Drops

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A Message for the Tiankuang Festival of the Dinghai Year

Anyone who wishes to see their true nature will not succeed by seeking it outside themselves; nor will they succeed by turning inward and trying to think it out. Both approaches involve the deluded mind setting up images. As the sūtra says, “Know one’s own mind as it truly is.” This is indeed the fundamental key to seeing one’s true nature and attaining Buddhahood. Practitioners should know that we all inherently possess the Tathāgata’s undefiled wisdom-nature; everything is already complete. It is only because we have long been deluded and have forgotten the source that we sink and drift through the six realms.

Those who are deluded delude themselves. They let discriminating consciousness take over and so fail to see their own nature. If the mind does not arise, there are no images and shadows; where there are no images and shadows, delusion cannot take hold. Where this deluded, condition-dependent mind ceases is the true mind; it is Buddha. They are the same thing, not two. Thus it is said that afflictions are themselves bodhi. Yet practitioners must not take this lightly, thinking that it is nothing much.

Those who can truly believe and accept this have, in the presence of countless Buddhas, planted many wholesome roots and accumulated immeasurable merit and virtue; only then are they fit to receive it. Do not doubt this. In the previous installment, I told you all: begin with no-mind. When resting, leave affairs out of the mind. When active, attend to affairs without clinging to them. It is like a boat crossing the great ocean: though it rises and falls amid the waves, its compass must

keep pointing true. Whether in activity or stillness, the true essence, clear and quiescent, is fundamentally unmoved.

Since everything is already complete, as stated above, there can be no question of difficulty or ease. Yet for those of spiritual intelligence, seeing is not difficult; what is difficult is to see and then be able to believe deeply. With faith comes a still greater difficulty: daring to take responsibility for it oneself. Harder yet is not to take it lightly and pass it over carelessly. Hardest of all is to recall it twenty or thirty times each day, thereby strengthening the practice.

Is there any matter in human life more important than this? Worldly people bustle through an entire lifetime for no more than a livelihood. Even if they obtain satisfaction, it is no more than the brief appearance of an udumbara flower.

Even those as exalted as emperors cannot avoid decaying along with the grasses and trees. How can this compare with this matter, which, once resolved, resolves all matters and bears upon life after life? A verse from the Diamond Sūtra says: “Though the seven treasures of the three thousand worlds are indeed abundant, once exhausted, they ultimately return to arising and ceasing.” If we awaken here, we directly realize bodhi at once. What spirit this is! What joy and exhilaration! Therefore, for practitioners who have not seen their true nature, it is as though they have not yet escaped a pit of fire; sooner or later, they will have a share in the three lower realms. How can they fail to feel deep urgency and fear?

As for the high and low, poverty and prosperity, success and failure in human life, these were settled long ago by prior causes and conditions; there is nothing that cannot be resolved. Yet to miss the great matter of this life because of minor concerns of livelihood is truly not worthwhile. Moreover, none of the affairs of the world obstruct the Way; it is precisely amid busy, vexing, and disorderly circumstances that one should train.

Do not take it lightly: this is the method of diligent practice before seeing one’s true nature. Do not forget it: this is the method of safeguarding realization after seeing one’s true nature. Do not deliberately attend to it: this is the method of following conditions and nurturing the Way upon entering the stage of effortless functioning. Dharma gates are immeasurable, but in a single phrase they may be summed up: see one’s true nature. Therefore, apart from seeing one’s true nature, it is not Buddhadharma. One must clearly distinguish the genuine from the false, urgently take up the supreme teaching, and directly recognize it. Above all, be honest, open, and spiritually alert. The years do not wait for us; do not mislead yourselves.

The Method of Using the True Mind to Eliminate Delusion

Chan Master Yuanzhina set forth ten gates for resting the deluded mind in the true mind; I shall further elaborate their meaning.

The first gate is awareness. This practice is of the utmost importance. From before awakening through thorough awakening, and from the first bhūmi to the tenth, keen awareness is needed at every moment and in every situation. Not only must one be aware the moment a thought arises; even in the course of daily dealings and in responding to the myriad affairs, one must remain aware in every thought that “to stir a thought is already to go astray.”

In every thought, abide nowhere: do not abide in delusion, nor in truth; do not abide in awareness, and still less abide in non-abiding. Continue in this way, continuously and seamlessly, for ten or twenty years, until it becomes continuous and undivided. At first, awareness entails deliberate effort; then it advances to effortless awareness, until nothing whatsoever need be contrived, yet one never departs from awareness. When the six sense faculties have nothing on which to rely, delusion likewise has nothing on which to rely, and one naturally enters a time of great rest.

The second gate is rest. This does not mean that, once one rests, there is simply nothing at all, as though one were stupid or deaf. Rather, as things arise, rest them; as movement occurs, let it cease. Nor should one abide in rest, for rest too is a dharma and a state of mind. In this practice, one cannot be the least bit dull: when it is time to rest, rest; when it is time to cease, cease. This state truly cannot be described; it is like an incense burner in an ancient temple, cold and desolate. Yet even here there is still attachment. One either falls into corrective suppression or sinks into emptiness and guards stillness; one’s capacity consequently fails to develop. These first two gates should be practiced in mutual adjustment; do not become fixed on them.

The third gate is to let the mind fall away while preserving circumstances. How can mind and circumstances be separated? To say that one disregards external circumstances and merely stills one’s own mind implies that there is a mind to be stilled; how is that not a circumstance? If one says there is no mind to be stilled, then originally there is no mind; but as soon as one falls into verbal explanation, one again falls into circumstances. Moreover, the opposition between letting one fall away and preserving the other plainly entails mind and circumstances, and is far from clean. Layman Pang said, “Simply be without mind toward the myriad things; what harm is there if the myriad things constantly surround you?” This is the non-abiding mind: it can engage with the myriad things without becoming stained. Such is the meaning of this third gate. Students must not split it into two separate parts.

The fourth gate is to let circumstances fall away while preserving the mind. Know that attachment to a dharma here has the same fault as in the third gate. Mind and

circumstances, inner and outer, are originally empty and quiescent. When encountering circumstances, there is no need first to contemplate them as empty; they are originally empty. Contemplation is an initial method of counteraction, for through contemplation one posits circumstances and mind, and this is not ultimate. Once one knows that they are originally empty, what harm is there in being companions with all phenomena and engaging with the various sense objects?

Yet this too is a stage one must pass through in practice. At the beginning, one cannot avoid swaying this way and that; after thorough awakening, one naturally will not fall to either side. As for saying that the true mind shines alone, this does not mean that there is merely a true mind that shines alone. It means that, after directly seeing the true reality, one sees clearly and constantly that there is only one reality. A sūtra says: “Without knowing, there is illumination.” Because there is no knowing, circumstances and mind are not established; because there is illumination, all is clearly illumined. If even truth is not established, how much less need one speak of delusion? Without deliberately letting it fall away, it falls away of itself; once one thing is understood, a hundred matters are resolved. There is no further need to establish the two views of letting fall away and preserving.

The fifth gate is to let both mind and circumstances fall away. This method is most perilous, for it is easy to fall into the pit of dead water. When people reach a point at which they have no way forward, they often cannot attain meditative stability though they seek it, nor achieve quiescence though they seek it. Seeing this instruction, they are certain to be overjoyed, supposing that attainment can be achieved merely by doing this. In the past, Zhihuang sat lifelessly for twenty years and fell precisely into this error. Had Xuance not led him to see the Sixth Patriarch, he could never have come back to life.

They do not know that “person and ox both disappear” means that one must die through completely. “Precisely when the moon is bright” requires you to look at the two Chinese characters (“precisely when”). At the time when both disappear, it is precisely when the moon is bright. Then come alive again and investigate what this condition is like; do not overlook it. The entrance lies right here.

The sixth gate is to preserve both circumstances and mind. Do not understand the word “preserve” as “to exist”; otherwise, when they fall away, you will understand it as “nonexistence.”

You must know that preserving means temporarily not discarding illusory existence, while letting fall away means returning to the original state of empty quiescence. Though mind and circumstances do not reach one another, they nevertheless are interconnected in their coming and going. Each should abide in its own position: mind abides in its originally unborn position, and circumstances abide in their

originally non-existent position. Yet because both belong to illusory existence, they each accordingly abide in the position of illusory existence. Therefore, the Lotus Sūtra says: “Dharmas abide in their dharma positions; the worldly characteristics constantly abide.”

Dharma positions means that each has its own causes and conditions, while all share emptiness of nature as their fundamental position. Because one knows with certainty that their nature is empty, one can engage with them without being stained and need not fear that they will obstruct. This gate is best able to increase one’s strength; only then can one proceed downward to engage the following four gates. This dharma is the highest vehicle and most complete. Unless one truly recognizes it clearly, realizes emptiness thoroughly, and awakens completely, one dare not undertake it. But one must by all means avoid becoming attached once more to the word “preserve” and falling into views of dharmas. If one leans even slightly too heavily toward it, one falls into existence and loses the meaning of preserving the mind; this too is delusion.

The seventh and eighth gates, the whole substance and whole function within and without, are but one matter: the state in which emotional attachment to self and things is forgotten. Essence and function were never separate; nothing in the universe is apart from one’s own intrinsic nature.

The ninth gate is essence itself as function, without any discrimination. When practice becomes fully mature, it becomes continuous and undivided.

The tenth gate is to go beyond essence and function. In the mind there is no longer any measure of inner and outer, essence and function. All is wholly one clear and even Way; this is the time when there is nonobstruction among phenomena. This practice cannot involve even the slightest contrivance, nor can it be called a practice; it is attained naturally.

These ten methods help delusion subside. Unless one has attained a certain degree of strength, there is absolutely no way to begin. One whose causal ground is correct must begin with the mind-ground and never begin with the deluded mind. If one begins with the deluded mind, one will inevitably become ever more confused, and delusion will multiply in turn. The practices of these ten gates are also a method of drawing fuel from beneath the cauldron, allowing the deluded mind to transform naturally. But one who does not know how to draw out the fuel can never leap beyond the circle.

These ten gates are forcibly established only as a last resort. The moment one deliberately focuses on them, one enters a trap and will not easily escape. Therefore, the Chan school generally has no dharma to show people; it only teaches them to awaken and become aware for themselves. Hence it is said, “There is no

dharma to tell people." It is also said, "I do not understand the Buddha-Dharma." A sūtra says, "One should not grasp dharmas, nor should one grasp non-dharmas." The point lies in flexible application. Upon reaching great rest, what gate remains to be grasped?

As for entering the Buddha's true school, there is only the single gate of seeing one's true nature. For one who has not seen one's true nature, studying dharmas is of no benefit. Students must not mistakenly take the deluded mind to be nonexistent, but they must certainly not mistakenly take it to be truly existent. Beginning students are merely afraid of delusion; this is because they regard it as existent. If one first sees one's true nature, it will naturally be eliminated little by little. One must first examine carefully: what, after all, is this "delusion"? When awareness is complete, delusion is exhausted; when dharmas are empty, views disappear.

Only the Buddha dwells in the Pure Land; this means that bodhisattvas of the tenth bhūmi and below cannot avoid subtle delusions. A sūtra says, "Ignorance has no substantial entity." It also says, "Mind has no form or dimension; delusion has no location." Before seeing one's true nature, you naturally shrink back in fear at every turn. Once you understand, what is there to fear?

Earlier, when I asked you all to see which of these ten gates had an affinity with you, you had already taken the bait. No wonder you were then taken in by Zhinà as well. You keep turning over within these ten gates—can you get out of the circle or not? Today I again delude people with the circle of words. Those who are bold may enter the circle, then leap out of it. If someone asks me, "Since you want people to leap out of the circle, why establish this circle at all?" I can only laugh aloud and ask in return, "Where, at this very moment, are you standing?"

A Direct and Expedient Method of Dhyāna

In the blazing heat of summer, one is oppressed by sultriness and vexation. When human affairs are confused and inverted, and there seems no way to resolve them, use a cutting-off method: (clap) At that very moment, let body and mind both fall away at once! Suddenly become as if wood or stone: not a single thought arises (and do not cling even to these words), yet seeing and hearing remain perfectly clear. Look into what this is. At such a time, think neither of good nor evil; it is neither empty nor existent.

After doing this for one minute, take up the mind again and attend to affairs. What obstruction is there in affairs? What obstruction is there in time? The benefits of this single act cannot be fully described. Why not do it? Again, when you are joyful and carefree, when body and mind are delighted and you are dancing with joy, you may also make this cut. The benefits gained are even more beyond description.

Why not do it? Try it several times each day; over time, you will naturally attain a state of quiescence and ease. Then the Original Face will naturally be realized, and the three powers of samādhi, wisdom, and emptiness will naturally be awakened. I fear only that you will not be willing to do it. If you can steal a little leisure amid your busyness, doing it once and becoming familiar with it once more, then you can remain in meditative absorption moment by moment and in Buddha-remembrance at all times, until they become continuous and undivided.

When that final day arrives, you will naturally have clear right mindfulness. The terror in your mind and the pain in your body can then be immediately released, because the old debts of past karma will already have been gradually repaid. You may even know beforehand when the time has come. (Among those known to me, there are already many who have believed this and had it confirmed.) If one has no far-reaching concerns, one will surely have immediate worries. “Immediate worries” means that they will arrive before one’s eyes in an instant.

Only those with merit and virtue, wisdom, and an acute concern about birth and death will believe my words. Yet the pull of the people and affairs before your eyes is too strong, and it causes you to forget naturally. Therefore, you must be deeply concerned; recognize what is true and false, do not be deceived by empty glory, and do not ruin the great matter of this human life. Often reflect on that final day: if it were already before your eyes, how terrifying, how terrifying! You would naturally become keenly aware.

This is called suddenly escaping the pit of fire. Ha ha! Who would be willing to believe the words “pit of fire”? Little do you realize that what now gives you the greatest satisfaction will become what causes you the greatest suffering in the future. What else could it be but a pit of fire? The Buddha said: “The three realms are without safety, like a burning house.” With but one cut, you can awaken at once: the pit of fire itself is a blue lotus. Such is its simplicity and directness.

If you make this cut when afraid, you will naturally become composed and unperturbed, and wondrous functioning will be awakened.

If you make this cut when angry, you will naturally not become excessively agitated, with blood rushing to your head.

If you make this cut amid the suffering of illness, you can naturally reduce the fever and recover quickly.

If you make this cut when grieving, you will naturally restrain your sorrow in due measure, and your mind will not be depleted.

If you make this cut at all times, you will naturally gain the joy of ease and tranquility, see your true nature, and attain Buddhahood.

Look into what this is. (You may investigate this in ordinary times. At the very moment of clapping, not a single thought arises; investigation would instead become delusion.)

Appearance—nonexistent; true emptiness is not empty.

Nobility—unsurpassed. Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.

True reality—not nonexistent; wondrous presence is not existent.

Form—immeasurable and boundless, pervading the dharma realm.

Essential nature—empty, pure, quiescent, and without arising or ceasing.

Wondrousness—everyone possesses it. Everything is already complete; there are neither ordinary beings nor sages.

Dharma function—omnipotent. All things are established through it.

Status—the master of all things. Therefore, it is the mother of the Buddhas.

Nature—though defiled, it is ultimately undefiled.

Distance—when seen, it is before one's eyes; when unseen, it lies beyond a thousand mountains and ten thousand waters.

A Direct and Expedient Dharma Gate for Letting Go

Beginners who are unaccustomed to the dharma gate of letting go truly do not know where to begin. They therefore forcibly suppress thoughts, imagining this to be letting go; or they draw the mind into the body, guard an aperture or the dantian, and cling to essence, qi, and spirit, imagining that they have attained samādhi and seen their true nature. None of these is the right path. I will now set forth a simple and expedient method, but it has prerequisites to which practitioners must pay careful attention:

1. When using this practice, do not harbor the slightest desire to gain anything. To seek results too quickly is already deliberate striving, and one will instead fail to attain samādhi.

2. When using this practice, be quick and nimble: use it the moment you decide to use it, and let it go the moment you decide to let it go. Only by proceeding as though

there were nothing to be done can one avoid being bound by the method.

3. When using this practice, know that it is only borrowed temporarily. Take non-deliberate attention as the practice, for the fundamental purpose is to remove the clinging mind, allowing it to dissolve imperceptibly and return to empty quiescence. If one clings to there being an empty quiescence, that is a dharma-view, and it is no longer empty quiescence.

4. When using this practice, never manipulate the breath; breathe as usual. Simply let the mind, intentionally yet unintentionally, lightly linger at that place for half a minute, and then immediately let it go.

5. When using this practice, make brevity and frequency the main principles. Practice it at least ten or so times each day. After one hundred days, you will be able to remember it wherever you are, but under no circumstances should you become attached to it.

6. When, in using this practice, you reach the point of not forgetting it, go a step further and train in having no practice to apply. This means that even this practice must be let go. It lies between neither approaching nor departing, between seeming to be and seeming not to be. Above all, do not cling to it rigidly; apply it flexibly.

7. Do not lightly transmit this method to careless, hot-tempered, competitive, or dull-witted people. Nor should you transmit only half of it without fully explaining it. Those who hold such inferior views will certainly undergo evil karmic retribution, for this can lead people into a non-Buddhist path and cut off their wisdom-life. This method is not to be used during seated meditation, but in the ordinary course of daily life, whether busy or at leisure; it is a means of training the mind.

1. [Sinking]. Amid the greatest busyness, suddenly let both body and mind sink down together, as though there were no body and no mind, casting everything aside. Do this for only half a minute, then raise yourself again to attend to all affairs.

2. At this time, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are clear and distinct, yet no thoughts arise. Still and without abiding anywhere, this is letting go.

3. At this time, let the mind lightly linger at the dantian, intentionally yet unintentionally. Forgetting it does no harm. Let the breath continue in and out as usual. Never draw the breath into the dantian, for this becomes a non-Buddhist path. This is of utmost importance.

4. At this time, do not allow yourself to see lights or Buddhas. If anything is seen, it is a demonic view. It is not letting go. Yet deliberately insisting on seeing nothing is also not letting go. Refer to the second point.

5. This method should be used for no more than one minute, or half a minute. Let it go immediately, and practice again after some time has passed.

6. Practice this method at least ten or so times each day. There is no need to count how many times you do it, but you must refer to the second point.

7. Write the Chinese character (“sinking”) many times on slips of paper and post them in various places around the room or on your desk at the office. Whenever you see the character, practice it once. But when using another method, or during seated meditation, do not use this method. If doubts arise, do not assume that you are right. There are two measures: first, do not generate doubts on your own; second, write in with your questions, and they will be answered.

8. Each day, constantly arouse great compassion and dedicate the merit by praying for world peace, for all sentient beings to eliminate calamities and extend their lives, and for all to attain Buddhahood together.

Dharma Gate for Guiding People onto the Way

1. In guiding those newly entering the Way, one must make them fear the many sufferings of the world and not crave petty pleasures. They should be encouraged to arouse a courageous resolve. As their teacher, one must continually set their causal ground straight, so that they do not fall into biased views and drift onto a misguided path.

2. Avoid drawing them in by making the teaching seem mysterious. They should begin by trusting their own capacity; otherwise, they will later retreat because of doubt, or turn to superstition, so the very way they were introduced to practice ends up harming them.

3. At the outset, one may use profound Dharma to guide them, directing them straight to begin from the field of their own mind and seek within the mind itself. At worst, they may simply not understand; if their causes and conditions are already mature, they may awaken at a single prompting. Otherwise, planting wholesome roots may still lead them one step closer. The danger lies in mistaking apparent understanding for the real thing and granting confirmation too readily. The student then either understands confusedly or takes things too easily; they will never be able to practice diligently. They may also fall into stubborn emptiness and arrogance, causing others to dislike them and disparage the Dharma.

4. Make them firmly believe that they can certainly attain Buddhahood. They must also arouse an earnest and urgent resolve and come sincerely to seek instruction. Do not accommodate them excessively; they must also be made to show reverence.

5. Those of superior capacity should be tested by the Dharma. Thus, let those who lack faith leave and not return; their blessings are limited, and their affinity with us extends no further than this. They should therefore be abandoned, and one should not continue associating with them. To associate with them only drives them farther away. If they can nevertheless remain firmly faithful, do not regard this as strange: they must be persons of the highest vehicle. Since they are already close to nonduality, they may be guided by the great Dharma.

6. The first requirement is that a person have deep foundations. Those who are neither filial nor respectful toward their elders, and who lack faith, are innately shallow; they are not vessels for the great teaching and can never enter the Way. To transmit it to them is what is called slandering the Dharma.

7. In guiding people, do not be overly eager, nor should you be hasty. Wait for the proper causes and conditions. This is especially difficult with members of one's own family. Never force or press them with reproach; once reproached, they will leave, and may instead slander the Dharma. This is again evidence that one's own root of attachment is deeply entrenched.

8. For beginners whose resolve in practice is not yet firm, never make them become attached to practice or force themselves to practice.

9. Those with obstinate dispositions are difficult to awaken, while those of sharp faculties are easily unsettled. In both cases, faith is difficult to stabilize.

10. Obstinate people are often fond of reputation; one may use their competitive spirit to urge them to advance.

11. Those who are always willing to come and ask for instruction must be making daily progress. Guard against their acquiring some understanding and using it to obstruct themselves. At this point, guidance is most important. Lead them carefully: first make them joyful, then offer criticism so that they feel their own insufficiency.

12. Do not lightly accept those with severe illnesses; those who are arrogant; those of impoverished or unattractive appearance; the overly suspicious; the eminent and powerful; those who indulge themselves lavishly; those fond of adornment; those excessively exacting about details; the narrow-minded; those fond of contentious argument; those preoccupied with making a living; and those who lack sincerity and trustworthiness.

13. Better to accept a follower of a non-Buddhist path than a person whose view of self is firmly entrenched and who makes no effort in practice.

14. Anyone who regards their own life as supremely important shows that their grasping of inner marks is firmly entrenched. Once inner marks are fixed, external

marks will not be relinquished. Such people can never study the Mind-Ground Dharma and enter the highest vehicle.

15. The method of observing the mind is the foremost key to entering Buddhahood; all else is secondary. The preliminary methods used to lead one into observing the mind are merely fingers pointing at the moon, and ultimately are not the moon itself; they are only temporary expedients. As for the method of observing the mind, one must not rigidly cling to a fixed method, but should guide people according to their capacities:

First ask: “Before your eyes are forms of every kind. By what do you see them?” They will surely answer: “The eyes.”

Next ask: “What else do you use to see these eyes?” They will surely answer: “The mind.”

Next ask: “If so, it is the mind that sees. Why did you previously say that the eyes see?” They will surely answer: “The mind is primary; the eyes are merely auxiliary conditions.”

Next ask: “Since the mind can see, why does it not see when there is nothing before the eyes?” They will surely answer: “It is like there being no reflection in a mirror.”

Next ask: “If the mind has no reflection, where is this mind concealed?” They will surely answer: “It lies concealed within the faculties, like the light of a mirror when it is not functioning.”

Next ask: “When the mind lies concealed within the faculties, does this mind arise and cease, or does it not arise and cease?” They will surely have some answer…

Next ask: “If you say that it arises and ceases, why has it never been destroyed or departed from beginning to end? If you say that it does not arise and cease, why does it suddenly function and then suddenly cease to function?” They will surely answer: “This mind is illusorily existent; it exists but is not real.”

Next ask: “If it is illusory and not real, where, then, is the true mind?”

Next ask further: “Why does the mind function? Since its functioning is mind, from where does the innate capacity for that functioning arise?”

Next ask: “Can this innate capacity itself still be seen? What is it?”

Next use this analogy: “Iron can be made into scissors, knives, wheels, machine parts, and various other implements. The implements can be seen; can the iron itself be seen?” They will surely answer: “It can.”

Next ask: “Can hardness be seen?”

By questioning in this way, layer upon layer, one can surely press them to advance a step further.

The Function of the Great Mind

Delusion is the result of the mind being narrowly employed. People contend with people, clans with clans, and nations with nations, all because of narrow views. When the mind is used narrowly, it naturally and gradually tends toward evil. What is called goodness merely brings things into balance; it has not yet become empty. The ancients disputed whether human nature is good or evil, but because they had not seen their nature, they spoke in this way. This “nature” refers to habit and to mind. Nature itself is neither good nor evil; it is through the arising of mind that habits are formed.

Once something departs from the inherent suchness of nature, partial views arise. One does not know that good and evil are transformations illusorily produced in the mind; they are not matters belonging to one’s nature. Nature is neither increased nor diminished by them; hence it is said to be “unpolluted.” The purport of Zhuangzi’s chapter “Free and Easy Wandering” is that one must first enlarge one’s mind before one can enter the Way.

The purport of the Avataṃsaka is that the Buddha entrusted this sūtra to ordinary beings of great resolve. When the mind is great, one’s aspirations are lofty, one’s capacity to undertake responsibility is strong, and one is close to awakening. This distinguishes the noble person from the petty person. Yet among those of great resolve, there are degrees of thoroughness and lack of thoroughness. Those who have not seen their nature have not yet made the mind empty and quiescent. Though their functioning may be great, it is not complete; or though complete, it is not all-pervading. Whenever one calculates within the mind by means of the mind, the mind grows smaller day by day.

To be refined and focused is still relative. One must first inwardly realize the empty and quiescent original nature, and only then activate the various functions of mind. In this way, one marvelously contemplates the principle that all things are originally empty. What my mind grasps is not firmly held; therefore it can be broad and great, complete and all-pervading, penetrating yet non-abiding. If one does not even grasp at goodness, how could there be any evil? This is the functioning of a great mind, beyond the understanding of those who delight in lesser dharmas.

Human beings are born endowed with the five desires. It is said that, because of sexual desire, one establishes one’s life. The five desires have their roots in wealth,

sensuality, food, fame, and sleep. Once the roots exist, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit necessarily grow. They arise upon meeting conditions, without end; this is their natural tendency. From their endless unfolding came the illusory establishment of the six realms.

As people give free rein to their illusory minds and seek to indulge the five desires, their original nature becomes obscured. Unawares, the mind they employ changes from great to small. They suffer in vain and do not know where to stop. This is what awakens the compassion of those who awakened before them, and what gives rise to the vow of great compassion. Guanzi said, “Within the mind there is yet another mind.” This is one who has begun to awaken. Such a person knows to use the mind to gather in the mind and thereby lessen desires.

Since ancient times, all sages and philosophers have based themselves on this principle in seeking to save the world. Thus they advanced teachings: first rectify the mind; when the mind is rectified within, one’s conduct will not be deluded. What establishes goodness and guards against evil is ritual propriety. What prohibits wrong and establishes right is law. What harmonizes feelings and intentions is music. What stirs and inspires aspirations is poetry and song. All these seek to tame the mind. They do no more than guide it from smallness to greatness, so that it may cast off its own suffering.

The mind is master of the myriad things, yet it easily becomes a slave. When the mind is bound to desire, it becomes desire’s slave. The affections between father and son, brothers, husband and wife, and friends all depend upon desire, and their true meaning is thereby lost. In human society, all esteem profit in order to support desire. This is why righteousness cannot prevail and the Way declines day by day.

Desire cannot be eliminated by human effort, nor can it be restrained by empty talk of heavenly principle. Ritual teachings can only guard against it temporarily; its root remains. Even with the guidance and moral influence of worthy fathers and elder brothers, one may be somewhat better, but its root remains. Even if one can restrain oneself, this lasts only for a time. If external temptations are powerful, one may still follow the old path and give desire free rein; its root remains.

Why is this so? Habits accumulated since beginningless time are deeply entrenched. How could the effort of half a lifetime eliminate them? Therefore, despite the instruction of hundreds of sages and thousands of worthies, and despite the strict supervision of ritual teaching and law, no one can bring this to ultimate completion. Mind is illusory; once one speaks of illusion, one knows that ultimate completion is impossible. One can only provide temporary relief as an expedient, and merely gives it the provisional name “ultimate.”

The Buddha has no way to liberate people lacking the requisite affinities; the rest may be inferred. Among the many kinds of sentient beings, those who know to be liberated from birth and death are not even one in a million. Those who fear birth and death and are willing to seek liberation from it with utmost urgency are not even one in a million. Of those able to free themselves from birth and death, those who also make plans for the sake of others are again not even one in a million. Why is this so? For human life, liberation from birth and death is the ultimate matter.

Now, to seek liberation from birth and death amid delusion is ultimately difficult to achieve. Birth and death are the illusory mind. Only by leaving the illusory mind and seeing one's true nature, then spontaneously bringing forth great functioning from that true nature, can one be thoroughgoing. Chan Master Shenhui said: "Knowing empty quiescence and understanding the dharmakāya, understanding the dharmakāya and truly being able to be liberated—this is called the correct principle." If one does not now realize the mind and see one's true nature, but merely calculates illusion upon illusion and competes in mutual delusion, what ultimate completion can be spoken of?

Nevertheless, the Buddha-nature of sentient beings is inherently equal. Yet, obscured by the five desires, they become confused and lost for a time; their original nature itself is without admixture and without corruption. Now that they are temporarily submerged in the sea, bodhisattvas apply the power of great compassion to liberate them extensively.

Yet because causes and conditions differ, some remain on the water's surface, some sink to the ocean floor; some are near, some far; some are willing to emerge, while others are unwilling; there are even those who doubt, slander, and oppose. To attend to this one is to neglect that one. Though the labor and hardship are beyond measure, the bodhisattva's original vow does not retreat. Only the Buddha knows their causes and conditions. He does not compel them, but liberates them according to conditions, without either joy or vexation.

Temporarily treating an expedient for the moment as ultimate means only that, within what cannot be made ultimate, such an expedient is called ultimate. Thus there are those liberated who become Buddhas, bodhisattvas, sages, worthies, or devas and humans; yet all these too are merely transformations of illusion. It is also said, "They are not sentient beings." This means that they are all Buddhas and must not be regarded as sentient beings.

It is further said, "It is not that they are not sentient beings." This means that, at this present time, their illusory minds are inverted and deluded, so they cannot but be called sentient beings. Precisely because they do not understand their own nature, the minds they employ are small rather than great. Among all sages and worthies,

those who have not seen their nature employ minds that may be great but are not complete. None has reached ultimate completion; there are only distinctions of greater or lesser, good or evil, deviant or correct, high or low.

The ancient sages and philosophers used their minds to save the world by causing people to save themselves. Their guiding principle was no different from the Buddha's, though their methods differed. They spoke of restraining the mind, subduing the mind, rectifying the mind, and gathering in the mind—all as countermeasures in which one mind treats another mind. When Guanzi said, "Within the mind there is yet another mind," that mind too arises in dependence on mind. It knows only to use mind to restrain mind; it is not the mind employed after seeing one's nature.

Therefore it does not go beyond counteraction. The result of counteraction is to remove evil and preserve goodness. Wherever something is preserved, there is no ultimate completion. Take the injunction, "Do not look at what is contrary to ritual propriety." The initial thought is that something is contrary to ritual propriety; the thought that follows is the awareness that it is contrary to ritual propriety and should not be looked at. Yet the mind that does not look has not disappeared. Hence it is said that something still remains. As for sages, they know that above the mind there is only the one, and therefore speak of "being watchful when alone."

They speak of clearing the mind, purifying the mind, and no-mind. In these they have already awakened to see that which has sound yet no odor, that which is most hidden yet most manifest. Extending this, they give it the names nature and Way; thus they are close to seeing their nature. They already know there is a supreme, unsurpassable, unique, and incomparable original nature, but they have not seen it through completely. Therefore, in their use of mind, they dare not depart from the original ground.

Compared with others, their understanding is more complete and their minds greater. Yet because their insight is still incomplete, they try to preserve and nurture it for fear of losing it.

Moreover, no one has clearly stated that mind is absolutely illusory, or what the features of nature ultimately are. They merely say: what I naturally possess is called nature ("what Heaven mandates is called nature"); the mind that arises in accordance with nature, when it accords with what is natural, is called the Way ("to follow one's nature is called the Way"); when the Way is lost, teaching that restores one to one's root is called cultivation ("the cultivation of the Way is called teaching"). These few phrases have in fact already seen something pertaining to nature. Regrettably, what follows provides no method for returning to nature, and still does not depart from the functioning of mind, but speaks only of sincerity.

As for how one realizes the mind or empties the mind in order to enter and verify this true nature, nothing has been heard. Mind and nature cannot be divided, yet foolish people forcibly divide them into two, and know even less what realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature mean. Again, non-Buddhists who gain a minor meditative experience and illusorily see a moon-disc before blue eyes claim that they have already realized the mind and seen their nature. Is this not strange?

Ritual teaching is the compassionate transformation by which bodhisattvas guide beings in accordance with circumstances. Governance is the expedient of Vajra-like adverse transformation. Only when both arise from the vow of great compassion will there be neither the bias of laxity nor that of severity. If government is lax, the people disregard the law; if severe, the people become brutalized. Therefore it is said: "Leniency and severity should complement each other; thus government is harmonious." Those who seek an immutable method for ten thousand generations, regarding it as ultimate, are mostly seen not to know their own limits.

In saving the illusory minds of sentient beings, one can never obtain a method of ultimate intent; one can only maintain them temporarily. Methods have times when they are exhausted, but evil has no time when it is ever entirely cut off. Thus there is what is ultimate for one time or one age, and what is ultimate for ten or a hundred ages. Judged in terms of time, it is clear that these are ultimately not ultimate. Therefore the Buddha called expedients ultimate, having thoroughly understood the world and sentient beings: they can only be sustained in this way.

If one seeks a fundamental solution, there is only the one method of causing people to realize the mind and see their true nature. Teaching the six perfections, the myriad practices, and the thirty-seven aids to awakening are all expedient, illusory methods before realizing the mind. If one can awaken and liberate oneself, there is no need for any governance by dharmas; one will naturally transform all universally. One can give rise to awakened illumination, and cause and effect will naturally become wholly clear. One's plans will reach far ahead, and the five desires will naturally be restrained.

To awaken to the mind, though one's awakening may not yet be thorough, means that the root of evil has not yet been pulled out. To awaken to the root, though one may not be awakened for the moment, means that the root has already been loosened. When, having awakened to the root, one further awakens to the mind, great functioning arises; the root can certainly be removed, and the matter thoroughly resolved. The process cannot be determined in a few words, nor can it be attained by cultivation for a short time. It too is simply a matter of practice.

Using the mind to turn back and contemplate is the virtue of inner realization. Using the mind to bring forth functioning is the work of outer cultivation. The former is

entry into the Way and is fundamental. The latter is the application of dharma and is secondary. The virtue of inner realization is directed toward examining oneself; the work of outer cultivation is directed toward dealing with others. One must proceed from within to without; only then is one's learning possessed of both essence and function. Yet people are accustomed to attending to externals and do not know what inner realization is.

Therefore, those who examine themselves are few. If one does not examine oneself, one places heavy blame upon others; to seek ultimate completion in this is difficult indeed. Moreover, people differ in worth and folly, in high and low capacity. Anyone even slightly outstanding in talent will cling to himself as being right. Sentient beings then extol him, making his attachment to self still stronger and causing the way of inward reflection and realization to grow ever more remote.

If there is another intelligent person, he rises to compete with him. Each advances his own doctrine, and each clings to his own reasons. The minds of sentient beings are originally habituated to restlessness; thus factions and schools are formed, people act from partisan feeling, and calamities become incalculable. The Huainanzi says: "Those who embody the Way are at ease and never exhausted. Those who merely rely on teaching labor without achievement. Those skilled in swimming drown; those skilled in riding fall. Each turns what he delights in into his own disaster. Therefore, those fond of undertaking affairs are never free from affliction, and those who contend for profit are never free from distress." This is for no other reason than that the mind races outward and forgets its root. If everyone understood this, they would know how to conduct themselves.

The ways of saving the world spoken of by ancient sages and philosophers all exhaust their principles in subtle detail. Regrettably, they have never provided methods for putting them into practice. Nor have they indicated the way of inner realization, leaving people almost without a point at which to begin. This has allowed non-Buddhists to spread their erroneous doctrines freely, and people rush toward them as though mad. This fully shows that everyone has never ceased to seek the Way, but suffers from having no path of entry. Seven parts of the error are self-inflicted, and three parts mislead others—could this be a matter of blessings, virtue, and causes and conditions?

The reason Buddhism teaches people to give is to arouse the great resolve. Giving to the point of relinquishing the view of self is the highest Dharma-giving. The meaning of giving is to arouse great compassion. The more one acts for others, the less one acts for oneself. Yet bodhicitta must be taken as the cause: at the causal stage, one must realize the emptiness of intrinsic nature, thereby planting the root of great compassion.

Because it arises from the emptiness of intrinsic nature, it can possess the wondrous functioning of skillful means; only then can one speak of ultimate attainment. This is also the initial application of the great resolve and the fundamental basis for entering Buddhahood. As the Avataṃsaka Sūtra says: “This sūtra is not entrusted to bodhisattvas and the like, but to ordinary beings of great resolve.” Thus it can be seen that the great resolve is the key to becoming a Buddha and the basis of liberating oneself.

Now, rather than turning within to one’s intrinsic nature, people seek outside the mind. Their foundation is already narrow, and accomplishment will certainly be difficult. Therefore it is said: “Relying on sentient beings, one gives rise to great compassion; relying on great compassion, one gives rise to bodhicitta; relying on bodhicitta, one attains perfect enlightenment.” Thus the Buddhadharma is everywhere inseparable from sentient beings, and therefore inseparable from worldly dharmas and human affairs. It may be called supremely active. Moreover, one sees self and others as nondual. To arouse bodhicitta benefits oneself, and also benefits others. Skillful means are the means of dealing with worldly affairs. Only by taking bodhi as one’s foundation can one bring forth the function of the great resolve. To be skillful everywhere is the fruition of the great resolve. Otherwise, it is merely empty talk.

Buddhist scriptures came to China in the medieval period. Some people of ancient times had not yet had the opportunity to encounter them; moreover, their sectarian views were too deeply entrenched for them to accept and integrate them, and thus they were unable to make use of them. In the writings of Mouzi of the Jin dynasty, Buddhism is discussed in the greatest detail, and people gradually came to understand the breadth of Buddhist learning. Figures such as Yuanming, in their spiritual vision, were in fact very close to Buddhism; their transcendence of the worldly and their profound capacity for prajñā are especially evident.

Later great Confucian scholars likewise, in their later years, all took the Buddha’s teachings as their foundation. By the time of Master Wang Yangming of the Ming dynasty, he was able to bring forth Buddhism’s wondrous functioning, for when the essence is great, its function is great. Scholars today who wish to transcend birth and death and bring forth great potential and great function should apply themselves with utmost earnestness to the path of seeing their true nature.

Intrinsic Spirit

Everything in the universe, from human beings to all things, has its own nature; that is, nothing is without its own spirit. Spirit is spiritual function. Iron has the nature of hardness and the wondrous function of hardness; this is the spirit of iron. Cotton

has the nature of softness and therefore the spiritual function of softness; this is the spirit of cotton.

Yet cotton and iron cannot put themselves to use. Human beings are the most spiritually endowed of all things; their spirit is distinctive, and thus they can put this capacity to work in many ways and shape the world we inhabit. This is the work of human beings, not the work of gods or Heaven. Therefore, the capacity and power of human nature are inconceivable. I shall now speak solely of the human spirit.

Human nature is of one substance and nondual; it does not differ according to wealth or poverty, rank or lowliness, sex, or age. When people eat sugar, all know that it is sweet; when they see the moon, all see it as white. There is no difference in this. Yet the functioning of spirit differs, because each person has different strengths, different habitual tendencies, and different attainments. Take sugar, for example: some like it and some do not.

Human capacities are awakened from one's nature, and their use is inexhaustible; spiritual responses too are limitless. Yet this spiritual functioning must be achieved through learning. Learning is accomplished through practice; practice through specialization; specialization through perseverance; and from persevering through hardship, ingenious thought and skillful effort naturally arise. The passage in Mencius—"When Heaven is about to confer a great responsibility upon a person, it must first distress his mind and will, and weary his sinews and bones"—speaks precisely of achievement through tempering. With more supplementary resources as well, and as the saying goes, "To do good work, one must first sharpen one's tools," the spiritual functions one can bring forth become still greater.

Human nature possesses innate capacities of its own; therefore, people can seemingly create a world from nothing, while supporting conditions naturally gather to assist them. This is still human endeavor, not a gift bestowed by Heaven. People do not understand the principle of karmic cause and effect across the three lives. They think that someone is naturally intelligent, not realizing that this person cultivated learning and formed habitual tendencies in previous lives; hence, in this life, those capacities are awakened according to circumstances in ways that differ from others. Even stupidity is not formed in a moment. Nor need we refer only to life before birth and after death: even thirty years in this life can create many worlds.

The power released by the spirit of one's nature is immense, greater than that of an atomic bomb, for it is the master of the atomic bomb. Its supporting conditions are also extraordinarily extensive; thus, there is no end to the invention of skills and technologies.

Do not suppose that intelligence and ability belong to me alone; everyone has a share in them. Others may have developed their specialization more fully than I

have. In the design and construction of an atomic bomb, for example, everyone has such capacity and may possess supporting conditions equal to or even greater than mine; only their causes and conditions temporarily differ. Thus, a person of knowledge may employ his skills, but one with wisdom would never dare rely solely on such skills or indulge a prideful attitude toward others, knowing that these things are not dependable.

Accordingly, spiritual capacities may be great or small. The present progress of the world in culture and material things is merely a minor function of the spirit; it is not its great work. Humanity gains physical enjoyments, yet creates spiritual terror and mutual suspicion. Even the atomic bomb, in another year, will inevitably be countered by a newer invention and become useless; and so inventions emerge one after another without end. The terror of the world will then have no end, and a day of regret must come.

The great function of the spirit seeks what is ultimate and universally beneficial. It does not seek temporary pleasure and profit, but lasting peace and happiness. It plans as a whole and refuses to create evil. One who harms himself, like Hitler, completely exemplifies the result of stupidity, for his spiritual capacity and all his supporting conditions were regrettably put to petty use. Japan and Italy, following in his footsteps, met the same fate. This is a great warning; but how many people in the world have truly awakened? They still walk toward his grave, because they do not know the great function of the spirit.

To kill another is to kill oneself; to rob another is to rob oneself. Such a person's spirit is not merely without light; it is lost in darkness. Though such a person has a spirit, it cannot be called spiritual functioning, for the most foolish person under heaven is one who plunders himself. As the saying goes, harming others does not benefit oneself.

The present world has culture without enlightenment. Material things have become refined and splendid, while people themselves have become less enlightened. Material enjoyment has advanced, but the unrest in human hearts and the pressures of the economy have advanced even further. Hence strange illnesses have multiplied and life spans have shortened. A few are happy, while the many suffer. Human knowledge and technical skill have advanced, and so too have the methods of harming others. Morality has perished; mention righteousness, and everyone laughs at you. All this is the inversion and evil of the spirit.

The wondrous functioning of the spirit is infinitely variable. Ordinary people merely use the mind to investigate human affairs; the more they investigate, the more expert they become, but their scope remains narrow and small. They never willingly use the mind to investigate mind itself—what is called using the mind to regulate the

mind. Some may study psychology, but they study only the psychology of controlling others; they have never investigated their own psychology.

Yet there are also a few people who question themselves and admonish themselves, asking what is good and what is evil. They are already as rare as phoenix feathers and qilin horns, and are called sages and worthies. But even they have never investigated what the mind and spirit ultimately are. Are my good and evil inherent, or do they arise through coercion and change? Is my intelligence innate, or is it formed through tempering?

A bronze mirror can reflect, but if it is recast into a cauldron, where does its light go? Copper can be polished into a mirror, so the brightness of copper is inherent; but why must it be polished? If it is not polished, why does that brightness not appear? People then credit the polishing. But why can a brick be polished without becoming a mirror? This shows that spirit is inherent in one's nature, yet it must emerge through tempering.

Human nature is originally spirit, so why are there also those who are dull and unresponsive? Copper may possess brightness, yet without polishing it does not shine. But what, then, is polishing? Ordinary people understand only half the meaning of the word "polish."

People know only that using the mind to think is polishing, but that is merely half of polishing. If one understood the wondrous principle in these three phrases —"knowing without knowledge, spirit in what is unresponsive, mind in what is mindless"—then this polishing would be complete and would become its great function. Yet people have no faith even in these three phrases, because they can use only the mind that has already stirred, and cannot understand the mind before it has stirred. This question cannot be settled in a few words and must be discussed further.

Ask someone, "What is mind?" and he will only say that it is thought. Ask where thought comes from, and at most he will say that it arises in the brain. It is like asking what lamplight is: he will only say that it is electricity; ask where electricity comes from, and he will say that it is emitted from the light bulb. Can these two simple answers satisfy anyone? When people fail to understand the principle of nature and spirit and speak of it in vague generalities, it is exactly the same.

Everything in the world is created by mind. When the mind repeatedly engages in something, it becomes a habit; when a habit endures, it becomes a fixed convention. But was not that convention itself originally fabricated by someone? Once people create habits, they are in turn controlled by them. They cannot master their own joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure. Since people's habitual tendencies are both similar and different, they cannot live in harmony and thus encounter favorable and adverse

conditions. Those who differ often contend over temper, while those who agree often contend over profit; even where open contention is impossible, they cannot restrain themselves.

Thus craving arises. Jealousy and intrigue make human affairs ever more complicated; cheating increases, preventive measures become stricter, suspicion increases still more, and suffering grows greater. This turns repeatedly into habit, and people remain deluded without awakening. Therefore, the more material things advance, the more human craving for beauty and pleasure expands day by day; the spirit of kinship, kindness, and compassion diminishes day by day; and the mentality of cruelty and plunder grows ever more intense, creating today's terrifying world.

"Self-benefit" is only natural to human feeling, but what is genuine self-benefit? Genuine self-benefit is lasting, ultimate, free of harmful consequences, and expansive. (1) Seek peace and contentment of mind.

One must know that everything in the world is shared and interdependent, mutually influential and reactive. Take Hitler in Germany: was not his original intention to seek peace and contentment? Yet in the end he brought the consequences upon himself. Therefore, his self-benefit was not genuine. (2) Seek every victory.

One does not understand that victory must begin in contention. Even if I win, I have already been injured at the root. How much better if neither side contended? Moreover, victory is only a temporary turn of fortune, and unseen consequences have already been planted. An atomic bomb, for example, may be a temporary victory, but there is no assurance that it will not provoke a still greater reaction. Such self-benefit is not ultimate and has harmful consequences. Thus, for the past year, international suspicion and terror have prevented both sides from attaining genuine self-benefit. The evidence lies plainly before our eyes; why do none awaken?

My welfare and security are entrusted to others; only benefit that is broadly shared can be true benefit. A person who truly benefits himself will certainly not harm others for his own gain, for exclusive profit never fails to invite reaction. It is no different from choosing evil causes for oneself and receiving evil results oneself—what is called a despot. If people truly understand how to benefit themselves wisely, they must first understand cause and effect. And what could possibly be wrong with seeking self-benefit that is thorough and expansive?

Contentment is not timid narrowness; it is knowing when enough is enough in speech and thought. For example, if one eats too little, one is not full; if one eats too much, one becomes bloated. In either case one is uncomfortable. Yet this does not mean not eating, nor does it mean shrinking back in fear of eating. This is called contentment: one seeks sufficiency until it is truly sufficient, knows it for oneself, and stops decisively. To go beyond it is instead to lose what one has gained.

Again, in harmful matters, such as Germany's aggression, if it had understood how to stop decisively, completely changed its former policy, and ceased making an enemy of Russia, how could it have fallen so completely? Thus greed is not a good thing, but contentment is not passive; it is the lively responsiveness of spiritual intelligence, a means of action amid struggle. Sadly, people misunderstand this as well.

Suppose a person has the strength to walk one hundred li. Having gone fifty li forward, he stops. Others think he is contented and laugh at him as cowardly, not knowing that he still has fifty li to walk back. How has he been cowardly? You proceed for one hundred li, but cannot return. Therefore, one should not be bound by fixed and incomplete views. Struggle requires deliberate planning before action. This is the functioning of the spirit.

The most admirable people in the world are not frivolous but are adaptable and honest. Adaptability means that both sides gain some benefit and every aspect is brought into harmony. Honesty means not deceiving others, and that itself is self-benefit. The spirit is extremely keen, farsighted, not fixed in rigid views, quick to respond to changing circumstances, and simple and clear in handling affairs. Its capacity of mind is always lively and vital, because it can see from afar and see that everything in the universe is fundamentally false and unreal, originally empty and illusory. Therefore, it can do this and is willing to do this.

Everything in the world is illusory and unreal; only one's cultivation is not illusory. To accomplish this cultivation, one must first eliminate greed. Yet greed arises from taking things as real: believing that all one can see, hear, and grasp are not unreal. Thus, what you crave, I too crave; what you seek, I too seek. There are gains and failures to gain; when you are troubled, I too am troubled. The disorder of the world and the suffering of human life both arise from this. Therefore, the essential intent of Buddhism in saving the world is to bring about self-awakening: first see that all things are intrinsically empty, yet do not fall into emptiness or annihilation.

Knowing that the mind itself is illusory, one knows that all this is created by the illusory mind and has no substantial reality. Yet, while living amid illusion and understanding illusory affairs, one does not abandon illusion altogether, nor does one cling to truth. Regard worldly affairs as neither real nor unreal. If one takes them too much as real, one labors and suffers excessively; if one takes them too much as unreal, life becomes empty and insipid. One simply responds according to conditions.

As it is said: act without contrivance, attend to affairs without attachment to affairs, savor what is without flavor. One may appear not to know, yet in fact there is nothing one does not know; one may appear unresponsive, yet in fact possesses

great wisdom that seems like foolishness. This is the responsiveness of seeming unresponsiveness; it is precisely the mind of no-mind. In this way, at least sixty or seventy percent of greedy thought has been removed. Friction between people is thereby forestalled; even if misunderstandings and conflicts should arise, they can readily be resolved.

Thus two gentlemen will not contend, nor will a gentleman contend with a petty person, for the gentleman is willing to yield and thereby leaves no contention to arise. Only two petty people must contend: neither is flexible in disposition, and neither has room to retreat.

Someone may say that yielding is a good thing, but if the Japanese invaders came to invade, should I yield then as well? No—then one's spiritual responsiveness has again become obstructed. Why must sores and boils grow on the body? It is best if they do not arise; but once they unfortunately have arisen, incision is the only remedy. If the poison is not completely cleared away, the harm will be even greater, and some healthy flesh must also be removed. Thus, when something is harmful like a thief, one must eliminate the evil completely. This is precisely the function of spiritual responsiveness. But before sores and boils have arisen, why deliberately cut out flesh and make a wound? What suffering would that be for?

When worldly people suffer confusion and distress, knowingly commit wrongs, act out of emotion, and exhaust themselves with needless worry, it is all because their minds are biased and attached and they do not know how to adapt. When the strong contend with the strong, both act out of temper. At first they contend for profit; afterward, they contend merely for pride. In the end both are ruined, and their suffering was already latent long before—it did not arise in a single day. Yet this too is a natural tendency. No flower remains red for a hundred days; human affairs rely on such friction to bring about their own dissolution. Otherwise, they would remain forever undefeated, which could never be so.

All spiritual functioning is mind; every mind is all dharmas; and all dharmas are all meanings. Dharma has no fixed dharma, and meaning has no fixed meaning. A may independently control something, while B may reject it on his own. For A it is right, while for B it is not right. Originally there is no fixed definition; people merely agree upon and provisionally establish a fixed standard amid what is unfixed. Precisely because it is unfixed, what is permitted must change. This is nothing other than the spiritual functioning inherent in one's nature.

Success and failure, honor and disgrace, gain and loss, right and wrong, nobility and lowliness, flourishing and decline, rise and fall, arising and ceasing: ordinary people see distinctions in all these, but those with penetrating understanding see them only as a game, like an epiphyllum that appears for a single moment. This is nonduality

seen with the eye of wisdom: all alike are illusory and insubstantial. They are not absent before one's eyes, yet ultimately they are illusory. One who understands this principle possesses true spiritual functioning; thus, poverty and lowliness cannot shake them, wealth and rank cannot corrupt them, and power and force cannot subdue them.

Why was Jesus willing to bear the cross? At the time, he had no thought of seeking fame or profit; he had long since penetrated all ultimate principles, and was therefore able to do so. This is the function of the Holy Spirit.

A child's spiritual intelligence should be allowed to develop and should not be overly constrained, yet neither should it be indulged without restraint. There must be proper boundaries. Teach the child to be discerning, but not harsh; generous, but not rigid; broad in thought, but not slippery; and large in mind-capacity, but not narrow.

People have a tendency to imitate, and thus their independence is weak. Independence is good, but obstinacy is not independence. One must not have a dependent mind, though one cannot do without accepting assistance. Hope is indispensable, but one must not insist that it will certainly be fulfilled. Desire is merely a superstitious faith in cleverness. People are often unwilling to apply themselves, while those who do apply themselves often become rigid and dull. Therefore, diligent effort must also be flexible, and it must lead to some discovery.

A child's vital energy should be encouraged to develop, but it must be upright and not undisciplined. First cultivate in the child a mind of equanimity, and the child will naturally not be arrogant toward others; cultivate in the child a compassionate mind, and the child will naturally be able to refrain from wrongdoing. Only parents who offer such instruction are truly compassionate; this is genuine service to society and an honor to the nation.

The Germans know only utility and profit, seeking to make everyone capable; thus they became the chief culprit of the world. Lacking the virtue of compassion, they are bound to perish. This is self-destruction; it is the loss of spiritual intelligence. Taking the past as a warning, those of great wisdom should change their course: do not crave utility and profit, do not rely on military force, and do not let your thinking become too outdated.

Instruction to Fellow Students at the Beginning of the Dinghai Year

Daoists emphasize quietude; Buddhists emphasize purity. Quietude excludes external objects in order to gather the mind into one. Purity gathers the inner mind

and returns it to emptiness, whereby objects too disappear. One is a remedial treatment; the other treats the root. Their difference cannot be measured in terms of distance.

People do not know the wonder of the one mind. They merely entertain thoughts, thought after thought, and thus each thought becomes deluded. The one mind is the mind before it stirs; it is direct awareness, clear knowing without discrimination. Though it clearly discerns right and wrong, it is a mind without attachment, abiding, or defilement. As it cannot be named, it is called bodhi, and is also called no-mind. Thought means that a person has two minds. The original mind is original awakening; upon encountering objects, it gives rise to discrimination and establishes dualistic views. This is the second mind; this is thought; this is birth and death. Its mechanism is exceedingly subtle.

Daoists do not know that mind arises from objects and objects are established through mind; each makes the other into delusion, and one cannot distinguish which is primary. They therefore use mind to gather mind, forcibly break through external objects, and remain unmoved when encountering objects. Their method of gathering the mind relies on regulating and subduing the blood and vital energy; at the same time, it may bring longevity, and they suppose that they have achieved their aim. They do not know that this is a formless attachment that grasps at forms, and that it is merely a practice of suppression. As the practice develops further, it gradually forgets its root and instead loses the essential way of gathering the mind. Mistaking essence, vital energy, and spirit for the Way, it has harmed countless people. Is this not lamentable?

In recent times, those who practice Esoteric Buddhism regard crown opening as the supreme Dharma gate. Relying on a master's blessing, they may suddenly have their crowns opened. Yet they do not even know what realizing one’s true nature and becoming a Buddha means; nor do they know the state of their own habitual tendencies or the strength of their samādhi and wisdom. They no longer seek to make diligent progress. Nor do they seek instruction or investigate how they should practice after crown opening. Is this not lamentable?

Crown opening is simply the initial receiving of the Buddha’s blessing, opening an extremely subtle thread of light. One borrows this illusory body to seek the path upward; one must not cling to this as ultimate. Practitioners should exert themselves and work diligently from this point, tirelessly day and night; only then will there be a response. It is like opening a mine: one has no basis on which to proceed and must rely on the guidance of a mining expert. If one begins digging from a certain place, one will surely find gold.

Although there may be a renowned master for this method of crown opening, if I do not strive diligently, there is nothing the master can do. Such cases are everywhere among students of Esoteric Buddhism. Moreover, those who study Buddhism yet mistakenly calculate their bodily attainments—how are they any different from followers of non-Buddhist paths? Because their causal ground is improper, they cannot attain Buddhahood or transcend birth and death.

Although essence, vital energy, and spirit are esteemed by Daoists, they are also provisions for Buddhist practitioners. One may examine oneself by the characteristics of the pulse. Observe also the eyeballs. The pulse is divided into left and right, with the six positions of cun, guan, and chi. The two chi positions pertain to the kidneys: the left should be deep and the right floating. If the pupils are black as lacquer, essence is abundant. The left guan position pertains to the liver, for which a wiry pulse indicates fullness; the left cun position pertains to the heart, for which a fine pulse indicates fullness. If the eyeballs are round and prominent, vital energy is abundant.

The right cun position pertains to the lungs, for which an astringent pulse indicates fullness; the right guan position pertains to the spleen, for which a surging pulse indicates fullness. If the eyes are dark and lustrous, spirit is abundant. If the joints make sounds, the breathing is even, and one can go without sleep, these are the three grades. Those of these grades may practice the Dharma.

In spring one must not be excessively cold; in summer, excessively cool; in autumn, excessively refreshed; and in winter, excessively warm. This is the art of nurturing life. Winter is a time when essence flourishes, but it is also easily stirred and easily lost.

Before the mind stirs, there is the formless true essence of primordial vital energy. Once thoughts of desire, emotion, delusion, greed, anger, joy, wrath, and the like arise, it becomes formed and turbid essence, distributed throughout the body and obstructing the growth of vital life. Thus illness arises and old age and death are hastened. As soon as a thought stirs, fire stirs with it. Fire is the mind.

The mind is sovereign fire, and essence is commoner fire—that is, kidney fire; heart and kidneys are connected. When these two fires act upon one another, there is nothing that does not burn and destroy the body. Only even vital energy—the ministerial fire—neither low nor excessive, in a word, harmonious equilibrium, can regulate them. Yet all three are governed by the mind. This is a method for preserving longevity.

The mutual generation of exhalation and inhalation is called breath. There are six kinds of exhalation: hē, hū, xì, xū, chuī, and xī; but inhalation is only one. Exhalation proceeds from within outward and easily becomes coarse; inhalation enters from

without and its sound easily becomes quiet. Both should be slow and subtle. Inhalation must not be without sound, and exhalation must not have sound. Otherwise, when the sound is quiet, the fire is gentle; when the sound is coarse, the fire is vigorous.

One may continue doing until old and still never finish learning—how then can one be arrogant toward others? Only at the age of sixty-two did I first learn how to make dried vegetables. I record it here to inform my fellow vegetarians:

Take one hundred jin of mustard greens. Wash them clean, let them dry, and sun them for one or two days. Then knead them with salt (use only one full rice bowl; stir-fry with Sichuan pepper, and it should certainly be lightly salted—never use too much). Press them overnight, remove them and wring them dry, separate them, and sun them dry. Then put the liquid into a pot and boil it first, adding two jin of sugar at the same time. Put in the greens and boil them thoroughly. Remove them and dry them, then sun them dry again. Boil them again; after reducing the liquid until dry, sun them once more, then steam them. After steaming, sun them again; steam them again, and sun them again. After doing this three times, they may be stored.

Tie them into bundles of different sizes according to the amount needed each time, so that they may be conveniently packed away and taken out for use without waste. If they are stored for a long time and develop even a little mold, steam them once more; their flavor will not change at all. In this way, they may be stored for three or four years without spoiling. Their freshness is incomparable—ten times better than Shaoxing dried vegetables.

Verses Urging Buddhist Practitioners Not to Divide into Sects

The Buddha-Dharma is a whole. Expedient means establish distinctions. All dharmas return to the source. Every gate is prajñā.

All Buddhas of the three times rely on it as pāramitā. I pity those who divide into schools, falsely erecting sectarian views.

If Buddha-recitation is not let go of, how can one be steadfast? The foremost secret lies in upholding it. In the end, it returns to the formless Dharma.

Break through appearances; do not cling to appearances. The essence of the precepts should first be established. Though there is a special transmission outside the teachings, it does not transmit distinctions.

Within the teachings there are no written words; to establish them is to slander the Buddha. Yet for those of lesser wisdom, the Buddha also retained teachings with form.

When will disputes ever cease? When will medicine and illness be set aside? Rely only on the school of prajñā; without it, defilements cannot be cleansed away.

For countless hundreds of years, people have remained in a stupor. They should first awaken from the great dream. If the mind-ground becomes clear, all can naturally merge and return to one.

When one reaches the ground of returning to the source, not a single thing can be obtained. To cultivate in this way is true pure karma.

Wondrous indeed is the Heart-of-Heart Dharma: it can swiftly transform the eight consciousnesses. Esoteric Buddhism encompasses Chan and Pure Land, perfectly illuminating pure enlightenment.

Supernormal powers are not sought externally. To see through to wisdom is to see through to Buddhahood. Realize this boundless body: enter the moon and see no moon.

All dharmas are marked by emptiness. To break views is to break attachment. Clearly know that no dharma is a dharma, yet speak the unspeakable.

Each person knows warmth and cold for themselves; one who has realized cannot be deluded. When it is one's duty, do not yield. Only no-mind is Buddhahood.

Vajra Longevity

Human life span may be roughly divided into two kinds. The first is bodily longevity, which pertains to the physical retribution body. There were indeed many long-lived people in ancient times, and even in recent times one may often see people living to one or two hundred years. Yet bodily longevity is ultimately subject to arising and ceasing. Comparing longer and shorter lifespans, people distinguish between premature death and longevity. But longevity has no fixed definition: one who dies at ninety is commonly said to have lived a long life, whereas a person of one hundred and twenty would regard that as premature death.

The second is longevity of mind, namely the spiritual platform and intrinsic nature of mind. The dharmakāya, which neither arises nor ceases, exists forever and is as firm as vajra; hence it is called vajra longevity. This is truly the principal thing. The power over the premature death, longevity, life, and death of the physical retribution body lies in the mind. Bodily illness invariably arises because the mind is weak, allowing

external pathogens to enter. When the mind and vital energy are weak, it is often because the spirit and mind are disturbed and the true basis is not full, giving rise to various forms of unease.

Greed for food, victory, gain, pleasure, and ease can all cause illness. When what one greedily seeks cannot be obtained, anger arises. Greed and anger can make the mind agitated and the qi hurried, startle the gallbladder and inflame the liver, shake the six pulses, and set the five viscera boiling; external pathogens then enter at the same time. This is the origin of illness.

Medicines can provide relief only for a time. If one does not treat the root, then although one may temporarily recover, the root of the illness lies concealed within. When it recurs, one lacks the strength to resist it and may perish. Anyone who seeks longevity should first eliminate illness. To eliminate illness, one must understand how to use qi. To understand how to use qi, one must first nurture one's nature. The method of nurturing one's nature begins with regulating the mind.

Although the method of regulating the mind may be transmitted and received, it must be demonstrated in person, so it will be omitted here. Its fundamental principle, however, is to have less agitation and vexation. My aunt, Madam Pan, is one hundred years old this year and remains in good health. Throughout her life, she has known no causes for agitation or vexation. This is the benefit of regulating the mind. There are far too many sick people today, and the trend of short lives and suicide is increasing daily. Of those who rely solely on medicine, scarcely one or two percent are saved.

Everything in the world is advancing, yet longevity and health alone are declining without exception. Strange diseases also emerge in great numbers. People seek neither causes nor effects; they give heed to neither. They know only to greedily seek satisfaction in clothing, food, and shelter. Heightened desire is the cause, and shortened life the result. The loss outweighs the gain; this is already absurd. Furthermore, because they do not understand the principle that one does not cease to exist after death, they create all kinds of evil karma. Killing others and killing oneself have become habitual.

Inverted and crazed demons are seen in ever greater numbers each day—how deeply pitiable! Thus I speak of vajra longevity: so that those without illness may extend their years, those with illness may dispel it, those at home may have less vexation, and travelers may be free of fear. Going further, one may be led into investigating the Buddha vehicle, opening great wisdom, understanding the principle of neither arising nor ceasing, and realizing vajra longevity. Is this not a joyful thing? Therefore, if one wishes to save the race, save the nation, and save the world, one must first begin by saving oneself, curing illness, and saving the mind.

This is also the original vow of the members of this association to propagate the Dharma and benefit living beings.

Human beings live by receiving the qi of the five elements; therefore, qi is primary in the physical body. When qi is depleted, illness arises; when qi is stagnant, illness arises. To treat illness, first treat its qi. Herbs, plants, medicines, and minerals possess the five qi of cold, coolness, warmth, heat, and neutrality; these are partial manifestations of the qi of the five elements, yet they can still ward off disease. How much more so the true qi inherent in the human body, which possesses the complete qi of the five elements.

Moreover, herbs, plants, medicines, and minerals differ in their cold and hot properties. Used improperly, they can kill at once; therefore, it is better to use one's own qi. The method of using qi lies again in the mind. The mind is the commander of qi. The place in the human body where qi is stored lies below the heart and above the kidneys, at the navel. The navel and heart belong to spleen-earth; they are the ancestors of the five viscera and eight channels. Within are eight apertures, which can connect with all the network vessels.

Whoever preserves this place and stabilizes the qi of the central palace will surely dispel illness and surely attain longevity. The beginning of the hundred illnesses arises when wind pathogens enter. If bodily qi is weak, nutritive and defensive qi are disharmonized; or if one is troubled by worry, thought, fright, and fear, or exhausted by drink, sex, or labor, true qi is depleted and external pathogens enter. Thus numbness and pain arise from wind-dampness. A crooked mouth and eyes result when wind strikes the channels and network vessels.

Paralysis of the left side, with paralysis of the hands and feet, results from blood deficiency and stagnant blood. Paralysis of the right side, with paralysis of the hands and feet, results from qi deficiency together with phlegm and dampness. When both sides are affected, qi and blood are greatly depleted. Paralysis of the hands, thirst, and impeded speech result from blood deficiency and blazing fire. Qi moves the blood, and blood replenishes qi; the two are one.

Prolonged looking damages the blood; prolonged lying damages qi; prolonged sitting damages the flesh; prolonged standing damages the bones; prolonged walking damages the sinews. Excess in the seven emotions and six desires damages primal qi and harms the heart and kidneys. When ministerial fire blazes and true yang is depleted, there may be cough, phlegm, wheezing, fever, vomiting blood, nosebleeds, night sweats, and seminal emission. Above there is excess and below deficiency: the palms and soles are hot and the skin is parched; one fears cold after noon and develops fever at night.

Sometimes it does not subside during the day; sometimes there are palpitations, nausea and retching, irritability and restlessness, pain in the chest and abdomen, fullness after eating with diarrhea, abdominal masses and groundless fright, a pale face and red lips, dizziness of the head and eyes, aching in the lower back, sore back, weary and weak limbs, and scanty, red, difficult urination. All these belong to yin deficiency with stirring fire: water does not ascend and fire does not descend to aid it. Hence there are all kinds of illnesses. All are due to qi not circulating freely.

There are two approaches to treating illness: first, attack external pathogens; second, replenish deficiencies. In attacking pathogens, first stabilize upright qi; therefore, steadiness of mind is primary, and qi is directed to oppose them. In replenishing deficiencies, first nourish the mind, and likewise direct qi to replenish them.

In treating diseases of the five viscera, nothing takes precedence over replenishing qi. This is especially urgent for the kidneys. Qi can move blood and generate fluids; fluids are like a source of wealth, on which all the channels depend for sustenance. Yet in replenishing qi, one must not stir the mind. When the mind stirs, the liver becomes vigorous, the various pulses are alarmed, and true water is depleted. I have often compared the mind to a fan: when it moves, it draws up wind. When wind moves, fire blazes; when fire blazes, water dries up; when water dries up, earth is damaged. One should use every method to regulate the mind and prevent it from moving. Then greed, anger, and illness have no means of arising; even if they arise, they are easily controlled. Neither inner liver wind nor the external eight winds can shake one. The four elements regulate themselves. There is no better method for prolonging life and increasing longevity.

In treating illness, one must never rely entirely on physicians. Physicians can only help patients remove illness; they cannot nurture health on their behalf. They can only help patients remove wind pathogens; they truly cannot nurture their primal qi on their behalf. No illness is inevitably fatal, but those who do not nurture qi cannot avoid death. Even if they do not die, the root cannot be removed; before long the illness will recur, and when it recurs, death will surely follow. Nurturing illness and replenishing qi preserve the heart; this is the fundamental condition for treating illness. A noted German physician said, “When people die of illness, they do not die of the illness itself; they actually die from the sudden collapse of the heart.” How profound these words are.

There are countless medical methods. The principal ones are no more than six: medicines and minerals, acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, surgical treatment, and shamanic spells. There are Chinese and Western schools, and ancient and modern methods of treatment. Of these, shamanic spells are the most efficacious, but unfortunately they have long been lost in transmission, and what remains is

incomplete. Shamanic spells may seem close to the mysterious, but they are not superstition. They often yield extraordinary results, benefit the sick body without harm, and may be used together with medicines and minerals.

Only when patients lack faith are their effects slight; otherwise, their rapidity is inconceivable. Next comes moxibustion, followed by acupuncture and massage. These have the same effect: they lack the partiality and adverse consequences of medicines and minerals, yet can open points and free the apertures. Next come surgery and medicines and minerals, which are the most widely practiced today. The art of dissection and surgery has long been lost in China. Scientific progress has brought great convenience.

For such matters as emergency injections, surgery, detoxification, and examining illnesses with visible physical signs, Western medicine should take first place. For regulating dampness and warmth, nourishing primal qi, and recuperation after illness, Chinese medicine is most suitable. For removing the root of illness, transforming the movement of qi, and opening the eight channels, acupuncture and moxibustion are superior.

For calming the liver and regulating qi, clearing the intestines and stomach, quickly bringing about sweating, vomiting, or purging, and treating children who cannot describe their illness or refuse medicine, massage is most convenient. As for shamanic spells, the practitioner must have a settled mind and concentrated spirit, while the recipient must have firm faith and a focused mind. When the two minds unite, they can treat all illnesses, with unfailingly marvelous results. In fact, regardless of whether one uses acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, or other methods, all illnesses can be treated. But because learning is not yet refined and methods are not fully mastered, people become prejudiced and errors arise.

Since Chinese and Western medicine have been practiced side by side, they have regarded one another as fire and ice, each establishing its own camp. Such attachment to the new or the old is by no means a blessing for patients. Yet having no settled view and indiscriminately trying both Chinese and Western treatments is likewise not a blessing for patients. The patient's household must first make a settled decision. If an illness has visible physical form and the patient's primal qi is still sufficient, Western medicine is naturally appropriate.

But if the illness concerns qi transformation, warmth, and dampness, and is without visible form, then preserving primal qi is primary, and Chinese medicine is naturally appropriate. If Chinese and Western medicine cannot manage it, acupuncture and moxibustion are suitable for acute illness, and massage for chronic illness. If acupuncture, moxibustion, and massage cannot manage it, then treat it with shamanic spells. One will surely be able to save the patient in the slightest chance of

survival. If these methods can be used skillfully, one may first use Western medicine and then Chinese medicine, or first acupuncture and moxibustion and then massage. Physicians must break through their habitual tendencies, make compassion their guiding mind, and not cling to their own views. This is a blessing for patients.

In the present environment, how can people avoid illness, and once ill, how can they avoid death? Yet people fear death on the one hand while working all the harder to create illness on the other. More pitiable still, even at death they have never understood why they became ill or what illness caused their death.

Bodily illnesses are of many kinds. First, hereditary illnesses. Second, illnesses already formed: these belong to the stage of fruition and cannot be escaped. Third, future illnesses, which are further divided into: A, contagious illnesses; B, illnesses transformed from illness; and C, newly created illnesses. These belong to the causal stage: they could be avoided, but people refuse to avoid them. These are what the Buddha called illnesses caused by disharmony among the four elements. Fourth, illnesses of karmic retribution from past lives. Fifth, illnesses arising when demons and ghosts seize an opportunity.

These latter two kinds can be removed, but people cling to the view that they are superstition and do not believe in them. Mental illnesses such as anger, anxiety, fear, madness, and suicide are all called illnesses as well. These are most important and can very easily lead to death.

Why do people instead neglect them? Among middle-aged people, whether male or female, of every hundred persons, nearly eighty or ninety have liver or stomach ailments; forty or fifty have heart disease or excessively high blood pressure; and eight or nine have palpitations, madness, or derangement. Among the elderly, more than half of those over fifty suffer from heart disease or hemiplegia.

Among young people, six or seven in every hundred suffer from liver or kidney ailments and weakness. Among small children, seventy or eighty in every hundred suffer from stomach ailments. Even wealthy households find it especially difficult to escape them. People are weak in middle age and grow old before they are old. If one relies solely on physicians or on a single exercise regimen, believing that this can strengthen the body and preserve the race, one’s thinking is surely too simplistic.

Children’s stomach ailments are brought about by parents and nurses who do not understand these matters. Parents go out all day for amusement and take care of nothing. Nurses too have no knowledge and pay no attention at all to hunger and fullness, cold and warmth. In wealthy households, snacks and tidbits, whether hot or cold, raw or cooked, have already harmed children’s spleens. Indulgence of their

willfulness and pampering further harm their livers. Thus there are none who do not suffer from worms and illness, even to the point of death.

Even if they do not die, parasitic and stomach ailments have already taken root, lying latent within. Should they contract such illnesses as scarlet fever or smallpox, their vital energy will surely be too weak to resist. The children of wealthy families are especially at risk. Young people may inherit congenital deficiencies from their parents and already be extremely frail in body. Moreover, their various circumstances are again unfavorable. For instance, inequalities of wealth among classmates may provoke resentment and grievance.

The mutual attraction of young men and women may lead them into confusion. Social ills, national decline, and the people's weakness may provoke indignation and resentment. The enticements and threats of bad companions may lead them to greed and fear. After graduation, having no livelihood to pursue may cause them anxiety. While at school, their studies are burdensome and complicated; their energy already feels inadequate, and their thoughts become confused. Then they are further pressed into athletics and martial pursuits, which leads to consumptive injury. Thus, diligent students readily fall ill. Several young nephews in my family have already died of illness! Ten years ago, I wrote a treatise entitled The Method of Longevity Through One's Own Nature precisely for this reason.

Middle-aged people face difficult lives. Worry injures the spleen, anger injures the liver, depression injures the stomach, fright injures the gallbladder, and exhaustion injures the sinews and kidneys. When all these ailments converge, the heart becomes diseased. The liver belongs to wood; when wood overcomes earth, the stomach is disharmonized and its transformative functions are impaired, so one sleeps uneasily at night. The kidneys belong to water; when water is depleted, fire flares up. The heart belongs to fire; thus the heart becomes excessively debilitated.

All the nutritive essence and fluids of human life ultimately return to the heart, which distributes them to the various parts of the body. If the spleen and stomach are diseased, intake suddenly diminishes. When the heart lacks sufficiency, all parts likewise decline. The more fire flares up, the more blood is consumed. When the heart is weakened to the utmost, there may suddenly be collapse, stroke, or a rush of blood to the brain; all result from weakness of the heart and stagnation of blood and vital energy.

When the situation is like collapsing earth, it cannot be saved. The human body is like a house: repairs can be made only on a clear day; there is no reason to wait until heavy rain has caused leaks before repairing it. Why not set aside a small portion of the toil spent seeking clothing and food, and use it instead to nourish the body and cultivate one's nature, thereby prolonging this one life? Do not say that you now

have good spirits, are young and vigorous, and therefore have nothing to fear. Once great storms and waves arise, it will not suffice.

If human life had a fixed constancy, the date of death could be calculated, and there would be no premature deaths among the young in the world. Moreover, among young people today, nine out of ten are ill; their very foundations are unreliable, which is deeply alarming. There are roughly many causes of illness. They are distinguished below:

1. An unsettled mind and spirit. This is the primary general cause. (It includes such cases as suicide, or sudden collapse and obstruction of vital energy caused by anger.)

2. Irregular daily routine. (This includes racing about and sleeping outdoors.)

3. Immoderate diet. (This also includes opium, white powder, or mistakenly consuming unclean food.)

4. Excessive exertion. (If students masturbate after athletic activity, they will certainly become ill and die. This also includes those exhausted by long-distance rushing about.)

5. Affliction by pathogenic wind.

6. Excessive overcaution. (This includes illnesses caused by habits of luxury and indulgence, and by being unaccustomed to hardship.)

7. Suddenly receiving a fright or shock. (This includes karmic retribution from grievances of former lives.)

8. Ghosts and spirits taking advantage of an opening. (This includes madness and delirium.)

9. Improper regulation in seated meditation. (This also includes Daoist methods of rigidly clinging to bodily apertures, or sitting meditation that insists on never allowing a thought to arise; over time, all may cause illness and madness.)

10. Accidental injuries from vehicles, horses, airplanes, stray bullets, and the like.

There are likewise many causes of death. They are distinguished below:

1. Excessive faith in doctors, leading to mistakes in medical treatment. (This includes those who die from excessive anesthesia.)

2. Improper adjustment after illness, followed by relapse. (There are relapses from food, exertion and vital energy, sexual activity, and pathogenic wind. Those involving

masturbation or sexual relapse will certainly be fatal.)

3. Excessive disease prevention. (This includes those who were originally not ill but undergo preventive surgery or treatment, and die because their weak bodies cannot bear it.)

4. Karmic grievances from former lives. (They cannot be escaped.)

5. Indiscriminate use of medicines. (This results from the errors of having money or being impatient.)

6. Failing to recognize the symptoms, thereby delaying too long and missing the chance for treatment.

7. Lacking the means for treatment, or lacking the required medicine.

8. The patient's willfulness and impatience, and inability to control and endure them.

9. Not understanding methods of self-treatment, and bringing harm upon oneself by not trusting treatments outside conventional medicine.

10. Death due to wrongdoing, suicide, or being killed.

In sum, illness has no inherent reason to cause death. When a minor illness becomes serious, or a serious illness causes death, there are again many causes. They are distinguished below:

1. An unsettled mind and spirit, together with the patient's impatience.

2. Wealthy people indiscriminately using medicines.

3. Relapse through improper adjustment after illness.

4. Medicine proving ineffective, with no knowledge of how to alter the treatment.

5. Lacking the means for treatment, or lacking the required medicine.

6. Having old karmic grievances without knowing how to resolve them.

7. Not understanding treatments outside conventional medicine.

In the present age, wealthy people commonly incur one or two of these conditions; poor people commonly incur four or five; and young people commonly incur items one, three, and six. Having even one of them already leaves little hope of recovery—how much more so when there are many! As for the seventh item, very few know of it; no wonder things are as they are.

An unsettled mind and spirit, and an impatient temperament, are the general causes of illness and death. Therefore, methods for calming the mind are the foremost essentials of health preservation. Modern hygiene in fact only guards the body. It seeks merely adequate clothing, food, and shelter, knowing only bodily comfort and not ease within the mind. “Life” refers to vital life. Authority over life lies in the mind. Human life is the circulation of essence, vital energy, and spirit.

Clothing, food, and shelter merely supplement and protect the physical body; they cannot govern essence, vital energy, and spirit. Only the mind can direct everything. When the mind is settled, vital energy is harmonious; when vital energy is harmonious, the blood flows smoothly; when the blood flows smoothly, essence is abundant and spirit flourishes. When essence is abundant and spirit flourishes, the body's internal resistance is strong, and illness naturally disappears. Recovery of health means returning to the state in which essence is abundant and spirit flourishes.

Medicine can assist the strength of essence, vital energy, and spirit in resisting illness. Yet medicine has harmful side effects: it may be excessive or insufficient, or produce another illness; one cannot be too cautious. Therefore, in treating illness, restraining the mind should be primary. Wind, cold, yin and yang, heat, and dampness can all cause illness. If one's resistance is weak, they can enter through a vulnerable opening. This is why those with weak bodies suffer many illnesses.

Rich people have protective resources, such as clothing, food, and shelter. Poor people have resistance, such as abundant vital energy and flourishing spirit, dense pores, and a body not easily invaded. Rich people often eat rich and sweet foods, injuring the stomach and teeth. Poor people often go hungry, and what they eat is not mixed and varied; therefore, they do not suffer intestinal diseases. Rich people often live in ease and therefore are often vexed and angered. Poor people often labor and therefore have fewer illnesses.

When rich people do not create blessings but merely enjoy blessings, they only consume their blessings; once these are exhausted, they become poor. If poor people can be diligent and frugal, this is creating blessings; when the fruition ripens, they become rich. Whenever the protective resources of clothing, food, and shelter are abundant, resistance in essence, vital energy, and spirit is weak. When protective resources are weak, resistance is strong. Protective resources cannot be carried about freely and are often forcibly taken away. Resistance, however, can be applied conveniently and freely everywhere.

Protective resources provide only comfort, sufficient to sap one's resolve, ruin one's household, destroy a nation, and extinguish a people. Resistance enables one to endure labor and suffering and shoulder great responsibilities. Gain and loss cannot

be calculated by ordinary reasoning. Ease and indulgence can destroy the body. May wealthy families take care not to poison their children.

Vajra Longevity is what everyone desires. Yet everywhere people strive to make life difficult for themselves—why is this so? I now impart the Method of Vajra Longevity to my fellow practitioners. It has three essentials and two keys. What are the three essentials? First, diligently prevent illness before it arises, so that it does not arise. Second, after illness has arisen, keep mastery in the mind and do not use medicines indiscriminately. Third, after recovery, patiently regulate and nourish oneself, so that illness does not recur. What are the two keys? First, attend to the illness within illness. Second, pay heed to the physician outside medicine.

Preventive protection before illness arises is treatment at the causal stage and is the most important:

1. First, do not stir up liver depression and anxious thought. Second, do not indulge craving and desire. Third, do not be overly suspicious. Fourth, do not keep irregular hours, eat without moderation, or eat things out of season. Fifth, be broad-minded and practice generosity often; this can create future blessings and longevity.

2. Be careful about cold and warmth, change clothing diligently, and do not rely on your physical strength and neglect self-regulation.

3. Every day, settle the mind for at least twenty minutes. With a single mind unstained, sit quietly and contemplate emptiness, or nurture vital energy through esoteric mantras; this will surely prolong life.

4. Practice the method of circulating energy with the hands, and massage yourself. (This method must be transmitted orally and personally.)

5. Do not sleep immediately after becoming overly full. Before sleep, do not eat fruit or rich, heavy foods.

6. Do not become resentful, anxious, or worried; when sleeping, do not engage in thought and calculation, and so forth.

7. Do not kill living beings, thereby avoiding the planting of evil causes; this can also eliminate debts arising from karmic grievances and harm from former lives.

8. Do not be lazy, but also do not overexert yourself in exercise.

Maintaining mastery once illness has arisen: this is treatment at the stage of fruition.

1. Do not permit yourself to think of yourself as an invalid. Do not fear death. Forget the illness and behave as though you were someone with nothing wrong. Settle the

mind and do not be afraid; then harmful influences will not enter the organs. Put aside all affairs.

2. Above all, avoid impatience and do not use medicines indiscriminately. Never summon two or three doctors in one day or indiscriminately combine Chinese and Western medicines; this is the path to certain death.

3. Recognize the situation and act swiftly. If, after three doses of medicine, the illness has not diminished, the treatment approach should be changed.

4. Eat little, and especially avoid meat and fish. If one can go hungry, so much the better.

5. Do not rely entirely on doctors. Use the method of circulating energy with the hands and self-massage; it will surely lessen the illness and hasten recovery.

6. Reciting mantras, nurturing the mind, and refraining from killing can prolong life.

Regulation and nourishment after recovery give equal weight to cause and fruition simultaneously.

1. Refrain from exertion, especially sexual exertion; also refrain from overeating and from anger and vexation.

2. Eat lightly, taking small meals more often. Refrain from killing; best of all is to avoid substantial meat dishes.

3. Listen to music for ten minutes every morning.

4. Put aside all miscellaneous involvements, and concentrate on reciting mantras and nurturing the mind.

5. When recovering from a serious illness, strictly avoid such things as cutting the hair, washing the feet, and bathing.

6. Do not take medicine continuously. If taking a long-term prescription, one may stop for a day or two in between, to prevent harm to the stomach and other ailments.

7. Above all, avoid impatience. If, after an illness, one should rest and recuperate for ten days, one should plan for twenty days; then one will recover before ten days have passed, because the mind is settled. Otherwise, one will certainly not recover in ten days, because the mind is unsettled. Such is the importance of this matter.

8. One must not be careless, yet one must not be excessively cautious; it is within one’s own control.

What is meant by attending to the illness within an illness?

Any illness that manifests outwardly is a resultant illness; its root is not there. For example, a headache may have its root in the liver; the liver disorder may in turn arise from anger and vexation, which are themselves illnesses. The root of anger and vexation lies further in the mind's narrow and obstinate attachments—in being unable to let go, broaden one's perspective, and contemplate emptiness. To seek out the cause and treat it is what is called treating the illness within the illness.

What is meant by attending to healing beyond medicine?

All sick people seek medical treatment. Those who are unconscious and unaware of their surroundings can rely only on physicians. But those who retain mastery of themselves can also heal themselves beyond medical treatment. Methods such as moving one's hands to massage oneself, as well as mantra recitation and quiet sitting, are healing beyond medicine. With these two essential methods, one will surely eliminate illness and attain longevity. Moreover, strange illnesses must have causes such as karmic debts and enmities from past lives; these should be resolved separately, and this too is a means of treating illness. As for talismans and registers, one must certainly not dismiss them as superstition, for they can indeed cure illness. I myself have cured many people. What can be done if people do not believe it?

In sum, bodily illness generally arises when pathogenic winds invade, or from inner injury caused by emotional desire; such causes account for seventy or eighty percent of cases. Illness arising from past-life enmities is in fact rare, accounting for only ten or twenty percent. The body of flesh and blood is born from causes created in past lives, stained by emotional attachment, and brought forth through one's parents as conditions, sharing their vital essence, energy, and spirit. This is the karmically requiting body, also called the physical body. In the end, it is subject to decay and destruction.

The various methods of protection mentioned earlier can only maintain the present condition of this physical body, enabling it to remain in the world somewhat longer; this is what is called longevity. But a person's spiritual nature, consciousness, and mind are called the dharmakāya, from which all dharmas arise. This numinous and empty essence cannot be seen, yet it is not nonexistent; therefore it is called true emptiness. Though empty, it possesses wondrous functions as countless as the sands of the Ganges; therefore it is called wondrous presence.

This is the master of essence, energy, and spirit, and the instrument through which thoughts arise when the six sense faculties come into contact with the six sense objects; therefore it is called the mind king. All illnesses of emotional desire also arise from it. For example, anger and vexation cannot arise out of nothing: first, the

faculties and objects confront one another, and one discriminates between right and wrong; this is then called mind.

From judgments of right and wrong arise all kinds of comparison and discrimination. One determines what is favorable and adverse, and accordingly joy and anger are established. The agitation of joy and anger then affects the internal organs. When one cannot withstand such vexation and turmoil, qi is injured, blood is depleted, and both sleep and appetite diminish. The mind becomes still more fearful, vexed, and resentful; the body becomes even weaker and more depleted. External pathogens then take advantage and invade, and one is increasingly unable to endure. This is how illness and death arise—what is called death from illness of the mind. Therefore, if one seeks longevity and freedom from illness, one must continually strengthen the physical body.

To strengthen the physical body, one must regulate essence, energy, and spirit. To regulate essence, energy, and spirit, one must reject the thieves that cause disturbance. To keep out these thieves, one must first gather in the mind. To gather in the mind, one must transform greed, anger, and ignorance, the three poisons. To eliminate these three poisons, one must learn the precepts of the mind. But merely speaking of precepts is of no benefit; one must seek to open wisdom, so as not to be deluded by them. To open wisdom, one must first seek samādhi.

To attain samādhi, one must learn quiet sitting. Yet one cannot attain the ultimate merely by sitting dully and rigidly guarding oneself. Therefore, one must rely upon a teacher and seek transmission of Esoteric Buddhism. The wondrous functions of Esoteric Buddhism are vast: at the highest level, it can enable one to realize the mind and see one’s true nature, open great wisdom, and attain Buddhahood; at a lesser level, it can enable one to attain samādhi, strengthen the body, and reduce afflictions and past karma. This is the root of roots of Vajra Longevity, and also the preliminary expedient of this association before it saves the world through transmitting the Dharma.

Therefore, when this association guides beginners and transmits its various teachings, it does not follow any fixed method. First, it examines their physical condition and removes their suffering from illness. Second, it examines their capacities and then imparts a teaching—Esoteric Buddhism, Chan, or Pure Land—according to the individual. Third, it regularly questions them about the states and experiences of their practice, so that they may avoid entering mistaken paths. The benefits gained in body and mind are beyond enumeration.

If one can practice honestly and sincerely, without clinging to views of self, one will surely obtain various confirmations and experience all kinds of benefits, too numerous to describe. Those who do not understand this may give rise to doubt

and fear, criticizing it as wild extravagance. Yet those who do not practice personally cannot know. This is a method for extending both bodily and mental life. Ask yourselves whether it can enable one to remain in the world without error. If my words are false, may I enter Avīci hell.

What has been said is only too brief and does not convey even one ten-thousandth of the matter; each person must realize it for themselves, but the Dharma must be transmitted. In sum, one who can be still is benevolent; one who has benevolence has longevity; and longevity is true happiness. When this is further joined by clothing, food, and shelter, one's blessings are immeasurable. I respectfully wish that all in the world who seek progress may realize Vajra Longevity, the safeguard of all things. May I have longevity, may others have longevity, and may all sentient beings have longevity.

If one instead seeks non-longevity, then there is killing by oneself and killing by others, and all sentient beings kill one another. The cause of killing lies in greed, anger, and ignorance. This is true of an individual, of society, and of international affairs. Thus the world becomes terrifying. Misfortune and blessing have no gate; people alone create them. If you do not believe my words, then you may simply allow yourself to be swept along in inverted confusion, waiting until all kinds of terrors arrive.

All methods of cultivating the body and mind have only one two-character formula: turn back. As soon as one turns back, the sick are immediately healed and the deluded immediately awaken. This is true immeasurable longevity. Here ends the discussion of Vajra Longevity.

Father's Day

It is astonishing that fathers, too, now have a festival. Perhaps it is the influence of the atomic bomb; otherwise, no one would have paid any attention to these two characters long ago. Who would have thought that they would make it into the newspapers, and that every August 8 would be commemorated as Father's Day? What do the many fathers of the world think of this? Is this day merely one on which fathers receive filial support from their children? Is it the day when fathers, treated like oxen and horses, are set free? Or is it simply an empty slogan?

I do not know what a jie [festival or joint] really is. Yet bamboo has joints, wood has knots, and the body has boils as well. Without joints, bamboo and wood have no strength; without divisions, human affairs have no stages; without seasons, the climate has no changes. From this, it would seem that jie is a good thing.

But when the joints of the body cease to function properly, or when blocked blood and vital energy produce boils; when one loses propriety; or when debts from the year's three festivals press upon one and the customary gifts required for each festival cannot be omitted—then hardships pile upon hardships. In such cases, jie is bad. Yet for fathers, every day is a jie and every moment is a jie; there is not an instant that is not a barrier of jie. Whether good or bad, they must pass through it until death brings release.

Moreover, even fathers who carefully try to be filial sons fear that their own children may dislike them, saying that the old man is always creating complications and depriving them of all freedom. Is that not pitiable? If, among the 360 days of the year, he receives this little empty consolation only on August 8, and if the mother, unwilling to suffer jealous resentment, does not even allow him that much, is it not both laughable and lamentable? Thus fathers truly are the world's number-one great wronged fools, and this festival of wronged fools is a life sentence without term.

This jie is contagious. Once people reach the age of thirty, eight or nine out of ten are infected by it, and each generation suffers more severely than the last. When they first become fathers, they are so delighted that they welcome the flavor of life as oxen and horses. From then on, the ox or horse is harnessed to the cart; if he walks a little too slowly, the mother helps to whip him on. With one careless step, he may take the road of corruption, wrongdoing, or collaboration with the enemy. Yet this is not the father's original wish; it is the father's misfortune.

I became a father; my son has also become a father; and my grandson will soon become one. Yet before I was twenty, I truly did not know what filial piety was.

Look at the character xiao, "filial piety": its upper half is half of the character lao, "old," and below it is the character zi, "child." It turns out that when one reaches middle age and has children, and has tasted the hardships brought by one's own children, one then thinks of the hardships one's father once endured. Only then does the meaning of filial piety arise, and only then does one realize that father and son cannot be separated. The old depend upon their children, while the children must first bear the old upon their heads. A father's kindness and a child's filial piety are both enacted within this single character xiao; separate its parts, and it is no longer the character for filial piety.

Today is Father's Day. I am thinking of a method of restraint, to urge the people of the world that even in serving as oxen and horses, they must exercise restraint and need not go to excess. Fathers, too, must look upward at their own fathers and, looking downward, exercise restraint toward their sons. They must not indulge their children too greatly, thereby harming them for life and fostering their lack of filial

piety. If a son could set aside even one percent or one tenth of what is his for his parents, he would already be the world's foremost filial son.

No one is more foolishly attached than parents. What worries them most is their children, especially after they themselves have died. Thus they exhaust every possible means to prevent their children from suffering, leaving them not only an education but also much money and property. Still they are not at ease, and want to entrust someone with caring for them after their death. But there is no one to whom they can entrust them; no one is suitable.

Only their own grandchildren are closest in relationship and can be entrusted with this task. So they discuss with their sons how to teach the grandchildren to be filial. But you, as a father, must first set them an example. Though you know it is artificial, you must first make a show of filial piety. You will not lose by being filial to me; in the future, your grandson will follow your example and be filial to you. Then, when I die, I may close my eyes in peace. This is the most painful, foolish devotion of a father.

In this age of material civilization, human feelings have become crude and uncultivated, and ethics are swiftly perishing. People can safeguard one another only through the two Chinese characters (ren'ai, "humaneness and love"). In associating with good people, one feels at ease and comforted everywhere; in dealing with bad people, one is constantly suspicious and afraid. All human affairs rest upon human morality.

If a person has no feeling or affection even for parents and siblings, one can readily imagine how cold that person's nature will be toward others. Once a person has no regard for others and knows only the self, greed naturally blazes forth. The greedy must contend; those who contend must become cruel; cruelty injures both sides and ultimately harms oneself. Filial piety and fraternal respect within the home are the first training in generosity of heart.

Filial support during life, attendance during illness, funeral rites at death, and regular ancestral sacrifices: in all these matters, one sets an example for later generations to see. The government must first promote them, and the people's morality will naturally become more generous. This is precisely the foundation for cultivating talent. A nation depends entirely on the spirit of its people, and that spirit depends upon their morality. This is a natural civic right. Once the people's morality is generous, their livelihood will naturally prosper and the nation will naturally stand firm.

To overthrow filial piety is to hope that everyone will be disloyal and that no one will be trustworthy; how is this different from advocating licentiousness and violation? The abundance of collaborators with the enemy is the consequence of overthrowing

the ethical teachings. Everyone pursues profit and advantage, without knowing what propriety, righteousness, integrity, and shame are.

Political and governmental circles feel that no one can be employed; society feels that no one can be entrusted with anything. Even husbands and wives, sons and brothers dare not trust one another; they deceive and scheme against each other. Can this still be a human world? Since it is no longer a human world, it must naturally be washed in blood and swept clean by fire. Yet not everyone is a beast, and so there remains a distinction between jade and stone.

When famine and pestilence come, some are destroyed and some are not; some perish sooner and some later, some more severely and some less. The atomic bomb arose because the atoms within human beings have already decayed. The atoms within human beings are moral principle and righteousness. The power of moral principle and righteousness can destroy the atomic bomb, preventing it from being unleashed.

That is why they dare not test it over cities: cities are full of fathers and children, and even in dealing with enemies there are many scruples. Those who kill will themselves inevitably be killed. One may have one's satisfaction for a moment, but thereafter one lives every instant amid suspicion and terror. This is the victory of moral principle and righteousness. Moreover, wherever there is benefit, there is harm; the greater the benefit, the greater the harm.

One should regret having brought this thing into existence! It has made many enemies and left the spirit unsettled. Even drinking cocktails every day cannot counter this anguish. Why suffer so? Why suffer so? The Buddha said that before disorder comes upon the world, the people cease to uphold moral principle and righteousness, fail to be filial to their parents, the six kinds of kin fall into discord, and rulers and ministers become mutually suspicious; then natural disasters and human calamities arrive.

The Rites of Marriage

A classic says: "When the rites of marriage are neglected, the way between husband and wife becomes fraught with hardship." From the beginning of a marriage proposal and the exchange of written agreements, through the completion of the great wedding ceremony, until the couple grows old together with white hair, the rites must never be neglected. Such solemnity is required because husband and wife are the beginning of human relationships. From husband and wife comes the family; from the family come society and the state. Above, they continue the lineage and honor their ancestors; below, they nurture and guide later generations. This is

service to society and fulfillment of one's duty to the country. It is not by abandoning one's family and going out to work that one serves society.

The union of husband and wife rests first on affinity. How is it that people are born at the same time and yet meet in another place? Without affinities from former lives, they would certainly not meet. Second is appearance. Those who have affinity need not depend on appearance in order to get along well. Third is love. Love may be lesser or greater. Lesser love is based on temporary form and appearance; it may fade with time and cannot be relied upon.

Greater love is spiritual: it is formed through mutual feeling and understanding, with consideration and tenderness in every circumstance. Even where there are disagreements, both can generally forgive and yield to one another; this is lifelong happiness. Thus, fourth is affection. Yet husband and wife are also friends. After living together for a long time, misunderstandings are unavoidable. Friends may cease associating and sever their relationship, but husband and wife cannot do so. Their bond is one of righteousness, and the law, too, does not readily permit its dissolution.

Because of this bond of righteousness, love and affection can endure all the longer. Thus affection is rooted in righteousness. Therefore, fifth is righteousness. Without righteousness, people are no different from beasts. Sixth is respect. Respect means mutual respect, with each fulfilling the proper rites. Therefore, seventh is ritual propriety. From the completion of today's great ceremony until you grow old together with white hair, all depends on your wholehearted cooperation: outwardly, you are joined through propriety and respect; inwardly, you are moved by affection and love.

A lifetime of happiness depends entirely on how each of you conducts yourselves. That is why being a true person is not simple. When something joyful happens, do not become overly delighted. When mistakes occur, do not blame one another. When something arouses anger, both of you should first be patient for a moment; after a minute has passed, you will forget it. This very practice of non-abiding is the capital for becoming a Buddha.

As the saying goes, "Do not dwell on old wrongs, and resentments will thereby become rare." Never contend out of wounded pride or empty concern for appearances. Each person should make their temperament known in advance. Never, because of love, demand that the other be exactly like oneself, thereby turning affection into estrangement. All misunderstandings are reactions arising from excessive attachment. Therefore, a husband should not cause his wife to harbor resentment. A wife should endeavor to give her husband comfort; in food, daily living, and the orderly care of the home, let everything be well arranged. Then

the husband will naturally turn inward rather than outward; their affection will naturally grow better day by day; and improper outside entanglements will naturally cease.

A family is meant to endure. Frugality and simplicity are necessary for lasting prosperity, yet one must not be petty. A narrow-minded person is surely one of scant blessings. One may be frugal in caring for oneself, but one must not treat others harshly; neither, however, should one be indiscriminately lavish. Only then can happiness endure. And when you attain wealth or success, never become arrogant or disdainful toward others, for such things are but blossoms that appear briefly and vanish.

For example, a new garment remains fresh for only three days; in the blink of an eye, it becomes old. Yet an old garment may be worn for ten or eight years. In short, both parties must be lively, well presented, kindhearted, and cooperative; only then will their happiness be lasting and complete. If you act in this way, your mutual affection will surely be good, your family's livelihood will surely prosper, and you will have spirit in all that you do. Even if you undergo some hardship, you will have no resentment.

Illness and pain will also be fewer, and the children you bear will be strong and healthy. Would this not be perfect? These principles are not addressed to the two of you alone. You should make a great vow: may all married couples under heaven attain harmony and fulfillment; may those whose marriages are not fulfilled change their ways and share in this happiness. You must first set an example. When your children and grandchildren marry, repeat these same words to them. That will be true happiness. I wish you lasting harmony, with husband and wife supporting one another, that you may grow old together through a hundred years, and enjoy boundless happiness through generation after generation.

Chart of Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Returning to One's Nature

Emptiness samādhi wisdom wondrous contemplation knowing

Ultimately unreal—know illusion—do not crave

Cessation of verbal karma; the ending of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct—cessation of thoughts

Great compassion of shared identity—equanimity—no anger

Clear insight into cause and effect—right seeing—no ignorance

(Proceeding in this sequence is called the gradual method—the cultivation that involves cultivation.)

Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct

Verbal karma

Greed, anger, and ignorance

}

The ten evil acts in an instant return to emptiness (samādhi and wisdom complete)
—cessation of thoughts

(Instantly returning to the true is called sudden awakening—the cultivation that involves no cultivation.)

(Sudden)

There is no other wondrous secret to becoming a Buddha: let the true mind constantly appear.

What is the appearance of true nature? It is originally perfect, luminous, and profoundly still.

(Gradual)

Return the mind to empty quiescence; there is only the single method of stopping thoughts.

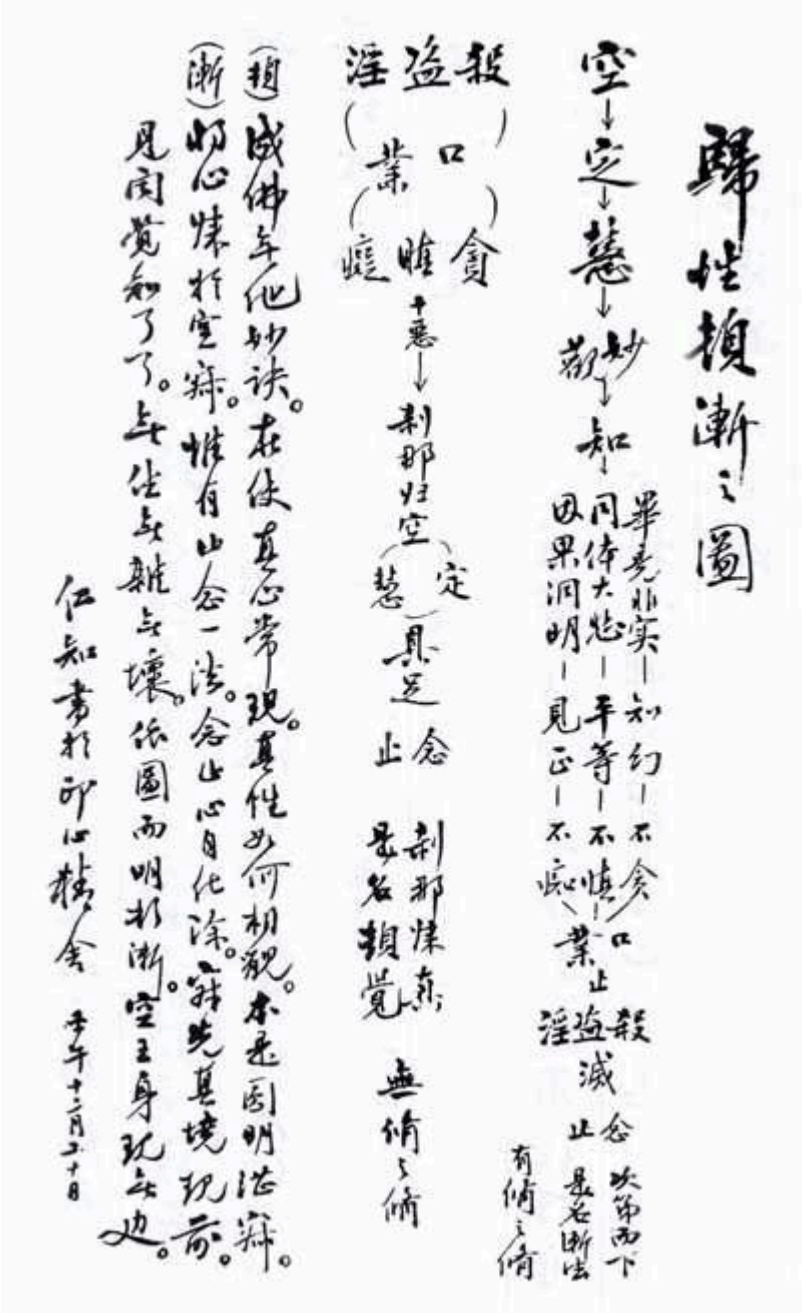
When thoughts cease, the mind naturally dissolves; the true realm of quiescent light appears before one.

Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are utterly clear: without abiding, without admixture, without decay.

Understand sudden and gradual through this chart; the body of the Empty King manifests without bound.

Written by Renzhi at Mind-Seal Vihara

Twentieth day of the twelfth month, renwu year



A Brief Discussion of the States of Mind Before and After Awakening

The intrinsic essence of sentient beings' Buddha-nature is nondual with the Buddha. It is only because they lack the power of wisdom's illumination that they follow the flow of karma and transmigrate; this is called delusion. Delusion and awakening [illegible] are like the three lower realms, yet in nature and appearance they are nondual. Thus, delusion is in the mind, and awakening is also in the mind. Yet mind cannot be obtained; delusion and awakening alike become illusions. As for [illegible]

states, one also relies on illusion to leave illusion, hoping only to rely on illusion to extinguish illusion.

Mind and circumstances are not two things. What is called extinction is still an image illusorily arising within the mind. This [illegible], when in delusion, is called consciousness; when awakened, it is called wisdom. [Illegible] original awakening is called realization; realizing [illegible] is called the mind [illegible]. When one realizes one's own mind and encounters external circumstances, what is the situation? Does one follow the waves and drift with the current, or is there something [illegible]? Compared with the past, how strong is one's power now? Can one remain unmoved by the eight worldly winds?

A practitioner's self-awareness is like looking down from a height: one can know only what lies below oneself; what is slightly higher cannot be reached. Realizing one's own mind is the same: one knows one's own cold and warmth, but cannot know what is slightly higher than oneself. Therefore, the first bhūmi does not know the second bhūmi. Now let us roughly distinguish four periods: before awakening, at the time of awakening, after awakening, and beyond awakening. Practitioners may use these for [illegible] awareness and [illegible] reflection [illegible].

I. Before Awakening

It is like a person carrying [illegible] things somewhere [illegible]. The mind is occupied only with the things, racing outward and grasping everywhere at objects. Losing them brings sorrow; obtaining them brings joy. Joy and sorrow follow things, and one has no mastery of oneself. One does not know what the mind [illegible] is, what dharmas [illegible] are, and clings [illegible] to existence. On seeing objects, one takes there to be objects; on speaking of mind, one takes there to be a self. One is wholly passive.

Even if [illegible] the mind [illegible] arises and establishes one's own views, it is still born in dependence on circumstances and remains passive. Thus, one cannot transform circumstances but follows them; over a long time, this turns into inner habits.

There are also those who turn according to their habits, [illegible] following external circumstances and then following inner habits. They are passive without being aware of it. This is called karmic ability, and is also called [illegible] waves [illegible] currents. Life after life, they do not depart from the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance. Instead, they regard original awakening as something strange. When [illegible] awareness arises, they again fear difficulty because of habitual tendencies. As they revolve through the heavenly paths, when [illegible] themselves, they then draw near to spiritual friends and somewhat fulfill the human way. Yet they know only the two paths of evil and good, and still rely on inferential comparison. They

take the heavens of defiled [illegible] as the ultimate standard; as for the gate of cultivating the mind, they remain very far from it.

II. At the Time of Awakening

This means beginning to awaken to the Buddha-light and first knowing that one's intrinsic dharmakāya is nondual with the Buddha. One knows that without removing ignorance, one cannot attain awakening; one also knows that learning the Buddha's teaching necessarily requires seeking the mind. Becoming a Buddha is nothing other than opening wisdom. Wisdom arises from samādhi, and samādhi is attained through the precepts. Yet those who all day recite sūtras, bow to the Buddha, recite the Buddha's name, and seek the Buddha, but do not seek inwardly to realize the mind or painfully reform their habitual tendencies, are not among those who awaken.

At this time, one's inner state is half believing and half doubting, now clear and now obscure. One understands at the level of principle but has not yet reached the level of phenomena. Speaking of extinction, one inclines toward phenomena; speaking of samādhi, one clings to dead samādhi; speaking of esoteric practice, one acquires the verbal habits of the Chan gate. When habitual tendencies arise, one still truly and concretely strives to contend with them. It is like climbing a mountain: one has already seen the summit, yet remains at the foot of the mountain, able to see it but unable to reach it. One simply no longer retreats.

III. After Awakening

This means abiding after clear awakening and recognizing the state of one's original nature.

(1) One knows that external circumstances originally have no distinctions of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, or favorable and adverse conditions. They are originally empty and quiescent. Because one's own mind discriminates, various illusory images arise and are provisionally established as dharmas. Yet my mind is still not shaken or confused.

(2) One knows that this discrimination is the illusory mind arising through my dependent origination, [illegible] becoming illusory dharmas. Through the power of wisdom's illumination, I empty these illusory dharmas. The clear mind itself cannot be obtained; in its very substance, the three wheels are all empty. The three wheels are: first, the illusory mind that can arise; second, the illusory circumstances that are apprehended; third, the illusory dharmas in between [illegible]. Those who have not realized the mind cannot be like this.

(3) One realizes that although the three wheels are empty, the inherent capacity of my awareness is not annihilated; it still flows forth from the treasury-nature that neither arises nor ceases. This nature is originally limpid and quiescent, eternally unchanging. Therefore, it is the nature of suchness. Its wondrous functioning is as countless as the sands of the Ganges; emptiness and existence equally support it. Thus it is called suchness. The practitioner clearly realizes the unborn, does not fall into mere emptiness, deeply possesses wondrous functioning, and does not cling to existence. This is called seeing one's true nature and becoming a Buddha.

(4) Regarding one's own habitual tendencies, [illegible]: first, they turn from heavy to light; second, from long-lasting to brief; third, from major matters to minor matters; fourth, from later awareness to earlier awareness; fifth, from powerlessness to power; sixth, from effortful to natural; seventh, from deliberate attention to unawareness; eighth, from intense to mild; ninth, from narrow and small to broad and great. In sum, what was once firmly maintained has its roots [illegible].

(5) With regard to all dharmas, one is neither startled, frightened, nor afraid. When circumstances are broken through, the mind is empty; when the mind is empty, dharmas disappear. One views everything equally, naturally without inferential discriminations and various views, standing firm, unmoving and unshaken.

(6) One's understanding can advance still further. Having passed through a barrier, one does not oneself realize why this is so.

(7) Each day brings tranquility and joy, because entanglements grow fewer each day.

(8) One sees only progress and not regression, with a surging force that nothing can restrain. This, too, is truly something one knows for oneself.

(9) The powers of samādhi and wisdom grow stronger by the day. [Illegible] the mark of self, one naturally [illegible] harmonizes, does not grasp at marks, does not [illegible] evil, and does not long for good.

(10) [Illegible] thinks of diligent effort, practices the highest vehicle, and anxiously fears only that one may not reach it in time.

IV. Beyond Awakening

This means that after thorough awakening, one turns [illegible] the affairs of the time before awakening. The inner state is wholly beyond human measure. Those who do not understand are startled and take it for regression, or call it [illegible], not knowing that its [illegible] movement transcends [illegible]: there is neither regression nor progress. This is called beyond awakening—not [illegible] what is realized. At the time of awakening, one realizes that awakening too is illusory and

awareness too is not real. Its [illegible], true [illegible] is also complete; this is truly the original [illegible].

First, [illegible] and all have mind; since mind is empty [illegible], then discrimination [illegible] again [illegible].

Second, one knows that the three wheels are all empty, yet [illegible] is not empty. There is no harm in provisionally establishing these illusory dharmas in response to the ordinary [illegible] thoughts.

Third, one knows that realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature are natural and ordinary matters, with nothing at all extraordinary about them.

Fourth, regarding one's own habitual tendencies, [one is] completely illuminated everywhere and awakened at every moment. One's power surpasses habitual tendencies; [illegible] surpasses circumstances. [Illegible] belongs to the mind, yet the mind is wholly like wood or stone. Though like wood or stone, it has clear, ever-present knowing and is unlike an inanimate thing—lively and vivid, beyond description. When habitual tendencies arise, with one turn they become unobtainable; there is nothing to grasp. Ordinary beings cannot grasp it, and sages cannot touch it; it is simply so. When it is precisely thus, that state of thusness also cannot be obtained. One suddenly transcends thought and deliberation; this is called [illegible] awakening.

Fifth, one can view everything equally, and yet still makes inferential discriminations. With [illegible] unequal [illegible] affairs, one can wholly accord with [illegible] completeness.

Sixth, the six sense faculties arise interchangeably, while [illegible] the mind itself remains limpid and quiescent, as though present and as though absent. When present, it pervades [illegible] everywhere; when absent, [illegible] defilement. It is form and also emptiness, utterly without hindrance.

Seventh, the mind does not hate evil, nor does it long for good.

Eighth, whereas before one anxiously feared not reaching it in time, now this is no longer so. Like water flowing eastward, one simply lets it roll on.

Without personally passing through these four kinds of states, one can never directly realize the marks of awakening. Therefore, practitioners need only ask themselves and must not doubt others. What is called breaking through ignorance and realizing the true mark is entirely [illegible] one's own affair; what does it have to do with others? A teacher is merely one who uses his own experience to verify another. When one is able to awaken for oneself, one enters ever more deeply; this lies in one's own urgent and painful firsthand [illegible].

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Dharmakāya Speech and Sambhogakāya Writings

In the autumn of the Gengchen year of the Republic, Mr. Xiong took this photograph. As a playful exercise, I composed “Dharmakāya Speech and Sambhogakāya Prose” and inscribed it after the photograph, to admonish myself and to urge those in the world who take this illusory body too seriously and vainly weary themselves in worldly toil.

You and I were born together fifty-five years ago. Form and shadow, inseparable—yet we have never met.

Now, suddenly turning back, I have at last recognized your face. I can see you, but you cannot see me.

You and I are neither one nor two. Only by seeing you do people know that I exist.

I am hidden in the subtle; you appear before me. Relying on your body, I have something on which to depend.

Without your tongue, I would have no way to speak. Borrowing your eyes, I distinguish forms and colors.

Borrowing your ears, I am able to hear the Buddha. All these skillful means—whose power makes them possible?

I bow in gratitude for your beneficence; it is indeed supreme. When I reflect on your virtue, how are you different from close kin?

Yet in our original nature, I am truly not you. You and I are joined, yet though constant, we are not intimate.

You do not know me; how could you be called a true confidant? I have afflictions, but you cannot resolve them for me.

When I think of doing evil, you assist me in wrongdoing. Your clothing and food all depend upon my efforts.

When things do not go as you wish, your face reddens and your ears burn. Over the smallest matter, anger often shows upon your face.

To make you hold your head high, I run myself ragged. To let you vent your breath, I exhaust my mind and strength.

After a lifetime of hardship, for whom have I been so busy? What causes and conditions are these? I can only ask Heaven.

I wish to sever myself from you, yet you will not abandon me. Like a festering sore attached to the bone, you cease only at death.

My wish to sever myself from you is so deep; yet my wife and children love you.

They take you for me and regard you as their closest kin. They grieve at your aging and fear your illness.

When they hear that your life may be short, they are alarmed at heart. Others laugh at their folly, but I understand their feelings.

Alas, a true confidant is hard to speak of. Since you have never known me, how could I blame them?

I should turn back upon myself and pity myself once more. Between you and me, there is neither self nor other.

We are both resentful and paired, neither false nor true. Your coming here was in truth invited by me.

I seek fame and profit, and you too must toil. Thoughts of greed and anger arise from me.

If I still my mind, you too rest in peace. If I become a Buddha, you bear that name.

If I become a thief, the consequences bind your body. The power lies with me; you simply carry it out.

Who is slave, and who is master? You do not betray me; it is I who betray you.

Today I make an agreement with you: let each of us be at peace. You will not press me, and I will not torment you.

Let suffering and happiness follow conditions; let us proceed according to the natural course. I am originally free and seek nothing from others.

Solitude is my nature; transcendent and apart from the crowd, I sit alone as the honored one upon the peak of the Great Hero.

You are my companion, and I welcome you. If you should depart again, do not linger in attachment.

Now I borrow your body to extinguish past karma. Those who support and care for you, I treat as honored guests.

When each knows the other, we may be called true confidants. Having come together into this world, it is but a single game.

You are impermanent, while I do not die. When shall we part, you going east and I west?

Those who read this piece may laugh or weep. They are just like me—such is all.

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A Dialogue Between Clouds and Moon

On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, the bright moon ever hangs in empty space.

The moon said: “For countless eons, I have circled the world once each day. With eyes wide open, I look straight ahead and glance to either side, now in the light, now in the dark. As I behold the vast universe, past and present, all the innumerable people, affairs, and things do nothing but give rein to greed and anger, pursuing fame and profit, good and evil, high and low, success and failure, gain and loss. How many are willing to turn back and let go? From the womb onward, they are born and die, arising and vanishing like illusions. None are other than flowers in a mirror and the moon reflected in water; each and every one lies within my sight.”

“If I continue looking on for countless further eons, there will still be neither past nor present. They will remain just as confused and inverted. Those able to leap out of the pit of fire are truly as rare as phoenix feathers and unicorn horns. The long night stretches on, with no end in sight. Yet they do not know that everyone can originally be as free as I am, transcending worldly things. Why toil and suffer in vain? How laughable indeed!”

At that moment, a cloud suddenly appeared and said to the moon: “Brother Moon! You truly understand the affairs of the world and lament both past and present. But whenever you encounter me, you too have moments of confusion. Moreover, Brother Moon, you have never seen your own appearance. In this respect, you are no different from worldly people who do not see themselves. Are you not afraid that they will laugh at you?”

The moon laughed heartily and said: “Brother Cloud, what you say is quite true. Yet however much you obscure me, my light does not diminish; I continue to shine as

before. Though others may see me as confused, I shall never lose my way. When living in this world, one should not merely withdraw into passive self-concern. Otherwise, I, the moon, would not circle unceasingly throughout the year, striving tirelessly."

"It is precisely because worldly people do not exert themselves in the fundamental task, but vainly delight in fame and stir up trouble, coveting empty glory, that they bustle through an entire lifetime, laboring to no purpose. Look at how many heroes and great figures, having aroused the resolve to save the country, have ever saved a single person? A hundred million people have died for nothing; in the end, all perish together and return together to empty illusion."

"If they truly understood, it would already be too late for repentance and too late for tears of grief. Would they still have time to laugh at me? As for seeing one's own true face, that is this younger brother's own vital concern. Whether one sees it or not, only one knows for oneself. As the saying goes, 'One knows for oneself whether water is cold or warm; even a thousand sages cannot know it.' Nor can it be told to others; indeed, there is no need to speak of it, for that would only confuse people's minds. If I were to claim that I can know and see myself, would I not again be obscured by Brother Cloud? Better to leave it at that."

On hearing this, the cloud suddenly vanished. The moon continued to illuminate the great thousandfold world, while the clear sky extended for ten thousand li. Worthy ones, tell me: what is this? Do you understand?

(On an autumn night in the Yiyou year, a visitor came to talk and asked about the meaning of [Bodhidharma's] coming from the West. I answered with this playful piece, to assist his Chan inquiry. Moreover, worldly people know existence but do not know emptiness, while practitioners know emptiness but do not know existence; it is merely fifty steps laughing at a hundred steps. This great matter depends entirely on oneself—what use is there in seeking the Buddha? Therefore, seek without attachment to the Buddha and without attachment to the Dharma; one should seek in this way. Lay Practitioner Renzhi)

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Verse on Contemplating the Mind

All things are empty through conditions; why take them as real?

Let go of everything; only contemplate the mind.

Mind is originally nonexistent; how can afflictions arise?

This single turning is the wondrous key.

Seek the Buddha and gain one; seek yourself and gain seven.

Though this is a worldly principle, it is precisely the Buddhadharma.

When afflictions cease, one immediately attains cool clarity.

Those who awaken themselves possess unsurpassed majesty and radiance.

Verses on Cutting Off Afflictions

All things are empty through conditions—why take them as real? Let go of everything; contemplate only the mind.

The mind is fundamentally nonexistent; how can afflictions arise? With this single turn, one has the wondrous key.

When the flames of greed are extinguished, one immediately attains coolness. Those who awaken of themselves possess unsurpassed majestic radiance.

Our Buddha, in compassion, has revealed the wondrous Dharma. Only by liberating themselves can people attain liberation.

Seek the Buddha and gain one; seek oneself and gain seven. Though this is a worldly saying, it is precisely the Buddhadharma.

Skillful means guide and receive without end; the Dharma wheel is inexhaustible. Only oneself knows warmth and cold—ask your own mind in return.

(This article appeared in the 1941, no. 33 issue of the semimonthly magazine Awakening Sentient Beings.)

Do I Have Afflictions?

If even one person in the world suffers from afflictions, those afflictions are shared by the whole world, for all relationships are interconnected. Afflictions can foster terror in the world: on a large scale, war; on a small scale, slaughter, suicide, and murder. Their causes all lie in mutual deceit and trickery.

Why do people resort to deceit? It is because life is difficult and economic pressures are severe. Yet the cause of economic insufficiency is truly extravagance and luxury: the international expansion of land, sea, and air armaments, and the people's

luxurious indulgence in clothing, food, housing, and material goods—just like madness. All this is for the sake of vanity, saving face, and mutual suspicion.

Nations seek outward expansion because of overproduction, fearing unemployment and revolution. They do not realize that revolution arises from inequality and inequity. A small number of people control machines and imagine that they can manipulate everything; they embrace self-interest, and harmful conditions proliferate from this. The sages of old invented science for the welfare of all, not to facilitate private gain. The principle of society should be mutual benefit, not one-sided depletion.

Why do people fail to understand this principle? Because they lack wisdom. They lack wisdom because they do not understand the Buddhadharma. People mistakenly regard the Buddhadharma as negative and superstitious, and therefore refuse to promote it. If this confusion continues, the world will deteriorate day by day, and afflictions will multiply day by day. Thus people must reflect and ask themselves, “Do I have afflictions?” If they awaken sharply and turn back, making a turn in their minds, afflictions will be transformed into happiness.

Whether you are male or female, young or old, rich or poor, wise or foolish, a ruler of the country or a beggar seeking alms, wealthy or impoverished, powerful or powerless, you cannot escape the two Chinese characters (“affliction”). Please reflect for yourself: “Do I have afflictions?” If you do and wish to remove them, you cannot but heed my advice. It will surely broaden your mind, keep you from going to extremes, and naturally transform misfortune into blessings and suffering into happiness.

The character fan (, “vexation”) contains the element for fire, while nao (, “affliction”) contains the element for heart-mind. When there is fire within the heart-mind, one is in the utmost state of unrest. Yet people's afflictions differ. In general, they do not go beyond the five desires: wealth, sexual desire, fame, food, and sleep. Desire is a desire of the mind; it means seeking something. When one cannot obtain what one seeks, anger and resentment arise. Thus the Buddha taught that there are six major root afflictions: greed, anger, ignorance, doubt, pride, and wrong views.

“Greed” means greedily seeking gain. Not being greedy does not mean seeking nothing at all; if it meant seeking nothing, it would become negative passivity. Those who do not understand the Buddhadharma say that after learning Buddhism one should no longer work or make money. This is fundamentally mistaken.

The Buddhadharma is not negative but positive; it does not mean seeking nothing, but not forcing one's demands. It means according with conditions, not contrivance. There is room to prosper through legitimate means. Seizing what belongs to others or fantasizing about lottery winnings is another matter. Moreover, “greed” does not

refer solely to greed for money. Whenever one seeks excessive gratification of the five desires, that is greed. Wealth and sexual desire merely most readily arouse greed in people.

Not obtaining what one greedily seeks is certainly an affliction. But even while one is in the very act of seeking it greedily, anxiety over obtaining it burns like fire, and this too is an affliction. Food has no flavor, sleep brings no rest, and all of this is suffering. Once something has been gained, one must take pains to preserve and manage it; the fear of losing it likewise burns like fire and is an even greater affliction. It is only because such habits have lasted so long that one no longer notices them, just as one who has long tasted pungency forgets that it is pungent, or maggots living in a latrine forget its foul stench. These are afflictions that cannot readily be seen.

“Anger” means resentment, hatred, and rage. Greed is the cause; this is its result. Because greedy seeking fails to accord with one's wishes, anger arises. It is the outward manifestation of the blazing fire of the mind, varying with the scale of the circumstances: on a small scale, abusive speech, fighting, and killing; on a large scale, conflict and warfare. These are afflictions that can be seen.

“Ignorance” means confusion. Whoever does not understand cause and effect, cannot distinguish truth from falsehood or right from wrong, and proceeds in inverted ways is ignorant. This is an affliction that is not easily recognized.

“Doubt” is the source of all disorder in human affairs. It begins with stubborn attachment to one's own views: fabricating something out of nothing, generating deluded views from anxiety over gain and loss, and clinging to them as right. For example, one may suspect that someone has insulted oneself, suspect the loss of a lover's affection, or suspect that someone has slandered one behind one's back. All such doubts have confused greed and ignorance as their seed, anxiety over gain and loss as their cause, and discriminating calculation as their result; they gradually lead one into anger. Moreover, when practitioners reach the middle of their practice and suddenly give rise to the hindrance of what they think they know, this too is a disorder of doubt. They take themselves to be clever and ingenious, yet remain unaware of their afflictions.

“Pride” arises from self-importance. Thinking oneself excessively superior, one becomes arrogant toward others. Such arrogance makes one easily mocked and insulted by others, and the result is again anger. In this way afflictions arise.

“Wrong views”: whoever possesses the preceding five afflictions in full is said to hold wrong views. Yet wrong views also give rise to the preceding five afflictions. Wrong views are views that are not correct. Their incorrectness arises from not understanding the ultimate truth; ignorance is their root, and all afflictions follow

from it. All who cultivate non-Buddhist paths, taking themselves to have attained the ultimate, hold wrong views. Therefore, for those who study Buddhism, the foremost principle is to realize the mind and open wisdom.

The root of these six major afflictions is attachment to a self. Buddhism teaches generosity; to give is to relinquish. If one can relinquish attachment to self, afflictions will naturally be purified. For while people live in the world, whether matters are great or small, there is nothing for which they do not calculate in terms of themselves, inwardly considering each thing: What benefits me? What harms me? They give no thought, however, to introspection and realizing the mind.

Because of attachment to self, people divide things into two paths: what goes against oneself causes affliction, while what accords with oneself brings joy. Yet they do not know that joy too is an affliction. First, because the opposite of joy is affliction; second, because excessive joy truly contains the anxiety of loss; third, because it likewise makes the heart boil and churn in unrest. Excessive laughter injures the sinews, wild joy can become madness, and shortness of breath and distended lungs can lead to illness. In sum, everything excessive is what is meant by being unable to bear it. Recently, someone died from drinking excessively in extreme joy; this is further clear proof that joy is an affliction.

Everyone possesses the aspiration to rise upward, and this is the beginning of striving. Yet this striving is progress. Striving to excel is a kind of fuel for human evolution—not solid fuel such as coal or firewood, nor liquid fuel such as gasoline or alcohol, but truly a gaseous spiritual fuel.

Yet striving to excel differs from competing to seize. Striving to excel is upward-directed: it seeks progress in one's own learning and does no harm to others; indeed, it encourages mutual observation and emulation. It benefits all. Competing to seize seeks advancement in one's own wealth and profit, taking what belongs to others for oneself. It harms others and brings no benefit to oneself; it harms both.

Universal benefit is the model of civilized progress; harming both is the conduct of theft in a barbaric age. In ancient times, one need not yield when righteousness was at stake, yet there was also the custom of brothers yielding property to one another. Noble and base, right and wrong, were clearly distinguished; such was the difference between progress and decline. Therefore, where all benefit, afflictions naturally lessen; where both are harmed, afflictions multiply. If progress is misunderstood, theft will inevitably be regarded as advancement. Once public justice is lost, war grows fiercer by the day, fostering great terror and great affliction throughout the world. This too is caused by one or two people who fancy themselves clever and indulge their desires in greedy madness.

How do great afflictions arise? What kinds of unrest do people have?

1. The unrest of suffering. Everyone knows it; there is no need to discuss it.

2. The unrest of happiness. Its causes and conditions also differ for each person, and it has been discussed above.

3. The unrest that is neither suffering nor happiness. For example, ordinary people may already have sufficient clothing and food, yet find life tasteless, with nothing on which the mind can rely. They then think about the future, death, what comes after death, illness, and the like. Thus arise all kinds of inexpressible unease.

4. Sudden disputes within the family, or unforeseen events that occur, so that dangers may arise everywhere. This is found mostly among those who are happy and wealthy.

5. Because the desire to rise upward swells excessively, nations become highly suspicious of one another, diplomacy becomes aggressive, industry and commerce prize strange forms of competition, doctrines and ideologies become bizarre, men become deceitful, women become extravagantly sensual, and money itself becomes social standing; even immorality is deemed glorious. The distinction between those clothed as humans and beasts is lost, and the bonds of family affection deteriorate day by day. When human life has come to this, what interest remains in it? The trend toward suicide arises from extreme disgust and weariness. The world's countless afflictions are also like this.

6. Those who are utterly unreliable nevertheless fervently hope that others will be reliable toward them. Those who constantly call for the overthrow of loyalty and filial piety nevertheless greatly delight in others' loyalty to them, and speak of how good and obedient their own sons are. This is the affliction of greedy seeking and anxiety over gain. When they are deceived and suffer loss, with no one to whom they can appeal, their affliction reaches an extreme.

7. When people suffer from illness, their afflictions need hardly be mentioned. They are no more than three: fear of expense, present discomfort, and fear of death. Yet ordinarily they are unwilling to take care to preserve their health. Illness is of no more than two kinds: external invasion, perhaps one or two parts in ten; and internal disturbance, perhaps eight or nine parts in ten.

External invasion includes wind, cold, heat, dampness, water and soil conditions, contagion, and the like. Internal disturbance comes from one's own narrow-mindedness and inability to let go: becoming afflicted, angry, or depressed over trivial matters, and thereby falling ill or dying; suffering the great losses of illness from overeating and a shortened life; or plotting in secret and being slaughtered, and so forth. There are very many such people in the world. Each considers himself

clever, yet does not realize that he is utterly foolish and stupid—among the most pitiable and afflicted of people.

8. Some so-called gentlemen hate evil as though it were an enemy and parade their own goodness. Are they not afflicted?

9. Those who perform good deeds resent miserly people for refusing to give. Are they not afflicted?

10. Monks and lay practitioners seek to establish their own factions, contend over temple property, and solicit patrons. Are they not afflicted?

11. Compassionate people fear that everyone will enter non-Buddhist paths and encounter demons, and consequently become angry. Are they not afflicted?

12. There are also various blind afflictions, which are especially laughable. A few are listed below:

1. Those with an obsession with cleanliness, such as people overly fond of cleanliness who suspect all sorts of things to be impure.

2. Those who fear that speaking may hurt others, and therefore refrain from saying what should be said, exercising such excessive caution that they become as silent as cicadas in cold weather.

3. Those whose excessive politeness makes them forget themselves. During the Qing dynasty, in the reign of Emperor Qianlong, there were two aged grand ministers. When A fell ill, B visited him, and they spoke beside the sickbed. A said, “We are both old. I wonder which of us will enter the ground first?” B clasped his hands and replied, “I must still yield precedence to the old Minister of Works.” This became a joke; it is an example of the same thing.

4. A woman would not allow her husband to dream of his former wife or deceased concubine, warning him that he must not have such dreams again. This too is a true story, though I have forgotten the name.

5. Those who like to boast at a gathering, always claiming famous people as friends when in fact they do not know them. One day, someone again claimed to know B and boasted that they had been close friends for many years. B happened to be present, provoking laughter throughout the room, and the boaster fled the table.

6. While gambling, one inadvertently withholds a card, and the other party comes to harbor a bitter grudge. Nothing is more pointless or more damaging to friendship; therefore, I have abstained from gambling all my life.

7. When a friend, being too busy in a gathering, forgets to greet someone, that person suspects that he has been slighted.

8. One refuses to overlook the slightest point of social etiquette, bends oneself to accommodate others' wishes, and attends to everything with exhaustive care, exhausting one's mental energy. Delighted with one's own thoroughness, one gradually becomes accustomed to it without noticing and comes close to affectation. Then, if others are in any way less than considerate toward one, one feels displeased and becomes annoyed.

9. Having no views of one's own, echoing whatever others say, and allowing one's likes and dislikes to be swayed by others.

10. Becoming afflicted because one has no son to carry on the family line—this is utterly laughable. The most fortunate people in the world are those without children; next are those with few good children; then those with many good children; fourth, those with many good children and few bad ones; fifth, those with many bad children and few good ones; sixth, those with few children, all of them bad; and seventh, those with many children, all of them bad. Generally, children come together with their parents because of connections from former lives. By forming good affinities, one may have good children; by planting evil causes, one naturally receives inferior children. Among evil causes, the remote cause is chiefly indebtedness, while the immediate cause is chiefly failure to educate them. Among failures of education, the foremost is allowing them to become arrogant, self-indulgent, and unrestrained because of great wealth.

11. Those who regard Buddhadharma as superstition, who know perfectly well that it is not superstition yet dare not study it for fear of ridicule, are the most foolish people in the world. It is like insisting on knowing the taste of a dish before daring to try it—how could there be such a principle? All this is blind affliction.

In sum, all of this is unease; all of it is affliction. The eight sufferings press upon us from every side and are all included within it. The Buddha said, "The three realms are insecure, like a burning house." Within and beyond the three realms are separated only by the line between delusion and awakening. In delusion, one creates karma and undergoes suffering; this is to dwell within the three realms. In awakening, one understands suffering and knows happiness, thoroughly comprehends the ultimate, creates no causes of suffering, and receives no fruits of suffering; this is to be beyond the three realms.

I shall now explain what afflictions are and how to eliminate them.

A. Afflictions are extremely numerous, but each has its causes.

I shall briefly describe them here, citing seventy-two kinds for the time being.

It is evident that not a single day passes without affliction, and that everywhere there is cause and effect: first, illness and suffering; second, failure in seeking loans or collecting debts; third, humiliation or being controlled by others; fourth, old grievances; fifth, failed love affairs or abandonment; sixth, misunderstandings; seventh, being provoked or incited; eighth, missed opportunities; ninth, discomfort in one's daily routine; tenth, fear that others are plotting against one; eleventh, having nothing that satisfies one;

twelfth, sorrow at growing old; thirteenth, losing people or things one loves; fourteenth, hardship in making a living; fifteenth, having nothing to do and finding life dull; sixteenth, being old and without companionship; seventeenth, unattractive appearance; eighteenth, being caught in a dilemma; nineteenth, being away from home during a festival; twentieth, fearing that one's private wrongdoing will be discovered; twenty-first, failure in one's studies; twenty-second, seeing injustice on the road;

twenty-third, unfilial children; twenty-fourth, discord with one's wife; twenty-fifth, misfortune within the household; twenty-sixth, prosperity followed by decline; twenty-seventh, friends repaying kindness with resentment; twenty-eighth, having to sell valuable possessions cheaply because of urgent need; twenty-ninth, encountering prolonged rain while traveling; thirtieth, encountering matters considered inauspicious; thirty-first, the sudden onset of madness; thirty-second, finding one's food tasteless; thirty-third, clothes that do not fit;

thirty-fourth, being wealthy but unable to surpass others; thirty-fifth, being forbidden to gamble or suffering gambling losses; thirty-sixth, having cherished possessions or undertakings slandered; thirty-seventh, being impatient while having to wait long; thirty-eighth, hurting others through careless speech; thirty-ninth, a breach of etiquette; fortieth, having one's false claims refuted; forty-first, a fall in land prices; forty-second, instability in the banks; forty-third, disorder in the world; forty-fourth, bandits;

forty-fifth, running short of travel funds midway; forty-sixth, being wrongfully implicated in an affair; forty-seventh, suffering consequences as a guarantor; forty-eighth, anxious thoughts; forty-ninth, resenting guests who sit too long and will not leave; fiftieth, being unable to refuse tedious social obligations; fifty-first, forcing oneself to appear cheerful; fifty-second, having to endure humiliation or suppress laughter; fifty-third, acquiring wealth and fearing that others will learn of it;

fifty-fourth, becoming ill because one's joy is so extreme that one cannot bear it; fifty-fifth, hearing that someone traveling abroad has met with danger; fifty-sixth, harsh levies; fifty-seventh, wishing to get far away; fifty-eighth, having no heir; fifty-

ninth, conscription for a distant expedition to a foreign country; sixtieth, fear of death; sixty-first, being excessively fastidious about cleanliness and seeing impurity everywhere; sixty-second, resentment within the women's quarters; sixty-third, unequal treatment; sixty-fourth, having to defer to others' moods;

sixty-fifth, having to deal perfunctorily with shameless petty people; sixty-sixth, seeing the graves of old friends; sixty-seventh, having new clothes soiled; sixty-eighth, disturbances by fox spirits and ghosts; sixty-ninth, childbirth; seventieth, conducting negotiations; seventy-first, excessive compassion; and seventy-second, being afflicted by affliction itself.

These seventy-two kinds of affliction are the intermediaries of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. When they become fully developed, they can destroy a nation and annihilate a people, leave corpses strewn across the fields and blood flowing for a thousand miles; in the end, both sides are harmed. One must not disregard them because they are subtle. A great fire has always begun with no more than a single spark; thus one cannot be careless at the causal stage. Yet if Buddhist practitioners do not know to seek this for themselves, they too fail to understand cause and effect.

B. Affliction is unease, but what is meant by "ease"?

"Ease" simply means a mind at rest. When the mind is at rest, there are no hindrances. There are distinctions between true ease and false ease, temporary ease and lasting ease, individual ease and collective ease, and reliable and unreliable ease. Whenever ease is merely individual, it must be temporary rather than lasting, false rather than true, and unreliable. Therefore, peace is true ease: tai means universal and inclusive of all; ping means equal. Only when everyone is at ease am I truly at ease.

For example, sleeping at night behind locked doors, protected by bodyguards, insurance, and armed guards—this is false ease. How could it compare with the lasting ease of having no thieves and no enemies, and thus no hindrances? The ancient distinction between individual happiness and shared happiness rests on this principle. Therefore, truly intelligent people who wish to preserve lasting peace must study Buddhadharma. When the Buddha teaches you generosity, he is teaching you how to protect yourself.

For example, a person with assets of one million could live adequately on half of it, yet use the other five hundred thousand for local public welfare by establishing factories so that everyone has food to eat. Who, then, would be willing to become a thief and harm him? His remaining five hundred thousand could thereby be preserved forever, and all expenditures for bodyguards and the like would be entirely unnecessary. This is true, lasting, and reliable ease.

But people are by nature miserly and shortsighted; they care only for the present. They would rather leave suffering to their descendants and bring further affliction upon themselves. Only by understanding this principle can one understand the true meaning of ease. At present, however, we need not hope for great acts of generosity; we need only hope that everyone may relax a little and avoid extremes, and thus attain a little ease. To seek a tiger's skin from the tiger is, of course, no easy matter.

C. What, then, is this so-called affliction and unease?

People know only that a headache is pain in the head and an aching waist is pain in the waist, but they do not know that this is not so. Pain is awareness: without the mind's awareness, one would not feel pain in the head or waist. Therefore, affliction and unease both belong to the mind. The mind makes distinctions and comparisons. Good and bad, favorable and adverse, gain and loss, right and wrong—these paired opposites arise one after another, and joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure arise accordingly.

If greedy thoughts do not arise, one will naturally not crave, grasp, or cling to existence. When the discriminating mind is lessened and thoughts of gain and loss become light, there is no question of ease or unease, and afflictions naturally cease. This is why Buddhists must first realize the mind and see one's true nature as the foundation. To understand the mind-ground, one should read Buddhist books and put cultivation into practice; then one will receive genuine benefit.

D. Methods for Eliminating Afflictions

The methods for eliminating afflictions are inherently immeasurable, but there is one essential key and four methods. The one essential key means that there is only this one wondrous key; there is no second gate. Afflictions arise from the mind, and they must also be resolved through the mind. To resolve them is to understand them with wisdom. The moment the mind turns a thought, there is the illumination of wisdom. When one sees that all things are fundamentally empty, suffering and adversity naturally fall away. The Heart Sūtra is the supreme wondrous key for relieving suffering and rescuing from difficulty.

Yet how can people read it without understanding it, remain as confused and distressed as before, and even dismiss it as superstition? The four methods are wondrous applications that unfold from this one essential key: first, remedying the cause; second, remedying the result; third, turning the thought; and fourth, verifying through circumstances.

(1) Remedying the cause means that, before undertaking an action, one first becomes keenly alert. For example, when an argument is about to arise, that is the

cause of affliction. First consider: What is the cause of this matter? And if I act in this way now, what result will follow later? One will then naturally become cautious. If the mouth does not speak recklessly, misfortune will cease by itself; if the body does not act recklessly, harm will disappear by itself; if the mind does not give rise to reckless thoughts, vexation will end by itself. This is remedying at the causal stage.

People are always unwilling to turn their thoughts around and reflect. Because they do not cultivate this habit, they often have no room to step back when a crisis arises; at the slightest touch, they erupt. This is the case with inferior people who delight in fighting, brawling, and cursing. It stems from parents' failure to instruct them in childhood, while indulgence only worsens the matter.

Therefore, courtesy and mutual deference must never be dismissed as empty formalities. They are a line of defense against conflict among human beings. When matters stop at this boundary, many troubles naturally diminish. This is truly a wondrous method for preventing disorder at its causal stage. Modern people esteem competition and misunderstand the meaning of valuing martial prowess. They do not know that wu, "martial," means "to stop the spear"—that is, to stop contention. If one wishes to stop conflict, civil governance must never be neglected.

The more civilized people are, the more majestic they are; this is called dignified bearing. The more fond of fighting they are, the more barbaric they are; this is called brute force. Brute force will inevitably be overthrown, because it lacks knowledge; stronger military force will inevitably be needed to restrain it. But there is no point discussing this with those who lack knowledge.

(2) Remedying the Result

This means remedying a matter after it has already broken out. When affliction has arisen, one should consider the following:

1. What one gains is not worth what one loses; what is contended for is very slight.

2. My precious vital energy is depleted by it; it is even less worthwhile.

3. If, for example, something has already broken, do not break it further and enlarge the damage.

4. When matters reach an extreme, there will surely be an immense reaction.

5. Do not add further loss to the loss already suffered.

When one thinks in this way, the troubled mind naturally dissolves. In short, afflictions involve much contention and bring absolutely no benefit. This is not passive self-concern. If there is something worth doing—if one dies in war while

defending one's country—such death is also honorable. In ancient times, there were those who sacrificed their lives to fulfill righteousness. Buddhadharma actively saves all beings; how much more, then, should one save one's country?

Giving one's body in generosity is precisely the foremost realization of emptiness. As the Diamond Sūtra says of giving bodies and lives as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, this requires wisdom; this too is remedying the result. Again, when enemies cannot be reasoned with, they must be taught a lesson and their greed restrained. When King Wen became angry once, the realm was brought to peace; this too expresses the meaning of remedying the result.

In recent times, social mores have declined, people's hearts have grown ever thinner, self-interest has become ever stronger, and human suffering has increased accordingly. As suffering and affliction intensify, so too does the urge to seek self-protection. Thought grows daily more extreme, ideologies ever more bizarre. Patriotic feeling cannot rival self-love—this is what is worrying about the state of the age. Love of one's body cannot rival attachment to one's views—this is what is frightening about such strange doctrines.

Would this not be like adding oil to a fire of the world's afflictions? Yet humanity has one unchanging principle: opposition. As opposition escalates, each side's actions become both cause and consequence of the other's. When one side goes to an extreme, the reaction against it will inevitably exceed it. As the sides trade blows, each new reaction exceeds the one before it. Temporary gains and losses tell us little about where it will end. There is no other reason: the more humanity suffers, the more evil thoughts arise and the narrower people's capacities become.

This develops a step further into another principle: "What satisfies the majority prevails." The cries of distress under heaven become the resources of a new ruler. The opportunities of a new ruler are all driven out and bestowed by the old ruler. By the same reasoning, when people have afflictions, if they relax their grip by one step, there will be nothing that does not benefit them.

(Yin) Changing One's Thought

Changing one's thought is the beginning of awakening. If a person is firmly obstinate, the capacity for self-sacrifice must be weak, for the hardest thing to sacrifice is attachment to one's own views. Only those of the greatest intelligence are willing to take such a drastic step. At most, one simply lets go. On the surface, this letting go may seem to involve a loss, but inwardly one gains greatly: one gains invisibly, and the benefit is inexhaustible.

In Buddhist giving, the aim is to cultivate a capacity for self-sacrifice. When one is willing to relinquish even attachment to one's own views, this is called true great

giving. Those new to Buddhism often do not understand this principle. Those who have studied Buddhism for a long time may understand it clearly but still be unwilling to relinquish it; hence it is said that attachment to dharmas is difficult to remove. Only people of the greatest intelligence and wisdom recognize the moment early, turn back quickly, think flexibly, and act decisively; thus their gain is also great.

When Han Xin sought to be enfeoffed as a provisional king, the King of Han instead granted him the title of true king. The decisive moment in the success or failure of Chu and Han lay in a small sacrifice. This is what is meant by gaining invisibly and benefiting without end. We need not seek future advantages. If we merely change one thought and take a broad view of our present afflictions, this is truly a marvelous method for cutting off afflictions. Moreover, it costs nothing; why not give it a try?

In society, there are only the relationships and exchanges between people; therefore they are called human affairs. Human affairs involve mutual exchange, and recompense for giving varies in generosity. If one's giving is slight, the recompense cannot be generous. It is like borrowing one hundred yuan from someone: at most, one repays one hundred yuan plus interest; it is absolutely unheard of to repay double. Moreover, one who borrows from A will certainly not mistakenly repay B.

As for giving without seeking recompense, its emphasis lies not on money but on human feeling and moral obligation. Anyone who values human feeling and moral obligation will necessarily be respected and welcomed by society. Everyone may repay such a person, without there necessarily being one particular recipient of the gift. Thus, the invisible benefits one receives are inexhaustible. It lies only in a single shift.

(Mao) Practical Evidence

This concerns actual practice and seeks a fundamental resolution of afflictions.

(1) Education: If parents truly wish to love their children and prevent them from undergoing all kinds of suffering and affliction, they should diligently educate them from an early age. If children are taught courtesy and yielding, enemies and antagonisms will diminish day by day. Parents must not indulge them for the moment, contend on their behalf over minor matters, and thereby cultivate an arrogant and overbearing disposition; then there will be few enemies. If they are taught frugality, they will not later become accustomed to luxury, and suffering will cease of itself.

If they are taught gentleness and harmony, their dispositions will naturally become broad and peaceful, their livers will not be injured, and they will naturally live long

lives. If they are taught diligence and endurance, they will have no leisure for play, and their studies will advance. This is the responsibility of parents. Therefore, the most pitiable children are those born into families where they are spoiled but receive no education. Their parents do not understand cause and effect; craving temporary ease and pleasure, they cause their children lifelong harm.

(2) Giving through merit and virtue: There are many kinds of giving through merit and virtue. On a smaller scale, they are called good deeds; on a larger scale, merit and virtue. Buddhists further hold that visible, outward acts are good deeds, whereas formless acts are merit and virtue. A few examples follow. Visible merit and virtue: first, building stūpas and temples; second, providing meals for the monastic community; third, building bridges and roads; fourth, giving food; fifth, giving clothing; sixth, distributing medicine; seventh, establishing factories; eighth, caring for infants.

Ninth, eliminating theft. Formless merit and virtue consists in establishing oneself as an example: first, resolving difficulties and disputes; second, giving the Dharma and teaching it; third, circulating sūtras, treatises, and writings; fourth, establishing schools, or promoting novels, films, dramas, and the like that encourage moral improvement—though these may also harm the world; fifth, enduring humiliation and contemplating emptiness; sixth, being careful with causes; seventh, being fearless and responsible; eighth, having a mind-ground that is bright, impartial, and upright; ninth, being without self-centered intention.

Everyone thinks of performing meritorious deeds but does not understand how to do so; thus afflictions can never finally be avoided. This is truly regrettable. The foremost meritorious deed is formless, for visible merit and virtue is only temporary, not permanent; it tends to address results rather than causes; it is limited rather than immeasurable, formal rather than ultimate. Therefore, no merit is greater than saving people's minds, enabling them to awaken and become Buddhas. Among forms of giving, giving the Dharma through education is supreme; giving fearlessness comes next, and visible giving is still lower.

(3) Self-cultivation: In self-cultivation, contemplating emptiness comes first. If, when giving, one does not expect recompense, does not crave fame, and is not arrogant, then there are no afflictions. But the root lies in opening wisdom. This is why learning Buddhism is ultimate.

Conclusion

The afflictions of human life are rooted in human affairs. Yet human affairs cannot be abolished, and therefore afflictions are inexhaustible. People do not realize that afflictions lie not in human affairs but in the human mind. The contamination of greed, anger, and the other six maladies constitutes the major afflictions;

unawareness constitutes the fundamental affliction. There are coarse divisions and subtle divisions, but with a single turn they are empty. From ancient times, people have had more afflictions concerning future matters; people are always calculating over the future.

If one has ten yuan and thereby feels free from fear, one exerts every effort to obtain it. If one has one hundred yuan a month and thereby feels free from fear, one must attain one hundred yuan before being satisfied. Proceeding in this way, fears become ever more numerous and greed ever more intense. When one cannot obtain what one greedily seeks, one becomes distressed. This is an invariable principle.

People do not realize that no one in the world will starve me to death; it is only oneself who starves oneself to death. First comes laziness; second, being unreliable. When no one dares employ or consult you, there is only degradation and death. Everything has its allotted destiny, and nothing can be forced. This allotted destiny too belongs to prior causes and later results. People today first do not believe in previous lives and do not understand cause and effect; they are truly the most foolish and dull-witted of people.

If people had no previous lives, then after birth all human beings should be alike. Why, then, are there distinctions between the worthy and the foolish? Moreover, there is abundant practical evidence of rebirth from previous lives. A person's poverty or prosperity in this life is also determined by the prior causes they themselves created in previous lives. Thus some are born into wealth and honor, while others are born into poverty and lowliness; this cannot be forced. What use is great wealth? To leave it behind only to harm one's descendants and add to their afflictions is most meaningless.

Again, year after year one fears, and year after year one gets by. It is not necessarily the case that having more wealth brings more fear; from this one may awaken. As for those who claim there is no cause and effect, they are even more laughable. Cause and effect is called a law, meaning that it cannot be shaken. Otherwise, evil people could receive no retribution, and murderers could kill without consequence. Could there be such a principle?

In recent times, mental illness has become widespread, and there have also been many suicides. Often, ghosts and spirits trouble such people. This is not superstition; there are indeed facts that can substantiate it. Western science also has psychical research, which cannot be dismissed. Why not awaken early, perform more meritorious deeds, and broaden one's field of blessings? It is like a farmer who saves some seed for planting and harvest in the following year. Then one may preserve

wealth and honor for a long time and permanently cut off afflictions. This is why failure to awaken is itself an affliction.

The only means of cutting off afflictions is to open wisdom. Opening wisdom lies in attaining samādhi; attaining samādhi lies in learning Buddhism; learning Buddhism lies in seeking the Dharma; seeking the Dharma lies in finding a teacher suited to one's capacity. One should be respectful toward one's teacher and sternly critical toward oneself. The shortest thing in the world is life; the swiftest is time; the least worthwhile is affliction; and nothing is happier than realizing the mind.

For what purpose do I now urge others? Precisely because I myself am a person burdened by afflictions. Only because of affliction have I felt the need to turn back. Therefore, thinking of those who share the same ailment, I earnestly hope that readers will ask themselves: "Do I have afflictions?" Seize this opportunity and quickly turn back. This is what it is to be a true person of great resolve.

Because great calamities now stand before our eyes, to dispel disaster and avert misfortune, the first necessity is to endure humiliation. I was born at an unfortunate time, in a world that does not speak of justice. If one has personal afflictions or family discord, these are especially liable to attract external demons and bring evil matters near. The disorder of the world arises entirely from inequity. Countless small inequities gather together to form a great war, and the suffering returns to oneself. Do you think afflictions will ever come to an end?!

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Resolving Anguish

Introduction

Since the World War, the world has become wholly one of anguish and depression.

There is scarcely a country, a place, a family, or a person free from anguish and depression. Some suffer; some are depressed; some both suffer and are depressed. Some were not originally afflicted, yet have been wrongfully forced into anguish and depression. Some endure it but cannot speak of it; some will not speak of it, and some dare not. Others outwardly feign composure while inwardly suffering and depressed. Such manifestations are too numerous to recount.

Yet no one does not wish to resolve this anguish and depression, and no one is able to free themselves from it. The year-end has arrived, and the atmosphere of anguish and depression is especially heavy.

Yet the weather is exceptionally clear and bright, and spring is in the air, as though it were laughing at us: “A bright, broad road lies plainly before you—why do you not take it? How senseless to create karma and suffer in vain! Why sacrifice such fine days to needless anguish and depression? Why, indeed?”

Even now, when it is a matter of mending the fold after the sheep have escaped, it is still not too late. You need only turn a single thought around: Who is it that is anguished and depressed? And what is it that feels this anguish and depression? If you take it to be truly anguished and depressed, you will become all the more so. If you understand that anguish and depression are contrived by the mind’s comparisons—seeing what others have and comparing yourself with it—then such anguish and depression will never come to an end.

If you are already anguished and depressed, becoming further anguished and depressed is like adding frost to snow. What use is that? It is better to calm your mind and consider how the situation may be remedied.

I do not wish to offer empty consolations in winter. We are all people sharing this same anguish and depression. Looking back on past errors, we know that such anguish is not worth enduring. It is not without a solution; there is another bright, broad road. Since all anguish and depression are created by the mind, they can naturally be resolved by the mind. We must not compound one error with another.

Moreover, anguish and depression are one’s own affair. One can only understand and settle them for oneself; one cannot rely on others. Know that year after year one passes through anguish and depression. Where is all the anguish and depression of former years now? Ask yourself sincerely, and you ought to laugh. In that single laugh, sweep away all anguish and depression, and enjoy a happy New Year.

Wang Xianglu, New Year’s Eve, Dinghai Year, Republic of China 36 (1947)

Ten years ago, when the War of Resistance began, it was already clear that the suffering would not be brief. In the end, the two Chinese characters (“anguish”) accumulated in every household. The immediate causes of such anguish are nothing more than poverty and illness. Poverty needs no explanation; let us speak of illness, visible and invisible, of which there are untold kinds.

Visible illnesses include debility and exhaustion, tuberculosis, nervous disorders, cerebral hemorrhage, insomnia, liver cancer, kidney disease, and the birth of malformed children. Most arise because life is difficult and circumstances oppressive, resulting in inadequate nourishment.

As for invisible illnesses, they include suspicion, jealousy, fear, deceit, malice, and mental worry and gloom; when these erupt, they become resentment and violence. These are internal injuries. Once the mind and spirit are unsettled, all manner of physical illnesses naturally follow. Thus economic circumstances become ever more difficult and anguish ever more widespread, creating this society of anguish and turning the world into one of terror.

People are never willing to remain perpetually "anguished and depressed." Everyone seeks a way out, seeking to dispel this anguish and depression, yet never finds a thoroughgoing solution. Thus, beyond poverty and illness, there is added the word "helplessness."

Helplessness means having no way out. You may wish to bend yourself into a hole, yet find no means of turning in any direction—what can be done? Today, whether one has money or not, strength or not, all have reached an impasse. To break this impasse, if one is unscrupulous, those with power will inevitably act outside the rules and turn everything upside down.

Those with little power resort to deceit and fraud, without the least sense of shame; those with no power can only be enraged to death, starved to death, driven to death by anxiety, or killed by illness—even to the point of suicide. This anguished deadlock has become almost universal. Even families with ample livelihoods spend their days in irritation, worry, depression, and every kind of fear.

Thus the poor are helpless, and the wealthy are helpless as well. If this confusion continues for long, the wealthy will decline into poverty, while the poor will decline into disorder and death. They become ever poorer and ever more helpless. Yet it is not that there is no way out; rather, people do not seek solutions at the root. What use is it to live in anguish and depression, blaming Heaven and reproaching others? Pitifully, people no longer know that life has pleasures; some no longer even wish to have families. One can imagine the depth of their anguish and depression.

In today's anguished and depressing circumstances, people do not know what to do and have no means of resolving their predicament. Therefore, one's outlook on life is a matter of the greatest importance.

But no one is closer to you than yourself. Apart from seeking a way out for yourself, there is no one with whom you can truly discuss a solution. If you do not find a way yourself, and instead continue to make life difficult for yourself, then there can only be nervous collapse, confusion, and madness—ultimately, a dead end. This is suffering added to suffering. I now offer you a means of deciding for yourself: a way to resolve your outlook on life and find both comfort and a method amid anguish and depression.

Why is it called “being a person”? Because one must make oneself into a person. Take building a house as an example: bricks, tiles, timber, and labor may all be ready, but if you do not plan and begin the work, you cannot enjoy the use of it. Though houses may be built in different ways, some good and some poor, they can at least provide shelter for a time. Most regrettable is to discard all the bricks, tiles, timber, and labor—would that not be a waste?

The greatest fault in human life is laziness. When the mind has something on which it relies, this is called “laziness.” Relying entirely on what others have already prepared, sharing in others’ benefits, having no ideas of one’s own, and being unwilling to stir oneself to action—these are the fundamental causes of anguish and depression.

Laziness arises in the mind. At first, one is unwilling to apply one’s mind or investigate the reasons behind things; thus one’s faculties grow dull. Progress in every field of learning often begins with asking oneself questions. “Why?” is the sole gateway to deep inquiry in all learning, and it is also a necessary process for awakening one’s intelligence.

From the three Chinese characters (“why?”) one can infer past causes and gauge future results. With each cause and result clearly understood from beginning to end, all human affairs can be resolved. But to attend only to the present and have no concern for the future is the root disposition of laziness; to meet every matter with mere evasiveness and procrastination is likewise its root disposition. Once this disposition of laziness has been formed and accumulated over time, one may become lazy in every matter and at every moment, forever unable to rouse oneself. This is chronic suicide.

Living in troubled times, one especially cannot afford to be lazy. Without the spirit of keeping one’s eyes on all sides and one’s ears open in every direction, one cannot cope with one’s circumstances. Without the steadiness to remain undeluded when encountering situations and to stand on one’s own judgment, one cannot pass through this difficult barrier. If, as in peaceful times, one still pursues vanity, contends with others over pride and victory or defeat, and plays at power and clever stratagems, then one is truly out of step with the times and seeking one’s own troubles.

Therefore, in troubled times there is only one method: use stillness to govern movement. That is, hold firmly to one’s considered view and do not be swayed; then one can surely avoid many dangers. Take the ordinary collaborators as an example. When they began, how many intended to become collaborators? Yet because of momentary impulse, turning cleverness into folly; or because they failed to recognize the situation, did not understand the times, loved to show off, attended

only to the present, and did not reckon with later consequences, once they stumbled, there was no time left for regret.

The lazier human nature becomes, the more fiercely the desire for gain naturally burns, and the stronger the wish for lucky advantage becomes. Unable to withstand the lure of profit or the pressure of threats, people commit inhumane acts and acts that violate conscience, caring only for momentary gratification. In the end, they harm others without benefiting themselves. Why undergo such misery?

Know that the world is vast and contains every kind of strange occurrence. Human hearts and human affairs change like illusions and are impermanent. Thus one cannot fail to be on guard, yet one must also know how to respond tactfully and keep the peace. For this reason, the workings of the mind must be studied. If one can truly understand human feelings, one can succeed wherever one goes. Whether for oneself, one's family, society, or even national affairs, none can escape psychology and human feeling. This is truly the most valuable practical lesson in life.

There are only two kinds of anguished and depressed people in the world: those distressed because they cannot obtain what they seek, and those distressed because they cannot preserve what they possess. So-called happiness is only temporary. Although those who cannot obtain what they seek are the majority, their suffering is comparatively slight, for they merely devote themselves single-mindedly to striving for it.

Those distressed because they cannot preserve what they possess are few, but their suffering is greater. Their greed is never satisfied; beyond preserving what they have, they add the suffering of being unable to obtain what they seek.

If one knows contentment, suffering can naturally be greatly reduced. Yet the pressure of circumstances and the mind's greed and delusion unknowingly sink ever deeper. Moreover, people misunderstand the words "knowing contentment," thinking them a sign of having no ambition. They do not know that knowing contentment restrains excess and averts many dangers. A cup of tea need not be left unfilled; it simply should not be filled beyond measure.

But this does not mean that one should be content with one's learning. If one considers one's learning sufficient, that is complacency. One must know that learning has no end. It harms no one and entails no danger; moreover, in society the value one can exchange comes entirely from one's learning. If one has little learning, the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks will naturally increase.

People are instead complacent and content with their own learning. After graduating from university—just when diligent study should begin—they abandon it.

After only a year of neglect, and with society often requiring work unrelated to what they studied, they may end up worse off over a lifetime than a junior factory worker.

Yet in what they seek as recompense, they are exceptionally discontented. The greater their desires, the harder they are to satisfy, and the more heavily circumstances oppress them. With their hearts full of anguish and depression, their speech becomes strangely distorted without their noticing. Their usual aspirations are narrow, aimed only at promotion and wealth. Once an opportunity arises, they seek to fulfill former desires and relieve their immediate suffering, and so they cannot help becoming corrupt.

Yet corruption is not their original intention. Helplessly laboring all year without even enough to eat, they lack the means to maintain integrity. Even if they do not become corrupt, they think of taking on other occupations as a sideline; then they cannot concentrate on their work, much less find time to pursue learning. The nation's unseen loss is the tragic waste of talent. How many can truly leap out of this fiery pit of discontent? If even those who have employment are like this, then among those unable to find work, how many are willing to know contentment, remain in their proper place, and seek further learning? They can only drift aimlessly from south to north.

Others say, "I understand the two Chinese characters (知足, 'contentment'), but one must first have at least a little and then stop; that is knowing contentment. Yet I cannot get even one full meal all day long. If I cannot obtain even a little sufficiency, what am I to do?" This is true enough. How would I dare reproach those who are in extreme hardship? But such abnormal conditions are not permanent. Apart from enduring them, what other way do we have?

Our Chinese national character possesses a great strength by which softness overcomes hardness; it can endure every kind of suffering. In times of hardship, the ancients had the two-word secret of "accepting one's lot," by which to restrain their desires. In times of comfort, they had the two-word method of "knowing contentment," by which to maintain their circumstances.

Yet in learning, one should not yield even to one's teacher; if one does not yield even to one's teacher, how can the force of one's courage and vigor be measured? What I speak of here is strength of mind. Accepting one's lot and knowing contentment are not corrupt notions. Under present conditions, if one neither accepts one's lot nor knows contentment, one can only become a bandit; how can that serve as an example?

As for those who already have enough but still refuse to know contentment, not only is their insatiable greed contemptible, but their cunning acquisition and plundering are no different from those of violent bullies. Is their danger not even greater? Is

their delusion not even more profound? Seen in this light, is knowing contentment not a virtue? Thus, those without promise are precisely those who do not know contentment.

People in the world all know that money can solve everything, but they do not know that money is a temporary medium of use, meant to circulate and to serve public purposes. To hoard it stubbornly and not let it circulate is a fault. To use it publicly without good faith, thereby obstructing circulation, is an even greater fault.

Hoarding carries dangers. People think that having money gives them something to rely on and leaves them without fear, not knowing that it brings even more fear. The less money circulates, the narrower society's vitality becomes; the more poor people there are, the more thieves there are, and the less peace the wealthy can have.

Nor is that all. The children of wealthy families often become arrogant and spoiled as a result; women are often excessively proud, extravagant, frivolous, troubled, or ill. Moreover, wealthy households have too much idle time and no work to do; gambling and amusements poison society, making their wrongdoing still greater. Before long they decline or become impoverished, then burden society in turn and become parasites upon it. Is this not foolish?

People know only bodily comfort and do not know spiritual solace. In their numbness and confusion, how are they different from animals?

The human body is formed of blood and vital energies; there is not one solid part in it. A slight wound may cause one to bleed to death. Because it is so frail, it cannot endure hunger or fullness, cold or heat, heaviness or lightness, sourness or itching. Even formless things that offend the ear or eye cannot be endured. Therefore, the more comfortable the body becomes, the more the mind seeks consolation and the less one can relinquish it.

Yet what people need is nothing more than contentment and satisfaction. This shows that spiritual solace is comparatively more important. And nothing gives the mind greater solace than freedom from fear; and for freedom from fear, nothing surpasses the two Chinese characters (“contentment”).

Material comfort has limits, whereas craving born of desire has no end. People also have tendencies to imitate, compare themselves with others, compete, and advance; without realizing it, they mutually intensify one another's greed and rivalry.

A limited quantity of goods will certainly not suffice for the desires of the many. Thus contention becomes inevitable: first they contend for material things, then for pride and prestige, sparing no sacrifice. The struggle reaches its height, and after it has accumulated over time, people no longer recognize its fundamental error. When

they fail, they become dejected and may even commit suicide; the many spiritual disappointments and sufferings in between cannot all be described. When they succeed, arrogance and complacency lead to anxiety over loss; the various suspicions and defenses in their minds likewise cannot all be described. How, then, can people avoid growing old and dying in anguish?

A human life lasts at most sixty years. The first twenty are spent in muddleheadedness, the middle twenty in hardship and toil, and the last twenty in worry and sorrow. How many days of satisfaction can there be?

Moreover, a person's good fortune throughout life lasts no more than fifteen years; with one careless mistake, it may not even last five. And during the years it is maintained, who knows how much hardship must be endured? How many days of genuine enjoyment can there be?

After struggling for half a lifetime, one finally acquires a piece of land, builds a house, furnishes it completely, moves in, marries, and has children. When everything is at last in order, something wholly severed from all these relations arrives—namely, death. Do you think he is heartbroken or not? He then wishes to divide what he has acquired through a lifetime of management into two portions: the tangible portion is profit, entrusted to his beloved children and grandchildren; the intangible portion is fame, entrusted to some memorial object—the meaning of the saying, "When a leopard dies, it leaves its skin."

It is truly boring in the extreme. Unable to think of any better Dharma gate, one simply decays along with the grasses and trees.

There is a most profound significance in what makes a person a human being. There must be words by which people are praised: sage, worthy, perfect person, good person, great person, and so forth. There are also fool, strange person, base person, evil person, or even nonperson. These terms indicate the meaning of being human and determine nobility or baseness, honor or disgrace.

There are further names such as great person, wealthy person, celebrated person, learned person, one who has settled matters, decisive person, initiator, and even scheming person, deceitful person, and one who harms the community. Every criticism and every praise in society expresses a person's character.

In short, those whose conduct as human beings benefits society are called sages, worthies, great persons, wealthy persons, and the like. Those who harm society likewise have various designations. This is called public reputation, and it is also called being condemned by public opinion.

Ever since social criticism and public judgment have perished, there has been no distinction between right and wrong or any impartial justice. Any Tom, Dick, or Harry need only have a little money, ride in automobiles, live extravagantly, and act without restraint to be openly regarded as a wealthy person. What the ancients called “scattering the plain honesty of simplicity and creating customs of greed and meanness”—few return to the root, while many chase after the branches—precisely describes the faults of modern people.

Yet the custom of venerating sages and worthies and respecting goodness, though no longer what it once was, has always been preserved. This shows that impartial justice resides in people’s hearts, and that salvation is still possible. It depends upon advocacy by those in high positions and inculcation through education. I often see slogans about propriety, righteousness, integrity, and shame on the streets, but what use is mere talk?

To save the modern human mind, let us not first speak of the lofty and profound principle of no-self; let us speak only of self. If there is truly a self, and if people truly know that they have a self, then they will be willing to cherish themselves, cease opposing themselves, value their good name, and seek their own true happiness.

All those who are afflicted, confused, foolish, treacherous, and evil are so because they have no sense of self. They do not know what the self is, much less how to conduct themselves as human beings. Everyone delights in long life and detests a short life. If people knew that they had a self, they would never willingly commit slow suicide, for the four maladies of anguish, confusion, foolishness, and treachery and evil can shorten one’s life.

People have two kinds of life: physical life and the life of the mind. Whoever commits these four maladies may become insane in minor cases and lose life in serious ones. Why suffer so? Therefore, those who know that they have a self will never behave in this way.

The two Chinese characters (“peace”) and (“happiness”) differ in nature. Happiness has an object—perhaps a thing, perhaps an affair—which accords with one’s wishes and gives delight. Peace is comfort in the mind and need not have an object; the mind remains at ease. Yet both arise from the mind: if the mind takes something as peaceful and happy, then it is peaceful and happy.

Happiness involves desire, while peace is freedom from fear. Where there is desire, there is pursuit; if what one seeks cannot be obtained, there is distress. Peace is easygoing: one may obtain or fail to obtain; one does not rejoice at gain or grieve at loss.

People in the world have only the happiness of pleasure, not the happiness of peace. Therefore, the most anguished people in the world are those whose minds have nowhere to rest, who cannot find tranquility, and who have no way out on either side. This is what is called poverty. Poverty means having no way. A person may be poor in possessions but must not be poor in resourcefulness. If one is poor but has a way, one will certainly not remain poor forever; if one is wealthy but has no way, one will inevitably end in poverty.

To have a way, one must first have a way in one's mind. First, one must be able to control one's mind, giving it an independent judgment and eliminating all vanity; then a way will naturally emerge. Second, once the mind is settled, one sees everything clearly; affairs become orderly, arrangements are made in advance, and matters are naturally resolved.

Moreover, anyone without a way will certainly have three bad habits: first, the mind has no settled idea and is therefore chaotic; second, one is lazy and unwilling to prepare against future contingencies; third, when the moment comes, one cannot make a firm decision. Thus, having no way when an affair arises is not a temporary condition; one had already been without a way long before. As the saying goes, where there is a cause, there will be a result. Everyone knows only to seek peace and happiness, yet does not first cultivate the causes of peace and happiness. Thus anguish has no end.

As for human nature itself, it has neither good nor evil. Good and evil are changes in the mind: now good, now evil, like scene after scene of illusory images. When a good thought suddenly arises, the evil image disappears; when a deluded thought comes, the good image disappears again. People simply have more delusion than awakening and cannot constantly maintain this good thought. Thus, deluded, they create karma and consequently undergo all kinds of suffering.

Once a thought in the mind has stirred, one cannot bring forth another mind within the mind to awaken oneself, open a different path, and turn the thought around. Instead, one continues straight ahead, going ever deeper and clinging ever more tightly, making withdrawal difficult. Therefore, people must understand cause and effect and recognize that a present cause may bring temporary gratification but will certainly bear a greater bitter result in the future. Once one awakens in dread, one stops abruptly.

To be a person, the first necessity is to establish an aspiration. To seek not learning but only profit and official rank is to have no aspiration. If women are willing to do work within the household, and men are willing to go into the countryside, then the nation will have hope. If everyone craves profit and advantage, they will inevitably

deceive one another, say what they do not mean, and fail in what they do; yet they will have already created unwholesome karma.

Everyone in the world wishes to become good, but suffering from not knowing the path is a most pitiable matter. At home there is no one to instruct them; at school there is no time to study such matters; and in society there are many harmful conditions that tempt them. Thus they are utterly confused about the direction of good and evil, the distinction between deviance and correctness, the truth of honor and disgrace, and the discernment of what is weighty and what is light.

Because the true meaning of honor and disgrace is unclear, one cannot distinguish what is weighty from what is trivial, nor discern right from wrong. How, then, can there be any standard for the direction of good and evil? Thus, understanding the truth of honor and disgrace is of utmost importance. Everyone wants to save face, yet few understand what true face is.

People do not know what constitutes honor and what constitutes disgrace. They know only that having money is honorable and poverty disgraceful. This is one of society’s fundamental errors. All worldly troubles—personal confusion, family discord, social unrest, national turmoil, and even world wars—arise from this very point.

The hope of the future world rests entirely with the younger generation. Yet young people must not continue to have the same ambitions as before: at home, knowing only how to obtain their parents' money by deceit and squander it, taking this to be honor; at school, knowing only how to obtain a diploma by deceit and taking it as glory; in society, knowing only how to obtain status, with promotion and wealth as their aim; and in political circles, knowing only how to curry favor with those in power, intrigue, and attack others. They do not realize that all these are shameful and disgraceful things.

All disputes in the world, great and small, are nothing but greed for gain. Laozi said: “Do not prize goods difficult to obtain, and the people will not become thieves. Do not display what may be desired, and the mind will not be disturbed. No misfortune is greater than not knowing contentment.” Our Eastern culture teaches people only not to contend, whereas Western doctrines merely encourage people to struggle. Leaving aside their relative refinement or crudeness, their only result is to increase distress; this is their failure. More astonishing still, those who have already suffered greatly, directly or indirectly, continue to believe in them completely. This shows that the harm caused by material desire knows no end.

In short, distress arises from greedy desires. The higher a person's position, the greater his vanity; the heavier his responsibilities, the more severe his mental suffering. This is distress at its core.

For such a person, finding a way out is more difficult than for anyone else. He does not know how to stop decisively, and so he sinks ever deeper. Since he is unwilling resolutely to let go, he ends up bound by the four Chinese characters (“vanity and face”), deprived of even the slightest freedom. Therefore, to break this stalemate of distress, one must first break free from (“vanity”). In such circumstances, there is only one word: “endure.”

Do not fear distress; distress is not permanent.

Do not fear disgrace. If you yourself are neither corrupt nor base, there is nothing shameful in the world.

Do not fear illness. Before illness arises, do not indulge the appetite; when ill, do not use medicines indiscriminately. Naturally, there will be less illness.

Do not fear poverty. So long as you are diligent, there is no need to spend wastefully.

Do not fear being abandoned by others. If you have a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness, people will naturally come to you.

Do not fear failing to be promoted. Simply be loyal to your work and patiently build up your qualifications.

Do not fear that your children will turn out badly. Educate them more, give them less money to spend, set an example yourself, and forbid lies, theft, and indulgent spoiling.

Do not fear that servants will be disloyal. You must first be generous and maintain proper discipline.

Do not fear thieves. Simply do not display wealth, associate less with criminal types, and forbid gambling.

Do not fear that your children will be unfilial; first ask yourself.

Do not fear discord between husband and wife. So long as each forgives the other and understands the other's difficulties, they must never blame one another.

Do not fear being burdened because of others. Socialize less, distribute fewer calling cards, and carefully discern whether people are upright or corrupt.

Do not fear a lack of status. You need only understand how to employ people, have the capacity to accommodate them, show consideration for human feelings everywhere, and do not slight those who are beneath you. With superiors, do not contend for fame; with subordinates, do not contend for profit; with peers, do not

contend out of pride. Be firm at heart, gracious in manner, even-tempered, and empty in mind. Be swift in your methods and yielding in your conduct. In time, you will naturally win the respect of all.

Do not fear a short life. Simply do not let the mind be greedy. If the mind can truly settle, the spirit will be at peace and one's affairs will be orderly. Sit quietly for half an hour each day without interruption, and longevity will come naturally. But never practice the non-Buddhist methods of cultivating essence, vital energy, and spirit, for they may instead cause illness.

With these dozen or more things not to fear, all distress will naturally be resolved. For everything is governed by the mind: the one that feels distress is the mind, and the one that does not regard it as distress is also this same mind. My final counsel is this: all human affairs are matters of sustaining human life. While living in this world, one must neither be too passive nor too aggressive.

It is like staying at an inn for only a few days. Why should one greedily seek luxury and refinement, decorating it beautifully, when one will soon leave it behind? Yet why should one make it excessively shabby, with doors and windows incomplete, and suffer from wind and dew? Let the body not be bound by material things, and let the mind not be entangled by honor and disgrace. Fulfill your proper duties as a human being. One must struggle free from distress before life has any savor.

In all things, do not take them as real, for taking them as real brings too much suffering; nor should you take them as unreal, for taking them as unreal is too insipid. If you can deal with this environment as neither real nor unreal, there will naturally be no obstacle that cannot be overcome. This is a good method for resolving distress fundamentally at the causal stage. Apart from this, there is no other way.

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What Use Is Buddhism in Society?

(Lecture Transcript)

Since the time of Emperor Ming of the Han, when the Buddhadharma formally came to China, more than eighteen hundred years have passed. Yet only a small number of people understand what the Buddhadharma is. Most people in society, whether learned or unlearned, have never understood its true basis.

Consequently, society has not enjoyed the benefits of the Buddhadharma in the slightest; it has long been buried in darkness. Worse still, some unworthy monastics and laypeople not only fail to communicate its true essence and wondrous function

to society, but instead create many detestable situations that give others an excuse for vehement attack. Then, living in comfort and privilege, they advance from parasites to harmful parasites. The worms within a lion's body feed on the lion's own flesh. One can readily imagine the difficulties faced by the Buddhadharma.

The prevailing public opinion in society merely takes hearsay for sight and never willingly studies the matter carefully. People vaguely say, "Buddhism is negative." Yet the sūtras plainly say that one liberates immeasurable sentient beings and accomplishes nirvāṇa without remainder—that is, Buddhahood. They also say, "If I do not enter hell, who will enter hell?" This shows that Buddhism is absolutely positive.

They also say, "Buddhism is superstition." Yet the Buddha taught that sentient beings, confused and inverted, create karma and undergo suffering; they themselves create the threefold cycle of delusion, karma, and suffering. Deluded by the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance, they must be ferried across to the shore of awakening, so that they may comprehend the true meaning of human life, and so forth. This shows that Buddhism absolutely eradicates superstition.

Moreover, there are countless people in the world who do not study Buddhism. Why, then, are they equally confused and superstitious? What the world calls superstition concerning ghosts and spirits belongs to spiritual studies and has nothing to do with Buddhism. As for the superstition of worshipping evil deities, the Buddhist scriptures explicitly state that it is of no benefit whatsoever. Those who do not read the scriptures casually make all sorts of remarks; they are truly setting a price without having seen the goods. Is that not laughable? Therefore, a truly learned person will never presumptuously advance an opinion on a matter before studying it, only to invite the laughter of the well informed.

There was originally no need to explain everything in Buddhism's past to society, nor any need to say how good the Buddhadharma is, because that would be useless. Suppose there were a medicine that could restore the dead to life. What use would it be to tell healthy people over and over of its virtues?

It is better simply to explain how to use it, so that those who genuinely feel themselves to be ill will naturally and voluntarily try it. The wonderful thing about this medicine is that, so long as one is willing to take it, it never fails to work. Once its efficacy is experienced, it becomes impossible not to believe in it. Because it possesses this real power, however circumstances may change, the Buddhadharma is never destroyed.

Therefore, I often say that stupas and temples, relics, Buddha images, sūtras, and treatises may all be destroyed, but the Buddhadharma can never be overthrown.

Why? The very thing that someone says he will overthrow is the Buddhadharma. How could it overthrow itself?

To return to the main subject and say less nonsense: I wish to offer the benefits of the Buddhadharma to a newly developing society. Those who presently consider themselves afflicted may as well try it, and will then know that it is not empty or false—not merely a Buddhism in which old women seek blessings and safety.

Fifteen years ago, I too was personally arrogant and doubtful. Later, I came across a Buddhist treatise in which every sentence expressed what was in my own heart. Only then did I realize that the Buddhadharma was not so simple, was not superstition, was not negative, and was not merely a matter of seeking the Buddha. I then aroused the resolve to study Buddhism.

Several years later, I again felt that one could not rely on sūtras and treatises alone, but had to rely completely on oneself. Only when one understands oneself does one truly study Buddhism and learn to become the same as the Buddha. Mere textual understanding is like making an empty verbal promise or writing a bad check: the bank will not pay out cash. Thus I single-mindedly entered the right path and put investigation into practice.

Now I understand, to some extent, the benefits of the Buddha. I know what Buddha is, what Dharma is, and why it is something society must have, must use, and cannot do without for even a single step. In society, the Buddhadharma is like food—like tofu and grain: it may seem unimportant, yet it is of the greatest importance.

Among all the undertakings in the world—national affairs, political affairs, family affairs, human affairs, and social affairs—the forms may constantly be renewed, but the Buddhadharma never changes. If food is compared to tofu, the Buddhadharma is a block of tofu. You may braise it, stir-fry it, season it hot and spicy, fry it in oil, make it into soup, or use it as filling.

But tofu itself cannot be changed. Only if one could make tofu without tofu could the Buddhadharma be overthrown. Therefore, dharmas undergo all kinds of arising and ceasing, whereas Buddha does not change or cease. Indeed, the Buddhadharma is not merely comparable to grain and tofu; it is the very “I” who eats the grain and tofu. Can that be overthrown?

When the Buddha taught the Buddhadharma, it was not the Dharma of “my Śākyamuni Buddha.” The first thing people must clearly recognize is that Śākyamuni Buddha did not possess a Dharma to teach others. Only when sentient beings understand their own Buddhadharma is it truly the Buddhadharma. If this point is not understood, one cannot investigate the supreme Buddhadharma. Because

people do not understand this point, the Buddhadharma seems unrelated to society.

But it is not that the Buddhadharma is unrelated; rather, people do not understand that it is related to everything, and in the most intimate and vital way. It is like a traveler who has left home, forgotten his original inheritance, and become poor. Is that not unjust and regrettable? What is Buddha? It is human possibility: the capacity arising from one's nature to manifest every kind of ability and function. This is mind.

The various transformations of mind establish many dharma gates; this is Dharma, and this is the Buddhadharma. Therefore, everyone possesses the Buddhadharma. Yet because of a misunderstanding of the name, people take it to be the Dharma of Śākyamuni Buddha. That is an enormous error—an error extending ten thousand miles away.

Buddha means awakening; it also means original awakening. Everyone possesses original awakening and the innate capacity for awakening, and therefore can undertake all manner of actions. Yet whether one's actions are right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, is another matter. Whether a block of tofu is prepared well or poorly is another question; the tofu itself has not changed. Therefore, Buddha is unmoving and unchanging, while dharmas illusorily arise and perish.

That is, intrinsic nature neither arises nor ceases, whereas mind comes and goes illusorily. If you find the two characters "Buddhadharma" too antiquated, you may change the name and call it "capacity." Capacity is its essence, and power is its function. Capacity is originally possessed, while power differs in degree. Everyone, for example, has the capacity to do things, but their strength differs, greater or lesser. Capacity is ever present; power changes. Tell me: can human capacity be abolished or overthrown?

Society is an organization of people. Each person must develop that innate capacity, provided that it is done lawfully. Thus the sūtras say, "All dharmas are Buddhadharma." A person may use a knife to save someone or to kill someone. Whether there is saving or killing lies with the person, not with the knife.

Although it is the same knife, it can both save and kill. If merit is achieved, it does not belong to the knife; if a crime is committed, what does the knife have to do with it? For people are Buddha, and the knife is Dharma. What, after all, does society truly need: people or knives? Of course it needs people—and useful people. This is an unchanging principle.

But what makes a person useful? There must be one sole condition: such a person benefits public undertakings and does not harm society. But how can a person avoid harming society? Again, there must be one sole condition: the person must be clear-

minded, not confused. Human clarity and confusion lie only in awakening and non-awakening. An awakened person will necessarily show this in many ways. As it is said, the wise are free from perplexity, the benevolent are free from worry, and the courageous are free from fear. Such clear-minded and useful people are what society most needs.

Yet everyone possesses the three virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and courage. Why, then, are people always sorrowful, confused, and afraid? It is simply because they are not awakened. They have capacity but do not know how to put it to use. Thus, when faced with poverty, they cannot help but change; when they attain wealth and rank, they unconsciously become licentious and unrestrained; when faced with power and force, they dare not refuse to submit.

Consider a household: from the head of the family down to the servants, if every person were ineffective and without independent judgment, could it still be called a household? Extend this further: if everyone were like that, could there still be a world? Everyone must develop that innate capacity and bring forth from it three strengths: meditative stability, discernment, and physical strength. Once a person has lost these three strengths, he can only become a slave to circumstances and cannot struggle against them. One who has capacity but no strength is a confused and useless person. What use does society have for such a person?

What is the strength of meditative stability? Meditative stability means not being confused when confronted by circumstances. When a person is oppressed by circumstances and changes his guiding purpose, he has lost the strength of meditative stability.

What is the strength of discernment? When one must judge a matter—its advance or retreat, gain or loss—one's vision must be broad and far-reaching. To understand clearly and see beyond others is the strength of discernment.

What is physical strength? Only when a person's body is healthy and physical strength abundant, so that hunger and fullness, cold and heat are not feared, can one undertake great responsibilities. What is called spirit as the foundation of all undertakings is this physical strength.

These three strengths are interdependent like links in a ring. First, when the strength of meditative stability is sufficient, the strength of discernment is far-reaching. No matter what difficulties arise, one can remain unperturbed and unafraid. With mind settled and spirit at ease, breath is full and blood vigorous, and one naturally becomes healthy. A healthy person naturally has firm aspirations, remains unmoved and unwavering, and possesses both courage and discernment. Thus it is clear that the three strengths cannot be separated.

How can one live amid hardship and fear without becoming ill? And how can a chronically ill person live long? Then no undertaking can develop; the implications are immense beyond measure. People often lack the strength of meditative stability. Their concern over gain and loss is deep, and their worries increase daily. When difficulties arise, they cannot resolve them or respond to them, and their suffering is beyond description.

Add to this the pressure of circumstances: inwardly and outwardly afflicted at once, people either grow old or fall ill, and if not ill, then die; some even become weary of the world and take their own lives. How can this be a blessing for society? Seeking the cause, it is because they have no way to cope. It is not that there is no way; their minds are in turmoil, so they cannot think of one, and they have no strength to resist. You see, is the relationship between these three strengths and human life not profound?

To acquire the three powers, it is not enough merely to read books and gain a little intellectual understanding; one must be able to put them into practice. When circumstances actually arise, such understanding is often of no use at all. In the late Qing period, an old scholar took several students to sit for the examinations, while he himself also entered the examinations. In ordinary times, this teacher prided himself on Neo-Confucian learning; his manner was solemn and dignified, seemingly beyond reproach. He often taught his students to cultivate the power of samādhi.

After the examinations were over, good news arrived: one of the students had passed. The student was overjoyed and, without realizing it, lost his composure. The old teacher sternly rebuked him: “You have merely passed the provincial examination and become a juren; why have you become so carried away? Where has all the power of composure that I have taught you gone?” The student then became solemn and did not dare behave recklessly. Less than half a day later, while the old teacher was urinating, someone suddenly announced that he himself had passed. Holding the chamber pot in his hand, the old teacher said nothing, but he was beside himself and actually set the chamber pot on the table. This shows that merely speaking of the power of samādhi is useless.

If we seek genuine power of samādhi, we cannot do without Buddhist dhyāna. Dhyāna means simply recognizing one’s own original mind and not being deluded by circumstances. From samādhi wisdom arises; this is the power of discernment. Those who practice dhyāna often suffer fewer illnesses and enjoy longer lives. Many people in our association who have faith and personal verification can attest to this, so there is no need to elaborate further. This is a matter of fact, supported by evidence; it is not superstition.

In the eight years since this association was established, this is the one contribution it has made to society: a genuine dharma gate that transforms suffering into health, suicidal impulses into liberation, and afflictions into joy. Yet these are still only minor benefits. As for the great work of improving one's livelihood and learning, nourishing the mind, and cultivating qi, those who practice know for themselves; there is no need to speak of it.

In short, the Buddhadharma is a teaching of the human mind: it uses mind to illuminate mind. With a clear mind, one responds to circumstances, can endure hardship and humiliation, remains steadfast and unyielding, does not turn back despite a hundred setbacks, unites great aspiration with complete conduct, discerns causes and comprehends effects, and develops people who possess both essence and function. This is the use of the Buddhadharma. Society absolutely cannot do without it.

The source of Wang Yangming's strength throughout his life lay entirely in the Buddhadharma. How has the Dharma failed society, that it should so needlessly suffer so much suspicion and slander? Is this not unjust? Yet this is not the fault of those who slander it; it is still our fault for not introducing it properly. As for those who use the Buddhadharma to swindle money and deceive people, while trying to protect themselves from death, and who thereby cause everyone to distrust Buddhism—there is no need even to discuss them.

What I have said today is not an advertisement for the Buddhadharma or an attempt to put on a show for it. It is sincerely offered to the world with an impartial mind. Any genuinely inquisitive young person may as well try it and see whether it is useful or not. If you are willing to practice dhyāna according to my method for one hundred days and find no evidence, then come and ask me.

On Mr. Wang Fengyi of the Daode Society

More than eighty years ago, there was an embodied bodhisattva named Wang Fengyi in Chaoyang County, Rehe. He came from a farming family. When he was eight or nine, he tended cattle for others. The other cowherd boys often beat the cattle, but he strongly opposed this, saying, "We are entrusted with caring for other people's cattle, just as if we were looking after their children. The animals cannot speak—why beat them?"

Such was his naturally impartial and compassionate disposition from childhood. Later, when his mother died, he lived by her grave in mourning for six years. He then entered the mountains and cultivated the Way in a cave for another three years, making a total of nine years in seated practice. Suddenly he thought: "A bodhisattva

saves the world; this is not a passive pursuit of one's own liberation. I should earnestly exhort people, descend the mountain, and liberate and transform them."

He therefore went everywhere speaking of the Way and teaching the principles of how to conduct oneself. He appeared mad and eccentric, and people could not fathom his depth. He had suffered from a tubercular bone disease, with an opening in his body that constantly discharged fluid. One day he suddenly realized the Way and said aloud to Heaven: "My illness causes foul fluid to flow from my body all day long; this shows that there are all kinds of impurities within the body."

"Yet although I single-mindedly admire goodness, I hate evil as though it were an enemy. When I see the faults and evils of others, that evil enters my own mind and body, and I too become an evil person. How could I not be ill? I must repent deeply, deeply repent! From now on, I must no longer see the faults and evils of others."

As he repented single-mindedly in this way, his illness somehow was cured. Only then did he realize the principle that all illnesses may naturally be healed through repentance. At the same time, a Mr. Yang, who also exhorted people to do good and spoke of the Way, was imprisoned on suspicion of involvement with bandits, for some unknown reason.

When Mr. Wang heard of this, he was greatly alarmed and raced into the city to rescue him. Along the way, he repeatedly cried out to Heaven, saying that a good man must not die. When he reached the city gate, it was still dark. He then suddenly awakened to the fact that human affairs have their definite causes and conditions. Mr. Yang was destined to undergo six months' imprisonment and certainly would not die; when the time came, he would naturally be delivered from this misfortune.

He then entered the city to visit Mr. Yang in prison, offering him comfort and counsel while also testifying on his behalf. Sure enough, Mr. Yang was released after six months. From then on, Mr. Wang exhorted people to do good everywhere he went, speaking of the Way to everyone he met.

There was a military officer who was also studying the Way. Having mistakenly heard someone say that Wang was a follower of a non-Buddhist path, he seized Wang without distinguishing right from wrong, brought him into the military camp, and tortured him privately. With every blow, Mr. Wang cried, "Good! Strike well!" The harder he was beaten, the louder he cried out. The officer finally had to stop; upon examining him, he found not the slightest mark of injury.

When asked why he called it good, Mr. Wang said: "I thank you for helping me realize the Way. Is that not good? I had lacked an opportunity to temper my mind; I was not merely pretending to say it was good." The officer was greatly astonished, apologized to him, and then asked him about the Way. Without realizing it, they

talked freely until midnight and became companions on the Way. From then on, everyone knew of Wang Fengyi, the man of the Way.

Mr. Wang taught the Way everywhere for forty years. His son worked in education and was absorbed in science. He strongly disapproved of the old man, saying that he was far too old-fashioned.

One day, just as Mr. Wang was about to take the platform to speak, his son went up first and wrote a list of items on the blackboard: strengthening the army, enriching the nation, promoting education, developing industry, and so on. He said that these were the urgent tasks of the day, and asked what use there was in Mr. Wang's speaking of the Way every day.

Mr. Wang did not become angry. After his son had finished speaking, he went up to the platform and said: "Every one of your points is correct; none is wrong. But others are already undertaking these things, whereas no one is undertaking my work of speaking the Way. Moreover, cultivation of the Way precisely supports the strengthening and enrichment of the country, education, and industry; it does not oppose them or seek to abolish them."

"If people possess moral character, they will naturally love their country sincerely and pursue science sincerely." Only then did his son cease to oppose him. Through Mr. Wang's forty years of tireless travel and teaching throughout North China, there are now more than 1,700 branches in the places where he taught the Way.

He placed particular emphasis on family education. He said that maternal education is the foundation of the nation; that wherever families are disharmonious and given to arrogance, extravagance, and licentiousness, it is because women are not good and drive men to do evil; and therefore that women should be gentle. As unmarried girls, they should have a disposition as soft as cotton and be harmonious, compliant, and virtuous in every respect.

A woman managing a household should have a disposition like water: neither insisting on nor rejecting anything, yet possessing firmness within gentleness, her own judgment, and strength. A grandmother should have a disposition like ashes: when old, she should not meddle in idle affairs, thereby having fewer troubles and quarrels. He also said that when children are unfilial, it is usually because their parents have not been compassionate. At the places where he taught the Way, every member, whether male or female, was expected to speak of the Way. Whenever someone was ill, that person first had to acknowledge the wrongs and evils of his or her life; then the illness would be cured. This is a general account of Mr. Wang Fengyi's life.

Mr. Wang entered parinirvāṇa in the twenty-second year, at nearly eighty years of age. Countless people were transformed by his influence. We who study Buddhism should truly be ashamed. He was illiterate, yet everything he did and realized accorded with the Way. He was indeed a bodhisattva present in the flesh.

His care for animals in childhood showed his compassion; his six years of keeping vigil at his parents' graves showed his great filial piety; his repentance for realizing that one must not hate evil showed his understanding that a bodhisattva does not see the faults of others; his descent from the mountain to save the world showed his great compassion; his rescue of Mr. Yang showed his benevolence and courage; his lack of alarm when insulted showed his impartiality toward enemies and friends; his never forgetting the Way wherever he went, and his not opposing science, showed his skillful integration and adaptability. As for his emphasis on women's education within the family, it showed his ardent concern to save the country and restore the human heart.

With forty years of such perseverance, who could equal him? How could you ridicule him as a follower of a non-Buddhist path? It is regrettable that his own causes and conditions were unfavorable and that he never heard the Mahāyāna Buddhadharma; yet everything he did accorded with the Way.

Nowadays, those who study Buddhism often do not attend to the principles of proper human conduct and understand nothing of worldly affairs or human relationships. Therefore, fundamentally, one should enter the highest vehicle and realize the mind and see one's true nature; in human affairs, one should study morality in order to put it into practice. Moreover, all dharmas are equal, without high or low; what suits the person is unsurpassable. If you do not yet even possess the qualifications for proper human conduct, do you still wish to become a Buddha? This truly reverses cause and effect and is most frightening. Although you may understand clearly in your mind-ground, you must put it into practice and follow the bodhisattva path. You should take Mr. Wang as your example; only then can you eliminate past karma and attain Buddhahood. May you all strive diligently.

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Opinions on Using Temple Property to Promote Education

A few days ago, a printed publication issued by the Chinese Buddhist Association arrived from Shanghai. Because certain members of the Central University faculty, led by a Mr. Tai, have advocated using temple property to promote education,

strong opposition has arisen. In my view, both sides have misunderstood the issue. I hope that, under the Party-state, there will be an impartial government and an informed citizenry to resolve this matter thoroughly, so as to prevent other misunderstandings from arising. Moreover, Buddhist organizations should make definite preparations before the National Assembly. I therefore set forth six points as my contribution:

(1) We are strongly in favor of using temple property to promote education. Temple property was fundamentally intended to support education; it was not intended solely to maintain monastics.

However, it should be used to promote Buddhist learning, not for other purposes; each has its proper limits. Temple property is of the same nature as the churches of the Catholic and Christian religions. Thus, if monastics do not propagate the Dharma or promote education, they have neglected their responsibilities. Buddhist organizations themselves may hold them accountable, but this must never be made a pretext for implicating the temples themselves. It is like a shop whose manager performs poorly: only the shareholders have the right to speak and dismiss the manager. How could there be any justification for confiscating the shop? Anyone with the slightest common sense should understand this principle. This is what the people of the entire country should clearly recognize.

(2) Mr. Tai's advocacy of using temple property to promote education is not without reason. But promoting education is the responsibility of the government and of everyone, not the unilateral responsibility of Buddhism. If the government reduced military expenditures by merely one percent, the educational world would shine brightly. Now that military operations have ended, promoting education is the first and most fundamental important question.

Since the government has neither adopted a passive stance nor declared that it will not assume responsibility, and has not instructed the educational community to seek solutions through temple property, the educational community should actively contend with the government on sound grounds and make legitimate demands. It should not passively abandon the government and instead seize the livelihood of defenseless monks, thereby violating public opinion.

As for the notion that the foundations of the Party-state must be consolidated by relying on temple property, such a policy is truly lamentable. After the European war, the domestic economic crises of various countries were a thousand times more severe than China's; yet because their governments adjusted matters skillfully, they soon recovered. Nor has one heard that they permitted the people to engage in any sort of property seizure against the churches of the Catholic and Christian religions.

This shows that the government has its own great plans to carry out and impartial policies of adjustment to implement. Thus, in preserving the government's prestige, it must not allow two or three persons to monopolize seizure and plunder, thereby damaging the government's dignity. This is what the government should clearly recognize.

(3) The late Premier employed the Three Principles of the People in carrying out the revolution. The revolution's success was the success of those principles; the people's faith was faith in those principles. To violate these principles is to oppose the revolution.

Therefore, monastics are not foreigners: this is nationalism. The people enjoy freedom of religious belief: this is democracy. The people and organizations possess fixed property rights: this is people's livelihood. The government has already promulgated laws and regulations stating that “temple property and Dharma objects belong to the temples,” and providing for “the propagation of doctrine, maintenance of monastic discipline, and other legitimate expenditures.” The abbot is a representative, and explicit legal protection is precisely respect for the Three Principles of the People.

If one lightly attaches to them the charge of being landlord-capitalists and wipes them all away, then among the many residents of this country who own tens of thousands of mu of land and have amassed millions in capital, not one would fail to fear for his own safety. The undertaking may not succeed, but resentment will first be created; the people will be needlessly frightened and further repelled, and will instead misunderstand the Three Principles of the People. How could this be a blessing for our Party-state? This is what the Party headquarters should clearly recognize.

(4) It cannot be denied that the corruption of unworthy monastics has deeply entered the minds of the masses. At present, apart from a few great monastic communities, several great Dharma teachers, and a small number of monastics who genuinely arouse the resolve to spread the Way, most are hardly worth speaking of. At bottom, this is simply the poison of property: accustomed to comfort and privilege, they are unwilling to spread the Way.

Take Beijing alone. Fayuan Temple, which possesses the most property, is involved in lawsuits year after year and changes abbots month after month; it is truly an intolerable situation. This shows that using temple property to promote Buddhist learning is the donors' great aspiration. If it is used as private property, it only creates much evil karma and loses sight of the donors' original intention. It would then be better to invite demons into the house and have it all seized, so that matters might at least be cleanly settled.

In my view, in an age governed by the Way, temple property can be used to promote the teaching; in an inverted age, it can instead harm the teaching. Things must first decay of themselves before worms arise. Formerly, lay Buddhists painstakingly urged monastics to propagate the Dharma and spread the teaching. When did they ever heed a single word? Yet when calls from outside to seize their property arose, they gathered like ants to seek help, not realizing that the rise and decline of the Buddhadharma lie solely in the human mind.

The human mind is the Buddha-mind; when the mind-ground is pure, that is the Pure Land. If a practice center genuinely propagates the Dharma with a true heart, people will naturally come forward to protect it, and it need not panic. Otherwise, demons are summoned by oneself; even a wise and enlightened government or devoted lay practitioners will be unable to protect it. Even if a great bodhisattva manifests a Vajra aspect, it is only to protect the Dharma, not to protect property. First, action must be taken against monastics who overthrow discipline and fail to observe the pure rules. This is what the monastic community should clearly recognize.

(5) Since the relation of temple property is as stated above, it is clear that temple property has its own legitimate uses. Henceforth, the Buddhist community will naturally undertake reforms of its own; it must never simply allow outsiders to seize it. You need not trouble yourselves over this. Moreover, temple property is the sovereignty of an established organization: donors entrust monastics with promoting Buddhism and conducting Buddhist learning.

If the monastics fail to do so, that is their fault. How could it be considered settled merely because a third party has seized the property? Suppose A gives money to B and entrusts B with a task. B steals the money and does not carry out the task; then C suddenly comes and seizes B's money. The two are equally culpable. Let the matter be examined according to legal procedures—would that be right or not? This is also what the Promotion Association should clearly recognize.

(6) Since the establishment of the Republic, Buddhist organizations have had no practical measures concerning temple property beyond requesting government protection. Because the government respects the late Premier's teachings and takes public opinion into account, it has explicitly ordered protection, without going too far. Yet lay Buddhists have considered that, once the government issued an explicit order, their responsibility was finished, and they have taken no further interest in the matter.

Thus unworthy monastics again became as lax as before, entirely without repentance or reform. If this continues, there will ultimately be no resolution. In my

humble opinion, lay Buddhists should henceforth understand the issue clearly: we protect the Dharma, not property; yet neither can we allow outsiders to seize it.

With regard to the government, we should present practical measures and give expression to the true spirit of our Buddhist community. We should unite the renowned fourfold assembly of north and south, discuss together a permanent solution, and request that the government establish a Ministry of Rites and Religion, with provincial Bureaus of Rites and Religion.

In fact, the government should also establish some organization for its specialized affairs in Mongolia and Tibet, in the interest of frontier administration, as well as for the management of Catholic and Christian missionary affairs in various countries, in order to enhance its authority. It is only because no one has proposed this that the government has had no means of proceeding.

If the government had such an understanding, all reorganization could be placed under the Ministry of Rites and Religion and carried out with bold and decisive measures. This would save both monks and those who seize property from creating disorder, which instead brings enormous and undeserved harm upon monastics who truly practice austerities and creates opportunities for a new crop of local riffraff.

As for using Buddhist property today to promote Buddhist learning, if it is handled properly, how could anyone dare to defy justice and openly oppose it? How could Mr. Tai and the others possibly fail to express their agreement? We must certainly not continue the old routine of issuing two circular telegrams, calling in favors from a few places, and then considering the matter finished.

I venture to say that, for more than a decade, we lay Buddhists must bear half the responsibility for procrastination and missed opportunities. If we truly arouse bodhicitta, we should bring forth all skillful means of great compassion together. Thus the final solution requires the combined strength and unanimous position of the fourfold assembly. This is what lay Buddhists should clearly recognize, and I especially hope that everyone will give it close attention.

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The Essential Meaning of Not Raising a Toast on One’s Birthday

A human life of a hundred years passes like a white colt flashing through a crevice: from youth to maturity to old age, it is but the time of a finger snap. Thus, on occasions of joy and celebration, people offer congratulations; in times of sorrow and calamity, they offer condolences.

Why, then, do people not offer congratulations on birthdays but instead offer wishes? Because a person's lifespan diminishes with each passing moment and is not something to celebrate. One can only wish them enduring health until they reach a venerable age. Clearly, this is not an occasion for celebration. There are two causes for longevity in this world: first, not taking life in previous lives; second, being less given to anger and vexation in this life.

If one now wishes to create the causes for longevity in future lives, one must plant the seeds at the causal stage. It is not fitting to hold lavish banquets involving much killing and harm. Therefore, beyond holding a family celebration, one should seek the means of extending life in this world; there is no gift surpassing the gift of Dharma. The gift of Dharma is to encourage people through the Buddhadharma, set their wisdom-life aright, and enable them all to ascend to the realm of immeasurable life.

Human life is fundamentally of two kinds. The first is bodily life. In the ancient age of increase, some lived to eighty thousand years, yet this still belongs to arising and ceasing. The second is wisdom-life: this spiritually aware and wise nature, which never arises or ceases and is therefore called immeasurable. Yet when this spiritual nature is tainted by emotional desire and worldly burdens increase day by day, one's bodily life correspondingly diminishes. Those who now enjoy great longevity must have light desires and few vexations; since they do not exhaust their vital energy and blood, their lives naturally endure. As the saying goes, "The benevolent live long." This is indeed no falsehood.

Elder Aunt Shi, Madam Jiang, is now eighty years old. Madam Jiang comes from a distinguished family of Shanghai. Benevolent, compassionate, chaste, and filial, she is admired by all her relatives and acquaintances. She reveres the Buddha and keeps a vegetarian diet, becoming ever more devout with age. When she was in her twenties, she developed insomnia, which persisted for nearly fifty years, and no medicine proved effective.

In the spring of the ren-shen year, she took refuge with Dharma Master Dayu and received the Heart-of-Heart Dharma. She sat in meditation for two hours each day, and her illness suddenly disappeared. She has now completed more than eight hundred meditation sessions. Valiant and diligent, her mind never retreats. Each time she pays homage to the Buddha, she can still make more than a hundred

prostrations. The strength of her waist and legs is such that younger people often sigh that they cannot compare with her.

In the early winter of this year, her colleagues and friends proposed to celebrate Madam Jiang's birthday publicly. Her honored son, Dharma brother Shaobu, respectfully followed her compassionate wishes: rather than make elaborate arrangements, he would print and distribute many exhortatory writings for the benefit of the world, so that relatives and friends might all receive blessings and together reach the realm of longevity. This book is one of them. I hope that those in the world who read these words will love others through virtue, dedicate the merit to her filial aspiration, transform customs and change prevailing ways, and further disseminate them widely. The merit and virtue of extending life in this world will then surpass the gift of the seven treasures of the three thousand worlds.

Respectfully recorded with bows in the tenth month of the bing-zi year of the Republic of China, by your worldly foolish nephew, Wang Xianglu.

Extending Life for Men and Women Throughout the World

There are two kinds of longevity. The first is intrinsic longevity: immeasurable life, the unborn and undying vajra nature equally possessed by all, which has endured throughout the ages and never changes or perishes. Thus it is said to be free from aging and death. The birth and death we now experience are like a gold vessel returned to the furnace and recast: the vessel's form may change at any time, but the substance of the gold never changes. The second is bodily longevity. In the most ancient times, human life spans reached eighty thousand years; declining to the present day, eighty or ninety years is considered advanced age. Its value lies only in its comparative rarity; it is not yet enough to speak of its excellence.

What makes longevity valuable lies in virtue, not in years. If this body can be preserved for eighty or ninety years, or even beyond a hundred, the capacity that preserves it has qualities beyond ordinary reach. This is what makes it valuable. There are seven meanings:

1. A person's duration in this world is like the thickness, thinness, strength, or weakness of a vessel: what is sturdy endures for a long time. Human beings depend primarily on vital energy; those whose vital energy is abundant live long. This is the value of such virtue.

2. Those who live long must have prior causes. All who are benevolent and compassionate and do not delight in killing live long; those who are honest and not deceitful live long; those who are seldom angered live long; those whose bearing is

grave and composed and whose capacity is broad live long. This is the surpassing quality of such virtue.

3. Those of long life necessarily have much experience. Heaven surely preserves such examples for the benefit of later generations. Therefore, elders are advisers in human experience, and their relation to the fortunes of the world is of great importance. From the end of the Zhou dynasty through the Qin and Han dynasties, there were many elders. After the burning of the books, the broad recovery of ancient culture depended upon elders' recitations. This shows how valuable and worthy of respect elders are. Thus, longevity in this world is to be valued.

4. Among the five blessings in the Great Plan, longevity comes first. In common usage people speak of blessings, emolument, and longevity; Tibetans, however, place longevity first, saying longevity, blessings, and emolument. This means that blessings and emolument are fundamentally insubstantial, whereas longevity is comparatively real. This too values its virtuous quality.

5. The benevolent live long. Benevolence does not refer solely to kindness and compassion. A benevolent person understands human affairs and the principles of things. The character ren ( ) consists of "two" and "person," signifying the full realization of the human way. Moreover, ren is also the character tian ( ): Heaven is written as the combination of two persons, signifying conformity with heavenly principle. Only the benevolent can fully realize the human way and accord with heavenly principle, for they do not act exclusively for themselves but also for others. To take others as foremost is inseparable from great compassion. This virtue is especially valuable.

6. When a family has an elder, it is as if it enjoys the shelter of a great tree; its blessings extend to later descendants. Hence it is called a family blessing. A nation is formed from families, and virtuous families influence society. This is something to be respected and celebrated. Moreover, those who enjoy long life must have many blessings. Those with blessings are also relied upon and benefited from by others, and are a glory to their village and community.

During the Qianlong reign of the former Qing dynasty, there was a long-lived person in Jiaxing who reached the age of 120. The government bestowed upon him a plaque reading "The Sixty-Year Cycle Completed Twice." When he reached 140, it bestowed another plaque reading "The Ancient Rarity Seen Again." The entire country regarded him as an honor and acclaimed him as a human auspicious sign. Such was the preciousness attributed to him.

7. When there are long-lived people in the world, others naturally seek the reasons for their longevity and see their kindness, gentleness, and fraternal warmth. This can reveal the coldness and superficiality of worldly ways and transform social customs,

so that the people's virtue naturally grows more generous. Seeing their joy and ease, one may admonish oneself: be less irritable, more tolerant and harmonious, and learn from them first to endure hardship and later enjoy sweetness; do not contend for temporary fame and gain, but cultivate fields of blessing for the future.

In this way, everyone may enjoy long life. Can its honor and value still be fully expressed? As for the fine virtues displayed in the daily lives of those who live long, the people of their locality naturally know them in detail and praise them as an example. These words are now offered to encourage those in the world who seek longevity. Long life is what people delight in, but the cause of longevity lies in cultivating virtue. This is bodily longevity.

Bodily longevity is limited; therefore, it is all the more important to study Buddhism. This is intrinsic longevity. Intrinsic longevity is inexhaustible. To advance from worldly longevity to vajra-nature longevity is the unsurpassed treasure.

I now offer blessings to elders throughout the world and specially transmit the Vajra Life-Extension Practice, wishing that everyone may cultivate blessings and wisdom together and enjoy immeasurable longevity.

Vajra Life-Extension Practice (practiced by reciting the Samantabhadra Life-Extension Dhāraṇī Mantra)

Oṃ. Vajra. Yúshān svāhā.

(The syllable yu is extremely important; pronounce it as yóu, drawing out the third tone. Shan is pronounced sa.)

Whether male or female, anyone who is often ill or advanced in years and fears that they may not have time to complete Buddhist practice may first cultivate this practice. Each day, using prayer beads, softly recite thirty rounds, totaling 3,240 recitations. Do not divide the recitation into two sessions; once interrupted, it does not count, and one must begin the practice again. Do not practice after the hour of Hai (9–11 p.m.). Complete the practice in thirty-four days. If one misses a day in the middle, one must begin again and practice for another thirty-four days.

When practicing, it is best to face north. Each day make vows and dedicate the merit. Do not practice solely to seek long life for yourself in this one lifetime; practice in order to accomplish Buddhahood and liberate sentient beings. If you fulfill the fundamental vow of great compassion, the efficacious response will be inconceivable. During practice, bow with reverence and do not be careless. Those who are ill may also practice while lying down, but they must not recite aloud.

Respectfully recorded by lay practitioner Wang Xianglu of Renzhi, in the third month of the Yiyou year, the thirty-fourth year of the Republic of China.

(This article appeared in the combined issues 58–59 of the semimonthly Awakening Sentient Beings, 1942.)

The Problem of Killing

The cycle of killing and retribution, the fundamental principle of cause and effect, is in itself extremely plain and ordinary. If one kills another's father, others will likewise kill one's father. Yet people instead regard this as trite, or dismiss it as superstition. They treat writings on refraining from killing and releasing life as no better than the Treatise on Response and Retribution of the Exalted One, unworthy of reading, and mock others as old-fashioned and behind the times. One should understand that, in an age when science is flourishing and people's minds are especially impatient, one should not exhort others through superstition, but explain matters according to real principles, so that they may understand and not fall into misunderstanding.

Writings on refraining from killing place exclusive emphasis on slaughtering birds, livestock, and the like, and thereby have already lost the meaning of refraining from killing. Killing people, suicide, intentions to kill, acts of killing, instructing others to kill, and assisting in killing must all be strictly prohibited. Thus the subject becomes broader, and people will more readily become alert to it.

In general, there is no one who does not think of benefiting oneself. But if one wishes to benefit oneself, one must first give to others. If I wish to obtain something, then before obtaining it I must offer another person an equivalent price, and that person will thereby repay me. If I wish to be insulted, I must first curse and humiliate others.

If I seek someone to kill me or kill my father or elder brother, then I too must first kill that person or kill his father or elder brother. This is an unalterable principle. There is no principle by which, after I have insulted or killed someone, that person would instead repay me with goodwill and gratitude. Even if the person who has been killed has no power to resist at the time, his consciousness does not ultimately disperse and perish; if he is reborn later and takes revenge, this too accords with the cycle from which one cannot escape. Even if future lives are remote and unseen, his children, relatives, and people of his kind will certainly not abandon revenge. This is precisely harming oneself, not benefiting oneself; no folly could surpass it.

At first, it is indeed not easy to persuade people to refrain from killing and to release animals. One should know that those fond of killing develop it into a habit. Once their hands have become accustomed to it, they may unconsciously find it easy to kill people as well. There was once a butcher who killed someone while drunk. When he sobered up, he deeply regretted it; when he struck, he had even mistaken the

person for a pig. Such a self-cultivated habit becomes indirect self-destruction. How pitiable!

When a person fond of killing forms the intention to kill, the mind is already terrified and uneasy. The person's own heart, liver, and lungs contract, expand, and are violently shaken, and cannot escape injury. Afterwards, remorse causes the mind to become disordered; one starts awake in sleep and suffers intensely. Moreover, the whole body becomes filled with harmful electrical forces, drawing in all manner of malign influences from without. The air of hatred, venom, resentment, and anger alone is enough to shorten one's life; what possible benefit could there be?

People give rise to ill will through suspicion and jealousy, and hatred and venom arise from ill will. Their hearts are already burning first, and their blood is depleted as a result. Amid all kinds of schemes and terrors, what pleasure can there possibly be? One's original intention is to seek happiness, yet this matter is itself unhappy from the outset. Is this not the height of folly and stupidity?

Someone may say, "If bandits and thieves attack, are we still to speak of refraining from killing and releasing life? That too would be contrary to human feeling." The answer is: "Yes. But resisting bandits is itself proper; in such a case, the matter must be discussed separately."

Now suppose that I were suddenly seized by bandits and, just as they were about to kill me, how could my terror and venomous resentment be described? If someone suddenly came and pleaded on my behalf, asking that I be released, how could my gratitude be described? The terror, venomous resentment, gratitude, and joy of my father, elder brothers, children, and relatives would likewise be beyond description. But just as they were about to release me, suppose another person suddenly came and strenuously prevented my release, insisting that I be killed.

At that moment, my resentful terror would surely increase tenfold or a hundredfold; and when my father, elder brothers, and children heard of it, their resentment toward that person would likewise increase tenfold or a hundredfold. When they later took revenge, they would certainly kill first the person who obstructed my release. This too is an unalterable principle.

Yet when I am bound, I can still speak up and express my feelings. As for animals, which cannot speak and lack the strength to resist, their resentment, terror, and gratitude are in fact exactly the same as those of human beings. If we compare them with ourselves, how can we not feel sorrow? What other matter in the world could compare with the misery of the karma of killing? Why, then, should people wish to kill living beings? This principle is visible before our very eyes; why do people not recognize it?

There are no more than two reasons why people kill living beings to satisfy their appetites. First, they take them for food. They say that if people did not eat chickens, ducks, fish, and meat, chickens and ducks would soon be everywhere and fish would fill the rivers. Yet people do not eat cats, dogs, tigers, or leopards; why, then, are they not seen in overwhelming numbers? Second, they say that killing living beings strengthens the body.

Thus they consume chicken soup and meat broth every day, believing them nourishing. They do not realize that country people, who have only vegetables and coarse food, are instead physically robust. Moreover, people who hope for bodily strength would most like to be as powerful as oxen and as strong as horses. Yet oxen and horses eat only fodder and have no chicken broth to nourish them; chickens too eat only coarse food and have never eaten ginseng. The principle is very clear; why do people not understand it?

Those who eat meat necessarily have two ailments: first, ardent sexual desire; second, greed for food and a habit of laziness. Therefore, those who fuss over food are bound to be physically weak and frequently ill, and they will also fail to attend to proper occupations. Those truly busy with affairs will have no leisure to concern themselves with food. The ancients said, “One who aspires to the Way yet is ashamed of poor clothes and poor food is not worth discussing with.” If one cultivates comfort and laziness, one’s stupidity comes close to that of a pig. What is there to value in it?

Repeated illness after illness is largely due to an unregulated diet. Rich foods generate phlegm and aggravate internal heat; when digestive power is weak, illness is especially likely. What is there to value in this? Besides, a month of nourishment cannot offset a single morning of anger or one sleepless night. If killing living beings truly prolonged life, then all wealthy families would live to eighty or ninety, while country people would all die young. The principle is very clear; why do people not understand it?

Consider those who flee famine in years of scarcity. In times of disorder and displacement, they often cannot endure hardship and consequently fall ill and die. Because they were too accustomed to comfort in ordinary times, what harms them today is precisely the chickens, ducks, fish, and meat of former days. This is truly self-harm. The principle is very clear; why do people not understand it?

In sum, killing living beings is a habit. Leaving all else aside, in managing a household or governing a nation in these present times, the former extravagance of wine and food is already excessive and should trouble the conscience. One should all the more reduce food consumption as a sign of frugality. Moreover, people relish

strange foods, such as monkey brains taken by cutting open a living monkey; this is especially injurious to the principles of Heaven.

Though all are equally living beings, such inequality prevails. Misfortune and evil events will certainly come upon such a person and such a household; they cannot be avoided. Moreover, it gives children an invisible education before their eyes, cultivating cruel habits in them. How could this be a family blessing? There is no need even to wait for retribution in a future life; unbearable consequences already appear in the present.

There was once a friend named Chen Richu, a purchasing agent for A. S. Watson & Company. He was extremely particular about food in ordinary life, but was later killed by his cook over some matter. The cook's mind contained nothing but kitchen knives; every day he was accustomed only to slaughtering, and his hand had become facile with a knife—it came naturally. There are also many soldiers who have been shot and killed by their subordinates, because they themselves were habitually accustomed to using guns, and their minds likewise contained only this one thing. Here one can see the harm of habit. The principle is again very clear; why do people not understand it?

In a certain place in England, near a slaughterhouse, many children also tried using axes to chop and injure the legs of calves. Recognizing the harmful influence of such education, the British government took this as a serious warning and did not permit children to visit slaughterhouses, fearing that it would become a habit. After killing for a long time, they may even kill people with axes. How frightening, how frightening!

All undertakings in the world are formed by imitation; evil precedents must truly not be set. If people cannot immediately abstain from meat, they may buy and eat what is already available, rather than insisting on slaughtering animals and thereby increasing evil karma. Above all, they should recognize with gratitude that killing living beings brings harm and no benefit, and earnestly practice refraining from it. This can indeed reduce misfortune and increase good fortune. The calamities of war in the world are all formed from resentful energies. Eastern culture takes the compassionate mind of Buddhism as its foundation. When humane influence is felt, good causes will certainly bring good results. This must not be overlooked.

Refraining from killing must begin with compassion within the family. People often abuse maidservants and child brides; this evil is worse than killing living beings, for when they strike them, they hate them so intensely that they wish to beat them to death at once. They are filled with the intention to kill and must receive evil retribution. In the twenty-fourth year of the Republic of China, there was a female student from my native district who cruelly abused a maidservant in an utterly

inhuman manner. I personally saw her die of illness, her entire body ulcerated and without a patch of unbroken skin. This was because the vicious energies she habitually kept filling her breast and heart turned her blood into hot poison. Such are the consequences even of killing without purpose or awareness.

Essentials for Beginning Buddhist Practice

If people in the world wish to rid themselves of suffering and vexation, avert calamities, gain health, and preserve wealth and honor, they must first realize the mind. Once the mind is clear, they will not create karma or commit evil; calamities will naturally keep their distance, and body and mind will be at ease. But to realize the mind, one must study Buddhism; and in studying Buddhism, one must seek for oneself. Seeking the Buddha yields one part; seeking oneself yields seven. This is the right cause; there is no second method. Those new to Buddhism should first read this book and make realization of the mind their foundation; it contains the marvel of entering the hall in a single step.

Memorial Inscription for the Ullambana Festival, Seventh Month of the Bingzi Year, Mind-Seal Vihara, Tianjin

This month is the Festival of Joy for Buddhas and devas, and people too should rejoice. Yet the foremost joy in human life is none greater than studying Buddhism. Why should people study Buddhism? Studying Buddhism is seeking awakening. For in this human world, there is nothing that is not felt to be suffering; the Buddha is supreme bliss. If people wish to leave suffering and attain happiness, they must understand that suffering and happiness lie in the mind, not in the body, nor in poverty, wealth, status, or lowliness. Therefore, they should study Buddhism.

Let us first speak of two kinds of people: the poor and lowly, and the wealthy and eminent. Their respective sufferings may be compared as follows. The principal suffering of the poor and lowly lies in seeking to obtain what they lack. They have four subsidiary sufferings: first, fear of pressure from creditors; second, fear of illness or premature death; third, fear of being slighted by others and losing face; fourth, failing to obtain what they seek as they wish. The principal suffering of the wealthy and eminent lies in seeking to lose nothing.

They have fifteen subsidiary sufferings: first, fear of thieves; second, fear of requests for loans; third, fear of solicitations for donations; fourth, fear of losing face; fifth, the toil and hardship of managing and operating property; sixth, fear that changing times may unsettle one’s enterprise; seventh, fear of illness or premature death; eighth, fear of pressure from enemies; ninth, the concern that one has no trusted confidants among those one employs; tenth, domestic irritation, quarrels, and frequent illness; eleventh, children and grandchildren running wild; twelfth,

discomfort when traveling or in daily living; thirteenth, fear that one's children and grandchildren will be deceived by others; fourteenth, the suffering of tiresome social obligations and constant busyness; fifteenth, failing to obtain what one seeks as one wishes. From this, it may be seen that the sufferings of the wealthy and eminent are actually greater than those of the poor and lowly.

There are many kinds of suffering, collectively called the eight sufferings. What are the eight sufferings?

1. The suffering of birth. Greed is its general cause. Through craving and desire, one enters and emerges from the womb, undergoes all kinds of suffering and vexation, comes and goes through birth and death, and revolves through the six realms.

2. The suffering of aging. From birth to death, it is an inevitable condition one must pass through. This body is by nature subject to arising and ceasing, changing at every moment. Even a newborn child continually ages and changes: from childhood to adulthood, from adulthood to decline and old age, until the hair turns white and the teeth fall out. This suffering goes unnoticed because it is subtle.

3. The suffering of illness. Indulging greed, anger, and ignorance is its general cause, and one thereby receives this painful result. Yet most of its painful causes are created midway through life or temporarily by oneself.

4. The suffering of death. With respect to this life, it is its ending and is called a painful result. With respect to future lives, it turns into new causes, and whether suffering or happiness will result remains undetermined.

5. The suffering of not obtaining what one seeks. Greed is its general cause.

6. The suffering of separation from those one loves. Ignorance is its general cause.

7. The suffering of meeting those one hates. Anger is its general cause.

8. The suffering of the blazing intensity of the five aggregates. Doubt and fear are its general causes, with unease and lack of freedom as their painful results.

Sentient beings, whether poor or wealthy, eminent or lowly, ultimately cannot escape these eight sufferings. There are only differences of degree, and distinctions between the present and the future. Those with wisdom first prevent future suffering and vexation by working at the causes. This is understanding cause and effect; but one must first understand the sources of these eight sufferings.

Before suffering is received, the causal ground consists only of creating karma: wholesome karma brings happiness, and unwholesome karma brings suffering. Before karma is created, the causal ground divides only into delusion and

awakening: delusion creates unwholesome karma, while awakening creates wholesome karma. Thus delusion, karma, and suffering are the fixed cycle of entering birth and death. Delusion in the mind is the initiating cause; the body's creation of unwholesome karma is the supporting condition for entering birth and death; and having birth and death, thereby undergoing suffering and vexation, is the painful result. Unwholesome karma consists of the forms of the ten evil acts. What are the ten evil acts? And how does this cycle proceed?

The ten evil acts are these: the three evils of mind—greed, anger, and ignorance; the four evils of speech—divisive speech, harsh speech, false speech, and frivolous speech; and the three evils of body—killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. These are called the ten evil acts.

Among the ten evil acts, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are the most extreme evils and also the beginning of suffering. Yet they follow a definite pattern of cause and effect. Their cycle is as follows:

Question: Why are there killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and the four evils of speech, such as divisive speech? Answer: Because of greed, anger, and ignorance.

Question: Why are there the four sufferings, such as not obtaining what one seeks, that press upon us? Answer: Because of accumulated suffering—that is, suffering formed by the conjunction of mind and circumstances.

Question: Why is there accumulated suffering? Answer: Because the sense faculties and their objects have not fallen away—that is, because the six sense faculties and six sense objects are entangled with one another.

Question: Why have the sense faculties and their objects not fallen away? Answer: Because the mind is not liberated.

Question: Why is the mind not liberated? Answer: Because the mind-ground is not clear.

Question: Why is the mind-ground not clear? Answer: Because there is no power of wisdom's illumination.

Question: Why is there no power of wisdom's illumination? Answer: Because the mind has no mastery and no meditative stability.

Question: Why does the mind have no mastery and no meditative stability? Answer: Because one does not cultivate.

Question: Why does one not cultivate? Answer: Because one has not heard the true Dharma.

Question: Why has one not heard the true Dharma? Answer: Because one has not encountered a good spiritual friend.

Question: Why has one not encountered a good spiritual friend? Answer: Because one is not deeply earnest and instead associates with bad companions.

Question: Why is one not deeply earnest and instead associates with bad companions? Answer: Because one's understanding and views are incorrect, and one's power of wisdom is insufficient.

Question: Why are one's understanding and views incorrect, and one's power of wisdom insufficient? Answer: Because of delusion.

Question: Why is there delusion? Answer: Because of creating karma.

Question: Why is karma created? Answer: Because of undergoing suffering.

Question: Why does one undergo suffering? Answer: Because one cultivates the ten evil acts. Thus the cycle turns.

Because one cultivates the ten evil acts, one undergoes great suffering and vexation. Because suffering becomes extreme, one feels moved to arouse the resolve and turn back. Because one arouses the resolve and turns back, one seeks a teacher in whom to take refuge. Because one finds a teacher, one is able to hear the true Dharma. Because one hears the true Dharma, awakening wisdom opens. Because awakening wisdom opens, one is neither deluded nor swayed. Because one is no longer deluded, one does not create unwholesome causes, crosses beyond all suffering and adversity, and no longer clings in the mind. Then one transcends birth and death; this is called becoming a Buddha.

What is a Buddha? Buddha means awakening. To seek the Buddha is to seek awakening—to seek one's own awakening, which is no different from the Buddha's. Śākyamuni Buddha and others were those who awakened earlier, people who serve as examples.

When we study Buddhism, it is like copying a painting: after looking at the model, the important thing is still to paint it ourselves. If we merely look at the model and do not set our own hands to work, we will ultimately remain a blank sheet of paper. This is deceiving oneself; it is the utmost folly in the world. The ancients said: "The wise seek the mind, not the Buddha; the foolish seek the Buddha, not the mind."

One must understand that the Buddha must be sought, and the mind must also be sought. When one seeks until one's own awakening wisdom opens, one has learned to become a Buddha—but this does not mean being transformed into some other Buddha. For people are originally capable of becoming Buddhas. Before Śākyamuni

became a Buddha, he too was deluded just as we are; only because he awakened earlier and cultivated earlier did he attain Buddhahood earlier. Again, a Buddha is like an engraved seal, while I am like an unengraved seal. In essence, both are a fine piece of stone—not tofu, not a lump of powder. We should never mistake self-effacement for reverence.

Again, Buddhas and people are not different in the slightest. Ordinary people are like drunkards: while drunk, they are indeed confused and inverted, yet nothing is truly lost; once they sober up, they return to how they were before. Therefore, there are no truly bad people in the world. It is also like a house that has fallen into disrepair: if one cannot repair it oneself, it will remain dilapidated.

Yet there are people who were bad yesterday and are good again today. This shows that yesterday they were not truly bad; once they change, they become good. But although it is easy to turn good, it is also easy to turn bad. They cannot, like sages, remain good forever. Thus sages and ordinary people are nondual in essence. The only difference is between delusion and awakening, cultivation and non-cultivation.

The meaning of cultivation is simply to return to one's original state. For people are originally awakened and originally free of suffering. They merely become suddenly deluded midway and mistakenly enter an evil path. They need only withdraw from it and return to the original ground of awakening; then they will know that their former mistaken entry was but a futile dream.

The aim of cultivation is realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature. The first condition lies in one's own aspiration: only if one is truly earnest and willing to cultivate will it be beneficial. For example, if one lacks rice, one must buy grain; if one lacks necessities, one must seek wealth. If one lacks nothing, there is no need to seek.

People today may be divided into three kinds. First are those who have no time to cultivate, being busy making a living and having no leisure for this. Second are those who feel no need to cultivate, believing that their clothing, food, and housing are sufficient and that they have no illness or suffering, so cultivation is unnecessary. Third are those who wish to cultivate but have no way to begin. This group is further divided into four kinds: first, those whose aims are incorrect, such as those seeking blessings and karmic rewards; second, those who do not understand the rationale of the Dharma; third, those for whom the Dharma is not suited to their capacity; fourth, those lacking teachers and guidance. These are differences in causes and conditions. Yet whether people cultivate or not, their aim is always to seek happiness and leave suffering behind.

Those unwilling to cultivate mistakenly regard cultivation as something painful, but fundamentally they too seek happiness. Those willing to cultivate, though they know

to seek happiness, do not understand the principle of ultimate happiness. The original vow of Buddhas and bodhisattvas is compassion. Loving-kindness is giving happiness, and compassion is removing suffering. To bring people to ultimate happiness is supreme bliss.

But giving happiness does not mean that the Buddha possesses some happiness to give; removing suffering does not mean that the Buddha removes suffering on another's behalf. The Buddha merely gives a method, teaching people to remove suffering and obtain happiness for themselves; whether they remove it or obtain it depends on themselves. Using one's own power of meditative stability and wisdom, one sees that suffering and happiness are distinctions made by the mind. When one takes something as suffering, it is suffering; when one takes it as happiness, it becomes happiness. If one understands this principle and contemplates all things as empty, one crosses beyond suffering and adversity oneself. Thus the distinction between suffering and happiness lies only in differences of level within one's mental outlook.

I

Ordinary people

They take adequate clothing, food, and housing as happiness.

They take lacking clothing, food, and housing as suffering.

II

People of high aspiration

Clothing, food, and housing need not necessarily be adequate; they seek only fame as happiness.

They take being unable to hold their heads high and give full expression to themselves as suffering.

III

Ascetics and arhats

They fear having adequate clothing, food, and housing, seeking only to attain Buddhahood quickly for themselves, without understanding benefiting others.

They regard wealth and honor as a burden, and take being unable to cultivate in purity as suffering. These are merely those who cultivate rigidly without skillful means.

IV

Bodhisattvas who have aroused the resolve

They do not seek adequate clothing, food, and housing, but only enough to get by; they take realizing the mind and benefiting others as happiness.

They regard being unable to liberate sentient beings as suffering. They cultivate wisdom together with merit, but place primary emphasis on cultivating wisdom.

Five

A person of great wisdom: a bodhisattva who has entered a bhūmi

They need not regard food, clothing, and shelter as insufficient. If they have them, they enjoy them; if not, they do not seek them forcibly.

They regard being unable to attain great accomplishment in this life as suffering. They cultivate merit and wisdom equally, as nondual.

Six

A person of great accomplishment: a Buddha

Neither suffering nor pleasure obstructs them; indeed, there is no longer any so-called suffering or pleasure. They attain the joy of great freedom.

There is no suffering; merit and wisdom are complete.

Worldly Happiness

Supramundane Happiness

Clothing, food, shelter, fame, profit, respect, and so forth—the five desires of wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. (Bodily pleasure)

Clothing, food, shelter, and everything else remain as before, but one does not greedily cling to them. So long as the mind is free of hindrance, one constantly attains the joy of freedom. (Mental pleasure)

Because it is impermanent, limited, and subject to arising and ceasing, it is not ultimate and in the end becomes suffering.

It is ultimate joy; its happiness is limitless, and it is ultimately happiness without suffering.

First, it emphasizes the body; second, it has arising and ceasing; third, it can be taken away; fourth, it is limited; fifth, it does not last, but only for one lifetime; sixth, comparison gives rise to suffering; seventh, it is gained amid hardship, and even while enjoying it, the mind is constantly afraid.

First, it emphasizes the mind; second, it has no arising or ceasing; third, it cannot be taken away; fourth, it is limitless; fifth, it endures forever through countless ages; sixth, it is beyond comparison and brings great freedom; seventh, it is attained through cultivating and realizing merit and virtue, so one may enjoy it peacefully and freely, with no fear of gain or loss.

Most evil deeds in the world are committed by suffering people. Why are suffering people willing to do evil? Solely because their minds are confused. Thus, delusion is the cause, creating karma is the condition, and undergoing suffering is the result. Reversing this, suffering becomes the cause, delusion the condition, and creating karma the result. This is called the threefold cycle of delusion, karma, and suffering. Now, through cultivation one opens wisdom; through wisdom one knows emptiness; through emptiness one attains samādhi; and samādhi is freedom from delusion. Wisdom, samādhi, and emptiness are likewise a threefold cycle. Therefore, people with blessings generally do not commit evil, but when they do, it is a great evil; when they turn themselves around, it is again a great good.

Therefore, even cultivating worldly blessings is not easy. If one does not cultivate goodness, one will inevitably reap bitter results. Thus, refraining from the ten evil acts is the foundation for cultivating merit and also the first step in cultivating wisdom. Only with worldly blessings can one have favorable conditions. One may then encounter an enlightened teacher, hear the true Dharma, and cultivate supramundane blessings. It is like climbing a building: worldly blessings are a ladder, but if one climbs the ladder without ascending the building, one will never reach the ultimate. Therefore, having the worldly blessings that are like a ladder, one must also have the supramundane blessings that enable one to ascend it. In short, cultivation means cultivating the mind: transforming a suffering mind into a joyful mind, and a confused, inverted mind into a luminous and free mind. This is the aim of cultivation.

The methods of cultivation cannot possibly be explained fully in just a few words. One must seek an enlightened teacher in whom to take refuge. Since each person's capacities differ, a single method cannot be transmitted universally to everyone. The methods of learning the Buddhadharma are administered according to the individual; the methods differ, but all lead people back to their original nature.

For example, the Chan school returns to its source through the method of Chan meditation; the Pure Land school returns to its source through the method of

Buddha-recitation; and Esoteric Buddhism returns to its source through esoteric practice. The source is an originally pure ground of awakening, and this ground is the mind-ground. This pure ground of awakening is called Chan meditation in the Chan school, the Pure Land in the Pure Land school, and siddhi in Esoteric Buddhism. The names differ, but the thing itself is nondual; it is the dharmakāya. Nature is the essence of mind, and mind is the function of nature. What is called realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, when brought to the ultimate ground, is collectively called realizing the dharmakāya.

But how does one cultivate and realize it? By observing the precepts, one attains samādhi; by understanding cause and effect, one opens awakened wisdom. All of this is contained in the book Records of the Yihai Lectures (1935), published by Mind-Seal Vihara. This book is divided into three sections. First read the Section on Inspiring Potential, then seek a teacher and request the Dharma. Next read the Section on Right Cultivation and study it in conjunction with your practice. When you have gained something for yourself, read the Section on Verification of Realization and verify, one by one, the dharma of your own mind-ground. This is genuine practice, through which one can realize the dharmakāya and attain Buddhahood.

The benefits and results of cultivation cannot possibly be explained in advance. It is like drinking tea: its flavor is good, but those willing to drink it must drink it for themselves in order to know. For those who do not drink it, no amount of explanation is ultimately of use. I will briefly mention one or two points merely to strengthen practitioners' faith and set their minds at ease.

A. Visible Benefits

1. Freedom from disasters of fire and water.

2. The household will not be plagued by demons and ghosts.

3. No enemies or unjust misfortunes will come near. In every household that cultivates goodness, the mind and vital energy are peaceful and harmonious; evil matters do not arise within, and external demons are not drawn in. Whenever evil matters come near, there must be demons serving as intermediaries. If they are prevented from approaching at the outset, there will be no harm.

4. Freedom from anger, vexation, and quarrels; the household will be harmonious, with fewer unexpected and unjust misfortunes.

5. Freedom from illness and attainment of long life. Illnesses such as anemia, stroke, cerebral hemorrhage, high blood pressure, and liver and stomach diseases can certainly be cured if they have not progressed beyond seventy percent.

6. Freedom from the disasters of epidemic contagion. Practitioners' minds are generally tranquil; they respond swiftly when circumstances arise, do not become angry at all, avoid serious matters in favor of lighter ones, and naturally do not give rise to quarrels. Moreover, once wisdom opens, they discern affairs clearly; idle talk and gossip do not enter their ears, and thus unexpected and unjust misfortunes do not arise. When the mind is ordinarily settled and the spirit at peace, the body naturally remains healthy; therefore, there is no suffering from illness or epidemic contagion. Yet these are only temporary benefits and are not ultimate.

B. Invisible, Genuine Benefits

7. The mind-ground becomes luminous. Because one understands cause and effect, one does not create evil causes and suffer bitter results.

8. One understands the principles of engaging in the world and transcending the world, forever cuts off all delusions, and does not enter birth and death.

9. All enemies from former lives are thereby released, and past debts are entirely cleared away. "To extinguish future suffering, first cut off the causes of evil. To avoid creating evil karma, first make the mind-ground luminous; this is freedom from delusion. Free from delusion, one does not grasp greedily and does not enter birth and death; this is transcendence of the world." When the mind constantly abides in great compassion and one arouses the resolve to save all beings, even enemies are naturally transformed by kindness, and old grievances naturally dissolve. This is a true benefit that costs nothing yet cannot be bought with ten thousand pieces of gold. Furthermore, when the thought of killing is cut off, no new enmities are added. Free of debts, one is light and unburdened, transcending the world.

10. One enters the Mahāyāna Dharma.

11. One obtains a method of cultivation and realization suited to one's capacities.

12. One encounters an enlightened teacher.

13. Through faith, practice, realization, and understanding, ignorance naturally vanishes.

14. In this very life, one realizes the mind and sees one's true nature. Reaching the ultimate ground, one opens the wisdom-eye and attains Buddhahood in this very body; this is realization of the dharmakāya Buddha.

15. Sweeping away habitual tendencies. In cultivating any practice, one should aspire to the very highest vehicle. There is absolutely no reason for false modesty; this is what is meant by not yielding when righteousness is at stake. To believe in that Buddha, one must believe in one's own Buddha; only then is it called Right

Faith. Merely understanding the principles but refusing actual practice is not called right practice. Without faith and practice, one can never realize. Once realization is complete, it is called liberation. Therefore, cultivation concerns only the mind, and removing habitual tendencies also depends on the mind. How is the work of realizing the mind cultivated and realized? Like a wheel: as one side turns upward, the other retreats downward. When evil rises, goodness falls away; when goodness rises, evil falls away. It turns round like a wheel; therefore, when the mind is luminous, ignorance vanishes.

C. Ultimate Benefits

16. One attains the state of great freedom; amid favorable and adverse circumstances, there is neither anything that must be accepted nor anything that must be rejected.

17. One thoroughly comprehends all dharmas: all are empty, and one can liberate sentient beings and benefit living beings. (1) Empty external objects. (2) Empty the inner mind, since the mind is illusory. (3) Empty habitual tendencies, for although both inner and outer are empty, habitual tendencies still remain. (4) Empty awakening: awakening too is illusory, established by the mind, and this too is a dharma. Since dharmas are not established, awakening too is illusory and should therefore be emptied. (5) Not empty: know that all is originally empty, yet this is not annihilation. Everything may remain as before; one simply does not cling or attach.

18. One enters no-thought. The ‘no’ in ‘no-thought’ does not refer to one side of the opposition between existence and nonexistence. It means that even when thoughts arise, one does not cling to them, and they are like empty space.

19. Habitual tendencies diminish day by day, and spiritual responsiveness becomes increasingly unobstructed. This is when supernormal powers first appear. Regarding future events, because one thoroughly comprehends cause and effect, one’s judgments differ and may seem like foreknowledge. Yet such realization must come after realizing the mind; it does not mean displaying strange magical transformations. Over a long time, it emerges naturally and unconsciously, though others regard it as strange. Therefore, although Buddhism recognizes the five supernormal powers, including the divine eye and divine ear, they must be realized after realizing the mind. One must not greedily seek them, for fear of misleading oneself.

20. Before dying, one knows in advance that the time has come. With one-pointedness of mind without distraction in ordinary life, one will certainly be reborn in the Western Pure Land upon relinquishing this body. This is a natural going; it cannot be compared with those who greedily seek and forcibly demand it.

These twenty points are only a brief selection. If you are willing to cultivate and realize, when your practice has reached even one or two parts, your joy will already be inconceivable; how much more so when it is thorough and ultimately complete! I now earnestly urge you: people in the world truly suffer greatly. If you do not save yourselves now, when will you wait for? Can today's wealth and rank be preserved forever? In an instant, blessings are exhausted and suffering arrives; then it will be too late.

When people climb a building, obtaining a single ladder is already exceedingly difficult. You all have a ladder, yet do not climb the building; instead, you wish to retreat downward. Is that not regrettable? What is meant by ultimately ascending the building is realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature—understanding what one truly is in the end. But one does not rely on Buddha or rely on Dharma; one must rely on oneself.

An Explanation of the Name Mind-Seal Vihara

Since ancient times, all Buddhas have realized the same Way, and mind has confirmed mind. They have entered the world to liberate sentient beings for no other reason than this one great matter of causes and conditions. Since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, the patriarchs and great masters of every generation have all accepted this responsibility without yielding it to others. Today, we too have established the Mind-Seal Vihara for this great matter. Though practice centers may differ in size, how could their guiding purpose differ? What is this great matter? It is realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature.

To speak of Dharma apart from this is not to speak of the true Dharma; to speak of practice apart from this is not to speak of right cultivation. This is what the Fifth Patriarch meant when he said, "To study the Dharma without recognizing one's fundamental mind is of no benefit." Since the Dharma is established through mind, and mind is clarified by means of the Dharma, it is only fitting that the guiding purpose of this practice center should be the realization of mind.

If so, it would be enough to call it the Vihara for Realizing the Mind. Why, then, must it be called Mind-Seal? There is a further explanation. In the Shuowen, seal is defined as an auspicious token of trust, conformity, and a means. An auspicious token of trust verifies what is true and manifests the auspiciousness of great faith, for without faith nothing can be established. Conformity means accord with one's original form; this is what the Mahāvairocana Sūtra calls "as it truly is." A means is that which provides support for use. Moreover, according to the Tables of Officials and High Ministers of the Former Han, officials with a salary of two thousand piculs all bore silver seals.

Thus, a seal conveys the sense of conducting affairs with solemn care and reverence. The name Mind-Seal is intended to lead people to establish resolute faith in the reality of their own minds, so that they may know that nothing in human life is more precious or more worthy of esteem than the mind. How is the mind clarified? Only by conforming to the essence of one's true nature can it be known.

All the wondrous functions of prajñā depend on mind for their expression. How could one fail to revere and honor it? As for how one enters into faith in the appearance of mind, this can only be done by having mind seal one's own mind. Mind accords with emptiness; mind is unobtainable; there is the samādhi of illusion; and there are immeasurable wondrous meanings. All of these depend upon this one seal, whose scope is vast indeed. Moreover, all that exists in the universe is mind-only.

Whatever has form is none other than mind. All illusions cease, but that which is not illusory does not cease. To verify this directly is what is called Mind-Seal. Yet we dwell every day amid the dense array of myriad forms, with which we are originally and inseparably united, without the slightest interval between us. When this mind can communicate with them in every breath, there is nowhere in which it does not harmonize.

If our minds are clear but, even for the space of a breath, forget this and cannot seal with it, then obstruction immediately arises. Therefore, the essential point of Mind-Seal is not that one sealing completes the matter. There is no time when one does not seal and no circumstance in which one does not seal. The spirit of the ancients is worthy of admiration. Yet that which seals is this very mind, and that which is sealed is also this very mind. Within oneself, mind seals mind; in encountering circumstances, mind and mind seal one another. What mind is not sealed? What seal is not mind? The sealer and the sealed are neither one nor two. When subject and object both fall away, there is no mind and no circumstance. To realize the mutual interpenetration of mind and circumstances is what it means truly to be able to seal.

One may ask: "Since mind is unobtainable, and the array of objects and circumstances is likewise entirely illusory, why is there any need for sealing?" Such a person does not understand that the Buddha's compassion arises precisely because sentient beings have not realized that mind is unobtainable. Mistaking illusory objects and an illusory mind for real, they bind themselves in vain. Wishing them to be liberated, the Buddha leads them to seal in accord with the pure ground of awakening of their own nature, so that they may know that what is called mind is but a fleeting point of illusory light and shadow: though seemingly present, it cannot be grasped; in the end, it is false and unreal. Yet this does not mean annihilation or that nothing whatsoever exists. Do not abide in either extreme of emptiness or

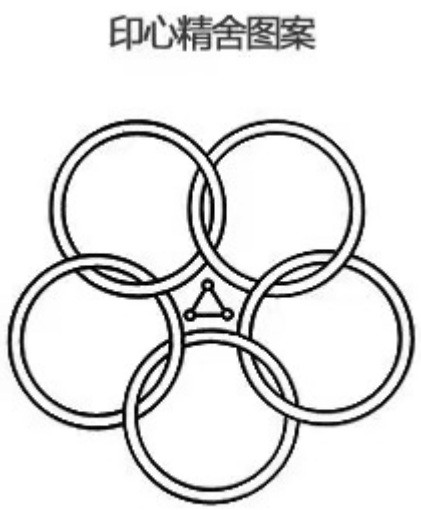
existence. With one turn at this point, afflictions become bodhi, and the great matter is resolved.

One may further ask: “If that is so, is not this seal also illusory?” The answer is: if one can seal, then all illusion is wholly true; if one cannot seal, then all truth becomes illusion. Ultimately, truth and illusion are neither one nor two. Both are merely provisional names and are unobtainable. This seal, too, is unobtainable. When one knows this, the work of Mind-Seal is complete.

Therefore, in the Dharma transmitted from Buddha to Buddha, whether Chan, Pure Land, or Esoteric Buddhism, all ultimately converge in realizing through the seal that mind is fundamentally nonexistent. If one further realizes thoroughly that this seal, too, is unobtainable, this is called purity. When even purity is not present, the Buddha lands of the ten directions are right before one. Thus, within the Mind-Seal gate, there is not a single dharma to which one may cling, yet there is not a single dharma that is not established. In truth, since mind is an illusory presence, the seal too is an illusory seal. How have dharmas ever truly been dharmas? Yet illusion is not discarded, lest one fall into annihilationism, and for the sake of the one great matter of sentient beings. Relying on illusion to transform illusion, one does not depart from reality. Neither real nor unreal—this is the ultimate meaning of mind.

So it is, so it is. I have briefly set forth what I see; I only ask those of superior understanding to examine it.

Illustrated Guide to Mind-Seal Vihara



The world does not depart from the five great elements, nor do people depart from the five aggregates. From the five desires arise the five hindrances; one commits the

five evil acts and the five heinous offenses, enters the five uninterrupted hells, and thus brings about the five sufferings. How much better to uphold the five precepts through the five faculties, arouse the five powers, open the five wisdoms, master the five fields of knowledge, perfect the five eyes, and realize the five bodhis? Now, amid the vastness of the five continents, the multitude of people of the five colors, and the kinship of the five clans, may all share in the five consciousnesses and the five spiritual families.

May this five-character true mantra reveal the meaning of one flower with five petals. I respectfully set forth the five teachings, that all may enter the five wheels of liberation. Moreover, these five wheels mutually encompass and interpenetrate one another; they gather together without obstruction. Thus one should be endowed with the five blessings and enter the three wheels: dharmakāya, prajñā, and liberation. They converge into one mind; mind seals mind. This is the aspiration of Mind-Seal.