



Without thinking, without form,
also without abiding

Mu nen mu sō mata mu jū
無念無相亦無住

Platform Sutra: This teaching was handed down from the Ancients and it is not a system of my own invention. Those who wish to hear the teaching should first purify their own mind, and after hearing it they should each clear up their own doubts in the same way as the sages did in the past.

Through many, many generations, through teacher to disciple, this place beyond mistake has been recognized and then passed along. It was not Eno's (Sixth Patriarch) personal understanding. If it were something only certain persons could understand, then it is not the truth that has been handed down. Each person has his own personal history, a culture, a country. But the Buddha Dharma is prior to and beyond all of that. Before any of that comes forth, that is the Buddha Dharma.

"This teaching of Sudden Enlightenment, if you want to understand it clearly, purify your mind from all distractions and extraneous, noisy, thinking."

If we look at each person as a vessel, if our cup is already too full of a personal flavor, we cannot hear clearly what we are taught. We have to empty that cup of personal opinion and personal ideas or we will have no way to hear the teaching. Clean it completely and empty it out, because the Ancestors are not teaching something that should be memorized or mentally comprehended. Only in accordance with how empty and free of extra thinking we are will we be able to realize this. Only then can we listen and truly realize it—only if we let go of all of our experience in the past and our knowledge.

The Buddha's truth is that all things are originally empty. Before knowing the separation between north, south, east and west—before even being in our mother's belly—before giving rise to even one single thought, there is Buddha-nature.

The teaching from the Ancestors is not something difficult if there is nothing held onto. We let go of our knowledge, or we will still have an idea of various levels of attainment, or prejudice. When we let go of all of that, we are all, then, equals.

We hang onto previous knowing and personal experience, and make it hard to realize that teaching of not doing bad things but doing good things. When there is no ego filter we naturally want to do good things and we naturally don't want to do bad things,. Without an individual stance and rank and ideas we can see and receive this teaching of Buddha-nature prior to any preconceived notion; this is the world of the Buddha-nature. But if we have preconceived ideas, then we can't see this clearly. That is not the Buddha-nature. So if you want to hear it clearly and know it directly, clean out and release everything that you hold onto in your mind.

Hearing the Ancients' teaching with clear Mind and without dualistic perceptions and narrowing mind, to see the truth directly! What "without dualistic perceptions" means is to not give any limiting mental idea to it, instead return to that Mind where no thoughts obstruct—this Mind of the Ancients, this Mind of the Buddha.

People hold onto their own thoughts from their own history, their own struggle, their own opinions. Buried within that, there are so many problems carried from the past. We all want to resolve these struggles, but it is not the case that our mind cannot open until we resolve every one of those past problems.

We all have dark, murky places in our mind, but believe and know that the Buddha-nature is like the sun—be that sunshine completely! As the sun rises and shines on everything the darkness disappears. Then everything is clear, right smack in front of our eyes. Houses, rivers, mountains—each thing is high when it should be high, and low when it should be low, as is appropriate. And the sun is shining equally on every single thing. And the sun does not only shine when there are no clouds at all. It shines even when there are many clouds. Even above dark clouds it shines on.

To let go of all of our thoughts, go to where we have nothing to hold onto at all—this is zazen. To do zazen with a gloomy face, holding onto many thoughts, is not real zazen. Rather, let go of everything we hold onto—this is the subtle flavor of zazen.