

# TREASURY OF THE EYE OF THE TRUE DHARMA

## BOOK 42

### Talking of the Mind, Talking of the Nature

Once, when the Chan Master Shenshan Sengmi was traveling with the Great Master Dongshan Wuben, the Great Master Wuben pointed out a cloister beside [the road] and said, “Inside, there’s someone talking of the mind and talking of the nature.”

Elder brother Sengmi said, “Who is it?”

The Great Master Wuben said, “Questioned once by my elder brother, and he’s immediately doomed.”

Elder brother Sengmi said, “Who is it that’s talking of the mind and talking of the nature?”

The Great Master Wuben said, “In death, he lives.”<sup>1</sup>

“Talking of the mind and talking of the nature” is the great origin of the way of the buddha; from it are caused to appear buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor. Without “talking of the mind and talking of the nature,” there would be no turning the wheel of the wondrous dharma; there would be no production of the thought and cultivation of the practice; there would be no “the great earth and sentient beings simultaneously achieved the way”; there would be no “all living beings lack buddha nature.”<sup>2</sup>

“Holding up a flower and blinking” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature”; “breaking into a smile” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature”; “making a bow and standing there” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature”; “the ancestral master entering the Liang” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature”; “transmitting the robe in the middle of the night” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” Taking up the staff is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature”; laying down the whisk is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.”<sup>3</sup>

In sum, every virtue of buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” There is the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” of “the ordinary”; there is the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” of “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.” The realization of the principle, “when the mind arises, the various dharmas

arise,” and the realization of the principle, “when the mind ceases, the various dharmas cease,” are in either case occasions of “talking of the mind,” occasions of “talking of the nature.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet, mediocre types, who have not penetrated the mind, who have not reached the nature, without knowing “talking of the mind and talking of the nature,” without knowing “discussing the dark, discussing the subtle,” say that these must not be the words of the buddhas and ancestors, teach that they should not exist. Because they do not know “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” as “talking of the mind and talking of the nature,” they think of “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” as “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” This is particularly because they have not been critical of the passage and obstructions of the great way.<sup>5</sup>

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Of late, there was a certain Zonggao, the Chan Master Dahui of Jingshan, who said,

People today, because they like “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” or “discussing the dark and discussing the subtle,” are slow to attain the way. When, you have thrown away both “mind” and “nature” and forgotten both “dark” and “subtle,” so that the two do not arise, you will verify and accord.<sup>6</sup>

This saying does not know the pale yellow silk of the buddhas and ancestors, has not heard of the monarchical line of the buddhas and ancestors. Consequently, he says this because he knows that the mind is merely consideration, knowledge, thought, and perception, and does not learn that consideration, knowledge, thought, and perception are also the mind. Mistakenly figuring only that the nature is pure, deep, quiescent, and still, he does not know about the existence or non-existence of the buddha nature or dharma nature. Because he has never seen “such a nature” even in his dreams, he has this biased view of the buddha dharma.<sup>7</sup>

The “mind” spoken of by the buddhas and ancestors is “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow”; the “nature” maintained by the buddhas and ancestors is “the

bamboo truncheon and staff.” The “dark” that the buddhas and ancestors verify and accord with is “columns and lanterns”; the “subtle” that the buddhas and ancestors take up is “knowledge and understanding.”<sup>8</sup>

The buddhas and ancestors who are truly buddhas and ancestors, from the beginning, hear this “mind and nature,” teach it, practice it, and verify it. They maintain this “dark and subtle,” and they study it. Those who are like this are called the children and grandchildren studying the buddhas and ancestors. Those who are not like this are not students of the way.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, [Dahui’s] “attaining the way” does not attain the way; when it does not attain the way, it is not that it does not attain the way. It misses the occasions of both attaining and not [attaining]. While, to say, as you say, “forget both mind and nature,” may be a part expressing the talking of the mind, it is a small part, a hundredth, a thousandth, ten thousandth, a hundred millionth part. To say, “discard both dark and subtle,” is a part forming the discussion of discussing of the dark.<sup>10</sup>

Not having studied this pivot, if you stupidly say, “forgetting,” you think [it is] leaving the hand, you know it as escaping the body. You are not yet liberated from the confines of the Small Vehicle; how could you reach the innermost darkness of the Great Vehicle, let alone know “the higher pivot”? It is difficult to say that you have tasted the tea and rice of the buddhas and ancestors.<sup>11</sup>

To study with a teacher and be diligent in your work is just to investigate physically “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” at the very moment of body and mind, to investigate it before the body and after the body. There are not two or three other ways.<sup>12</sup>

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At that time, the First Ancestor said to the Second Ancestor, “Externally, put a stop to conditions; internally, the mind will be without panting. With the mind like fences and walls, you will enter the way.”

The Second Ancestor talked of the mind and talked of the nature, but did not verify and accord [with them]. One day, he suddenly understood.

Subsequently, he addressed the First Ancestor, saying, “Your disciple has this time finally put a stop to conditions.”

The first ancestor recognized that he had awakened and did not further press him, saying only, “Haven’t you achieved severance and extinction?”

The Second Ancestor said, “No.”

The First Ancestor said, “How is the ‘master’?”

The Second Ancestor said, “Clear, clear, always knowing; therefore words can’t reach it.”

The First Ancestor said, “This is the substance of the mind transmitted down from the buddhas and ancestors. Now you’ve got it; protect it well.”<sup>13</sup>

There are those who doubt this episode, those who take it up.<sup>14</sup> One episode among the episodes of the Second Ancestor’s service under the First Ancestor is like this. When the Second Ancestor was persistently talking of the mind and talking of the nature, at first he didn’t accord with it. Finally, piling up merit and accumulating virtue, he attained the way of the words of the First Ancestor. The mediocre fools think that, [if] the Second Ancestor failed to verify and accord when he was first talking of the mind and talking of the nature, the fault lay in his talking of the mind and talking of the nature; subsequently, having discarded talking of the mind and talking of the nature, he verified and accorded. They say this because they have not penetrated the words, “when the mind is like fences and walls, you will enter the way.” This is particularly ignorant of distinctions in studying the way.

Why is this? After we have produced the thought of bodhi and turned to the practice of the way of the buddha, when we are wholeheartedly performing the difficult practices, though we may be performing them, we do not have one hit in a hundred practices. Still, “whether from a friend, whether from a scripture,” eventually we hit it. This one hit in the present is [due to] the power of a hundred misses in the past, is the “one maturation” of a hundred misses. Hearing the teachings, cultivating the way, attaining the verification are all like this. Yesterday’s “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” may be a hundred misses, but yesterday’s hundred misses of “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” are suddenly today’s one hit.

When we have the beginner's mind in the practice of the way of the buddha, if [we think that], since we are untrained and have not mastered it, we might discard the the way of the buddha and take another path, then we cannot attain the way of the buddha. Those types who have not mastered the beginning and end of the practice of the way of the buddha have difficulty clarifying the fact that this passage and obstruction is reasonable.<sup>16</sup>

The way of the buddha is the way of the buddha at the time of the first production of the thought; it is the way of the buddha at the time of attaining true enlightenment. It is the way of the buddha throughout beginning, middle, and end. For example, for one walking ten thousand *ri*, one step is within a thousand *ri*; the thousandth step is within a thousand *ri*. The first one step and the thousandth step may be different, but the thousand *ri* are the same.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, an extremely stupid bunch thinks that, when we are studying the way of the buddha, we have not reached the way of the buddha; only when we attain the fruit is it the way of the buddha. They do not understand “taking up the way and practicing the way.” They [talk] like this because they do not understand “taking up the way and practicing the way,” they do not understand “taking up the way and verifying the way.” Those who talk like this are the bunch who learn that only the deluded practice the way of the buddha and have the great awakening; they do not know, and have not heard, that the non-deluded also practice the way of the buddha and have the great awakening.

Though we say that “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” before verification and accord is the way of the buddha, we verify and accord through “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” We should not learn that “verification and accord” refers only to the deluded initially having the great awakening: the deluded have the great awakening; the awakened have the great awakening; the unawakened have the great awakening; the undeluded have the great awakening; those who have verified and accorded verify and accord.

Thus, “talking of the mind and talking of the nature is the direct [approach] of the way of the buddha. Mister Gao's saying, without his having

mastered this principle, that we should not “talk of the mind and talk of the nature” is not the principle of the buddha dharma. In the present land of the great Song, there is no one who even reaches Mister Gao.<sup>18</sup>

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The Eminent Ancestor, the Great Master Wuben, the single most honored among the ancestors, mastered the principle that “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” The ancestral masters everywhere who have not mastered it have no sayings like this present episode.<sup>19</sup>

When elder brother Sengmi and the great master were traveling, [Dongshan] pointed out a cloister beside [the way] and said, “Inside, there’s someone talking of the mind and talking of the nature.”

Ever since the eminent ancestor appeared in the world, his dharma descendants have always correctly transmitted this saying [as] the ancestral style. It is not something other traditions have seen even in their dreams; still less have they known, even in their dreams, how to understand it. Only those who are legitimate heirs have correctly transmitted it. How can one who does not correctly transmit this principle reach the origin on the way of the buddha?<sup>20</sup>

The principle in question here is: whether “inside” or “surface,” “there’s someone” and “someone’s there” “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” Within the surface, the mind is talking; within the surface, the nature is talking. We should investigate and work at this. There has not yet been “talking” that is not “nature”; there is no “mind” that is not “talking.”<sup>21</sup>

“Buddha nature” means all “talking.” “Lacking buddha nature” means all “talking.” Though one studies the nature of the buddha nature, [those who] do not study “having buddha nature” are not studying the way; [those who] do not study “lacking buddha nature” are not studying the way. [Those who] study that “talking” is “the nature” are the legitimate descendants of the buddhas and ancestors. [Those who] believe and accept that “the nature” is “talking” are the buddhas and ancestors of the legitimate descendants.

To say that the mind is rattled and the nature is composed is the view of other ways; to say that the nature is clear and deep and the form shifts and moves is the view of other ways. The study of the mind and study of the nature on the way of the buddha are not like this. The practice of the mind and practice of the nature on the way of the buddha are not equivalent to the other ways. The clarification of the mind and the clarification of the nature on the way of the buddha, the other ways have no share in.<sup>22</sup>

On the way of the buddha, there is the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” of “someone”; there is the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” of “no one.” There is the “not talking of the mind and not talking of the nature” of “someone”; there is the “not talking of the mind and not talking of the nature” of “no one.” There is “talking of the mind and not talking of the mind; there is “talking of the nature and not talking of the nature.” When one has not studied “talking of the mind” at the time when there is “no one,” then “talking of the mind has not reached the field.” When one has not studied “talking of the mind” at the time when there is “someone,” then “talking of the mind has not reached the field.” We study “no one who talks of the mind”; we study “no one talking of the mind”; we study “this one who talks of the mind”; we study “this one talking of the mind.”<sup>23</sup>

Linji’s total power to say something is just “the true person without rank,” but he still has not said, “the true person with rank.” He has not realized what remains to be studied, what remains to be said; we can say he has not reached the ground of penetration. Because “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” are talking of the buddhas and talking of the ancestors, we meet them in the ear, we meet them in the eye.<sup>24</sup>

The elder brother Sengmi said, “Who is it?”

When he expresses this saying, elder brother Sengmi should previously avail himself of this saying and should subsequently avail himself of this saying. “Who is it?” is the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” of “that inside.” Therefore, when “who is it?” is said, when “who is it? is thought, this is itself “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” This “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” is something that those of other quarters

have never known. They have forgotten their child and taken it for a thief; so “they recognize the thief as their child.”<sup>25</sup>

The great master said, “Questioned once by my elder brother, and he’s immediately doomed.”

When mediocre types of students hear these words, they think that the “someone” who is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature,” upon being asked, “who is it?” is “immediately doomed.” The reason is that they are facing the words, “who is it?” without recognizing them, without any view of them at all; hence, [the words] are “dead words.” This is not necessarily the case. Those who have penetrated this “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” are rare. To be “doomed” a hundred percent is not to be “doomed” ten or twenty percent; hence “doomed” is a hundred percent. At the very moment of “questioned,” who would hold that this is not “shielding the heavens and covering the earth”? Reflection of the past is cut off; reflection of the present is cut off; reflection of the future is cut off. Reflection of this very moment is cut off.<sup>26</sup>

The elder brother Sengmi said, “Who is it that’s talking of mind and talking of the nature?”

The previous “who is it?” and this “who is it,” though the name is “Zhang’s third,” the person is “Li’s fourth.”<sup>27</sup>

The Great Master said, “In death, he lives.”

In regard to this “in death,” [we should not] think that it is directly referring to the “immediately doomed”; he is not directly referring to [the one who is] “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” and arbitrarily saying, “who is it?”<sup>28</sup> “Who is it?” arranges the “someone” who is “talking of the mind and talking of the nature.” There should be a study holding that he does not wait forever to be a hundred percent “doomed.” The Great Master’s words, “In death, he lives,” are the voices and forms of “someone talking of the mind and talking of the nature” right before us. Again, they are also one or two parts of completely “doomed.” Life may be fully alive, but it is not

death changing to appear as life: it is just the sloughing off of “he lives” that is “true at the head and true at the tail.”<sup>29</sup>

In general, there is this kind of “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” that is investigated on the way of the buddha and the way of the ancestors. When we go further, by dying a complete death, we realize the way of life of “he lives.”<sup>30</sup>

We should realize that, from the Tang period till today, there have been many pitiable types who have not clarified the fact that “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” are the way of the buddha, who are in the dark about the “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” in teaching, practice, and verification, and who talk rashly and speak wildly. We should save them “before the body and after the body.” What I say to them is this: “talking of the mind and talking of the nature” are the essential functions of the Seven Buddhas and the ancestral masters.<sup>31</sup>

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