

**Introduction To Zen Buddhism With
The Ancient Masters**
Commentary On Zen Scripture

A.E. Abedi
Taoist-Books.com

CONTENTS

	Introduction	3
1	Introduction To Zen: The Many Views Of Zen	11
2	Commentary On Bodhidharma's "Transmission Of The Lamp"	54
3	Zen Poetry With A Commentary	68
4	Commentary On The Diamond Sutra	87
	Appendix: Sutra Of Transcendental Wisdom	140

Introduction

When people think of Buddhism it is normally of robed figures sitting in front of statues of an emaciated figure meditating. In fact, most of the encounters the western world has had with Buddhism , till the Dalai Lama was forced into exile, is of a culture similar to Hinduism which is of no coincidence. No writings seem to exist (at least none have been found) dating back to when Siddhartha was teaching.

The earliest texts , called the Pali Canon/Texts, were written down about 500 years after Siddhartha died. By this time the Buddha's teachings were so enmeshed in the mythological perspective of the Indian culture that it's actually impossible to separate what he taught from the stylistic and poetic religious texts that constitute the earliest books of the Buddhists.

What many people don't know is that there are actually two basic forms of Buddhism. The Southern forms of Buddhism are the more religious types while the Northern forms of Buddhism are offshoots, not of the religious aspect of Hindu culture & mythology, but of its philosophical aspects known as "Vedanta".

What we know of Siddhartha (later called The Buddha) was that he was an Indian Prince living around 500 BC who was disenchanted with his life & set out in search of truth or rather 'the meaning of life', which is called Enlightenment or Nirvana.

After years of searching and experimenting he arrived at some insights which were somewhat different from the other forest yogis of his age. Given that his teachings were developed after years of meditating with the forest yogis or ascetic teachers (a common sub-culture of his time) and probably after learning and discussing their philosophy (written down in the Indian Texts called Upanishads) it is possible to outline outlooks and perspectives that Siddhartha must have had but maybe in another book.

Siddhartha was probably a forest yogi who taught between 530-480 BC. Like other teachers of his time. Since his was a culture of yogic teachers it would be useful to see his age as a time when many philosopher/yogis discussed their insights into nature and man and their experiences with yoga. In fact it probably wouldn't be too far off to imagine the forest yogic teachers like some sort of university where scholars learnt new ideas, discussed these ideas and then wrote papers for publishing. The only difference being that there was no central location such as a University Campus, instead the whole region was their school premises (often covered in forests thus the term "forest yogi" – the mountain yogis tended to be more solitary and hard to find) and the ideas discussed were purely philosophical in nature and the work done was on oneself in the form of meditation techniques called yoga (& related ascetic practices) and the papers published was teaching any unique insights either directly or through some form of allegory or metaphor that was appropriate to their students culture.

Given that this was the culture of this time it makes sense that after the Buddhist texts of the Southern form of Buddhism

were written down in the South of India, and began to spread northwards towards the center of this forest sage culture where Siddhartha taught, the yogi teachers of the area were probably surprised by the sudden popularity of this new monastic and religious culture, which to them must have been a perverted form of the Upanishadic teachings in the form of a new religion with Hindu mythological aspects that was never a part of the forest yogi teachings to begin with. It would be like discovering that one of the ancient teachers teachings had found popular support amongst some people far away from it's origin, only their popular support was like the local forms of religion that already existed and was looked down upon by the yogis as the activities of children. When this cult began to find root and spread gaining support and thereby reaching the status of a religion (as all major religions were seen as cults when they first started to the people of their time) the yogi philosophers of the Buddhist school who, till now, were content to follow the ancient tradition of teaching to new arrivals in their forest yogic culture, decided it was time to distill this corrupted form of Siddhartha's teaching to it's more original form (the earliest texts of which are probably lost for good). These new texts, written around 100 AD, was the philosophical approach of Buddhism called Mahayana Buddhism and the Buddhism of the South (Pali Canon) became known as Hinayana Buddhism.

You can get an idea of how violently the ancient forest teachers must have reacted to the spread of the Buddhist Monastic religion of the Pali Texts by the fact that Buddhism literally ceased to exist in India after a few hundred years and only returned in the mid 19th Century during the British Raj as it

was adopted by the lower classes as an Indian form of religion that gave them relief from the cultural oppression of the Indian Caste system.

So, if the goal of the ancient forest Buddhist type sages was to stomp out this new monastic culture derived from their teachings they did eventually succeed . Siddhartha's teaching and insights were probably welcomed in the forest yogic culture as simple specific teachings of a great sage and/or accomplished yogi. So maybe this reaction to the more religious forms of Buddhism came from the Brahmin (cultural and religious leaders) of Ancient India.

As it is, a monastic culture will, by its very nature, stop the development of culture and civilization as its adherents would reject getting involved in life and would lead to disenchantment of whole segments of the population and like 'the Dark Age' would simply lose its vibrancy and affirmation of life. In fact, this may even be why the once popular religion of Jainism is also now just a minor religion which is still in decay (i.e. not spreading).

Bodhidharma

You can't start a discussion of Zen without referring to Bodhidharma, the man credited with bringing Zen to the east (China & Japan). Very few scholars will trace its origin to Siddhartha or "The Buddha" because, for the most part, very few understand what he really said since his story is mired in local mythology to such an extent that it's hard to separate the

two. Yet Zen is a form of Buddhism making the Buddha a part of it's story and the Diamond Sutra is said to be his entire teaching in a short and simple form. Bodhidharma simply took Siddhartha's teachings and simplified them for the culture he was dealing with. This means the basic ideas of zen are apparent in Buddhist scriptures themselves and can be understood with just a little explanation.

Siddhartha: The Forest Sage

Siddhartha (Buddha) was taking part in a very old discussion that had been going on in the Indian intellectual and ascetic class for centuries, which had been compiled together in a collection called the "Upanishads". The Upanishads represent the culmination of centuries of thought upon which the intellectuals and yogis of India would meditate and seek to comprehend reality as their ancestors once did.

Buddha followed the normal path of the "knowledge seeker class" that emerged in India called the Yogis. He followed normal ascetic procedures which included a heavy regimen of meditation and thinking about the philosophy of the Upanishads (which were probably just teachings from other yogis in his time), while having heavy discussions with other yogis, i.e. following what hundreds of thousands probably did on a regular basis. What he learned was implemented in his practice.

Siddhartha's enlightenment wasn't a spiritual one in the way non-Indian cultures perceive spirituality to be. It wasn't a

God-like blessing or “anointing” but an ordinary realization of the truth of existence. It was both philosophical and practical to one experienced in meditation.

When Siddhartha started teaching he called his path “the middle path”, because of it being between the hard asceticism of the yogis and the complete immersion in living life of the populace, was actually just the ending of the game of stories (mythology) that we like to play with ourselves.

So while the intellectuals of India had been arguing for centuries that this story we create is happening to a well defined self or person (their story of what we truly are is that we are ‘a self that is almost divine in nature’). Siddhartha turned around and said there was no self. The self was an illusion. Till now it was just the world that had been an illusion called *Maya* in Sanskrit. A world that was happening to a self that was a piece of the divine. After Siddhartha, the self itself began to be seen as an illusion. To the Indian mind, heavily steeped in metaphysics, this may not have been a popular approach which is why Buddhism ultimately left India in ancient times not to return till the days of British Colonialism, instead finding it’s home in the far east.

What did Siddhartha mean by ‘there is no Self’?

The normal person lives by a story which consist of his or her accomplishments, name, genetic lineage, heritage, and so on. These elements are all combined together by an individual to give meaning to their lives in whatever perspective on life they

may have at the time. A depressed person will have linked elements of his story together in a way that enhances the negative perspective they have chosen. Or a successful confident person, at whatever level, will also string together elements of his or her life which explains how they got to where they are and how they must behave because of it and so on.

In other words, you create a story that you live by and think by. Every person does. Without a story you can't give meaning to your life. Giving meaning to your life is an act of storytelling or, in other words, giving meaning to your life is an act of the mind.

In Zen (the Japanese pronunciation of the yogic meditation techniques called "Dhayana"), you let go of all stories you may have about yourself or the whole and just experience life directly without interference from your mind and meaning making ability. "You" cease to exist.

In other words, Siddhartha took a set of already well established techniques that had been around for thousands of years (making zen/dhayana the oldest spiritual technique taught in high civilization) and added his own explanations to it. An explanation which so corresponds to the practice of zen as inherited by the cultures with the writings of Lao Tzu that I sometimes wonder if the Tao Te Ching was written by somebody familiar with Siddhartha's teachings or Siddhartha was simply restating a fact so old that it has already spread and embedded itself in Ancient Chinese civilization as the Taoists.

Whatever the case may be, zen and dhyana - the central mediation technique of yoga - are the same and the different explanations for them help illustrate what it is so that it can be passed on to future generations. That is what this books seeks to do, to pass on knowledge of zen/dhyana.

Chapter 1

Introduction To Zen: The Many Views Of Zen

We have all heard the story of the 5 blind men and the elephant. It goes something like this; When encountering an elephant for the first time one blind man touched his leg and declared that an elephant was like a tree trunk. Another blind man grabbed the elephant's trunk and declared that an elephant was like a snake. The third his tail and thought an elephant was a rope. The fourth his ears and decided he was like a bird and the fifth his belly and decided he was like a cow. Each blind man had a different understanding and perspective of an elephant depending on his perspective.

Since zen is an experience and not a philosophy (though philosophy certainly seems to be a part of it) a person can develop a different understanding of zen based on their experience. So this section examines zen from many perspectives to make it as easy to comprehend as possible

while trying not to fit it within any particular category permanently.

Zen As A Philosophy Of The Mind

Sometimes I choose to describe Zen as a philosophy

I call zen “a philosophy” in the original sense of the word as ‘the love of wisdom’ and a philosopher being ‘a lover of wisdom’. True Wisdom, of course, is indefinable or as Socrates put it, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing“. By these definitions Zen certainly does seem to qualify as a philosophy.

Wisdom in zen is learning to live in a way that is most conducive to a peaceful state of mind that is accepting of all the good and bad that happens in life which you can rarely do anything about. Zen is not about knowledge or know “the truth of existence” or having any sorts of answers to these sorts of questions.

Alan Watts writes in the first paragraph of his book “The Way of Zen”:

“Zen Buddhism is a way and a view of life which does not belong to any of the formal categories of modern Western thought. It is not religion or philosophy; it is not a psychology or a type of science. It is an example of what is known in India and China as a ‘way of liberation’, and is similar in this respect to Taoism, Vedanta, and Yoga. “

Siddhartha (AKA The Buddha) taught a 'path of liberation' in other words, if you follow these certain principles you will achieve this goal i.e. "enlightenment" or "nirvana". It's like saying if you hold a baseball bat in a certain way then you will achieve a certain distance for that ball providing you hit the ball thrown at you in a certain way. A slow moving strike of the bat gets you a ball that moves away from you (in the direction of your hit) at a low velocity while hitting the ball harder will get you a higher velocity hit, maybe even a home run if struck just right. The point is that you know that certain actions, when done precisely, will achieve certain specific goals.

In the same way, what Siddhartha was simply teaching (which later came to be called "Buddhism") was just a set or rules that included moral and ethical principles with philosophical insights to help a 'seeker after truth' to focus their minds and find the peace of mind that they were seeking. The ethical and moral rules were for mental balance and not meant to be followed like they were commandments from any God. It was simply advice from a teacher to his students.

Thus;

Zen isn't a religion

Buddhism has neither creed, code, nor cult. There is nothing that is binding upon the Buddhist, nothing they are supposed to believe in. There is no authoritative code, and there is no positive doctrines that the believer has to ascend to, It's true that Buddhists do observe certain precepts of moral and

ethical behavior, however they don't regard the observation of them as following a divine will. It's simply a pledge you take to yourself. And, furthermore, Buddhism has no particular cult. That is to say, there are no specific sacraments or forms or worship that are binding upon all Buddhists. You might then say that Buddhism is a form of philosophy, but again this would not be quite correct because what we understand by philosophy in the west is the elaboration of certain ideas, certain theories about the nature of the universe, the nature of man or the nature of knowledge. And Buddhism is not particularly concerned with elaborating ideas.

The nearest thing in our culture to Buddhism, although it isn't exactly the same, is probably psychotherapy. And the reason is that what constitutes the essence of Buddhism is not beliefs, not ideas, not even practices, but a way of experiencing” Allan Watts – Buddha and Buddhism¹

Where I differ from Alan Watts and why:

While “philosophy” is not Alan Watt's chosen word for the zen path. when he tries to connect it to a modern example, I think it is an appropriate name for zen for our time as having a philosophy to deal with life in an effective and, dare I say, BALANCED manner... requires a personal philosophy. It's all about how we, as a culture, "see" it, i.e. our “philosophy” about it. Psychotherapy as a modern science has lost all the credibility that it had in Alan Watts time and no there is no cultural position, at the moment for philosophers, so let *finding*

¹ A lecture from 1960

and teaching paths of liberation be the new way of describing philosophy. At least for this book.

In Alan Watts time psychology was at the cutting edge of mental science. Hypnosis was entering its modern form. Carl Jung's ideas had spread. A man named Timothy Leary and used an unknown drug called LSD to prove that he could use it to have rehabilitation success rates for prisoners that, until that time, were simply unheard of (and probably still are). In any case, Timothy Leary spent a decade in jail for having a pinch of marijuana on him (which is now legal in several States) and that & LSD was banned.

As psychology was brought to a halt from Big Government on drug research and it's effect on human psychology, another front for psychotherapy opened up which also emerged with unheard of success rates called Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), which led to the modern popularity Hypnosis. Turns out this is something most people can learn in a weekend (the Ancient Greeks had dream temples based on a self-hypnosis concept that was unregulated whatsoever) and one can become pretty good at hypnosis and NLP in just a few months. The techniques work irrespective of theories in textbooks one has about a patients neurosis. Thus making it unprofitable - to the extreme - for big companies. Fortunately, NLP has been around for so long that many people in the psychology profession use it though not in psychiatry as their trade is in drugs and like how everything looks like a nail to a hammer, all the solutions of a psychiatrist's involves drugs.

Here is an extract from a more mainstream source of information;

Article:

Why Psychiatry Holds Enormous Power in Society Despite Losing Scientific Credibility It helps to be funded by Big Pharma.²

While Big Pharma financial backing is one reason psychiatry is able to retain its clout, this is not the only reason. More insidiously, psychiatry retains influence because of the needs of the larger power structure that rules us. And perhaps most troubling, psychiatry retains influence because of us—and our increasing fears that have resulted in our expanding needs for coercion.

But before discussing these three reasons, some documentation of psychiatry's lost scientific credibility in several critical areas.

Psychiatry's Lost Scientific Credibility

DSM Invalidity. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic bible, the DSM, was slammed by the pillars of the psychiatry establishment. Thomas Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the

² Altnet January 6 2015

<http://www.altnet.org/why-psychiatry-holds-enormous-power-society-despite-losing-scientific-credibility>

highest U.S. governmental mental health official, offered a harsh rebuke of the DSM, announcing that the DSM's diagnostic categories lack validity, and he stated that "NIMH will be re-orienting its research away from DSM categories." Also in 2013, Allen Frances, the former chair of the DSM-4 taskforce, published his book, Saving Normal: An Insider's Revolt against Out-of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis, DSM-5, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life.

Psychiatric Treatments May Cause Increased Suicide. The FDA—despite protests by the psychiatric establishment—has issued "black box warnings" about the potential for increased suicidality for patients under the age of 25 who use antidepressants. In 2014, AlterNet reported about a University of Copenhagen study comparing Danish individuals who committed suicide to matched controls between the years 1996 and 2009. The researchers found that taking psychiatric medications in a prior year was linked to a 5.8 times increase in suicide; contact with a psychiatric outpatient clinic was associated with an 8.2 times increase; visiting a psychiatric emergency room was linked to a 27.9 times increase; and admission to a psychiatric hospital was linked to a 44.3 times increase in suicide.

While correlation by itself does not necessarily mean causation, an accompanying editorial in the same journal where the article was published pointed out that associations with the features detailed in this particular study indicate a good possibility of a causal relationship. Among the reasons why psychiatric treatment could well cause increased suicide, besides the adverse effects of medication, is the stigma and

trauma of treatment, as the editorial authors state: “It is therefore entirely plausible that the stigma and trauma inherent in (particularly involuntary) psychiatric treatment might, in already vulnerable individuals, contribute to some suicides.”

Corruption of Psychiatry by Big Pharma. Big Pharma heavily funds university psychiatry departments, sponsors conferences and continuing education for psychiatrists, advertises in their professional journals, and pays well-known clinicians and researchers to be speakers and consultants. I documented in 2007 and updated in 2012 how virtually every way the public and doctors get information about mental health has been corrupted by drug company dollars. In 2008, congressional investigations of psychiatry revealed that major psychiatric institutions such as the American Psychiatric Association and several “thought leader” psychiatrists, including Harvard psychiatrist Joseph Biederman, were on the take from drug companies, creating obvious conflicts of interest and further damaging psychiatry’s credibility.

For all the above reasons, and others, I differ with Alan Watts on calling Zen ‘like psychotherapy’. Philosophy seems to have no positive or negative connotations in our culture, in our time, as it simply doesn’t exist on a basic educational level so no one has had a chance to destroy it yet. So philosophy is the best word for our time, I think.

How Zen Differs From Traditional Views Of Philosophy

Since this is a path of mental liberation it is meant to be experienced and only talked about enough so that it CAN be experienced.

A philosophy, while originally meaning the love of wisdom (which is an infinite search for knowledge, i.e. with no end in sight if Socrates wisdom is anything to judge by), it is now about beliefs that are wrapped around something the “philosopher” has taken to be an inarguable fact (to students of philosophy who generally exist as a tiny minority in college populations).

Descartes, for example, began his philosophy with the assumption that “*I think therefore I am*”³ and goes on from there piling one assumption upon the other. Clearly Descartes hadn’t heard of meditation in his time. Millions of people have learnt how to stop their endless mind chatter and silence the mind since Descartes time. Add the science of meditation to the facts available to us and Descartes philosophy falls apart like a game of Jenga where the foundation stick, holding everything together has been pulled out thus making the entire structure fall.

Philosophy rests on assumptions and is often subject to such problems. To begin with Descartes stops thinking when asleep and consequently ceases to exist every night. So his philosophy had many holes in it but for people of his time, all high on coffee and conversation as their main past times, this must have been acceptable. Zen also rests on assumptions

³ Meditations on First Philosophy by Rene Descartes (1641)

but the end point isn't a theory of the universe or of existence but one of experience.

Since the experience of Zen is the same, even if a different set of assumptions are used to get you to that experience, it can be said to have a fluid philosophy in that how it is taught differs greatly from teacher to teacher and time to time.

Zen is about letting go of thoughts and often includes meditation practice of no-mind and no-thoughts. Descartes wouldn't exist in Zen, or at least his philosophy wouldn't or couldn't exist. Yet I can put zen practice into words and thus have formed my own philosophy of how to explain zen (or 'dhyana' in meditation, i.e. it's originally a meditation technique extended to all aspects of life). In other words, just because Zen doesn't fit the format of philosophy doesn't mean it can't be talked about and explained in a philosophical manner that gets the meaning across.

The Difference Between Spirituality In The East VS The West

In the east, particularly Ancient China, spirituality is about a mental attitude that is maintained. While in the west, spirituality has this otherworldly tinge around it. A Saint in the west is "Holy", a "Man/Woman of God", "Untouchable by the Devil" etc. A Saint in Ancient China of the Taoist or Zen path are often represented by smiling and laughing individuals who are even portrayed being clumsy or drunk. In the west the idea of "holy" separates the individual from ordinary acts and he is

often portrayed with a halo around his head with everyone around him in awe or being clumsy or caught up in the world. This idea of holy doesn't seem to have existed in Ancient China beyond a form of ancestor worship common to ancient tribal peoples, i.e. one respected and revered ones lineage, both personal lineage and cultural lineage. If you compare and contrast these two concept of holiness you realize that one is "holy" while the other is just human.

That is the basic point to be understood here, Taoist "spirituality", which has been carried on by zen, is distinctly human in every way. While the west reveres its spiritual leaders as holy men or women, in the east they are revered as accomplished human beings who have learned to flow with life. In the west the spiritual people are above the people. In the east the "spiritual" people are more human than anyone else. They lack the basic inhibition trained into people as youths so they live instinctively rather than through a belief system.

I have been putting spiritual in the parenthesis like this "spiritual", because the differences between east and western conceptions of spirituality is so large that I feel uncomfortable using the same word as it doesn't convey the meaning of the words in it's context.

Zen Can't Be Described Thus, 'Those who know do not speak'

Many People will recite as if by rote that, “One who knows does not talk. One who talks does not know.” suggesting that a true zen practitioner says nothing.

I would like to point out to those individuals that this quote that they think describes all of zen is chapter number 56 of the 81 chapter Tao Te Ching... so the source document contradicts them on this claim. Also, the rest of the stanza goes something like this:

1. One who knows does not talk. One who talks does not know. Therefore the sage keeps his mouth shut and his sense-gates closed.

In other words, what this ancient zen POEM is describing, what seems to be, a meditation technique and probably is one of the source documents for the “vow of silence” practice that some monks are famous for. A look at the rest of the chapter suggests that the writer is describing a meditation technique based on the idea of ‘words can cloud your experience’ and what a person can gain from this practice and what sort of results one can observe for such a person;

2. "He will blunt his own sharpness, His own tangles adjust; He will dim his own radiance, And be one with his dust."

3. This is called profound identification.

4. Thus he is inaccessible to love and also inaccessible to enmity. He is inaccessible to profit and inaccessible to loss. He is also inaccessible to favor and inaccessible to disgrace. Thus he becomes world-honored.

OR

He who knows (the Tao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready to) speak about it does not know it.

Another, more poetic, translation of the same chapter of the poem;

He (who knows it) will keep his mouth shut and close the portals (of his nostrils). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will temper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called 'the Mysterious Agreement.'

(Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of nobility or meanness:--he is the noblest man under heaven.

Clearly the point of chapter 56 out of 81 of the world's oldest zen poem isn't that one can't speak about zen but more along the lines of, *'one shouldn't be talking as much as practicing it'*.

“Zen Is So Mysterious”

Other people will say that zen is so mysterious that you have to talk in it in the negative, i.e. describe what it's not like rather than what it is like because there are no words to describe the experience. Problem of just talking in the negative is that you are still using words and words convey a conception so you

are providing a person with mental impressions you have just chosen to accept these descriptions as the right way to give a person mental impressions about zen.

You can talk about zen by describing it just like just like you can describe the taste of strawberries by saying sweet and tangy. You still can't convey the accurate experience of eating a strawberry but you can provide mental impressions (words/descriptions) that indicate the right direction to look in, like a finger pointing towards the moon.

Words lack the ability to convey the experience of eating and tasting a strawberry. In the same way you can never understand zen by words alone because it must be experienced.

“Were language adequate, it would take but a day to fully set forth the Tao [The Path Of Zen]. Not being adequate, it takes time to explain material existences. Tao is something beyond material existences. It cannot be conveyed either by words or by silence” Chang Tzu

The Concept Of The Self (Or Lack Of It) In Zen

In ancient India a concept developed called Maya which means illusion, i.e. since the world is considered to be impermanent (constantly changing) and you can interpret the world in any way with your mind, it is considered to be an illusion.

For example a tree can be seen just as a separate plant or as something which connects with the earth and sky and the animals around it; (i.e. a tree can be seen as an object OR as a pattern of the environment which will disappear when the pattern changes such as a change in the weather patterns which can change patterns of growth from green regions to desert and back again as it does in changing ice ages).

Thus a common though ancient perspective on attachment was formed that if you hold onto your psychological and mental foundations, your images to reality, you are holding onto something that will dissolve away... eventually. SO you are holding on to something which is inherently unstable, whether it be life which comes and goes with birth and death or the features of the landscape around you.

Even mountains grow or shift and/or erode over time, though generally too slowly to notice unless man changes its nature, by say, cutting all the trees then a safe mountain can become a mudslide hazard and fall apart etc.

This understanding of the fluidity of life and living life, not as a Utopia but an ever changing pattern, is at the root of the ancient psychological position of learning to be 'detached' from the world (the practice of non-attachment).

Siddhartha (AKA The Buddha) essentially agreed with this philosophical position of ancient Indian philosophy but took it one step further by saying that not only is the world an illusion but so is the self (the part of us that we refer to when we say "I").

To put it in other words, you are not the person you were a year ago, you can probably see the ways in which you have changed or grown in the last year or 10 years or 30 years. You probably see the world in a different way than you did a year ago or 10 years ago or 30 years ago. Since you see the world differently you have a different image of yourself as well in relation to the world. You, at the very least, DEFINE (see) yourself differently than you did a year or 5 or 10 or 20 or 30 years ago.

What you are capable of, what you are, what you like most... all of these definitions tend to change for **every** person given enough time or given changes in circumstances of life.

The ancient philosophers noticed that as soon as you 'imagined' an event happening to you or your role in any situation, you first have to PLACE yourself IN it;

i.e. you have to imagine your role or character, then you decide what to do or how to feel. Now, this tends to happen very fast for most events as your story and behaviour has already been established over time.

In other words, every time you imagine yourself or a situation that you are in, you are, in a sense, recreating yourself (which is what a Zen practitioner means when they say "death & rebirth").

In the Scientific American MIND magazine an interview with neuroscientist Eric Kendal also proves the same concept of

Siddhartha's which is now a fundamental part of Mahayana Buddhism or simply 'Zen Buddhism'.

Here is how Eric Kendal defines the memory you have of your "self":

Scientific American Mind magazine in an interview with the Nobel laureate Neuroscientist Eric Kandel⁴;

Mind: We tend to think of memory as a kind of library that holds a record of events and facts that can be retrieved as needed. Is this an accurate metaphor?

*Kandel: No, memory is not like that at all. **Human memory reinvents itself all the time.** Every time you remember something, you modify it a little bit, in part dependent on the context in which you recall it. That is because the brain's storage is not as exact as written text. It is always a mixture of many facades of the past event: images, pictures, feelings, words, facts and fiction—a "re-collection" in the true sense.*

Modern neuro-science agrees with the Zen Buddhist idea of an impermanent self. As Eric Kandel points out that, "Every time you remember something, you modify it a little bit, in part dependent on the context in which you recall it." In other words you recreate your image of yourself to fit the new situation. If the self was something permanent and real, then your image of yourself would always remain the same. The fact that you can consciously or unconsciously change your image of

⁴ In Search of Memory: An Interview with Nobel Laureate Eric Kandel By Steve Mirsky, May 24, 2006

yourself and react to situations in a new way - or just create a new you - proves that the self is something you make up as part of living in society.

What does this mean? This means that you are not limited to being any particular 'self' or person. If you feel like you have low self-esteem you can change that self. If you feel like you are not comfortable in social situations, you can change that image too. Any limiting image you have of yourself can be changed as you create your 'self' or how you want to be.

This is how Alan Watts described the illusory self from a zen perspective which was illuminating for me and may it be for you too;

“The ability of a pattern to contain elements that represent its former states is what we call memory. In engineering language we would call it feedback, because feedback is the system whereby any system of energy is enabled to record the results of its own action so that based upon that record it can adapt, and as it were, make plans for the future. It can in other words, correct its action. So because human beings have memory, the capacity of the pattern of the nervous system to record its former states, the human being can make predictions about the future and in general control its activity.

But from this extraordinary marvelous ability there arises a confusing by-product. And that is this feeling that here is a constant entity, like the screen of a television. In other words, because a certain element of permanence runs through these changing patterns, this permanent behavior of the pattern, or

permanently repeating behavior of the pattern, gives the impression of some substantial mind stuff or mind entity underlying the pattern and upon which the pattern is recorded. It's the same sort of illusion that arises when, for example, I take a flashlight and rotate it in the dark, and you see a continuous circle of light. It appears that the light leaves a track behind it because the moving light leaves a memory upon the retina of the eye, and that is what gives us the illusion of seeing a constant circle of light.

And so a similar illusion arises from the repetitive pattern of the nervous system, and gives us the impression that there is this constant thing, the experiencer, who lasts, and endures like a substance from the past, through the present, and into the future.” Alan Watts – Lecture on Mahayana Buddhism

Zen Is Iconoclastic To The Extreme

Iconoclastic means a person who likes to break idols. A zenist likes to break mental idols.

Since everything has it's being in a mental conception (a belief or a label to categorize experience is what gives an object it's meaning), there is nothing zen can't go beyond. Nothing in the material world is meant to last and ideas are from the material world so they aren't meant to last as well.

In *Religion of the Samurai*⁵, Kaiten Nukariya writes;

⁵ The Religion of the Samurai, by Kaiten Nukariya, [1913] - Chapter 3: The Universe If The Scripture Of Zen

The Scripture is no more nor less than the finger pointing to the moon of Buddhahood. When we recognize the moon and enjoy its benign beauty, the finger is of no use. As the finger has no brightness whatever, so the Scripture has no holiness whatever. The Scripture is religious currency representing spiritual wealth. It does not matter whether money be gold, or sea-shells, or cows. It is a mere substitute.

And;

Zen is completely free from the fetters of old dogmas, dead creeds, and conventions of stereotyped past, that check the development of a religious faith and prevent the discovery of a new truth. Zen needs no Inquisition. It never compelled nor will compel the compromise of a Galileo or a Descartes. No excommunication of a Spinoza or the burning of a Bruno is possible for Zen.

On a certain occasion Yoh Shan (Yaku-san) did not preach the doctrine for a long while, and was requested to give a sermon by his assistant teacher, saying: "Would your reverence preach the Dharma to your pupils, who long thirst after your merciful instruction?" "Then ring the bell," replied Yoh Shan. The bell rang, and all the monks assembled in the Hall eager to bear the sermon. Yoh Shan went up to the pulpit and descended immediately without saying a word. "You, reverend sir," asked the assistant, "promised to deliver a sermon a little while ago. Why do you not preach?" "Sutras are taught by the Sutra teachers," said the master; "Çastras are taught by the Çastra teachers. No wonder that I say nothing." This little

episode will show you that Zen is no fixed doctrine embodied in a Sutra or a Çastra, but a conviction or realization within us. To quote another example, an officer offered to Tüng Shan (To-zan) plenty of alms, and requested him to recite the sacred Canon. Tüng Shan, rising from his chair, made a bow respectfully to the officer, who did the same to the teacher. Then Tüng Shan went round the chair, taking the officer with him, and making a bow again to the officer, asked: "Do you see what I mean?" "No, sir," replied the other. "I have been reciting the sacred Canon, why do you not see?" Thus Zen does not regard Scriptures in black and white as its Canon, for it takes to-days and tomorrows of this actual life as its inspired pages.

What Is Nirvana?

Nirvana is a very revealing word. It simply means to *extinguish* or to *blow out*. In other words, it's let go of yourself and experience the world directly without ego or any story to explain the world whatsoever, thus having 'blown out' the structure that was holding your world view together, setting you free of ignorant beliefs.

Put another way, Nirvana is to live without an ego or even a personality as it has extinguished. You live directly from the mind. You live "at cause" with the world, you being the one being "caused" to do things, as described in the yoga sutras, "*for those beings who are merged in unitive consciousness, the world is the cause*". How can it be any other way? When you personality and attachment to desires and results is gone

you can't help but pick up stuff from the outside to fill the void. You live like the description in the Tao Te Ching managing your *affairs without doing anything*⁶, as you have no desire for or against managing your affairs.

What is "Enlightenment"?

Enlightenment has been described as a mental trick that takes you from being a frustrated member of the rat race to just a person living life. Bodhidharma simply defines enlightenment as '*awareness, supreme awareness*'.

Other's will describe it as '*being aware of and living from your Original Mind*', for example zen scholar D.T. Suzuki uses the word "Reason" as the proper translation for the 'tao' in his translation of the Tao Te Ching indicating he thinks Tao refers to the zen state. Suzuki also described enlightenment as "*the same as ordinary every living except you are two inches off the ground*". He's referring to the mental weight of one's worries or beliefs being released. It's like discovering you were walking around in lead shoes and you feel lighter after taking off the lead shoes and walking around.

In zen, enlightenment can come to anyone at any time. As one writer explains about attaining enlightenment or awareness of the Original mind or "*mushin*":

In the attainment of this state of mind (mushin), some are quicker than others. There are some who attain to a state of

⁶ Chapter 2 verse 3 of the Tao Te Ching as translated by J. Legge in 1891

mushin all at once by just listening to a discourse on the Dharma, while there are others who attain to it only after going through all the grades of Bodhisattvaship⁷ such as the ten stages of faith, the ten stages of abiding, the ten stages of discipline, and the ten stages of turning-over. More or less time may be required in the attainment of mushin, but once attained it puts an end to all discipline, to all realization and yet there is really nothing attained. It is truth and not falsehood. Whether this mushin is attained in one thought or attained after going through the ten stages its practical working is the same and there is no question of the one being deeper or shallower than the other. Only the one has passed through long ages of hard discipline.

Basically it says that no matter how much you meditate or don't meditate, 'when you get it, then you get it'. Since zen is a state of mind which is natural, it simply has to be understood to be practiced and thus the smart ones will get enlightened fast and the slow witted will get it slowly or never. But once zen is attained, it is the same for everyone in it's basic understanding and experience.

One ancient master describes the enlightened philosopher in this manner:

Knowest thou that leisurely philosopher who has gone beyond learning and is not exerting himself in anything?

He neither endeavours to avoid idle thoughts nor seeks after the Truth;

[For he knows that] ignorance in reality is the Buddha-nature,

⁷ In this context it just means an *apprenticeship*

[And that] this empty visionary body is no less than the Dharma-body.⁸

What is reincarnation?

In zen, death & rebirth (reincarnation) is seen as a psychological phenomenon following from the illusion of the self.

An ancient Zen Scholar, Hui-Neng's Tan Ching, Writes;

What is Paramita? This is a Sanskrit term of the Western country. In Yang it means "the other shore reached". When the meaning (artha in Sanskrit) is understood, one is detached from birth and death. When the objective world (visaya) is clung to, there is the rise of birth and death; it is like the waves rising from the water; this is called "this shore". When you are detached from the objective world, there is no birth and death for you; it is like the water constantly running its course: this is "reaching the other shore". Hence Paramita.⁹

The idea being expressed here: When you cling to the world you have to create to create a self to deal with each new situation, thus you experience 'death and rebirth' (of the ego). When you let go and dwell in the zen state your consciousness stays steady and thus you don't experience birth and death (of the ego).

⁸ Yoka Daishi's "Song Of Enlightenment" - Manual of Zen Buddhism by Suzuki

⁹ Hiu Neng's Tan Ching - Manual Of Zen Buddhism by Suzuki

For example: When you try and do good deeds you are trying to create a new self. By working on being better and better, you are destroying an old way of being (the old 'self') and you are creating a new one. Your 'self', i.e. how you define or imagine yourself to be, is going through death and rebirth.

A Quick Introduction To Zen With Bodhidharma

Bodhidharma is the founder of Zen (& martial arts!) in China and, thus by transmission, Japan. So any in depth look at zen should begin with his writings which are simple, to the point and devoid of any mystical mumbo jumbo. As long as the translations are accurate, what he said 1500 years ago is understandable today. (some of the stuff here is repetitive but it fits and thus provides another useful perspective on important information)

A few quotes from Bodhidharma extracted from a very lucid translation of Bodhidharma's sermons by Red Pines¹;

Bodhidharma: What is the mind? You ask. That's your mind I answer. My answer is your mind. If I had no mind how could I answer; If you had no mind how could you ask. That which asks is your mind.

What he is saying is that the act of perceiving anything be it question a thought or an image or anything else, that is an act

of the mind. If you ask for a definition of the mind it is your mind that is asking for that definition.

So you got your answer, anything you say, do ask, want or imagine that is the mind itself.

Definition of the mind in more detail;

Your mind creates your thoughts. If you try to describe your mind then that is basically you using your mind to describe your mind.

In other words, your mind is creating images and thoughts to describe itself so it can only do so by analogy and if your mind is engaged in any task that an earlier analogy did not take into account then your mind has to come up with a new analogy.

So any description your mind comes up with an image of itself is like a camera looking into the lens of another camera and constantly moving backward in a sort of infinite regression. If you try to conceptualize an end mind, it's like the woman who believed the world was set on a large turtle and when asked what was underneath 'the turtle that held the world up', she replied; *' nice try. It's Turtles all the way down.'*

In other words, as soon as you imagine something about the mind, the mind is distancing itself from itself to describe itself and you can do this forever. Ultimately you discover the mind can't be understood, only experienced.

Bodhidharma says: *But the mind has no form and its awareness no limit.*

This means that any form or image you can imagine is a creation of your mind and since it is a creation of your mind, the mind itself has no form, i.e. the mind isn't a thing that you can find like a stone, it is formless as it is not made of matter.

Bodhidharma: *All appearances are illusion. They have no fixed existence or constant form. They are impermanent.*

People grow old and mountains erode over the millennia by the wind and rain (or a strong rainfall). In other words, given a large enough perspective on time, everything you can see, touch, smell, feel or hear is impermanent. In fact a sound or the taste of something or a smell is by its very nature impermanent . Everything in the material world exists as a flow of information to our senses that is ever changing.

Bodhidharma: *“The mind’s capacity is limitless, and its manifestations are inexhaustible. Seeing forms with your eyes, hearing sounds with your ears, smelling odors with your nose, tasting flavors with your tongue, every movement or state is all your mind. At every moment, where language can’t go, that’s your mind.”*

Anything you experience can be remembered in the mind thereby making its capacity seem limitless. Anything you can name or classify is a “manifestation” and you can make up anything on and on forever making it seem limitless. What you

sense by smell or touch is sensed by your mind. Where language can't go (such as explaining the taste of strawberries), that too is the mind.

Bodhidharma: "And as long as you're subject to birth and death, you'll never attain enlightenment."

In zen death & rebirth is seen as a psychological phenomenon following from the illusion of the self.

An ancient Zen Scholar, Hui-Neng's Tan Ching, Writes;

What is Paramita? This is a Sanskrit term of the Western country. In Yang it means "the other shore reached". When the meaning (artha in Sanskrit) is understood, one is detached from birth and death. When the objective world (visaya) is clung to, there is the rise of birth and death; it is like the waves rising from the water; this is called "this shore". When you are detached from the objective world, there is no birth and death for you; it is like the water constantly running its course: this is "reaching the other shore". Hence Paramita.²

The idea being expressed here: When you cling to the world you have to create to create a self to deal with each new situation, thus you experience 'death and rebirth' (of the ego). When you let go and dwell in the zen state your consciousness stays steady and thus you don't experience birth and death (of the ego).

For example: When you try and do good deeds you are trying to create a new self. By working on being better and better, you are destroying an old way of being (the old 'self') and you are creating a new one. Your 'self', i.e. how you define or imagine yourself to be, is going through death and rebirth.

Definitions drawn from Bodhidharma's sermons;

Enlightenment = heightened awareness that can be maintained constantly

Nirvana = a state where the self (or yourself that you create in your mind) ceases to exist and all the world is experienced directly.

Bodhidharma: *"To search for enlightenment or nirvana beyond this mind is impossible."*

Recognizing and living in the mind is by itself enlightenment. Enhanced awareness is one of the effects of said enlightenment.

The idea here is that as soon as you begin 'seeking' an experience, you have put that experience into a category and separated it from yourself.

Then you chase this conception you have of what 'enlightenment' or 'nirvana' should be. As long as you have an image to chase, i.e. your mind is chasing something it has created; you will be like a donkey with a carrot forever just out

of reach, going round and round attaining nothing. Why? Because all enlightenment/ nirvana are attributes of your mind itself (it is your “original mind” to be more precise). You already have what you seek. So looking for what you already have is pointless .

Going deeper;

To know that an object you perceive is a tree is a conception you have that you have created in your mind and imposed on it. What you’re perceiving could just as easily be called an air filter or a lung of the earth or a home for the spirits and every such definition is accurate in its particular context in that it is an image the mind has of its surroundings.

Thus noticing an object without defining it is your mind in a state of direct experience... which can be fun, like when you are engaged in a game or boring like if you are waiting in line. The key is not to go meta on what you are experiencing, i.e. if you are having fun, don’t think about the fun you’re having, just stay involved in enjoying yourself without any self-reflection, pondering or imagination – daydreaming or in any way being mentally not there which can included thinking of others opinions which take you away from your own experience

Same goes for if you are bored. Enjoy the boredom as it helps differentiate the boring time from the fun times. You could go ‘meta’ (outside of the experience of the situation) by imagining how bored you are and what a waste of time it is or go into an escape made by fantasizing doing something else (like

daydreaming to pass time) but don't. Simply experience waiting in line as waiting in line without imposing any value judgment such as fun or boring, good or bad, and you are experiencing waiting DIRECTLY without any mental wanderings. That is a form of zen. Practice it and waiting can serve as a meditative practice, as can work as keeping your mind on your task is easier if your whole body is engaged. That's probably why Monks in Zen Monasteries had so many chores and physical practices, i.e. as a form of mediation.

In short just experience. Notice and observe without conception, i.e. without thinking of anything in particular. Take the example of a baby, they have no conception of right or wrong, up or down, male or female – so they experience life directly and respond to it without imposing conception of how things are and THEN responding to how they think is appropriate (and I mean non-habitual behaviors as well).

1

<http://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Bodhidharma-English-Chinese-Edition/dp/0865473994>

2

Dr. Suzuki

Hiu Neng's

Tan Ching - Manual Of Zen Buddhism by

Zen Model: Ten Oxherding Pictures

Key: The Cow or Ox represents the mind. The Person is you or the one seeking to learn about the mind and experience zen (which is a mental experience). You can imagine the cow/ox as a bicycle or a car and get an idea of the learning process these series of images seek to explain.

1

The first picture, called 'the Searching of the Cow,' represents the cowherd wandering in the wilderness with a vague hope of finding his lost cow that is running wild out of his sight. The reader will notice that the cow is likened to the mind of the student and the cowherd to the student himself.



*"I do not see my cow,
But trees and grass,
And hear the empty cries
Of cicadas."*

The person is unaware of his or her mind except as a word or something they have been told they "possess".

One is embedded in communal life, following societies norms of what's right and wrong. Including what one should hope for, think or dream about i.e. following what they are told without any thought except where allowed by society itself. The person reacts to life instinctively like an animal in its natural habitat.

If the mind were a bike or a car: This is the time when you know nothing about riding a bike or driving a car.

2

The second picture, called 'the Finding of the Cow's Tracks,' represents the cowherd tracing the cow with the sure hope of restoring her, having found her tracks on the ground.



*"The grove is deep, and so
Is my desire.
How glad I am, O lo!
I see her tracks."*

Here one begins to learn about the mind (themselves). You figure out what your mind is composed of by what you react to in fear, pain or pleasure. You learn that all senses feed the mind with information. You know you can think logically about stuff and thus logic is an aspect of the mind. In other words, one learns about their mind by learning what sorts of behaviours, thoughts and actions count as mental activity. These are the footprints of the mind

If the mind were a bike or a car; Now you begin to learn how the bike or car operates without actually beginning to learn how to operate one yourself. You learn about riding a bike and driving a car intellectually (mentally) first.

3

The third picture, called 'the Finding out of the Cow,' represents the cowherd slowly approaching the cow from a distance.



*"Her loud and wild mooing
Has led me here;
I see her from afar,
Like a dark shadow."*

The more you study the philosophy of the mind or engage in discussions about the mind and its attributes, the clearer becomes your understanding of it.

Being able to see your cow means you are beginning to get an idea of what your mind is. In other words, the mind is getting to know itself.

If the mind were a bike or car; Here you begin to learn how to ride a bike or drive a car by practicing regularly.

The fourth 'picture, called 'the Catching of the Cow,' represents the cowherd catching hold of the cow, who struggles to break loose from him.



*"Alas! it's hard to keep
The cow I caught.
She tries to run and leap
And snap the cord."*

You seek to take control of the mind. You understand you have to silence it but it keeps chattering on. You discover trying to grab ahold of the mind with the mind is like a snake eating its tail (a catch-22 situation). It's like how difficult it is to quiet the mind when you first learn how to meditate. In fact, learning to meditate and fight while not letting the mind get in the way of fighting (sparring/practice) was probably the technique being employed. A basic meditation technique, called zazen, would also be a part of the Samurai's practice here.

If the mind were a bike or a car; Now you are beginning to get the hang of riding the bike or driving the car.

5

The fifth picture, called 'the Taming of the Cow,' represents the cowherd pacifying the cow, giving her grass and water.



*"I'm glad the cow so wild
Is tamed and mild.
She follows me, as if
She were my shadow."*

You have begun to gain control of your mind. You can sit in meditation for a while. You can change bad habits into good habits. You can flow when working (or fighting if a Samurai) or doing any activity to some extent. You move smoother and your reflexes are faster. You have a mind that you have some control over.

If the mind were a bike or a car; You have become a fairly good bicycle rider or car driver by now. You drive easily and freely wherever you want to go.

6

The sixth picture, called 'the Going Home Riding on the Cow,' represents the cowherd playing on a flute, riding on the cow.



*"Slowly the clouds return
To their own hill,
Floating along the skies
So calm and still.*

You have a complete grasp of zen philosophy and practice. You have attained "the flow". You can do your meditation easily and it feels as if no time passes because you're enjoying it. You can fight (or engage in your profession) without thinking, having become an expert. You can change your mind, in accord with circumstance, instantly. Habits are easy to change.

If the mind were a bike or a car; You are now so good at your bike and/or car that you can do tricks. You now have real skill.

7

The seventh picture, called 'the Forgetting of the Cow and the Remembering of the Man,' represents the cowherd looking at the beautiful scenery surrounding his cottage.



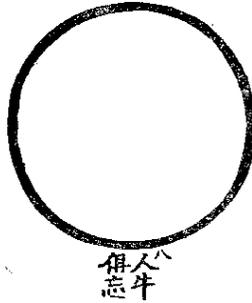
*"The cow goes out by day
And comes by night.
I care for her in no way,
But all is right."*

One has mastered zen in daily life and can now do all the daily activities and chores that is normal to everyday life as if one were on vacation or if the the mind has no attachments (non-attachment is mastered). You just do what needs to be done.

If the mind were a bike or a car; You can do really good tricks on your bike or in your car. The bike has become an extension of your body as if you and the bike were one.

8

The eighth picture, called 'the Forgetting of the Cow and of the Man,' represents a large empty circle.



*"There's no cowherd nor cow
Within the pen;
No moon of truth nor clouds
Of doubt in men."*

You attain the supreme flow of zen where both you and your mind don't exist. You just live in the world as if it were an extension of you.

Here you see beyond the categories and labels created by your mind to explain things. Everything just is.

Rather than using the mind to control the mind one just lets go. Without the mind to create a conception of the self, the self no longer exists. Without the mind creating labels to structure observation (the impressions from the senses) there is no

external world. The external world has no meaning, it's an illusion.

If the mind were a bike or a car; You and the car don't even exist. Well, the analogy breaks down here but the idea is that you transcend both yourself and the world, mentally, i.e. it's a meditation technique result called dhyana in Yoga and Zen in Japanese.

9

The ninth picture, called 'the Returning to the Root and Source,' represents a beautiful landscape full of lovely trees in full blossom.



*"There is no dyer of hills,
Yet they are green;
So flowers smile, and titter rills
At their own wills."*

Your consciousness is irrevocably changed by the meditative experience but as you come down from your state of meditative ecstasy you discover that nothing has changed. the world is the same as it was before. There is no deep meaning to life or events. No gods or goddesses or angels. Everything just is as it is.

If the mind were a bike or a car; You discover the bike/car exist. Despite disappearing they have returned. You drive/ride when you need to.

10

The tenth picture, called 'the Going into the City with Open Hands,' represents a smiling monk, gourd in hand, talking with a man who looks like a pedlar.



*"The cares for body make
That body pine;
Let go of cares and thoughts,
O child of mine!"*

As human beings we tend to be communal in nature and the full experience of learning comes when we cease to become the student and become the teacher. In other words we complete a natural human cycle of learning a skill and passing it on to the next generation. Once a person learns zen one teaches zen. That is the path.

We have come full circle in this simpler and more natural path of learning about zen, how to dissociate from the world and the labels we impose on it to returning back to the world.

If the mind were a car or bike; Now you teach what you have learned.

Chapter 2

Commentary On Boddhidharma's *The Transmission of The Lamp*

The following is a translation of the entire Sermon of Bodhidharma on which Far Eastern Zen is founded called "Transmission Of The Lamp". This particular translation is by Zen scholar D.T.Suzuki found in his work, 'A Manual of Zen Buddhism'. I thought I was extremely fortunate to find this very lucid translation in the public domain here in America and have added a commentary to it to make it more understandable. It is my hope that with the introduction so far Boddhidharma's thoughts will become understandable to even the lay reader.

Note: The Tao = The Path (of mental liberation that is Zen)

The translation is in ***italicized bold text*** and my commentary is in normal text.

Bodhidharma On The Twofold Entrance To The Tao¹⁰

i.e. Bodhidharma on how to attain the zen state

There are many ways to enter the Path, but briefly Speaking they are of two sorts only. The one is "Entrance by Reason" and the other "Entrance by Conduct".¹¹

This opening sentence makes it clear that this is a method that requires intellectual understanding (not faith as in the religious systems most people are familiar with) and this intellectual understanding needs to be coupled with behaviour (probably to stabilize the mind from desire like one trains the body before an athletic competition).

We know in our age that mind and body are so connected we might as well call them mind-body. In ancient China this was the normal understanding of the human being. The separation of mind from body is an intellectual concept that exists in Ancient Indian, Middle Eastern, Pagan and Ancient Greek philosophy which has been passed down to the present.

By "Entrance by Reason" we mean the realization of the spirit of Buddhism by the aid of the scriptural teaching.

¹⁰ From *The Transmission of the Lamp*.

¹¹ Entrance by Reason" may also be rendered "Entrance by Higher Intuition", and "Entrance by Conduct", "Entrance by Practical Living"

What this sentence is saying that to enter the path of the Tao/Zen one has to understand - with their mind - what exactly the Buddha was saying and how it applies to them in everyday life.

Note:

Scripture in Ancient China (& to a degree in Ancient India, i.e. only the philosophical texts) was written to help the people achieve the results the writers had achieved or to pass on the knowledge that the writers had understood or figured out.

The “spiritual” approach was actually more like a doctor's prescription, i.e. it had an outline of the problem, the source of the problem the best cure for the problem and how to implement that cure. In western religions it's “God's grace” that brings a person “close to God” and creates a “Holy Man”. In the east it was the individual who attained their goals themselves with their own efforts. So while religious figures or holy men/women in the west were otherworldly the holy ones of the east were accomplished practitioners of their art (yoga or zen) and are more comparable to professional sportsmen than to western holy men spouting rhetoric according to their belief & blind faith.

We then come to have a deep faith in the True Nature which is the same in all sentient beings.

This is the perfect example of the difference between zen and normal religions.

In the religion one sees the world as sinful or a fall from grace i.e. something which has to be overcome.

IN zen the pure state of mind is something one shares with all living beings because it's the natural state of mind.

In other words, spirituality in zen is about finding your most natural way of being while in western religions or even in yoga, it involves transcending yourself completely so nothing recognizable as "normal" remains.

The reason why it does not manifest itself is due to the overwrapping of external objects and false thoughts.

This concept is explained in the introduction under In short, your idea of reality isn't necessarily reality itself.

In other words, the world has already been labeled and explained to whatever degree in the culture you were born in. These labels were created to get around in the context of that culture.

For example, we only have a few names for snow and it's enough for us to get around in our culture. We got "snow" & "sleet" and maybe "hail". That it. Eskimos have over 70 different words for snow. Why do the eskimos have so many words for snow? Because snow can come down as flakes that you can see as little shapes (pic), in can come down with many flakes stuck together, as tiny little balls of snow as sleet

etc. To an eskimo, whose entire life is lived in snow and ice, these little differences are noticed and named as it affects their lives. We don't care. We don't hunt in the arctic so we don't need to know what kind of snow is falling to plan out hunting trips and so on.

Basically, the words we create and use helps us navigate our lives within our culture and way of life. Yet these words are made by categorizing the world in an arbitrary way.

Bodhidharma is saying that these definitions and labels that we use for navigation are false and in a way they are because they are arbitrary and do not reflect the true essence or context of the object in the universe but only in the particular culture that the word was created in.

What Bodhidharma is saying is that when you have all these labels and ways of categorizing the world you fail to see the world as it is (as Emerson pointed out in his essay on Nature) and thus a person has overlapped "external objects" with "false thoughts" or concepts.

When a man, abandoning the false and embracing the true, in singleness of thought practises the Pi-kuan¹² he finds that there is neither self nor other, that the masses and the worthies are of one essence, and he firmly holds on to this belief and never moves away therefrom.

¹² the wall gazing technique

If conceptions (words) can 'wrap' themselves around external objects becoming 'false thoughts', then how do you extricate yourself from these false thoughts? Here is where we discover Bodhidharma's meditation technique called *wall gazing* which must be pursued with single minded purpose to achieve results.

The technique is probably to literally sit in front of a wall and practice meditation. The type of meditation normally practiced in zen circles involves sitting in a comfortable position and focusing only on your breathing, eyes half closed. Some meditate with eyes closed. The wall gazing technique is probably what he did, i.e. sit in front of a wall and meditate to reduce the possibility of distraction and when he taught, he taught what he knew to work for him.

When practicing this technique Bodhidharma asks you to see everyone as the same/equal/conscious-beings-only.

He will not then be a slave to words, for he is in silent communion with the Reason itself, free from conceptual discrimination; he is serene and not-acting. This is called "Entrance by Reason".

After unpacking the earlier statements you can notice how clear and direct Bodhidharma is being in his explanation.

Instead of being caught by in words and conceptions you will be set free from 'conceptual discrimination' of one thing being better or worse than another.

With all the labels categorizing your experience gone, all just is as it is.

Now Bodhidharma begins to describe the approach of 'practical living' that helps one attain zen. This explanation is written for the Sage although this was adopted by the Samurai as well as the pure dhayana or zen state would make the following an easy task

By "Entrance by Conduct" is meant the four acts in which all other acts are included. What are the four?

- 1. To know how to requite hatred;***
- 2. To be obedient to karma;***
- 3. Not to crave anything; and***
- 4. To be in accord with the Dharma.***

Taking each number separately;

1. What is meant by "How to requite hatred"? He who disciplines himself in the Path should think thus when he has to struggle with adverse conditions: "During the innumerable past ages I have wandered through a multiplicity of existences, all the while giving myself to unimportant details of life at the expense of essentials, and thus creating infinite occasions for hate, ill-will, and wrongdoing. While no violations have been committed in this life, the fruits of evil deeds in the past are to be gathered now. Neither gods nor men can foretell what is

coming upon me. I will submit myself willingly and patiently to all the ills that befall me, and I will never bemoan or complain. The Sutra teaches me not to worry over ills that may happen to me. Why? Because when things are surveyed by a higher intelligence, the foundation of causation is reached." When this thought is awakened in a man, he will be in accord with the Reason because he makes the best use of hatred and turns it into the service in his advance towards the Path. This is called the "way to requite hatred".

This paragraph explains how one needs to think on the path of zen. It begins with 'during innumerable past ages I have wandered through multiplicity of existences' which I think needs to be unpacked.

In zen there is a concept of the Self that is something you have to create and maintain by continuously recreating the Self (I've gone into this in more detail in the introduction).

So looking at this paragraph as a psychological technique, Bodhidharma is saying 'in the many stories I have created of myself, which are like many lives, there have been many instances for me to get angry and do things motivated by anger. I understand that everything has a cause, either in myself through my own bad actions at some time in the past or through a cause and effect at work in society and in the culture which creates the effect I am observing now'.

In other words, this technique involves coming through conclusions through reason and observation, that help you

explain the cause of whatever situation you are dealing with. When you understand it, it loses some of its power over you and gives you the ability to release your anger as you have gained distance on it.

Note:

In zen, death & rebirth (reincarnation) is seen as a psychological phenomenon following from the illusion of the self.

An ancient Zen Scholar, Hui-Neng's Tan Ching, Writes;

What is Paramita? This is a Sanskrit term of the Western country. In Yang it means "the other shore reached". When the meaning (artha in Sanskrit) is understood, one is detached from birth and death. When the objective world (visaya) is clung to, there is the rise of birth and death; it is like the waves rising from the water; this is called "this shore". When you are detached from the objective world, there is no birth and death for you; it is like the water constantly running its course: this is "reaching the other shore". Hence Paramita.¹³

The idea being expressed here: When you cling to the world you have to create to create a self to deal with each new situation, thus you experience 'death and rebirth' (of the ego). When you let go and dwell in the zen state your consciousness stays steady and thus you don't experience birth and death (of the ego).

¹³ Hiu Neng's Tan Ching - Manual Of Zen Buddhism by Dr. Suzuki

For example: When you try and do good deeds you are trying to create a new self. By working on being better and better, you are destroying an old way of being (the old 'self') and you are creating a new one. Your 'self', i.e. how you define or imagine yourself to be, is going through death and rebirth.

2. By "being obedient to karma" is meant this: There is no self (atman) in whatever beings are produced by the interplay of karmic conditions; the pleasure and pain I suffer are also the results of my previous action. If I am rewarded with fortune, honour, etc., this is the outcome of my past deeds which by reason of causation affect my present life. When the force of karma is exhausted, the result I am enjoying now will disappear; what is then the use of being joyful over it? Gain or loss, let me accept the karma as it brings to me the one or the other; the Mind itself knows neither increase nor decrease. The wind of pleasure [and pain] will not stir me, for I am silently in harmony with the Path. Therefore this is called "being obedient to karma".

This is saying that life is as it is. Good things in life happen and bad things in life happen. Your good actions can lead to good things (such as working to make money gives you the ability to buy things, i.e. "good" actions leads to good results, and so on). The goal of this paragraph seems more to detach a person from the sense of profit and loss that people associate with living due to their attachment to life.

This idea is expressed by this story;

There was a farmer whose horse ran away. All his neighbors came by to say how sorry they were at his misfortune. All he said was, "We shall see". Next, his horse returns fallen by a group of wild horses. His neighbors congratulate on his good fortune and the farmer once again says, "We shall see". Then his son falls off the same horse and breaks his leg. The neighbors once again exclaim at his misfortune and once again he says, "We shall see". In a few days the army comes by collecting young men for a war. The farmer's son was ignored as his leg was broken. His neighbors congratulate him and all he says is, "We shall see".

Notice that in this story every event of the day or week did not make the farmer giddy with happiness or depressed at having a bad day. This is the goal Bodhidharma is asking the reader to strive for.

3. By "not craving (ch'iu) anything" is meant this: Men of the world, in eternal confusion, are attached everywhere to one thing or another, which is called craving. The wise however understand the truth and are not like the ignorant. Their minds abide serenely in the uncreated while the body moves about in accordance with the laws of causation. All things are empty and there is nothing desirable to seek after. Where there is the merit of brightness there surely lurks the demerit of darkness. This triple world where we stay altogether too long is like a house on fire; all that has a body suffers, and nobody

really knows what peace is. Because the wise are thoroughly acquainted with this truth, they are never attached to things that change; their thoughts are quieted, they never crave anything. Says the Sutra: "Wherever there is a craving, there is pain; cease from craving and you are blessed." Thus we know that not to crave anything is indeed the way to the Truth. Therefore, it is taught not "to crave anything".

As in basic yogic philosophy *craving* is considered to be the source of all mental ills affecting society and man. Thus the concept of non-attachment to the world is a central pillar of zen buddhism and of practicing zen itself. I've covered this concept in the introduction.

Bodhidharma is saying that since your concepts and stories change with your imagination and how you label the world changes with how you categorize it... why crave anything in the world at all? Clearly your attachment to the world is what causes pain and anguish to begin with. Even heightened pleasure followed by the low is a sort of pain as you wish you could have that heightened feeling again and are thus back in attachment of craving of the world.

4. By "being in accord with the Dharma" is meant that the Reason which we call the Dharma in its essence is pure, and that this Reason is the principle of emptiness (sunyata) in all that is manifested; it is above defilements and attachments, and there is no "self", no "other" in it. Says the Sutra: "In the Dharma there are no sentient

beings, because it is free from the stain of being; in the Dharma there is no 'self' because it is free from the stain of selfhood." When the wise understand this truth and believe in it, their lives will be "in accordance with the Dharma".

In other words, Bodhidharma is saying that if you live life from zen (the emptiness of zen, i.e. non attachment and alert awareness) then dharma, or doing your duty, becomes easy. Life is easier when you aren't constantly chasing it. Reminds me of the verse in the Tao Te Ching 'the sage does everything while doing nothing' and so I agree with the belief of D.T.Suzuki and Alan Watts that the Tao Te Ching is the worlds oldest zen poem and zen is essentially a far eastern (ancient Chinese) practice derived from the ancient Indian yogic practice of dhayana.

As there is in the essence of the Dharma no desire to possess, the wise are ever ready to practise charity with their body, life, and property, and they never begrudge, they never know what an ill grace means. As they have a perfect understanding of the threefold nature of emptiness, they are above partiality and attachment. Only because of their will to cleanse all beings of their stains, they come among them as of them, but they are not attached to form. This is the self-benefiting phase of their lives. They, however, know also how to benefit others, and again how to glorify the truth of enlightenment. As with the virtue of charity, so with the other five virtues [of the Prajnaparamita]. The wise practise the six virtues of perfection to get rid of confused thoughts, and yet there is

no specific consciousness on their part that they are engaged in any meritorious deeds. This is called "being in accord with the Dharma".

Describes what living a life of zen is like.

Note on enlightenment: Once you understand Zen you are "enlightened". It's not something you seek to practice forever as such striving tends to become the goal in and of itself. As one writer explains: "*That followers of Zen fail to recognize the Buddha is due to their not rightly recognizing Where their own Mind is. They seek it outwardly, set up all kinds of exercises which they hope to master by degrees, and themselves work out diligently throughout ages. Yet they fail to reach enlightenment. No works compare with an immediate awakening to a state of mushin itself*"¹⁴

¹⁴ HUANG-PO'S SERMON, FROM "TREATISE ON THE ESSENTIALS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF MIND" (DENSIN HOYO)

Chapter 3

Zen Poetry with Commentary

A couple of extracts of Zen Poetry from the Manual Of Zen Buddhism translated by D.T. Suzuki that, I think, encapsulate zen as taught by the ancient zen masters.

This poem summarizes the zen experience in a very taolike manner that brings together zen and taoism so smoothly you can see how easily this philosophy can be adopted to any way of living and thus how it was adopted and used to great effect by the Samurai and the culture they spawned in Japan through their promotion of Zen.

Note: The translation is in ***italicized bold text*** and my commentary is in normal text.

On Believing In Mind (Shinjin-No-Mei)¹⁵

¹⁵ By Seng-t'san (Sosan in Japanese). Died 606 C.E. Mind = *hsin*. *Hsin* is one of those Chinese words which defy translation. When the Indian scholars were trying to translate the Buddhist Sanskrit works into Chinese, they discovered that there were five classes of

**1. The Perfect Way knows no difficulties
Except that it refuses to make preferences;
Only when freed from hate and love,
It reveals itself fully and without disguise;
A tenth of an inch's difference,
And heaven and earth are set apart;
If you wish to see it before your own eyes,
Have no fixed thoughts either for or against it.**

Stop imagining/conceiving of stuff to live beyond the feelings of being for or against something.

**2. To set up what you like against what you dislike--
This is the disease of the mind:
When the deep meaning [of the Way] is not understood**

Sanskrit terms which could not be satisfactorily rendered into Chinese. We thus find in the Chinese Tripitaka such words as *prajna*, *bodhi*, *buddha*, *nirvana*, *dhyana*, *bodhisattva*, etc., almost always untranslated; and they now appear in their original Sanskrit form among the technical Buddhist terminology. If we could leave *hsin* with all its nuance of meaning in this translation, it would save us from the many difficulties that face us in its English rendering. For *hsin* means "mind", "heart", "soul", "spirit"--each singly as well as all inclusively. In the present composition by the third patriarch of Zen, it has sometimes an intellectual connotation but at other times it can properly be given as "heart". But as the predominant note of Zen Buddhism is more intellectual than anything else, though not in the sense of being logical or philosophical, I decided here to translate *hsin* by "mind" rather than by "heart", and by this mind I do not mean our psychological mind, but what may be called absolute mind, or Mind.

Peace of mind is disturbed to no purpose.

To create “good” and “bad” is like a mental illness.

***3. [The Way is] perfect like unto vast space,
With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous:
It is indeed due to making choice
That its suchness is lost sight of.***

The path is smooth and open.

***4. Pursue not the outer entanglements,
Dwell not in the inner void;
Be serene in the oneness of things,
And [dualism] vanishes by itself.***

Go beyond duality and don't get caught up in distractions.

***5. When you strive to gain quiescence by stopping
motion,
The quiescence thus gained is ever in motion;
As long as you tarry in the dualism,
How can you realize oneness?***

You can't attain spontaneity if you dither between opposites.

6. And when oneness is not thoroughly understood,

***In two ways loss is sustained:
The denying of reality is the asserting of it,
And the asserting of emptiness is the denying of it.¹⁶***

Emptiness being at the heart of everything is attributing a concept to a description of the indescribable (cause it's an experience). By creating an image of the way of zen you are not describing zen. If instead you deny all descriptions then you are experiencing zen.

7. Wordiness and intellection--

***The more with them the further astray we go;
Away therefore with wordiness and intellection,
And there is no place where we cannot pass freely.***

The more you seek to describe something the further away from direct experience you stray.

***8. When we return to the root, we gain the meaning;
When we pursue external objects, we lose the reason.***

¹⁶ This means: When the absolute oneness of things is not properly understood, negation as well as affirmation tends to be a one-sided view of reality. When Buddhists deny the reality of an objective world, they do not mean that they believe in the unconditioned emptiness of things; they know that there is something real which cannot be done away with. When they uphold the doctrine of emptiness this does not mean that all is nothing but an empty hollow, which leads to a self-contradiction. The philosophy of Zen avoids the error of one-sidedness involved in realism as well as in nihilism.

***The moment we are enlightened within,
We go beyond the voidness of a world confronting us.***

Objects are a distraction and take us away from our true being. When enlightened we go beyond the empty labels we ascribe to things.

9. Transformations going on in an empty world which confronts us

***Appear real all because of Ignorance:
Try not to seek after the true,
Only cease to cherish opinions.***

Changes in the world that may scare you are just an illusion. Ignore opinions of others and live without trying to seek answers to things,

***10. Abide not with dualism,
Carefully avoid pursuing it;
As soon as you have right and wrong,
Confusion ensues, and Mind' is lost.***

If you stop putting things on scales like good and bad or right and wrong or long and short then you live beyond categories. If you imagine such stuff then your mind is imagining stuff and thus is confused.

11. The two exist because of the One,

***But hold not even to this One;
When a mind is not disturbed,
The ten thousand things offer no offence.***

The differences in things exists because we imagine them to exist. When the mind isn't imagining things the world can offer no offense.

***12. No offence offered, and no ten thousand things;
No disturbance going, and no mind set up to work:
The subject is quieted when the object ceases,
The object ceases when the subject is quieted.***

When you are in the zen state, in a state of dhayana, you are at rest and at ease with the world around you.

***13. The object is an object for the subject,
The subject is a subject for the object:
Know that the relativity of the two
Rests ultimately on one Emptiness.¹⁷***

Reflectivity depends on the perception of the mind.

***14. In one Emptiness the two are not distinguished,
And each contains in itself all the ten thousand things;
When no discrimination is made between this and that.
How can a one-sided and prejudiced view arise?***

¹⁷ The Mind = the Way = the One = Emptiness.

The writer is being poetic and using the poetic licence he's describing the same idea from many different angles, as is probably apparent by now, so I thought just a line of commentary here and there will suffice for this poem as the essential concepts have been covered earlier.

***15. The Great Way is calm and large-hearted,
For it nothing is easy, nothing is hard;
Small views are irresolute,
The more in haste the tardier they go.***

Everyone can walk the path of zen just learn not to be in haste.

***16. Clinging is never kept within bounds,
It is sure to go the wrong way;
Quit it, and things follow their own courses,
While the Essence neither departs nor abides.***

If you are attached to things you will never be able to control it and it will lead you down the wrong path. Let things be and don't seek to control them.

***17. Obey the nature of things, and you are in concord with
the Way,
Calm and easy and free from annoyance;***

***But when your thoughts are tied, you turn away from the truth,
They grow heavier and duller and are not at all sound.***

Follow the spontaneity of life and you live freely. When you tie up your mind in thoughts life becomes heavier and less fun.

***18. When they are not sound, the spirit is troubled;
What is the use of being partial and one-sided then?
If you want to walk the course of the One Vehicle,
Be not prejudiced against the six sense-objects.***

Not exactly sure what he is saying here but it's definitely along the concept of letting go of attachments that the senses can get caught up in but not being against them, i.e. don't pursue or reject stuff or don't have strong feelings for or against things (basic idea of 'things are as they are').

***19. When you are not prejudiced against the six sense-objects,
You are then one with the Enlightenment;
The wise are non-active,
While the ignorant bind themselves up;
While in the Dharma itself there is no individuation,
They ignorantly attach themselves to particular objects.
It is their own mind that creates illusions--
Is this not the greatest of all self-contradictions?***

When you let go of the world and just live in it without pursuing or rejecting it then you are enlightened. The wise aren't actively pursuing things while the ignorant bind themselves up in thoughts of goals and ambition and such. All of these are actions derived from attachment to things.

**20. The ignorant cherish the idea of rest and unrest,
The enlightened have no likes and dislikes:
All forms of dualism
Are contrived by the ignorant themselves.
They are like unto visions and flowers in the air;
Why should we trouble ourselves to take hold of them?
Gain and loss, right and wrong--
Away with them once for all!**

The ignorant seek pleasure and avoid pain while the wise take things as they are

**21. If an eye never falls asleep,
All dreams will by themselves cease:
If the Mind retains its absoluteness,
The ten thousand things are of one Suchness.¹⁸**

¹⁸ *The Masters and Disciples of the Lanka* also quotes a poetical composition of So-san on "The Mysterious" in which we find the following echoing the idea given expression here:

"One Reality only--
How deep and far-reaching!
The ten thousand things--
How confusingly multifarious!

If you are always alert and without thought then all dreams will cease. If you retain your zen perspective then *all just is as it is* (Suchness).

***22. When the deep mystery of one Suchness is fathomed,
All of a sudden we forget the external entanglements;
When the ten thousand things are viewed in their
oneness,
We return to the origin and remain where we ever have
been.***

A description of zen from another perspective. The more perspectives you use the better chance you have of getting the idea of an experience across. Like describing the taste of strawberries in as many ways as possible so a person has an idea of what it is like before the actual eating of a strawberry for the first time. Yet, just like zen, describing the indescribable will leave out the essence of what eating a strawberry is like as words can't get across an experience.

The true and the conventional are indeed intermingling,
But essentially of the same substance they are.
The wise and the unenlightened are indeed distinguishable,
But in the Way they are united as one.
Desirest thou to find its limits?
How broadly expanding! It is limitless!
How vaguely it vanishes away! Its ends are never reached!
It originates in beginningless time, it terminates in endless time."

**23. Forget the wherefore of things,
And we attain to a state beyond analogy;
Movement stopped and there is no movement,
Rest set in motion and there is no rest;
When dualism does no more obtain,
Oneness itself abides not.**

Once again, the writer is saying to reach beyond dualism to experience zen,

**24. The ultimate end of things where they cannot go any further
Is not bound by rules and measures:
In the Mind harmonious [with the Way] we have the principle of identity,
In which we find all strivings quieted;
Doubts and irresolutions are completely done away with,
And the right faith is straightened;
There is nothing left behind, There is nothing retained,
All is void, lucid, and self-illuminating;
There is no exertion, no waste of energy--
This is where thinking never attains,
This is where the imagination fails to measure.**

A description of what zen is like (like trying to describe the taste of strawberries).

**25. In the higher realm of true Suchness
There is neither "self" nor "other":**

***When direct identification is sought,
We can only say, "Not two".¹⁹***

In zen you are beyond categories so there is no self or other.

***26. In being "not two" all is the same,
All that is is comprehended in it;
The wise in the ten quarters,
They all enter into this Absolute Reason.***

Being in a non-dual state everything is connected to everything else and seems to be just one entity. Entering this state (of zen) is true Reason.

***27. This Absolute Reason is beyond quickening [time] and
extending [space],
For it one instant is ten thousand years;
Whether we see it or not,
It is manifest everywhere in all the ten quarters.***

The Original Mind (Absolute or Pure Reason) exists beyond time and space (as time and space are concepts created by the mind).

***28. Infinitely small things are as large as large things can
be,
For here no external conditions obtain;
Infinitely large things are as small as small things can be,
For objective limits are here of no consideration.***

¹⁹ I.e. Tat tvam asi.]

Everything is one in a mental state beyond categories (zen).

**29. *What is is the same as what is not,
What is not is the same as what is:
Where this state of things fails to obtain,
Indeed, no tarrying there.***

This is a state of spontaneity.

**30. *One in All,
All in One--
If only this is realized,
No more worry about your not being perfect!***

Attain this state and you will have no more worries.

**31. *Where Mind and each believing mind are not divided,
And undivided are each believing mind and Mind,
This is where words fail;
For it is not of the past, present, and future.***

When you live in a state of a mind undivided (zen state) then all is one. Words, time and space cease to exist as the mind no longer thinks in those categories and ceases to use labels to describe things altogether (being 'undivided').

Poetry with a different approach to explaining and/or viewing zen;

Yet another look at the zen state through a poem but saying that everything and all the mind can imagine is Buddha rather than the common technique used thus far, i.e. that there is nothing beyond and it's conceptions/imaginations. In other words, if the person insists there is a "Buddha", i.e. something greater than himself then you respond by saying '*fine, then all is Buddha*'. In other words, '*all is Divine*'.

Note: The word *Samadhi* is the Indian word for a meditational experience of zen. Mahayana is the philosophical type of zen buddhism as opposed to the more religious southern styles of Buddhism.

Hakuin's "Song Of Meditation"

Sentient beings are primarily all Buddhas:

Everyone is a Buddha

***It is like ice and water,
Apart from water no ice can exist;***

A human and a Buddha are like ice and water, i.e. they are basically the same

Outside sentient beings, where do we find the Buddhas?

It is only humans that are buddha like anyways

***Not knowing how near the Truth is,
People seek it far away,--what a pity!***

People have a tendency to search for truth far away when it is in thier own minds rather than outside of them.

***They are like him who, in the midst of water,
Cries in thirst so imploringly;***

They are like the story of the man who travelled to India to 'find himself' and when he finally found a person he believed to be a wise yogi he told him 'I have come to find myself'. The yogi took one look at him and replied, 'well, here you are. now what?'

***They are like the son of a rich man
Who wandered away among the poor.***

It's like a person who has rejected a safe home by clueless wandering away into the wilderness

***The reason why we transmigrate through the six worlds
Is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance;***

The reason we got through cycles of experience (as if the history of our lives were repeating themselves) is because we are ignorant.

***Going astray further and further in the darkness,
When are we able to get away from birth-and-death?***

How can we live in the zen state when we constantly create selves by which to live by.

***As regards the Meditation practised in the Mahayana,
We have no words to praise it fully:***

Zen Buddhism has the best form of meditation.

***The virtues of perfection such as charity, morality, etc.,
And the invocation of the Buddha's name, confession,
and ascetic discipline,
And many other good deeds of merit,--
All these issue from the practice of Meditation;***

Meditation clears the soul and helps make a person moral.

***Even those who have practised it just for one sitting
Will see all their evil karma wiped clean;***

Even one meditation session can clear your head of evil thoughts.

***Nowhere will they find the evil paths,
But the Pure Land will be near at hand.***

Meditation will lead you to purity.

***With a reverential heart, let them to this Truth
Listen even for once,
And let them praise it, and gladly embrace it,
And they will surely be blessed most infinitely.***

This truth will help people if they listen to it even once with faith.

***For such as, reflecting within themselves,
Testify to the truth of Self-nature,
To the truth that Self-nature is no-nature,
They have really gone beyond the ken of sophistry.***

Those have realized their is no self (or that the go is a creation of the mind) has reached beyond the illusions of the mind.

***For them opens the gate of the oneness of cause and effect,
And straight runs the path of non-duality and non-trinity.***

By practicing meditation you reach beyond the illusions of
division the mind creates you discover all is one.

***Abiding with the not-particular which is in particulars,
Whether going or returning, they remain for ever
unmoved;***

When you find your center (in zen) you will always be able to
keep centered.

***Taking hold of the not-thought which lies in thoughts,
In every act of theirs they hear the voice of the truth.***

By understanding the abstraction that exists in thoughts they
can always see beyond the words.

***How boundless the sky of Samadhi unfettered!
How transparent the perfect moon-light of the fourfold
Wisdom!***

The meditative state is amazing! (very very cool)

***At that moment what do they lack?
As the Truth eternally calm reveals itself to them,***

The zen state of meditation (samadhi) is the center of eternal calm.

***This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity,
And this body is the body of the Buddha.***

Earth IS heaven.

Chapter 4

Commentary On The Diamond Sutra

Introduction: This is a very famous piece of scripture from Zen Buddhism called The Diamond Sutra or The Diamond Scripture. Given all the explanation covered so far in this book I believe I can offer a commentary that makes sense of this in a very down to earth and easy to understand way. But first;

In reading this keep in mind that honorifics are just that and are simply idioms of respect from a long lost culture of philosophical debate and it's relation and applications to yoga practice.

If you remove the stuff like 'King of the worlds' or 'Lord' what you find in this ancient sutra is a very plain analysis on psychology of zen. With your knowledge of zen from this book you can probably understand it better than many zen Buddhists today.

Note: The translation is in ***italicized bold text*** and my commentary is in normal text.

Terms used:

Bhikkhus - People seeking truth or enlightenment
(beginners/ascetics)

Bodhisattva - People on the Buddhist path with some skill

Tathagatas - Term Buddha uses to refer to himself & others like him ('one who has arrived' at awakening)

Buddhahood - Enlightenment

Subhuti - A person asking about Siddhartha's path

"Lord Buddha" - Siddhartha teaching after his enlightenment

Paramita - Perfections

The Diamond Sutra

(Vajracchedika Sutra)

THUS HAVE I HEARD. Upon a memorable occasion, the Lord Buddha sojourned in the kingdom of Shravasti, lodging in the grove of Jeta, a park within the royal domain which Jeta, the heir-apparent, had bestowed upon Sutana, a minister of state renowned for his charities and benefactions. With the Lord Buddha there were assembled twelve hundred and fifty mendicant disciples, besides many who had attained to eminent degrees of spiritual wisdom.

Setting the scene.

As the hour for the morning meal approached, Lord Buddha attired in a mendicant's robe and carrying an alms bowl, walked towards the great cry of Shravasti which he entered to beg for food. Within the city he went from door to door and received such gifts as the good people severally bestowed. Concluding this religious exercise, the Lord Buddha returned to the grove of Jeta and after bathing his sacred feet partook of the frugal meal which he had received as alms. Thereafter he divested himself of the mendicant's robe, laid aside the alms bowl and accepted the seat of honor which his disciples had reserved for him.

Not only do his disciples (students) have a 'seat of honor' for Siddhartha, the writer of this sutra himself has a very Godlike image of Siddhartha. Part of the effect is probably how language was used for teachers in his time.

The venerable Subhuti, who occupied a place in the midst of the assembly, rose from his seat, arranged his robe so that his right shoulder was exposed, pressing the palms of his hands together, and kneeling upon his right knee, respectfully bowed to the Lord Buddha, saying: "Thou art of transcendent wisdom, Honored of the Worlds! With wonderful solicitude thou dost instruct in the Dharma and preserve in the faith this illustrious assembly of enlightened disciples. Blessed One, may I beseech of you to discourse upon the theme: How should a disciple who

has entered upon the path behave? How should he advance? How should he restrain his thoughts? How may he realise Buddhahood? What immutable Truth is there that shall sustain the mind of a good disciple, who is seeking to attain supreme spiritual wisdom, and bring into subjection every inordinate desire?"

One student, Subhuti, has a question on the path of Buddhism and how to attain enlightenment in Siddhartha teachings.

The Lord Buddha replied to Sabuti, saying: "Truly a most excellent theme. Attend diligently unto me and I will enunciate a Truth whereby the mind of a good disciple, whether man or woman, seeking to attain supreme spiritual wisdom shall be adequately sustained and enabled to bring into subjection every inordinate desire.

"Good question!" Siddhartha responds.

"Subhuti, it is by the Truth of emptiness and egolessness that enlightened disciples are to advance along the Path, to restrain their thoughts, to attain Buddhahood. If they diligently observe the Paramitas²⁰, and fully enter into a

²⁰ **Encyclopedia Britannica Explains: Pāramitā**, in Mahāyāna ("Greater Vehicle") Buddhism, any of the perfections, or transcendental virtues, practiced by bodhisattvas ("Buddhas-to-be") in advanced stages of their path toward enlightenment. The six virtues are generosity (*dāna-pāramitā*); morality (*śīla-pāramitā*); perseverance (*kṣānti-pāramitā*); vigour (*vīrya-pāramitā*); meditation, or concentration (*dhyāna-pāramitā*); and wisdom (*prajñā-pāramitā*). Some lists expand the virtues to 10 by adding skill in the means of helping others (*upāya [kauśalya]-pāramitās*), profound

realisation of the profound Prajna Paramita, they will attain the supreme spiritual wisdom they seek."

Siddhartha explains that attaining an egoless state, as I attempt to explain in the intro to zen and then point out the zen state and the various explanations for it throughout the text, is all that is needed to attain enlightenment. The 'egoless state of emptiness' is the realization of there being no Self (or no "I") except that which we create in our imaginations or with our ego. Externally we should be practicing the virtues or mode of conduct as outlined by Siddhartha.

Dana Paramita (Ideal Charity): "Subhuti, good disciples, whether man or woman, should thus arrange their thoughts. Every species of life whether hatched in an egg, formed in a womb, evolved from spawn, produced by metamorphosis, with or without form, possessing or devoid of natural instinct or intelligence,--from these changeful conditions of being, I urge you to seek deliverance in the transcendental concept of Nirvana. Thus shall disciples be delivered from the immeasurable, innumerable, and illimitable world of sentient life, but, in reality, there is no world of sentient life from which to seek deliverance. And why? Because, in the minds of enlightened disciples there have ceased to exist such arbitrary concepts of phenomena as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality."

resolution to produce enlightenment (*prañidhāna-pāramitā*), perfection of the 10 powers (*bala-pāramitā*), and practice of transcendent knowledge (*jñāna-pāramitā*).

Siddhartha says that everyone of his students needs to focus their thoughts along the paths he prescribes for enlightenment. He says to find a clue within the concept of “Nirvana” or “blowing out the self”. If you ‘blow out’ or extinguish the ego that strings together the stories you create to explain things you find that all phenomena such as you being an ‘entity’ or even ‘living being’ is just an idea and you cease to use them. Same ideas as covered in the first 3 chapters but from a different angle or from the prism of another culture's perceptions.

(Subhuti, regarding the Dana Paramita--Ideal Charity, the Awakening of Faith Scripture teaches how disciples should practise charity. It says: "If persons should come to them and ask for something, they should as far as their means allow, supply it ungrudgingly and thus make them happy. If they see people threatened with danger, they should try every means for rescuing them and restore them to a feeling of safety. If people come to them desiring instruction in the Dharma, they should, as far as they are acquainted with it and according to their discretion, deliver discourses upon religious themes. And when they are performing these acts of charity, let them not cherish any desire for fame or advantage, nor covet any earthly reward. Thinking only of the benefits and blessings that are to be mutually shared, let them aspire for the most excellent, the most perfect wisdom.")

This part describes the standard spiritual definition of charity that all religions practice. Given that Siddhartha lived before Jesus, the Rabbinical Period and Mohammad, I have to wonder if these concepts simply originate from India and reached this far through trade and conquest.

The Lord Buddha resumed: "Moreover, Subhuti, an enlightened disciple in his acts of charity, ought to act spontaneously, uninfluenced by such things as form, sound, taste, odour, touch, discrimination, and favoritism. It is imperative that an enlightened disciple, in the exercise of charity, should act independent of phenomena. And why? Because, acting without regard to illusive forms of phenomena, he will realise in the exercise of charity a merit inestimable and immeasurable.

Siddhartha explains that not only should you have no thought of benefit for yourself in charity (which is a given if you have no Self/Ego to think about) he further illustrate the path of zen as already explained, i.e. be spontaneous, learn to live without being attached to any phenomenon (non-attachment). How does this approach help lead to balanced charity with no thought of oneself? By not thinking of oneself and acting spontaneously you do what is appropriate for the situation.

"Subhuti, what think you? Is it possible to estimate the distances that comprise the illimitable universe of space?"

Subhuti replied: "Blessed One! It is impossible to estimate the distances comprising the illimitable universe of space."

The Lord Buddha continued: "It is equally impossible to estimate the merit of an enlightened disciple who practises charity unperturbed by the disturbing influences of Phenomena. Subhuti, the minds of all disciples ought thus to be taught."

Here Siddhartha uses an analogy that requires the student to imagine vast indescribable distances and then comparing it to the benefits of charity from a state of zen.

Sila Paramita (Ideal Behaviour)

The Lord Buddha addressing Subhuti, said: "What think you? If a benevolent person bestowed as alms an abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the universe, would there accrue to that person a considerable merit?"

Subhuti replied, saying: "A very considerable merit; Honored of the Worlds! Because what is referred to does not partake of the nature of ordinary merit; in that sense the Lord Buddha rightly speaks of 'a considerable merit.'"

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a disciple studies and adheres with implicit faith to even a stanza of this Scripture, the intrinsic merit of such a disciple would be

relatively greater. And why? Because, the Tathagatas who have attained supreme spiritual wisdom, all owe their beginning to the Truth of this sacred Scripture--the Truth of Emptiness and Egolessness."

Once again Siddhartha uses imagery to guide his student to see this sutra itself as very important to understanding so he or she will think about it extensively. That said, this may all just be the over exaggerations of the later writer or writers who composed with scripture telling the reader to value this and thus helping it's spread. In any case, this intro tells us what this scripture, the Daimond Sutra, is about i.e. the truth of emptiness and egolessness that sounds like it could be one of the first Taoist teachings. No wonder later Chinese zen masters trace their lineage to Siddhartha through Bodhidharma. Yet the Tao Te Ching expresses zen concepts as well and thus we are left with the feeling of mystery in the deep past.

"Very deep." Wrote Thomas Mann at the opening of his mythologically conceived tetralogy, Joseph and His Brothers. "is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless?" And he then observed: "The deeper we sound, the further down into the lower world of the past we probe and press, the more do we find that the earliest foundations of humanity, its history and culture, reveal themselves unfathomable." Joseph Campbell²¹

²¹ Primitive Mythology page 5

(Regarding the Sila Paramita--Ideal Behavior--the Sutra says: "Lay members should abstain from all unkindness, stealing, unchastity, lying, duplicity, slander, frivolous talk, covetousness, malice, currying favor, and false teachings. Disciples, in order to disarm prejudice, should retire from the excitement of the worldly life and, abiding in solitude, should practise those deeds which lead to restraint and contentment. In the case of advanced bhikkhus, they have other rules to follow and should feel all the more shame, fear and remorse for any failure to observe the minor precepts. Strictly observing all the precepts given by the Tathagatas, they should endeavor, by their example, to induce all beings to abandon evil and practise the good.")

Describes the practice in detail which sounds like it could have come from an ascetic in the ancient world from Ancient Greek to Essene to Christian.

"What do you think, Subhuti? If a disciple, whether man or woman, were to collect a store of precious gems as great as this universe and was to bestow them on the holy Tathagatas, would that disciple on the strength of his gift lay up a large stock of merit?"

Subhuti replied: "Yes, Blessed One, he would lay up a very great merit."

The Lord Buddha replied: "Subhuti, if another disciple after reading even one verse of this Scripture and

observing it by living a good life, he will lay up a greater merit than the one who merely makes gifts in charity and continues his egoistic life. And why? Because, making gifts may or may not involve an advance along the Path that leads to Nirvana, but this Scripture points the way to the stages of Bodhisattvahood and the supreme spiritual enlightenment of the Buddhas. The disciple who sincerely reads this Scripture and lives a virtuous life is laying up merit immeasurable. But, Subhuti, a virtuous life, even the life of a Buddha, what is it? There is no such thing, it is only a name.

The writer says this sutra is more beneficial than jewels because it leads to understanding and enlightenment which is more precious than wealth and this sutra can help you achieve that.

"Subhuti, suppose a man had a body as large as Mount Sumeru, would he be counted a great man?"

Subhuti replied: "Exceedingly great, Honored of the Worlds!"

Analogy again. The analogies used are very dramatic and are designed to create a mental impression and then link it to the point the writer/Siddhartha seeks to make.

The Lord Buddha enquired: "Would his mind and heart be correspondingly great, Subhuti? What is it that makes a

man great? Is it the size of his body? Is it his unusual personality? Is it the work he accomplishes? Or is it the wisdom and compassion and selflessness of this behavior? Subhuti, what is behavior? There is no such thing; it is something the mind imagines, just like body and personality; it is only a name.

Everything is that a label or category in the mind. It is just a name. Reminds me of the first verse of the Tao Te Ching;

“The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.” Translated by James Legge
Verse 1 Chapter 1

Then the Lord Buddha continued: "Nevertheless, if a good disciple, man or woman, studies this Scripture and thoughtfully observes even a verse of it, his merit will be very great. What words can express the merit of a disciple who, living with restraint and kindness, diligently studies and observes it! Such a disciple is attaining powers commensurate with the supreme and most wonderful Dharma. Wherever there is the hermitage of such a good disciple, it is the treasure-house of this sacred Scripture; it is a shrine of the Lord Buddha; and over it will hover uncounted Bodhisattvas of highest reverence and honor."

This sutra is a good one and studying, understanding and applying it will help people even if it is only a little bit such as one verse/stanza.

Kshanti Paramita (Ideal Patience)

At that time the Lord Buddha addressed Subhuti, saying: "If a good disciple, whether man or woman, devoted to the observance and study of this Scripture, is thereby lightly esteemed or despised, it is because, in a previous life there had been committed some grievous transgression, now followed by its inexorable retribution. But, although in this life lightly esteemed or despised, he bears it patiently, the compensating merit thus acquired will cause the transgression of a former life to be fully expiated, and the patient disciple will be adequately recompensed by his final attainment of supreme spiritual enlightenment."

Here the idea of reincarnation comes up. Given how old this scripture is, the Indian culture itself and the time it took for the first writings of Buddha's teachings (estimated at 300 years) there is no reason not to take later masters at their word when they say reincarnation is just the reemergence of the Self/Ego after it dissolves for a while in meditation or sleep or strenuous activity etc. An extract from an earlier chapter seems appropriate here:

An ancient Zen Scholar, Hui-Neng's Tan Ching, Writes;

What is Paramita? This is a Sanskrit term of the Western country. In Yang it means "the other shore reached". When the meaning (artha in Sanskrit) is understood, one is detached

from birth and death. When the objective world (visaya) is clung to, there is the rise of birth and death; it is like the waves rising from the water; this is called "this shore". When you are detached from the objective world, there is no birth and death for you; it is like the water constantly running its course: this is "reaching the other shore". Hence Paramita.²²

The idea being expressed here: When you cling to the world you have to create to create a self to deal with each new situation, thus you experience 'death and rebirth' (of the ego). When you let go and dwell in the zen state your consciousness stays steady and thus you don't experience birth and death (of the ego).

For example: When you try and do good deeds you are trying to create a new self. By working on being better and better, you are destroying an old way of being (the old 'self') and you are creating a new one. Your 'self', i.e. how you define or imagine yourself to be, is going through death and rebirth.

(Regarding this Kshanti Paramita--Ideal Patience--it is said in the Sutra: "If disciples meet with the ills of life they should not shun them. If they suffer painful experiences, they should not feel afflicted or treated unjustly, but should always rejoice in remembering and contemplating the deep significance of the Dharma.")

²² Hiu Neng's Tan Ching - Manual Of Zen Buddhism by Suzuki

Basically, learn to see beyond bad events that happen to a positive frame of mind. Such as the old saying 'when one door closes another door opens' or as expressed in the old story;

There was a farmer whose horse ran away. All his neighbors came by to say how sorry they were at his misfortune. All he said was, "We shall see". Next, his horse returns fallen by a group of wild horses. His neighbors congratulate on his good fortune and the farmer once again says, "We shall see". Then his son falls off the same horse and breaks his leg. The neighbors once again exclaim at his misfortune and once again he says, "We shall see". In a few days the army comes by collecting young men for a war. The farmer's son was ignored as his leg was broken. His neighbors congratulate him and all he says is, "We shall see".

The Lord Buddha continued: "Numberless ages ago, Subhuti, before the advent of Dipankara Buddha, there were many other Buddhas and I recall my difficult experiences while serving them and receiving their religious instruction and discipline, but I endured it patiently and, because my conduct was entirely blameless and without reproach, I was reborn in the days of Dipankara Buddha. But in the ages to come, if a disciple faithfully study and put into practice the teaching of this Scripture, the merit that he will thus acquire will far exceed the merit of my service in the days of those many Buddhas.

Talking within the structure of thought that Subhuti is in Siddhartha is telling him to be consistent in study and practice.

"In a previous life, Subhuti, when the Prince of Kalinga severed the flesh from my limbs and body, because of the discipline I had undergone in the past I remained patient, I was oblivious to such ideas as phenomena as an entity, a person, a living person, a personality. If I had not been oblivious to such ideas, when my limbs and body were torn apart, there would have originated in my mind feelings of anger and resentment. I recollect, five hundred incarnations ago, that I was practising this Kshanti Paramita and, because of it, I got rid of such arbitrary ideas. Therefore, Subhuti, an enlightened disciple ought to discard, as being unreal and illusive, every conceivable form of hindering phenomena.

Using Subhuti's beliefs, Siddhartha is trying to make him detach from his attachments using graphic illustrations. The idea is basically to see beyond the categories our mind creates.

Subhuti, in aspiring to supreme spiritual wisdom, the mind ought to be insensible to every sensuous influence, and be independent of everything pertaining to form, sound, odour, taste, touch, or discrimination. There ought to be cultivated a condition of complete independence of mind; because, if the mind is depending upon any external thing, it is cherishing a delusion; in reality, there

is nothing external to the mind. Even the whole realm of sentient life is ephemeral and illusory. Therefore, in the exercise of this Paramita, the mind of an enlightened disciple ought to be unperturbed by any form of phenomena."

Siddhartha is saying that you have to learn to have an independent mind that doesn't get caught up in the world. Any attachment to desires for any external thing is a delusion. Thus the mind should not be affected by any phenomenon. This is covered in the chapter, 'many views of zen'.

The Lord Buddha addressed Subhuti, saying: "If an enlightened disciple in the exercise of this Paramita was patient in the face of external difficulties and steadily studied and observed this Scripture; and another disciple, realising that within the meaning and purport of it, there could be no abstract individual existence--no suffering, no one to suffer, no one to attain supreme spiritual enlightenment--and yet patiently accepts it and continues to perfect himself in its virtue, this disciple will have a cumulative merit greater than the former. And why? Because, he is unaffected by any consideration of merit or reward."

Siddhartha is saying to be patient and disciplined in their efforts to reach the (zen) state of mental liberation.

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha: "In what respect are enlightened disciples unaffected by merit or reward?"

The Lord Buddha replied: "Enlightened disciples, having patiently accepted the truth of egolessness, do not aspire for supreme enlightenment in any spirit of covetousness or acquisitiveness; they never think of merit and its commensurate reward. But the Tathagata, because of his perfect wisdom, knows of their patience and knows that for them there is reserved a cumulative merit that is immeasurable and illimitable."

Here Subhuti is following the traditional religious societal belief that merit or reward is important. Many social structures, not to mention games/sports, are based on reward and merit. So Subhuti is asking the meditation master with his new innovative ideas (for his area?) in what areas reward is not important, of course assuming that reward will influence the meditation masters life. Siddhartha patiently explains that in the egoless of zen state there is no thought of merit or supreme enlightenment or any conception whatsoever. So any conception you have you must leave behind.

I'm assuming in this commentary that the repetition of an idea is to explain it from many possible angles which would be necessary for something beyond the description of words such as enlightenment or strawberries as explained in the first chapter.

Virya Paramita (Ideal Zeal)

The Lord Buddha said to Subhuti: "If within this universe a good disciple heaped together the seven treasures forming many elevations as Mount Sumeru, and entirely bestowed these treasures on the Tathagata as a gift in his exercise of charity; and another disciple sacrificed his life as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, would such disciples accumulate great merit, Subhuti?"

Here Siddhartha asks about Subhuti's opinion on what would accumulate merit and uses extreme versions of what charity would be with the simple assumption that if a little amount of charity gives you merit then allot of charity would give you more merit. Note: Merit is the idea of "blessings" or "Divine favor" as is common in religious cultures. This particular culture had many gods and goddesses and accumulating merit meant you evolved along the path to freedom or liberation. In zen this freedom is interpreted as mental freedom and that is what seems to be in the Diamond Sutra as well though heavily enmeshed in the views of the writer who may have seen Siddhartha as a legend more than a man.

Subhuti replied: "They would accumulate great merit, indeed, Blessed One."

Of course, given the choice he has Subhuti has to agree that giving away large amounts of treasure would accumulate merit in the spiritual world.

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a good disciple were to select a single verse of this Scripture, faithfully observe and study it, and then zealously explain it to others, he would relatively accumulate a greater merit."

And once again, Siddhartha takes the extreme analogy by which he has heightened the the expectations of his listener and then links it to spreading this sutra signifying that it is important and full of merit. Maybe by placing important concepts within this sutra and emphasizing its importance Siddhartha hoped to encourage its spread and with it's spread the simple enlightenment of the sort of zen like awakening these ancient meditation masters seemed to be trying to spread.

(Regarding this Virya Paramita--Ideal Zeal-the Sutra says: "In the practice of all good deeds, disciples should never indulge in indolence. They should recall all their great mental and physical sufferings that they have undergone in the past on account of having coveted worldly objects and comforts during former existences and which did not give the least nourishment to their physical lives. They should, therefore, in order to be emancipated in the future from these sufferings, be indefatigably zealous and never let even the thought of indolence arise in their minds; but steadily and persistently out of deep compassion endeavor to benefit all beings. They should dauntlessly, energetically, unintermittently, six watches, day and night, pay homage to all the Buddhas, make offerings to them,

praise them, repent and confess to them, aspire to the most excellent knowledge, and make sincere vows of unselfish service. It is only, thereby, that they can root, out the hindrances and foster their root of merit."

More detail of how devoted a student must be using local methods of practicing the yogis path of that time.

"Subhuti, if a disciple takes pleasure in a narrow and exclusive form of doctrine, or is attached to false ideas as to an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, he cannot receive with profit the instruction of this Scripture nor can he find delight in its study. This Scripture is intended for those who are entering upon the path, as well as for those who are attaining the highest planes of spiritual wisdom. If a disciple zealously observes, studies and widely disseminates the knowledge of this Scripture, for such an one there will be cumulative merit, immeasurable, incomparable, illimitable, inconceivable. All such disciples will be endowed with transcendent spiritual wisdom and enlightenment."

If a person is attached to conceptions then he won't find this sutra useful. This scripture (sutra) is intended for people who actually intend to follow the (zen) path. A person who carefully studies and teaches/spreads this sutra will gain in "merit". Thus the writer gets the idea of spiritual gain just from spreading the sutra which will appeal to the common man and the seeker after truth or student of spiritual philosophy who will understand what Siddhartha is saying and pass it on.

Basically, the idea here is to pass this on like Bodhidharma's shorter explanation in "Transmission of the Lamp" (Chapter 2) which seems to be titled after the idea of transmission in this sutra.

The Lord Buddha continued: "What think you? May an enlightened disciple ponder within himself, saying, 'I will create numerous Buddhist Kingdoms?'"

Subhuti replied: "No, Honored of the Worlds! And why? Because, such thoughts would be incompatible with the Virya Paramita, and kingdoms thus imagined would not, in reality, be Buddhist Kingdoms. Such a phrase as 'the creation of Buddhist Kingdoms,' is merely a figure of speech."

Here you see that Subhuti has gained some understanding and when asked if an enlightened person can create heavens he responds 'don't be silly, to create Buddhist heavens is merely a figure of speech'. In other words, enlightenment is, as Bodhidharma so eloquently put it, "Nothing special" and Subhuti gets that.

The Lord Buddha continued: "What think you, Subhuti? Do you imagine that the Tathagata reflects within himself, 'I will bring salvation to all beings'? Entertain no such delusive thought. And why? Because, in reality, there is no such dharma as 'salvation' for any one; and there is no

such thing as a living being to whom 'salvation' can be brought. What is referred to as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, is not so in reality--it is only so understood by ignorant and uneducated people."

Siddhartha further presses the point of the enlightened not being Saints. He also presses the point that the whole personality and self you think exists doesn't (it's just a story the ego creates etc). Since all conceptions are just conceptions and not real, NO idea of what an enlightened person is like. The conceptions a person has of Saints or Gods doesn't apply to Siddhartha's path.

The Lord Buddha enquired of Subhuti, saying: "May a disciple who has 'entered the stream' which bears on to Nirvana, thus moralise within himself: I have attained the fruits commensurate with the merits of one who has 'entered the stream'?"

Subhuti replied: "No, Honored of the Worlds! And why? Because, 'entered the stream' is simply a descriptive term. A disciple who avoids the seductions of form, sound, odour, taste, touch, and their discriminations, is merely called, 'one who has entered the stream.'"

Now we see Subhuti gets it, i.e. that any description of enlightenment or "Nirvana" (which just means "to extinguish" or "blow out" referring to the ego, i.e. 'extinguish the ego') is just that a description that one uses to communicate. In other words, Subhuti gets that describing strawberries is not the

same as tasting strawberries. No matter how much you try and describe the taste of strawberries or however you can imagine strawberries to be, ultimately you have to taste a strawberry to know a strawberry.

The Lord Buddha again enquired of Subhuti, saying: "What think you? Is a bhikshu who is subject to only one more reincarnation, to muse within himself, 'I have obtained the fruits in agreement with the merits of "a once returner"?' "Subhuti replied, saying: "No, Honored of the Worlds! And why? Because, 'a once returner' is merely a descriptive title denoting only one more reincarnation; but, in reality, there is no such condition as 'only one more reincarnation.' 'A once returner' is merely a descriptive title."

He carries this further attacking the very foundation of the societal belief in reincarnation making one wonder if reincarnation even exists or it's just a conception. As I have shown earlier, later zen masters clearly saw reincarnation to be a psychological state and not a literal one and so we can assume that that is probably the point Siddhartha tried to make those many ages ago.

The Lord Buddha once again enquired of Subhuti, saying: "What think you? May a bhikshu who has attained so high a degree of spiritual merit that he is never again to be reincarnated, may he thus reflect within himself, I have obtained the fruits which accord with the merits of one

who is never to return to this world of life-and-death?" Subhuti replied, saying: "No, Honored of the Worlds! And why? Because, 'a never returner' is merely a designation, meaning, 'immunity from reincarnation'; but, in reality, there is no such condition, hence 'a never returner' is merely a convenient name."

Here it's even clearer that at the heart of Buddhism there should be no concept of reincarnation except as a psychological state. Repeating what I outlined before:

An ancient Zen Scholar, Hui-Neng's Tan Ching, Writes;

What is Paramita? This is a Sanskrit term of the Western country. In Yang it means "the other shore reached". When the meaning (artha in Sanskrit) is understood, one is detached from birth and death. When the objective world (visaya) is clung to, there is the rise of birth and death; it is like the waves rising from the water; this is called "this shore". When you are detached from the objective world, there is no birth and death for you; it is like the water constantly running its course: this is "reaching the other shore". Hence Paramita.²³

The idea being expressed here: When you cling to the world you have to create to create a self to deal with each new situation, thus you experience 'death and rebirth' (of the ego). When you let go and dwell in the zen state your consciousness stays steady and thus you don't experience birth and death (of the ego).

²³ Hiu Neng's Tan Ching - Manual Of Zen Buddhism by Suzuki

For example: When you try and do good deeds you are trying to create a new self. By working on being better and better, you are destroying an old way of being (the old 'self') and you are creating a new one. Your 'self', i.e. how you define or imagine yourself to be, is going through death and rebirth.

Zen Buddhism is not about religious beliefs but the lack of them, i.e. you cleanse yourself of ALL conceptions. So any religious belief would automatically get purged as a misconception, illusion, cultural superstition etc.

The Lord Buddha yet again enquired of Subhuti, saying: "What think you? May a Bodhisattva who has attained to absolute tranquillity of mind thus meditate within himself: I have obtained the position of an Arhat?" Subhuti replied, saying: "No, Honored of the Worlds! And why? Because, in reality, there is no such condition synonymous with the term Arhat. If an Arhat thus meditates within himself, 'I have obtained the condition of an Arhat,' there would be the obvious occurrence to his mind of such arbitrary concepts as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality. When the Blessed One declared of me that in tranquillity of mind, observance of the Dharma and spiritual perception, I was preeminent among the disciples, I did not think within myself: 'I am free from desire, I am an Arhat.' Had I thought thus, the Blessed One would not have declared concerning me: 'Subhuti delights in the austerities of an Arhat.' It was because I was perfectly tranquil and oblivious to all conditions, that

the Lord Buddha declared: 'Subhuti delights in the austerities practised by the Arhats.'

Once again the point is pressed that in the enlightened state there would be no conceptions/thought of anything. Further proving the point I've been making that zen, as we have learned from Chinese sources, seems to be the actual teaching of Siddhartha (Buddha).

The Lord Buddha added: "True, Subhuti! Enlightened disciples in the exercise of the Viya Paramita ought to maintain within themselves a pure and single mind; they should be unconscious of sensuous conditions and cultivate a mind that is independent of material circumstances. And why? Because, all sensuous conditions and material circumstances are only manifestations of mind and are alike dream-like and imaginary.

Here Siddhartha is teaching the traditional view of information from the sense that ascetics all over the ancient world held in common (from India to Greece).

"Subhuti, A Bodhisattva should have a heart filled with compassion for all sentient life, but if he should think within his mind: 'I will deliver all beings,' he ought not to be called a Bodhisattva. And why? Because, in the first place, if there is no living being, no personality, then there is no one to be called a Bodhisattva. And in the second

place, the Tathagata has declared: 'All beings are without self, without life, without personality.' Who then is to be delivered?

Here Siddhartha illustrate the idea that if a person thinks he is a “Bodhisattva” i.e. accomplished practitioner then he is living from a conception and thus it is fake. Since the self is a conception there is no need for deliverance, i.e. the idea of immediate enlightenment upon understanding is foreshadowed here and stated again by later zen masters;

In zen, enlightenment can come to anyone at any time. As one writer explains about attaining enlightenment or awareness of the Original mind or “mushin”:

In the attainment of this state of mind (mushin), some are quicker than others. There are some who attain to a state of mushin all at once by just listening to a discourse on the Dharma, while there are others who attain to it only after going through all the grades of Bodhisattvaship²⁴ such as the ten stages of faith, the ten stages of abiding, the ten stages of discipline, and the ten stages of turning-over. More or less time may be required in the attainment of mushin, but once attained it puts an end to all discipline, to all realization and yet there is really nothing attained. It is truth and not falsehood. Whether this mushin is attained in one thought or attained after going through the ten stages its practical working is the same and there is no question of the one being deeper or shallower than the other. Only the one has passed through long ages of hard discipline.

²⁴ In this context it just means an *apprenticeship by a student*

Basically it says that no matter how much you meditate or don't meditate, 'when you get it, then you get it'. Since zen is a state of mind which is natural, it simply has to be understood to be practiced and thus the smart ones will get enlightened fast and the slow witted will get it slowly or never. But once zen is attained, it is the same for everyone in it's basic understanding and experience.

The fact that Siddhartha assumes the person will have compassion in his heart suggests either that that is the natural human state (as suggested by zen from Chinese sources) or is practicing the path of the sage and the years of meditation have trained him to be compassionate, something which later masters have suggested is an effect of regular/constant practice of the zen path.

If a Bodhisattva were to say: 'I will create many Buddha-lands,' he would say what is untrue. And why, Because, the idea of a Buddha-land is wholly imaginary, it is only a name.

In a nutshell: A conception/idea is just a conception/idea. Nothing more.

"But O Subhuti, the Bodhisattva who believes that all things are without selfhood, and still has compassion and faith, he is, indeed, a noble minded Bodhisattva, and is so considered by the all-wise Tathagatas."

In a nutshell; A person who can let go of the self/ego while retaining his humanity is considered to be the best of students.

Dhyana Paramita (Ideal Tranquility)

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha, saying: "Honored of the Worlds! In future ages, when this scripture is proclaimed amongst those beings destined to hear it, shall any conceive within their minds a sincere, unmingled faith?"

The Lord Buddha replied, saying: "Have no such apprehensive thought. Even at the remote period of five centuries subsequent to the Nirvana of the Tathagata, there will be many disciples observing the monastic vows and assiduously devoted to good works. These, hearing this Scripture proclaimed, will believe in its immutability and will conceive within their minds a pure, unmingled faith. Besides, it is important to realise that faith thus conceived, is not exclusively in virtue of the individual thought of any particular Buddha, but because of its affiliation with the universal thought of all the myriad Buddhas throughout the infinite ages. Therefore, among the beings destined to hear this Scripture proclaimed, many, by the Dhyana Paramita, will intuitively conceive a pure and holy faith.

Subhuti asks a pointless question conceived in his imagination, i.e. 'what about the future, will anyone understand

your teaching in the future'. Clearly this was a concern of many people of that time if my reading is correct that the writer is adding his own explanations and reasons for spreading this sutra.

The response is, obviously, not to worry about the future as that too is a conception of your mind. Then Siddhartha (or the writer) seeks to console the reader who may lack the understanding with what he/she needs to hear, i.e. 'sure people will understand this in the future, sure monks will exist, sure this teaching will be heard and applied' and, interestingly enough, 'there will be some people who figure this out intuitively after practicing dhayana (the Sanskrit word from which the word Zen is derived).

"Subhuti, the Tathagata by his prescience is perfectly cognisant of all such potential disciples, and for these also there is reserved an immeasurable merit. And why? Because, the minds of these will not revert to such arbitrary concepts of phenomena as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, having qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, or existing apart from the principle of the Dharma. And why? Because, assuming the permanency and reality of phenomena, the minds of these disciples would be involved in such distinctive ideas as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality. Affirming the permanency and reality of qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, their minds would inevitably be involved in resolving these same definitions. Postulating the inviolate nature of qualities or

ideas which have an existence apart from the Dharma, there yet remains to be explained these abstruse distinctions--an entity, a being, a living being, a personality. Therefore, enlightened disciples ought not to affirm the permanency or reality of qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, nor postulate as being of an inviolate nature, qualities and ideas having an existence apart from the concept of the Dharma.

A teacher is aware of the potential of his students. Then there is a repetition of how conceptions are a wrong way of viewing the world and people who base their conceptions on Dharma (duties of living/life) are also involved in mistaken notions as these ideas are not real but just conceptions the mind has created.

"Thus enlightened disciples are enabled to appreciate the significance of the words which the Tathagatas invariably repeat to their follows: 'Disciples must realise that the Dharma is presented to your minds in the simile of a raft.' If the Dharma--having fulfilled its function in bearing you to the other shore--must be abandoned together with all its coincident qualities and ideas, how much more inevitable must be the abandonment of qualities and ideas which have an existence apart from the Dharma?"

Here Siddhartha says something interesting, that society's guide to life (one's dharma or "duty") is just meant as a raft to take you to the other side. In this case, it's meant as a means to get through the initial stages of life from childhood to

householder. Ultimately, when you reach the other shore (enlightenment) you can abandon all the ideas and concepts that got you there because they were just a tool, like a raft, and once the job is done (stream is crossed) it is no longer of any use.

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a disciple had an amount of treasure sufficient to fill the illimitable universe and bestowed it upon the Tathagata in the exercise of charity, and if another disciple, having aspired to supreme spiritual wisdom, selected from this Scripture even a stanza of four lines only, observed it, diligently studied it and with zeal explained it to others, the cumulative merit of such a disciple would be relatively greater than the merit of the former. But, Subhuti, the attitude of his mind in which he explained it is important. It should be explained with a mind filled with compassion but free from any assumption as to the reality of an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, or as to the permanency or reality of earthly phenomena, or as to the validity of any ideas concerning them. And why? Because the phenomena of life are like a dream, a phantasm, a bubble, a shadow, the glistening dew, a lightning flash; thus should they be contemplated by an enlightened disciple. His mind should, at all times, be resting in the blessedness of tranquillity which invariably accompanies the practice of the Dhyana Paramita."

Understanding is better than charity. The Stance of the mind must be the same as "dhayna" or zen. these two short

sentences should explain the entire paragraph above if I've done my job of commentating on this properly (with the introductions that are the rest of this book).

(Regarding the Dhyana Paramita--Ideal Tranquillity--the Sutra says: "The beginner should consider and practise Dhyana in two aspects: as cessation of the mind's intellectual activities, and as realisation of insight. To bring all mental states that produce vagrant thinking to a stand is called cessation. To adequately understand the transitory and emptiness and egolessness of all things is insight. At first each of them should be practised separately by the beginner, but when, by degrees, he attains facility, and finally attains perfection, the two aspects will naturally blend into one perfect state of mental tranquillity. Those who practise Dhyana should dwell in solitude and, sitting erect, should remain motionless, seeking to quiet the mind. Do not fix the thoughts on any definite thing that you have sensed or discriminated, or memorised; all particularisations, all imaginations, all recollections, are to be excluded, because all things are uncreate, devoid of all attributes, ever changing. In all thinking, something precedes that has been awakened by an external stimuli, so in Dhyana one should seek to abandon all notions connected with an external world. Then in thinking, something follows that has been elaborated in his own mind; so he should seek to abandon thinking. Because his attention is distracted by the external world, he is warned to turn to his inner, intuitive consciousness. If the process of mentation

begins again, he is warned not to let his mind become attached to anything, because, independent of mind they have no existence. Dhyana is not at all to be confined to sitting erect in meditation; one's mind should be concentrated at all times, whether sitting, standing, moving, working; one should constantly discipline himself to that end. Gradually entering into the state of Samadhi, he will transcend all hindrances and become strengthened in faith, a faith that will be immovable.")

A more detailed description that is explained in pieces in the commentary on the yoga sutras which shows from one of the sources teachings Siddhartha's teaching are influenced by and amounts to, basically, "practice zen".

The Lord Buddha resumed his words to Subhuti, saying: "What think you, Subhuti, are the atoms of dust in the myriad worlds which comprise the universe, are they very numerous?"

Subhuti replied: "Very numerous, indeed, Blessed One."

The Lord Buddha continued: "Subhuti, these atoms of dust, many as they are, are not in reality 'atoms of dust,' they are merely termed so. Moreover, these 'myriad worlds' are not really worlds, they are merely termed so because of ignorance.

"Subhuti, if a good disciple were to take these infinite worlds and reduce them to exceedingly minute particles

of dust and blow them away into space, would the so-called 'infinite worlds' cease to exist?"

Subhuti replied: "The Blessed One has already taught us that 'myriad worlds' is only a name; how can that which is only a name, cease to exist?"

Then the Lord Buddha continued: "True, Subhuti, but if it were otherwise, and the infinite worlds were a reality, then it would be asserting the unity and eternity of matter, which every one knows is dream-like, changing and transitory. Unity and eternity of matter, indeed! There is neither matter, nor unity, nor eternity--they are merely names. Belief in the unity and eternity of matter is incomprehensible; only common and worldly minded people, for purely materialistic reasons, cling to that hypothesis. Subhuti, enlightened disciples must thoroughly understand that emptiness and egolessness are characteristic of' all Truth. The Dhyana Paramita can be successfully practised only from that viewpoint."

A repetition of what has been said before many times already both in this sutra and in this book.

Then the Lord Buddha continued: "If a disciple should affirm that the Tathagata had enunciated a doctrine that the mind could comprehend the idea of an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, or ally other discrimination, would that disciple be interpreting aright the meaning of this Scripture?"

Subhuti replied: "Blessed One, that disciple would not be interpreting aright the meaning of the Lord Buddha's discourse. And why? Because, Blessed One, when you discoursed on belief in the reality of an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, it was plainly declared that there were no such things; that they were entirely unreal and illusive; that they were merely words."

The Lord Buddha continued: "Subhuti, the disciples who aspire to supreme spiritual wisdom ought thus to know, to believe in, and to interpret all phenomena. They ought to eliminate from their minds every seeming evidence of concrete objects; they ought to eliminate from their minds even the notions of such things; and become oblivious to every idea connected with them. And why? Because, so long as he cherishes ideas of and concerning an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, his mind is kept in confusion. He must even become oblivious to the idea that there is any one to whom the idea of sentient life can become oblivious. If he were to think within his mind, 'I must become oblivious to every idea of sentient life,' he could not be described as being wholly enlightened. And why? Because, within the bounds of reality there is no such thing, no entity, no being, no living being, no personality, nothing whatever that can be discriminated, and therefore, there can be no reality to ideas concerning them, for all these things are merely manifestations of the mind itself."

Restating in a new way that all is a creation of the mind and the descriptions Siddhartha (the Buddha) is using are meant as allegories or analogies and not literal fact (as people often interpret scripture to be).

Subhuti enquired, saying: "Blessed One, in the ages to come, will sentient beings destined to hear this Dharma, awaken within their minds these essential elements of faith?"

Subhuti asks again about the future. Asking if any intelligent people will hear this teaching in the future and get it. The reply is kinda funny...

The Lord Buddha replied, smiling: "Subhuti, it cannot be asserted that there are or will be any such things as sentient beings, nor can it be asserted that there will not be. At present there are none, they are merely termed 'sentient beings.'

Siddhatha says, smiling, that there is no proof that there exists any intelligent beings nor can it be proven that there are not any. But there are any we just call people intelligent. At least, that what it sounds like to me.

And as to any one being saved: how can there be one to find it by seeking, or to know it if it is ever found?

Here it is clear Siddhartha is returning to the idea that conceptions are an illusion of the mind and thus how can you be saved when you have to conceive of a state of being saved which is a creation of your mind and thus an illusion...

One cannot gain self-realisation of Prajna Paramita without transcending the conscious faculty. To fully realise emptiness, egolessness, imagelessness by the use of the discriminating mind is futile. It is only by practising the Dhyana Paramita, by identifying oneself with emptiness and egolessness, that emptiness and egolessness is to be realised. In the exercise of the Dhyana Paramita, unless the mind of the enlightened disciple is independent of all phenomena, he is like a person lost in impenetrable darkness, to whom every object is invisible and himself helpless. But an enlightened disciple practising the Paramita with a mind independent of every phenomena, is like unto a person to whom suddenly the power of vision is restored, and he sees every thing as in the meridian glory of the sunlight."

... and thus one must practice zen.

The Lord Buddha said:

***"Not by means of visible form,
Not by audible sound,
Is Buddha to be perceived;
Only in the solitude and purity of Dhyana
Is one to realise the blessedness of Buddha."***

Siddhartha said (my best guess);
Not through sight
Nor through sound
Can enlightenment be experienced
Only by practicing zen with purity of mind in a quiet place (for
meditation)
Can a person experience the bliss of Nirvana

Prajna Paramita (Ideal Wisdom)

The Lord Buddha addressing Subhuti, said: "What think you? When in a previous life I was a disciple of Dipankara Buddha, did I eventually become a Buddha because of some prescribed teaching or system of doctrine?"

This is meant to be a method of communication through analogy so when people get caught up in the concept of reincarnation itself they miss the point of Siddhartha's or even Bodhidharma's teachings. Instead of a lesson in history this should be seen as an analogy to test the students understanding of what has been taught and repeated thus far. So the question is simply: Is this some ancient doctrine from some mysterious source?

Subhuti replied: "No, Blessed One. When the Lord Buddha was a disciple of Dipankara Buddha neither prescribed teaching nor system of doctrine was

communicated to him, whereby he eventually became a Buddha."

The answer is simple and accurate. No system of doctrine has been passed on to Siddhartha, i.e. this is not some ancient but secret mystical teaching.

The Lord Buddha continued, saying: "In my discourses have I presented a system of doctrine that can be specifically formulated?"

Siddhartha asks if he has outlined any system to attain enlightenment.

Subhuti replied: "As I understand the meaning of the Blessed One's discourses, he has no system of doctrine that can be specifically formulated. And why? Because, what the Blessed One adumbrates in the terms of the Dharma is, in reality, inscrutable and inexpressible. Being a purely spiritual concept, it is neither consonant with the Dharma, nor synonymous with anything apart from the Dharma; but it is exemplified in the manner in which Bodhisattvas and holy Buddhas have regarded intuitive self-realisation as the highest law of their minds and by it have severally attained to different planes of spiritual wisdom."

Subhuti replies that the experience of enlightenment (zen) is beyond words and is best understood intuitively within your own experiences.

The Lord Buddha endorsed these words, saying: "True it is; Subhuti! True it is. There is no dharma by means of which Buddhas attain supreme spiritual wisdom. Wisdom is attained only by self-realisation through the practice of the Dhyana Paramita. If there had been such a Dharma, Dipankara would not have prophesied when I was a disciple of his: 'In future ages, my boy, you will become Shakyamuni Buddha.' And why? Because in the concept Buddha every dharma is wholly and intelligibly comprehended. How could there be a Dharma by which that all-inclusive state could be attained? The supreme spiritual wisdom to which Buddhas attain, cannot, in its essence, be defined as either real or unreal. That which is commonly spoken of as the Buddha Dharma is synonymous with every moral and spiritual dharma. Subhuti, what are spoken of as 'systems of dharma,' including even the so-called Buddha Dharma, are not in reality systems of dharma, they are merely termed 'systems of dharma.'"

Siddhartha says "correct!". Enlightenment is only attained by practicing zen/dhayana. Basically, that's it.

(Regarding the Prajna Paramita--Ideal Wisdom--really, there is no such thing. Prajna Paramita transcends all

ideation, all knowledge, all wisdom; It is Noble Wisdom in its "suchness" and its self-nature is manifested in the transformation-bodies of the Tathagatas.)

There is no such thing as ideal wisdom because wisdom can't be conceived only experienced or known. Reminds me of stuff Socrates would say, once again indicating a continuum of belief & practice from Ancient India to Ancient Greece;

To know, is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge.

Socrates

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha: "In attaining supreme spiritual wisdom did the Lord Buddha, then, attain nothing definite and tangible?"

Here Subhuti asks what is actually gained from enlightenment.

The Lord Buddha replied: "In attaining supreme spiritual wisdom, not a vestige of dharma nor doctrine was obtained, that is why it is called 'supreme spiritual wisdom.'

Siddhartha replies that in attaining enlightenment I obtained nothing describable and that's why it's supreme wisdom.

This is also translated as 'supreme unexcelled enlightenment' as achieving it is the goal and yet it is nothing special.

Ultimately the meaning is the same, i.e. there is no “truth” in enlightenment, no knowledge which can be passed on, it is just the experience of life and that’s what makes it ‘supreme spiritual wisdom’ because it is nothing. In other words, true wisdom is nothing special. Once again reminding me of the sayings of Socrates.

The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.
Socrates

Prajna Paramita is universal, coherent, indivisible; it is neither above nor below; it excludes all such arbitrary ideas as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, discrimination, ideation; but it includes every dharma pertaining to the cultivation of wisdom and compassion. And even these, when defined and thought about, are not in reality 'dharmas of wisdom and compassion'; they are only termed 'dharmas of wisdom and compassion.'

Wisdom is knowing all is a conception or idea of reality rather than reality itself. Even calling something wise is just a label. OR True wisdom is beyond definition.

"Do not think that the Tathagatas consider within themselves: 'I ought to promulgate a system of Dharma.' Have no such irrelevant thought, Subhuti. and why? because by so thinking the disciple would expose his ignorance and defame the Tathagatas. In reality there is

no 'system of Dharma' to promulgate; it is only termed 'a system of Dharma.'

Siddhartha further explains that there is no real *Universal Teaching* or *Absolute Spiritual Truth* taught by the enlightened. Saying 'I am teaching you a method to reach enlightenment' is just a bunch of words to describe mental conceptions. No true enlightened person tries to construct a scripture for enlightenment. They just explain things as best they can for the people of their time and culture. In reality there is no religion of or for enlightenment that anyone could possibly spread.

"What think you? Can the Tathagatas be perceived by their perfect material bodies, or by any physical phenomena?"

Subhuti replied: "It is improbable that a Lord Buddha can be perceived by his perfect material body, or by any physical phenomena; because, in reality, there is no such thing as a material body, nor physical phenomena; they are only terms that are in common use."

This is like saying you cannot perceive whether someone is enlightened just by looking at their body. That said, part of this is based in the common belief of that culture and time that the world was an illusion. All Siddhartha added to that popular belief was that *if the world is an illusion then so is the self or "I" with which you perceive the world*, i.e. it's all an illusion. (covered in the introduction)

Then the Lord Buddha said: "Why is the Tathagata so named? It is because he manifests the essential nature of reality. 'He who thus comes,' comes from nowhere. He symbolises the emptiness of qualities, the egolessness, the imagelessness, of ultimate reality. He symbolises the un-born, the un-originate, the truly eternal because the ultimate. And yet, Subhuti, if anyone should affirm that by the Tathagata ultimate Wisdom is manifested, he would speak an untruth, he would slander me by his limited knowledge. That which is manifested by the Tathagatas is neither truth nor falsehood: it is no-thing-ness; and yet it is inconceivable Oneness, because it is Prajna Paramita, because it is the essence nature of Buddhahood.

Here Siddhartha, interestingly enough, seems to describe the Tao as described in the Tao Te Ching and then adds to that the any conception of who I am would be a lie just like Socrates might say *'any conception of wisdom isn't wisdom itself'*.

"Subhuti, the plane of thought to which the Buddhas attain and which the Tathagatas manifest, cannot be expressed in terms of reality or in terms of non-reality. Their utterances are neither extravagant nor chimerical; they are true, credible, immutable, but can never be expressed in the limits of words and doctrines.

This sounds like it could have come right out of Plato's dialogues. The particular part of Plato's dialogues has come to

be known as ‘the allegory of the cave’ and it goes something like this;

Imagine a civilization that has spent it’s entire existence in a cave lit by a fire. This society believes that the shadows on the cave wall, that is cast by the fire, is actually themselves and their friends and family. They believe they are the shadows on the cave wall because they are chained to the ground and their face is locked in a position facing the wall.

Now imagine one person breaks his/her chains and steps out of the cave. This person sees color for the first time. Even sees his/her own hand for the first time as the chains are gone. Now this cave of shadows escapee has a serious problem...how do you explain to people who have never seen anything but shadows what color is? How can you explain a tree or even the blue dome of the sky? You can’t. They won’t even have words for the color blue or red since they live in the black, white and gray world of shadows.

Plato’s theory is that like a cave dweller who has stepped into the sunlight, the wise man too has stepped out of society and culture. When he comes back to his people to explain what he has learned, he discovers that there are no words in the language to define what he knows. So he must talk in riddles and parables.

Or as Siddhartha might put it *the words of the wise can never be put into the limited framework of words*, i.e. “can never be expressed in the limits of words and doctrines”.

Then the Lord Buddha enquired of Subhuti, saying: "Are Tathagatas to be recognised by the works they do and the effects they produce?"

Subhuti replied: "No, Blessed One; a Buddha is not to be known by his works, else would a great world-conquering King be a Buddha."

The Lord Buddha said: "Just so, Subhuti. It is not by a great show of erudition, nor by the building of anything, nor by the destruction of anything, that the Tathagatas are to be known. It is only within the deepest consciousness of Bodhisattvas through the self-realisation of the Prajna Paramita, that the Tathagatas are to be realised."

There is no way in the world for you to recognize an enlightened person because it is not something that is external to the mind that it could categorize and examine but internal to the mind and thus can't be observed in the external world. So no acts, good or bad, can indicate whether someone is enlightened. Only an enlightened person could probably recognize another enlightened person.

Then the scripture closes praising Siddhartha/Buddha as is traditional in the Indian tradition of Master (Teacher) & Disciple (Student). Another reason to assume that this scripture (sutra) contains the teaching of Siddhartha distilled through the eyes of a much later expounder of the Buddhist path who may have a view of Siddhartha as a legend and thus glorifies him or simply does so to conform with cultural norms for what a

scripture is supposed to sound like. In any case, by stripping all the excess stuff (conceptions/ideas) as is recommended by the Buddha in this very Sutra, it is possible to simply ignore all the glorification's of Siddhartha as a cultural thing rather than an intended one by Siddhartha himself and that is why I like this sutra so much.

The Lord Buddha continued: "What think you, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata possess a physical eye?" Subhuti assented, saying: "The Blessed One truly possesses a physical eye."

"What think you, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata possess the eye of enlightenment?" Subhuti assented, saying: "The Blessed One truly possesses the eye of enlightenment."

"What think you, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata possess the eye of Wisdom?" Subhuti assented, saying: "The Blessed One truly possesses the eye of Wisdom."

"What think you, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata possess the eye of Compassion?" Subhuti assented, saying: "The Blessed One truly possesses the Buddha eye of Compassion."

Basically, you are the coolest enlightened man ever. Something the writer must have added in competition with other teachers of his age, i.e. of all the teachers in our age you are the greatest.

The Lord Buddha continued: "If there were as many river Ganges as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if there were as many Buddha-lands as there are grains of sand in all the innumerable rivers, would these Buddha-lands be numerous?"

Subhuti replied: "Buddha-lands are innumerable."

A seemingly irrelevant comment. Basically asking if allot is allot and getting an affirmative 'yes allot is allot'.

The Lord Buddha continued: "Subhuti, within these innumerable worlds are every form of sentient life with all their various mental capacities, dispositions, and temperaments, all alike are fully known to the Tathagatas, and the Tathagatas are filled with compassion for them.

A glorification of the followers of Buddha's path to attract more students.

Nevertheless, what are referred to as mental capacities, dispositions, and temperaments, are not in reality mental capacities, dispositions and temperaments; they are merely termed such. Dispositions of mind, modes of thought, whether relating to the past, present or future, are all alike unreal and illusory.

Restating that all conceptions of mental capacities are just imaginary ideas and not real in and of themselves.

"Thus should the Noble Prajna Paramita be explained. Thus should a young disciple, whether man or woman, thus should the highest Bodhisattva, understand and explain the Prajna Paramita. Everything should be seen as solitude, as egoless, as imageless; everything should be seen as the sky, as sunlight, as darkness, as a phantom, as a dream, as a flash of lightning, as a bubble. Thus is Prajna Paramita to be conceived and to be explained."

Basically: In conclusion, this is how the path of wisdom should be explained.

Then the venerable Subhuti, hearing the text of this sacred Scripture expounded by the Lord Buddha, and realising its profound meaning, was moved to tears and, addressing the Lord Buddha, said: "Thou art of transcendent wisdom, Blessed One! In thus expounding this supreme Scripture, thou hast surpassed every exposition previously given. True it is that all things and all phenomena and all definitive ideas are transitory, empty, egoless, imageless and dream-like! Only Prajna Paramita abides."

Subhuti achieves enlightenment and is moved to tears. A great conclusion for a scripture teaching "enlightenment" to the masses. Of course, just because Subhuti gets it doesn't mean

other will and thus the constant entreaty to learn, even if just one verse, and to practice it and the constant bribery of merit in reading and passing on this scripture to encourage the student to learn.

The Lord Buddha assenting, said: "Subhuti, in future ages, disciples destined to hear this Scripture, discarding every arbitrary idea, neither becoming perturbed by its extreme mode of thought, nor carried away by its lofty sentiment, nor fearful as to realising its noble sentiment, who faithfully and zealously study it, observe its precepts, and patiently explain it to others, their intrinsic merits will excite superlative wonder and praise. Moreover, as they gain in realisation of this profound Prajna Paramita through the practice of Dhyana, they will eventually become wholly enlightened, wholly compassionate-- themselves revealed as Buddha."

People in the future, not caught up in conceptions of thier minds, will study this scripture, understand it and pass it on. In fact, as they practice dhayana/zen they too will eventually become like me, i.e. enlightened.

All in all a repetition of the basic ideas Siddhartha seeks to get across as his raft for others to make the journey to 'the other side' is contained in this closing.

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha: "Blessed One, by what name shall this Scripture be known, that we may regard it with reverence?"

The Lord Buddha replied: "Subhuti, this Scripture shall be known as THE DIAMOND SCRIPTURE, because, by its Transcendent Wisdom all sentient life shall reach the other shore. By this name you shall reverently regard it, always remembering that what is referred to as Transcendental Wisdom is only a name,--Prajna Paramita transcends all wisdom."

Basically: This sutra (scripture) shall be known as The Diamond Scripture and shall be a means of reaching enlightenment for all beings. But always remember that enlightenment is only a name and the actual experience of enlightenment transcends all names as all experiences transcend the words that are used for them (the strawberry example in the introduction to zen - chapter 1)

Appendix

The following sutra (or “scripture of wisdom”) talks about zen from another perspective condensing it into a very short form. If you have read through this book and understood it then this sutra should become clear with just a little thought. It’s like Siddhartha (or one of his students) put zen philosophy in a short form that could lead to instant “enlightenment” for those who understand the philosophy and references behind it.

Sutra of Transcendental Wisdom

(Maha-prajna-paramita-hridaya)

THUS HAVE I HEARD. At one time the Blessed One together with a number of the highest Bodhisattvas and a great company of bhikshus was staying at Rajagriha on Mount Gridhrakta.

The Blessed One was sitting apart absorbed in Samadhi, and the noble Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was meditating on the profound Prajna-paramita, thinking thus: Personality is made up of five grasping aggregates--form, sensation, perception, discrimination and consciousness--all of which the Blessed One has taught us are by nature dream-like and empty.

Then the venerable Sariputra, influenced by the power of the Blessed One absorbed in Samadhi, spoke thus to the noble Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara: "If a son or daughter of good family wishes to study the profound Prajna-paramita, how is he to do so?"

The noble Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara replied to the venerable Sariputra: "If a son or daughter wishes to study the profound Prajna-paramita, he must think thus: Personality? What is personality? Is it an eternal entity or is it made up of elements that pass away?"

"Personality is made up of five grasping aggregates which are by nature empty of any self-substance. Form, or matter, is emptiness; emptiness is not different from form, nor is form different from emptiness; indeed, emptiness is form. In like manner: sensation is emptiness; emptiness is not different from sensation, nor is sensation different from emptiness; indeed, emptiness is sensation. In like manner: perception, discrimination and consciousness are also emptiness.

"Thus, O Sariputra, all things having the character of emptiness, have no beginning nor ending; they are neither faultless nor not faultless; they are neither perfect nor imperfect. Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no discrimination, no consciousness. There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no sensitiveness to contact, no mind. There is no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no mental process, no object, no knowledge, no ignorance. There is no destruction of objects, no cessation

of knowledge, no cessation of ignorance. There is no decay and no death, nor is there any destruction of the notions of decay and death. There is no Noble Fourfold Truth--no pain, no cause of pain, no cessation of pain, nor any Noble Path to the cessation of pain. There is no knowledge of Nirvana, there is no obtaining of Nirvana, there is no not-obtaining of Nirvana.

"Why is there no such thing as the obtaining of Nirvana? Because Nirvana is the realm of no-thing-ness. If the ego-soul of personality is an eternal entity it cannot attain Nirvana. It is only because personality is made up of elements and is, therefore, empty of an ego-soul, that it may attain Nirvana. So long as man is approaching Ultimate Wisdom, he is still dwelling in the realm of consciousness. If he is to realise Nirvana, he must pass beyond the realm of consciousness. In highest Samadhi when consciousness has been transcended, he has passed beyond discrimination and knowledge, beyond any reach of change or fear. He is already enjoying Nirvana.

"The perfect understanding of this and the patient acceptance of it is the Ultimate Wisdom that is Prajna-paramita. All the Buddhas of the past, present and future, having attained highest Samadhi, awake to find themselves realising this highest perfect Wisdom.

"Therefore, every one should seek self-realisation of Prajna-paramita, the Truth of Perfect Wisdom, the unsurpassable Truth, the Truth that ends all pain, the Truth that is forever True. O Prajna-paramita! O Transcendent Truth that spans the troubled ocean of life-and-death, safely carry all

seekers to that other shore. Thus, O Sariputra, should a Bodhisattva teach all seekers the profound Prajna-paramita."

When the Blessed One had risen from Samadhi, he gave approval to the words of the noble Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, saying: "Well done! Well done, Noble Son! So, indeed, must the study of the profound Prajna-paramita be presented. As it has been described by thee, it is approved by all the Tathagatas."

Thus spoke the Blessed One with joyful mind, and the noble Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the venerable Sariputra and the whole company of bhikshus praised the words of the Blessed One.