

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrās](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are [now available in book form](#). However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Triratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas [Triratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

The Sutra of Hui-neng (the sutra spoken by the Sixth Patriarch) (unedited seminar transcript)

Held at the Old Rectory (later known as Abhirati), Tittleshall, Norfolk, in March 1974.

Present: Sangharakshita, Buddhadasa, Chintamani, Devamitra, Gotami, Mangala, Hridaya, Ratnapani, Subhuti, Sulocana, John Hunter, Wolf Pilchick.

Unfortunately this was a very poor recording and much of the material was indecipherable.

“double quotation marks” indicate passages from the text itself. The first edition of the text under discussion (see below) is out of copyright and this older edition is available at www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bb/

[1]

S: Altogether there are four translations available of the sutra. First of all there is one by Wong Mou-lam which was the first in various editions; then there is one by the Chinese scholar Wing-Tsit Chan [The Platform Scripture, New York, 1963, tr.], one by Charles Luk [Ch'an and Zen Teaching, third series, London 1962, tr.], and another by Philip Yampolsky [Yampolsky, The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, New York and London 1967, tr.]. So altogether we've got these four versions, but it seems that Wong Mou-lam in his various editions has stood the test of time, and that's the one that we are going to use, the one that's in 'A Buddhist Bible' [ed. Dwight Goddard, London 1956]. Altogether there are nine chapters, but before we begin on the sutra, we shall go through Yampolsky's 'Content Analysis', which will give us a sort of birds-eye view of the subject matter of the whole text. After that we shall go through Charles Luk's introduction. Yampolsky is rather scholarly, so we'll start off with a rather scholarly analysis of the content, and then there will be a rather more devotional introduction by the Chinese practiser.

The 'Content Analysis' is part of a very lengthy introduction, mostly of a very scholarly and historical nature.

p.111: "All the difficulties encountered in attempting to place the Platform Sutra in a positive historical setting" which is what he's been trying to do in the previous section of the introduction "repeat themselves when one attempts to deal with the thought and ideas contained in the work." We won't be too hypercritical about these expressions. He says, "thought and ideas contained in the work". Well there are thoughts, there are ideas, but they are only instrumental, the link, (unclear) the medium of communicating the Sixth Patriarch's experience. They are not thoughts and ideas in the ordinary sense.

"The Platform Sutra can be divided into two parts: the sermon . . ." he uses this word 'sermon'; we shall try to avoid it - "the sermon at the Ta-Fan Temple, which includes the autobiography, and all the remaining portions of the work. This latter material, while largely unrelated to the sermon, does at times serve

to reiterate and reinforce certain points of doctrine. The title ‘Southern School, Southern Doctrine, Supreme Mahayana Great Perfection of Wisdom: The Platform Sutra preached by the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng at the Ta-fan Temple in Shao-chou’ applies to the sermon alone, and clearly identifies the type of Buddhism that is to be preached.”

Buddhadasa: So the first part consists of the sermon and the autobiography?

S: Yes. The autobiography and the sermon which immediately follows. Strictly speaking the title Platform Scripture or Platform Sutra applies only to the first section.

“The work opens as though it proposes to launch immediately into the sermon, but the preaching has scarcely begun when it is interrupted by the story of Hui-neng’s early life. By using an autobiographical format, the compilers are able to impart to the audience a sense of intimacy with Hui-neng. A simple man of humble origins, unlettered and without pretensions, he was able with his own innate capacities to achieve the highest rank in Ch’an, while yet a layman. The availability of this teaching to the populace in general is emphasized throughout the work. Not only was Hui-neng himself a layman when he first undertook his training, but the sermon is delivered at the behest of Wei Ch’u, a government official, before a large audience of monks, nuns, and lay followers. The point is further brought out in section 36, where it is specifically stated that study as a layman is not only possible, but that it may be carried out as well outside the temple environment as within.”

This of course is a very fundamental emphasis of Ch’an or Zen throughout, though again it expresses the Mahayana [2] emphasis. In the Mahayana generally the rather hard and first distinction, not to say difference, which has been set up for in the Hinayana between the monks and the laymen, tends to be abrogated, and the emphasis is placed on the Bodhisattva ideal, the Bodhicitta. And it’s emphasized again that these are ideals and experiences which can be followed, can be achieved, whether one is a monk or a layperson, whether one is a bhikkhu or whether one is an upasaka, just as in the very early Buddhism, the emphasis was on the Going for Refuge. That was the basis thing, that was the fundamental thing. Whether, after having gone for refuge, you lived as a monk, as a wanderer, or as a householder, that was relatively of secondary importance. So Ch’an or Zen, in a way, gets back to the original emphasis of Buddhism and the original emphasis of the Mahayana itself: that it is the spiritual commitment and the spiritual experience that is basic and fundamental, whether you’re living in that particular way as a monk or that particular way as a layperson. So therefore right at the very beginning this fact is stressed, this general availability of Ch’an or Zen, the teaching of the Sixth Patriarch, and the fact that it can be practised, it can be applied, outside the special temple or monastic environment.

Of course if you have a nice temple where everything is beautiful and quiet with lovely flowering trees in the courtyard and beautiful temple gongs and bells and the novices chanting in the early morning, it makes it much more easy, and

maybe you are quite justified periodically in retiring into such an environment to get really into your practice, whether for a weekend or a week or a month or a year, or even longer than that. But you can come out of that and you can practise and you can apply in the world in general. If you are very tough and very determined you may not need to go into retreat at all, ever. You can stay right here in the midst of the world just like the proverbial lotus blooming in the midst of the fire, and never really need any retreat other than that which you get within your own mind. But this is for the exceptional person. Most do need to retreat and retire from time to time, and can quite legitimately and quite justifiably do that. I'm afraid if we try to be a lotus blooming in the midst of the fire our petals only drop and get a bit singed.

pp.111-2: "Hui-neng's illiteracy, much spoken of in later Ch'an, is treated here in a rather casual manner, and serves primarily to underline the conflict with Shen-hsiu. We are told early in the autobiography (sec. 8) that Hui-neng cannot read, and that someone with the ability to write was needed to inscribe the verse that he had composed on the wall. In the story of Fa-ta and the Lotus Sutra (sec. 42), we again hear of the Sixth Patriarch's inability to read. Later Ch'an has called much attention to Hui-neng's supposed illiteracy, largely in an effort to underline the contention that Ch'an is a silent transmission from 'mind to mind'" [3]

It should also be pointed out, by the way, that as far as we know the Buddha was illiterate. I know that there are very late texts which describe him as learning the alphabet, and in fact learning all the alphabets, but in the Pali scriptures there's nothing to suggest that the Buddha could either read or write. There's no reference to it at all. It is known that in the Buddha's day reading and writing were restricted to secular use. The merchants and shopkeepers kept accounts and they had business correspondence and things like that, and it seems as though the Indian alphabet came from Sumeria, but as far as religious matters were concerned, spiritual matters, there everything was learned by heart and repeated orally and learned orally in that sort of way. And in the whole of the Pali scriptures there is no reference, to the best of my recollection, to the fact that the Buddha ever read anything or wrote anything or even used any sort of figure of speech. He does sometimes refer to someone being like a skilful accountant reckoning up the parts, reckoning up the (?)requisite parts of the body, but that's about as near as you get to any literary reference - the skilful accountant. And the Buddha himself seems to have been, like Hui-neng, non-literate. Actually 'illiterate' is the wrong sort of connotation: non-literate, not dependent on books and things of that sort.

p.112: "The Platform Sutra, however, does not seek to convey this impression." It doesn't underline, the Platform Sutra makes it clear he was illiterate, full stop. Later Ch'an or Zen underlines it and emphasizes it quite a lot for various reasons of its own.

"Hui-neng's first interview with the Fifth Patriarch is verbal, a written verse demonstrates the degree of Hui-neng's understanding." The first time that the

future Sixth Patriarch meets the Fifth Patriarch there is a verbal exchange. There is no silent transmission, the emphasis of this seems to have come later. And again a verse, a written verse, a verse written up on the wall (unclear).

“And, after he had transmitted the Patriarchship, the Fifth Patriarch spends the night expounding the Diamond Sutra to his heir.” This doesn’t sound very Zen-like, in a way. He gets the transmission and then what happens he has a study session the whole night on the text. What this is all getting at is that the Zen or Ch’an of Hui-neng is not so Zen-like as some of the things we read about later on. This is the source. This is where it all starts from, but it’s [4] much nearer the original Indian tradition than Zen afterwards, because here you’ve got the verbal exchange, you’ve got the use of the scriptures, you’ve got the stanza playing an important part, but you haven’t got the mind to mind transmission, and you haven’t got the bizarre sort of doings and sayings as later on you had. Hui-neng is quite innocent of this. This is the point that is being made here. Hui-neng was not so Zen-like as some of the later Zen people, which is quite a thought.

“There is no indication here that the written word and the canonical works are in any way inimical to the teaching of Ch’an”. This is a very important point. There is no indication that the scriptures in themselves are inimical. Sure, they can be misused, and Hui-neng himself makes this clear, but Hui-neng has got nothing against the scriptures as such, so this sort of attitude on the part of some modern pseudo-Zen people that study doesn’t matter and you can disregard the scriptures, throw them away. This doesn’t have the sanction of Hui-neng himself.

“Indeed, when one takes into account the fairly large number of scriptural references contained in the sermon...” This is interesting; he’s supposed to be illiterate, and no doubt he was, but he must have heard quite a lot, because the supposedly illiterate Hui-neng every now and then refers to the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, the Vajracchedika Sutra, the Lankavatara Sutra, and some of the other sutras, the Parinirvana Sutra. He seemed to know them well enough, even though he seems to have been illiterate.

“...it is clear that the Tun-huang version of the Platform Sutra...” that is, by the way the oldest known version, “was not particularly concerned with emphasizing Hui-neng’s illiteracy; nor was it attempting to assert that Ch’an was a teaching in which traditional Buddhism played no part.” That’s very important, that in this sermon which forms the first of the two sections and to which really the title Platform Scripture pertains, there is nothing which is at all out of harmony with traditional classical Indo-Chinese or Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. It’s almost not Zen.

“The account of Hui-neng furnished by the autobiography stops with his departure for the south after he has gained the Patriarchship. Of his life until he reached Shao-chou, where he preached the sermon, we are told nothing. In the meanwhile he has become a renowned Ch’an Master, the recognized Sixth Patriarch, and

it is as such that he appears throughout the remainder of the Platform Sutra. A few biographical details are furnished, the circumstances surrounding his death are described, but chiefly we find him as the rather disembodied voice represented by the phrase ‘The Master said.’ This is a bit Confucian of course (unclear) so that the Chinese scholar reading would be a bit reassured. A bit like the Buddha’s parables - a nice little gospel-like echo.

“We do not gain from this work any precise knowledge either of the manner in which the doctrine was transmitted or of the teaching methods used.” That’s very important; and [5] what does it remind you of in the life of the Buddha? When the Buddha taught his first disciples in the Deer Park all that we are told by the earliest accounts is that he, in the words of the English translation, admonished them. According to later accounts of course we are told that he taught them the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, but in the earlier accounts we are not told what he taught them. We are not told that. The oldest versions do not give any actual content, any actual teaching. All that we actually know - and later traditions filled in the gaps with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path; it was good standard Buddhist fare - was that the Buddha spent that rainy season with those five disciples sending them out to beg for food turn by turn while he admonished the others. Other than that he was there with them communicating, talking, but what he actually taught, what the content was, whether there was in fact any doctrinal or dogmatic content, we just don’t know. All we know was that the Buddha was in contact and communication with those disciples over that whole three month period, as a result of which they gained Enlightenment. But there was nothing very specific. There wasn’t, so far as we know, a sort of regular course of instruction, it was just the impact of the Buddha’s Enlightened being, we may say on their unenlightened beings.

It’s much the same here originally with Hui-neng; it all seems rather vague to the rational and tidy mind. We don’t really know in what that transmission consisted. It wasn’t the later rather stereotyped kind of thing. All that we know was that there was the Sixth Patriarch and there were his disciples around and something happened, and once it had happened it was acknowledged: ‘oh yes it’s happened; it’s been transmitted to you.’ But how it was done we are not really told. It’s a bit mysterious, a bit intangible. It hasn’t been reduced to something systematic - a study course or interview or a graded series of examinations as they had in later Zen. You passed a series of examinations in koans and the koans are graded and they’ve got three thousand of them and you pass the koans of this grade and then you pass the koans of that grade until you reach Enlightenment. Anyway you get a certificate to say you are Enlightened. That’s later Zen, that is what is happening now, that’s the system that continues, but it was very different then - so that’s the point.

“The transmission is described merely as the acknowledgement on the part of the teacher of his disciple’s understanding.” It’s not the [6] teacher giving the disciple the understanding; the transmission isn’t that. The teacher says, ‘Ah yes, you’ve understood,’ - that’s the transmission. It’s not, ‘Here it is I’m going

to give it to you - wham! - now you've understood.' No. It's confirmation that I recognize in you what I experience in myself and invite you to recognize it in me. It's not anything sort of given, not a doctrine or even thoughts are handed over, but when the disciple has sort of sweated and struggled enough, long enough, and got a certain (unclear). The teacher might just have been taking a friendly interest from a distance and not said a word, but then the disciple says something or does something and the teacher says, 'Ah yes he's got it,' and that acknowledgement is the transmission.

"Up to the time of Hui-neng, we are told, the robe of Bodhidharma was handed down as a symbol of the transmission of the teaching." It says, "as a symbol of the transmission of the teaching", but we don't really even know that. It would have been better if the translator had said the robe had been handed down just as a symbol, or transmission even, but we don't even know if it was transmission of teaching. He's going a bit beyond his brief.

p.113: "But the Platform Sutra pointedly explains that this practice ceased with the Sixth Patriarch." It's as though Hui-neng thought that was a lot of nonsense: 'This handing down of a robe, well what does that prove?' Then later on in the autobiography there is even a plot to steal this robe. Well if one gets (unclear), well it doesn't really mean very much. Anyone can grab hold of a robe and say, 'Well I'm the Patriarch', so it's my personal feeling that Hui-neng wasn't very happy about this business of transmitting the robe and rather unceremoniously sort of terminated the tradition.

p.113: "... It would seem, then, that at this time a renowned Ch'an teacher, such as Hung-jen or Hui-neng is esteemed to have been, gathered under him a great number of disciples." Hung-jen, by the way, is Hui-neng's teacher, the Fifth Patriarch [i.e. Hwang-yan in Wong Mow Lam's transliteration, tr.].

"Those with particular talent served the Master, attended on him..." This is rather interesting. This isn't our Western way of looking at things at all. If someone considers themselves a rather advanced disciple he wouldn't expect to be bringing cups of tea and looking after the master's comforts and making his bed etc, but that's not the Eastern attitude, "...received instruction from him." That comes afterwards you see. Sometimes that serving attendant might last for ten or fifteen years before he'd get any instruction at all. [7]

Devamitra: Like Milarepa with Marpa.

S: Yes, except that Milarepa wasn't doing all that much serving and attending. He was sent away to be on his own, wasn't he? But he did serve and attend for quite a few years.

"...and eventually became teachers on their own." That 'eventually' might come twenty or thirty years later.

"We do not know how precisely these heirs were designated or which of the students whose names appear in conjunction with Hui-neng were legitimate heirs. By the time the Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu was completed in 1004, the number

of Hui-neng's heirs had increased to forty-three. The Platform Sutra, however, is quite specific in its insistence that a copy of the work itself be required as proof of the transmission of the teaching." That's quite interesting. It's almost as though the text takes the place of the robe, in a way. How it is to be known that you are a genuine follower of the tradition of Hui-neng. It seems that by the time the text was compiled, the text itself - and the fact that you had it in your possession or had been given or had been allowed to make a copy of the text - was regarded as a sort of outward and visible sign that you belonged to that particular spiritual lineage. So obviously once you start printing the text and everybody gets a copy, then again it becomes just like the robe.

"Thus the abandonment of the robe as a symbol is compensated for, as far as this work is concerned, by the establishment of the Platform Sutra itself as proof of the transmission." Obviously it can't really be a proof. It can in a sense be a sort of indication, but no one can say, well, I've got a copy of the text, or the scripture, therefore the tradition must have been transmitted to me, in a spiritual (?)sense. It doesn't necessarily follow. You could even steal a copy of the text.

One could say that the same transmission reveals itself in the (?)teaching but actually it's clear that the transmission itself is the acknowledgement. The transmission means receiving of acknowledgement, and so it is not that something is transmitted, whether it is a teaching or even an experience in a way, but there is this sort of successive acknowledgement on the part of teacher after teacher and pupil after pupil or pupil becomes the teacher, 'Yes, you've got it,' whatever it is, and this is the transmission.

Later on in the introduction the point is made - I think it's in this analysis - that we don't know for instance how Hui-neng or even how the Fifth Patriarch taught his pupils. It seems that they were much of the time left pretty much on their own, and they got on with their meditation, and they studied, and they listened to sermons - for want of a better word - when sermons were given by the [8] Patriarch himself or somebody else, and sometimes they asked questions and sometimes they didn't. But the point is that most of the time they were getting on with it on their own. There were no regular classes and courses and organized sesshins. That was completely unknown, especially organized sesshins. You get the lecture, you get the sermon, you get the study of the scriptures, but you don't have anything like sesshins or even regular meditation instruction as far as we can tell.

So on the whole, the Zen disciple, the Ch'an disciple, of those days got on with it on his own, but the teacher kept an eye on him and he was in contact with the teacher. Then eventually the teacher saw that by his own efforts, as a result of his study and listening to lectures and his own medication, he'd got it. And when the master says to the disciple, 'That's it, you've got it,' that is the transmission. It's an acknowledgement and a confirmation; so (unclear) can eventually become a teacher. Because he's got it he knows whether somebody else has. So in his times (unclear). So that is what is meant by transmission originally. It's much

more of the nature of a successive acknowledgement or confirmation rather than something passing on.

Or rather we can say perhaps that if there is any transmission or any passing on in the sense of transmission, or transmission in the sense of passing on, it comes from the whole tradition in which we are involved, not just from the master as later Zen suggests. It's coming from the scriptures, it's coming from his meditation practice, it's coming from the whole environment and atmosphere of the monasteries and his own effort, and that culminates in his own realization. And then the master steps in and acknowledges that. But if he's got it, then he knows that he's got it. He doesn't even need the master to say anything, but he really does need the master if for some reasons he hasn't because it's so easy to think that you've got it when you haven't. And the master's confirmation eventually goes back to the Buddha, and that is as far as it goes back, and therefore it is a Buddhist tradition and not any other, and the Buddha recognizes that his disciples, yes, they've got it, and they recognize in turn.

Mangala: It isn't a matter of the master saying, ah you've got it, and then it just suddenly happens, as a result of that.

S: No. [9]

John Hunter: If the master's not always in communication with him, then when he sees him again...

S: Well there are many examples like that. For instance, in later Ch'an history you get the example of someone meditating on his own for months and years and so far unenlightened, but he goes to a master who is a recognized master for confirmation. Not that he's got any doubts, he hasn't got any doubts, but in a sense at the same time, to be quite sure, so that you get really authentic, as it were, realization and not something else.

Buddhadasa: It's also like the arising of the bodhicitta.

S: This is why even when you get ordained, you get the ordination, as it were, from somebody who'd had it; in his case from somebody right back to the Buddha. Otherwise it's so easy to go astray. I got a letter yesterday from Vajrabodhi saying there's a new Enlightened teacher appeared in Finland who says that he's gained Nirvana, and he's rather proud and arrogant apparently, and highly intellectual, he's already got quite a following, mostly young ladies, and he's going around...

Buddhadasa: He was quite angry with Vajrabodhi because he wouldn't become his disciple.

S: You can see from practical experience the great need for this, that someone as it were in a sort of spiritually recognized position, and they will say, 'Well no, you haven't got it, you've got to go on trying, you haven't got it yet, don't think that you have.' Otherwise all sorts of half-baked people could be setting themselves up, as is happening now. But you can see that what was happening

in Hui-neng's times was rather different from what tended to happen in later Zen. You get the impression, as regards later Zen tradition, even contemporary Zen tradition, that the master is all in all. You've got to go to the monastery and get the actual guidance of the master. The master looks after you completely and tells you what to do, and keeps you at it, and stands over you with a big stick. But it wasn't like that in Hui-neng's day at all. You were left pretty much on your own and you got on with your own study of Buddhism, your own practice of meditation. Yes, the master was around and you had sermons and you sometimes asked him a question, but you were very much on your own. There wasn't any organized sesshins even, but when the time came the master stepped in [10] and said, 'Yes, that's it,' whether formally or informally, and that was that. And then you were able to teach. The overall impression that one gets from these various paragraphs is that the Zen of Hui-neng - or the Zen tradition in those days - is somewhat different from what it later became. Hui-neng seems to be functioning much more like an Indian Buddhist teacher, not very much like the later sort of Zen people. It all goes to underline the point that Zen originally was just Buddhism, not a particular sect of a particular school. It's just Buddhism.

Devamitra: Did Buddhism come through Tibet to China?

S: Allegedly straight from India. Bodhidharma is supposed to have come sailing across [the Yangtze] on a reed, but nobody really knows how it came. It sort of appears in legends (unclear).

Hridaya: To what extent does the unenlightened disciple have to be aware of the Enlightenment of the master?

S: He can't be aware of it at all. It's only his concept. He can have faith in it, but he can't be aware of it. If he was aware of it he would be Enlightened himself, so there has to be a degree of faith, at least a reasonable quantity.

Devamitra: Even though the external form of Zen has changed over the centuries do you feel that the spirit remained intact?

S: I think it became considerably diluted. I wouldn't say that this was so entirely, because as late as the seventeenth century there is Hakuin, the great Japanese Zen master, and there have been other great masters. But one does get the overall impression that down the centuries Zen, in a way like any other branch of Buddhism, did have this tendency to become more and more sort of ossified and more and more reduced to a system. A lot of the Zen that we come across nowadays with regards Zen groups and movements seems to be very much of this kind and not very much in the (unclear), say, of Hui-neng. In some of the accounts I've read of Zen in Japan, in modern Japan, you almost get the impression of 'battery Zen', with the poor disciples sitting there like battery hens and being sort of turned out, sort of sartori experiences being induced.

p.113: "Exactly what teaching method was used at this time is not completely clear. We know that sermons, addressed to the monks and to people at large,

played an important role.” As in the case [11] of the Buddha himself and all later Indian teachers. “From the later sections of the work we can also gather that individual priests came, almost at will, to question the Master and to ask for an explanation of problems that bothered them. Whether these questions were put in private or before a large gathering of monks is not quite clear. We are told, in the story of Fa-ta (sec. 42), that all who were present to hear his conversation with the Master gained enlightenment, which would indicate a public assembly. It is probable that both methods were used, but we have no evidence here of the use of the private interview, a teaching technique that developed later.” We know that monks came and asked questions, but whether privately or in public we don’t really know. The fact that it states that a number of the congregation gained Enlightenment at that time, it seems as though there were a number of people around, but whether that was invariably the practice we don’t know, but certainly the institutionalized interview with the master of later Zen (unclear).

“It would seem then that various wandering priests, the Vinaya masters and specialists in individual sutras that we hear of, as well as monks and laymen who showed an interest, might appear as the spirit moved them. Those who felt an affinity for the Master’s teaching would stay and become disciples, and perhaps, eventually, heirs.” This is very much like the Indian system even now, the ashram system and the guru living in his ashram. Then you have the teacher, in this case it’s the Patriarch Hui-neng, staying in what we would call his monastery with a number of what we would call monks with him, and every now and then he gives a sermon. He climbs up into his ceremonial seat and he just talks to everybody present. Since he’s famous quite a lot of people come. And then all over the country there are travelling ‘priests’, as this text calls them, i.e. bhikkhus. Some are specialists in the Vinaya: monastic rules, others are specialists in a particular sutra like the (White) Lotus Sutra, or it might be the Parinirvana Sutra, and in the course of their wanderings they come to this temple or this monastery where the Sixth Patriarch lives and they hear there is going to be a talk that afternoon, and so they’ll attend and they ask one or two questions, or they might arrive at a time when there is no talk being given, but the master is around. They ask him questions and quite a few no doubt are not particularly impressed, and they just wander on somewhere else. Others feel something, they feel attracted by the master, they ask questions, they get on with their own practice. If they stay for a few years they become recognized disciples, and in the course of time the Patriarch even might say, ‘Yes you’ve got it,’ and that is the transmission. You become a regular Dharma heir and you belong to that lineage, and that, as it were, transmission. And that’s how it all went on, but nothing highly organized, no sort of organized sesshins and regular interviews and everybody lined up at the master’s door and a little bell rang and you pop in and pop out. It wasn’t done [12] like that in those days. It was much more even and much more informal, much more free, but basically very serious and responsible.

p.114: “When one turns to the sermon one is at once struck by the fact that almost all of the basic ideas presented are drawn from canonical sources.” If you were expecting something more weird and wonderful than any other form of

Buddhism, then you will be disappointed. It's all standard Buddhist fare.

“For the most part they are phrases, terms, and ideas, taken from the context of various sutras, and discussed, to a certain extent, in terms of Ch'an.” According to tradition, a sutra is an actual discourse of the Buddha. It's sometimes rendered as a sermon. Sometimes it can be just a short saying, but usually it's quite lengthy covering a number of topics, but it means canonical literature, the scriptures.

Buddhadasa: Spoken not necessarily by the Buddha, but any Buddha, because this is a sutra: the Sutra of Hui-neng.

S: But this is exceptional. This is sometimes described as the only sutra spoken by a native of China. In principle you could say that a sutra is the utterance of any Enlightened being, but according to practice, according to tradition, apart from a work like this which is an acknowledged exception, the word sutra is reserved for utterances of the historical Buddha or his various transformations, or disciples speaking under his inspiration or with his approval and so on. But strictly speaking, in principle you could say that a sutra was the utterance of any Enlightened being.

Buddhadasa: Practically all the Mahayana sutras are acknowledged to be not necessarily the Buddha's teaching.

S: You mean Shakyamuni's teaching. But they are of another Buddha who could be regarded as a (unclear) of the original Shakyamuni.

“Most often these concepts are supported by canonical references; indeed the compiler makes no claim for their originality, for he quotes Hui-neng as saying, ‘My teaching has been handed down from the sages of the past; it is not my personal knowledge’ (sec. 12). Although it is not our particular concern here, it should be reiterated that passages in the sermon are found, very frequently in almost identical form, in the works of Shen-hui. We have, then, basic ideas, drawn from a variety of sources, which, while later subjected to exhaustive elaboration and commentary by other Ch'an figures and in later editions of the Platform Sutra, are here presented in a rather simple form.” So often in modern writings about Zen, and in what people say, there is a strong suggestion that Zen is somehow not Buddhism, or that Zen is distinct from Buddhism, and usually the suggestion is that it goes beyond Buddhism, it's something superior, something further, something higher, and if you are following Zen you are superior to someone who is merely following Buddhism. There is this very strong sort of suggestion, but it's completely negated by this text. These words make it quite clear that so far as the Platform Scripture is concerned, Ch'an is just Buddhism. Maybe there are special emphases here and there and as embodied in certain striking spiritual [13] figures, but certainly nothing separate from or different from Buddhism, but it's rather interesting how this whole sort of feeling or idea of Zen as something separate or superior has arisen, when basically it's just Buddhism.

p.115: “Following roughly the order in which they are presented in the text, let us examine briefly the major ideas that appear. The identity of prajna and meditation, a fundamental concept in the Platform Sutra, is described as basic to Hui-neng’s teaching (sec. 13). We are told that hold another view, to believe that one or the other comes first, or that one gives rise to the other, implies duality.” The terminology one has to watch here: prajna and meditation. It’s not meditation in the sense of a particular practice. Wong Mou-lam’s translation is prajna and samadhi, or prajna and dhyana, but meditation here, or samadhi/dhyana here, doesn’t mean meditation or samadhi or dhyana as they are usually experienced or practised. It’s samadhi in the highest sense, almost synonymous with Enlightenment itself, not samadhi as a sort of exercise or practice or slightly higher state or level of consciousness. It’s even a bit doubtful whether the Sanskrit word samadhi really represents or truly represents the Chinese word. Charles Luk’s note on dhyana and prajna says (p.44) “‘Ting’ and ‘hui’ in Chinese. For want of better Western equivalents, we are compelled to use the Sanskrit words dhyana, or abstract meditation,” that’s really a horrible translation, “and prajna, or wisdom. However, dhyana is not the exact equivalent of the Chinese ting which means dhyana-samadhi or abstract meditation leading to a state of imperturbable mind free from disturbances. According to the Chinese Buddhist terminology, ting is an abbreviation for ‘ch’an ting’, which means: ch’an, the unstirred mind, and ting, its imperturbable condition.” It’s a bit like the Pali yogakkhema, the unshakeable peace and security of mind which is not just meditation, even a good meditation, in the ordinary sense, “which causes prajna, or wisdom, to manifest itself.”

Buddhadasa: It’s more the results of meditation.

S: Yes, right. A very lofty state of imperturbability and mental serenity and peace and something very powerful, which when in action becomes prajna.

Chintamani: It’s like the ground to the Enlightenment experience.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: Is this the word which comes up towards the end of the twelve positive nidanas.

S: Yes, it’s much more like that, and in The Essence of Zen I’ve spoken of it as akin to the Pali cetovimutti: liberation of mind. But in Pali you get liberation of mind and liberation of wisdom, or liberation by mind or liberation by wisdom. It’s very similar to these. Anyway, this is an important teaching of Hui-neng. All I’m trying to point out is that when this particular version speaks of prajna and meditation, or wisdom and meditation, it’s not meditation in the ordinary sense as a specific practice or even higher state of mind. It’s this state of unshakeable peace and tranquillity, and very high, practically a [14] transcendental effort.

Devamitra: Is this state of imperturbability of mind and prajna synonymous, or does the prajna arise or tend to arise when one is in this state?

S: Hui-neng goes into this in the sutra. But basically what he seems to say is

that the prajna and samadhi, or samadhi and prajna, are non-different. They are distinct, they can be distinguished, but they are more like two aspects of the same thing. We could perhaps very crudely generalize and say that samadhi is the sort of static state or static aspect, and that prajna is the dynamic one. For instance [say] you've got this samadhi state, for want of a better term. You yourself are in that condition, you are in a state of complete imperturbability, unshakeable serenity, and so on. This is a very high transcendental attainment, a definite permanent state. And then in this state your total mind starts functioning. You just look at something you think about something and then, wham! the prajna comes into operation. It's the function of the samadhi. When the samadhi moves into action that is prajna, that is wisdom. They are like the lamp and the light, they are distinct, but how can you really separate them?

Mangala: It sounds a bit like wisdom and compassion.

S: It does, yes, except that it's sort of reversed: it's samadhi and prajna. But it's very much like that. Or you can even say that one is the subjective pole and one is the objective pole, though these are very provisional expressions. It's as though the samadhi is sort of - when it is contained within yourself - is your achievement, in a way your being, what you now are, but when you go into operation then it's prajna; or in that other sense you could say that wisdom - using the word in a slightly different way - represents your own actual attainment that you are Enlightened, that you have this wisdom and you move into operation, and this is manifesting its compassion.

Devamitra: It's also like Buddha and Dharma.

S: Yes.

p.115: "The concept of the identity of the two, however, does not originate with this work, for it is to be found in the Nirvana Sutra." Even this is in a way a great distinctive feature or emphasis of Hui-neng, even though it's not completely original. It's found among the great Mahayana sutras.

"The Platform Sutra rejects the idea that through meditation prajna can be obtained, for prajna is conceived of as something possessed at the outset by everyone." This is going off on a [15] slightly different tangent, but it's not that you practise meditation and then you develop wisdom. You practise the meditation, you can say, and you gradually obtain the samadhi, and that is where it's at, and it's where you are then, and then prajna is the spontaneous function of you in that particular sense. That is the prajna and the capacity to function in that way has really been there all the time. "Thus while prajna is described as the 'function' of meditation, it is at the same time explained as something akin to the original nature, wisdom of which is tantamount to enlightenment. Besides representing a fundamental concept, it is probable that the identity of prajna and meditation is emphasized in order to point out a basic disagreement of those sects of Buddhism that stressed one of these concepts to the exclusion of the other, or gave priority to one over the other." We don't really know this. We don't know which schools or sects they might have been.

By the way you will find in the Platform Scripture references to the Northern school and Southern school. The Southern school is of course the school of Hui-neng himself. According to some scholars this distinction wasn't very important in the lifetime of Hui-neng, but became important later on.

pp.115-6 "The immediacy of the results of the practice advocated in the Platform Sutra is alluded to in a later passage (sec. 16), in which the Sudden Teaching is spoken of as the method used by the enlightened. Nowhere does the Platform Sutra spell out in detail the specific characteristics of sudden Enlightenment." Actually it says in one passage that there is no real difference between sudden Enlightenment and gradual Enlightenment; it's simply that some people gain Enlightenment more quickly than others. There is no sudden path as opposed to a gradual path. Hui-neng says this quite clearly, so the sutra is described in the title, and this presumably was added some years after his death, as a work of the Southern school and the sudden tradition. But Hui-neng himself doesn't seem to claim to belong to a sudden tradition at all. He says there is no difference between sudden Enlightenment and gradual Enlightenment. Some people just get there more quickly than others. They are not two separate paths or two separate ways or two separate methods.

p.116: "However, it should not be conceived of a sudden in the sense of easily obtainable, without benefit of meditation practice. a thoroughgoing experience of its methods, the practice of direct mind in contradistinction to a step-by-step process of meditation, would appear to be what is being advocated here." Actually something quite different. Sudden suggests sort of time. Sometimes it's rendered as abrupt, abrupt in the sense of discrete, like an abrupt fall when you come to the edge of a cliff. So Enlightenment is sudden or abrupt in the sense that it is sort of completely discontinuous. However close that you might have thought that you were, when it actually comes it's completely different from anything you'd anticipated, and this of course is invariably the case, whether you are on the so-called sudden path or the so-called gradual path. It's something that you couldn't have anticipated, you couldn't have formed any previous conception [16] about, something incommensurate, something you had no idea of, something that takes you by surprise, that sort of overwhelms you. It's sudden in that sense, abrupt in that sense. It's not continuous with your previous experience, not explicable in terms of that, therefore not to be anticipated. You really might think, even when you are right on the threshold of Enlightenment, that you had quite a good idea of what it was going to be like, but when it actually comes you realize you just had no idea at all. You were completely, not wrong, but you weren't even right enough to be wrong. You were so out of touch with it and had so little idea, it wouldn't even be very intelligent to say that your idea about it was wrong. As I said, it wasn't even right enough to be wrong. It was completely irrelevant, so it is abrupt or sudden in that way, if you follow the so-called sudden path or the so-called gradual path. You can find out even before you get as far as Enlightenment that even the next stage on seems sort of unanticipated and different from what you might have thought or could have expected, not like the idea that you formed about before at all. It's abrupt, it's

discrete, it's discontinuous.

So that fact that Enlightenment is described as sudden is not that it comes very quickly or that you get it soon, but that it is sort of not explicable in terms of your previous experience; so therefore of course it's very difficult to say anything about it, because there are some experiences which you cannot even think. The experience is there but there are not even thoughts to refer to that experience, not to speak of words, but even thoughts are not there, even thoughts cannot operate. But how is one going to communicate an experience which one can't even think about. You can't even think about it in the sense of saying it isn't this or it isn't that. You can't even do that. Thoughts just can't function, so how are you going to communicate that? So when you get to Enlightenment it's like that but even more so, but you can't even say that it is like that because its intelligibility is not a refinement upon that sort of intelligibility, so it's best to say that it is completely unintelligible. If you realize you don't know anything about it and can't think anything about it or form any idea, you are on much better ground than you are if you think you've got some idea about it or even a pretty good idea about it. Then you are going completely astray by looking in the wrong direction altogether. [17] So it's best to remain in that condition of what has been described as learned ignorance.

“It is thus conceivable that the sudden method might very well, from the standpoint of time, take much longer to attain than the gradual method. The Platform Sutra does not specifically deal with the period after sudden enlightenment has been gained. It is possible to construe this to mean that nothing more is needed, that the student has achieved all that is necessary for him to achieve. Judging from later Ch'an practices, however, this probably was not the implication intended. Indeed, in one of the remarks attributed to Hui-neng just before his death, we find him instructing his disciples to continue to sit in meditation as if he were still present.” This is the whole question of the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation. Path of Vision experiences are sort of abrupt, but then the Path of Transformation represents the gradual working out. So you can have a relatively low level Path of Vision experience and relatively high ones. You could say that full Enlightenment itself is in a way a Path of Vision experience; after that there is nothing to do, no further transformation, no practice. But after any Path of Vision experience short of that, there is still a lot of work to be done, i.e. work on the Path of Transformation. But in later Zen the word Enlightenment was used sort of very loosely and tended to be applied to any sort of abrupt experience, and therefore you get the idea of sort of working at your meditation even after Enlightenment, because Enlightenment here refers to a Path of Vision type experience which is genuinely transcendental, but not complete, not perfect, and requiring for its further support and consolidation more work on the Path of Transformation. Satori corresponds very roughly to this. Sometimes satori is used almost in the sense of Enlightenment, but very often just in the sense of a rather brilliant flash of insight you get in the course of meditation. But after that, after that satori or Enlightenment, there's so much work to be done. Philip Kapleau in *The Three Pillars of Zen* uses the

word Enlightenment very loosely indeed for something that we would describe just as passing insight experience. For instance there are some rather amusing cases, say Mrs W of Chicago, housewife, comes to a weekend sesshin and on Saturday afternoon she gets Enlightenment! It's like that. It's very unfortunate. Or she 'experiences Enlightenment'. So especially bearing in mind that there are so many Pali scriptures in which sambodhi itself is translated as Enlightenment, all that can be very misleading. Even though the English word is the same, the experience behind it may be quite different.

During the course of my year 'off' it was occurring to me just how many miccha-ditthis, how many false views and wrong opinions, there are floating around. They sort of float into us from outside, from the world of contemporary thought and advertising and ideology and slogans, but we are very strongly tainted by them actually. We can't help it, at least at first. And these sorts of wrong [18] ideas and real sort of false views really get in people's way and really sort of hold them back, and it is quite difficult to realize the extent to which you are affected by them because they are so much a part of the content of the climate of opinion and thought, and you take them so much for granted just because you've been born and brought up in them, and especially if they are so-called liberal opinions and free opinions, you take them all the more for granted. Many of them are derived from psychology. For instance this idea that you must not keep anything in, you must let it all hang out and so on and so forth. Well this is just nonsense, as though everything that is experienced has to be expressed, and that's automatically the thing to do, and if you do anything else you are repressing yourself. This is nonsense. Experience, yes, but not every experience has to be expressed; you must consider other people, the effects on other people and also the effects on you. Then again, when the Friends started we took it for granted that all our activities would be mixed. We didn't think that any activities might not be mixed. We took it for granted that in all our activities we would have men and women together. We didn't think about this, we took it for granted. Why? Because everybody else in the West nowadays takes it for granted. It's not taken for granted in the East, so as a result of experience we have found that it was helpful to separate sometimes, and for instance have men's retreats and women's retreats. It works, it's quite good, but we only found that out by experience when we started wondering about this and that. But our assumption at the beginning was everybody else's assumption that everything is going to be mixed - it's a good thing, you must always mix up the sexes together - that's pure assumption. We took it for granted, we never thought about it one way or the other.

And another thing: everybody is equal, everybody is the same and how dare anybody think that they are different, much less still, best or more experienced or even knowing more? Impossible! Everybody is the same. All equal, and everyone has equal rights. We are really plagued by all sorts of miccha-ditthis and false views, things we just take for granted, we never examine. And that discipline is bad, discipline couldn't possibly do you any good, discipline is negative, it's restrictive, it's anti-spontaneous; it's a very nasty word, a dirty word: discipline.

If you want to be free you've got to throw away [19] discipline, dance around it all the time. Anyway we won't go into this depressing subject any more; but I certainly could say that in the course of the last year I've seen much more clearly than before the extent to which the Friends themselves - individual Order members and Friends - are affected by contemporary assumptions which are in fact wrong views, and their whole approach to Buddhism and the Friends itself very often is vitiated, and very often the false views have been derived from so-called liberal thinking.

"Once the initial awakening was gained, more practice, more enlightenments, greater efforts, were probably called for on the part of the student. But of subsequent practice the Platform Sutra has nothing to say." It's as though the Platform Sutra is more concerned with just getting you right on to that Path of Vision and that it doesn't say very much about what you do afterwards.

"One of the messages most prominent in the Platform Sutra is the doctrine of no-thought." That's been the source of much misunderstanding and confusion I'm sure: no-thought.

"Here again we have a concept drawn from earlier canonical writings: it is to be found in the Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun, among other works. In the Platform Sutra (sec. 17) it is referred to as the main doctrine of the teaching, as is associated with non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis. Non-abiding is defined as the 'original nature of man'. These terms all seem to be pointing to the same thing: the Absolute, which can never be defined in words. Thoughts are conceived of as advancing in progression from past to present to future, in an unending chain of successive thoughts. Attachment to one instant of thought leads to attachment to a succession of thoughts, and thus to bondage. But by cutting off attachment to one instant of thought, one may, by a process unexplained, cut off attachment to a succession of thoughts and thus attain to no-thought, which is the state of Enlightenment." You can stop thoughts without being Enlightened, but what does it really mean do you think by not having any thoughts.

Buddhadasa: Not being identified with the thought that you think.

Gotami: It's not thinking about any thoughts when you are thinking.

Chintamani: Being aware of the state that the thoughts are held in rather than the thoughts themselves.

S: I think maybe it's better to translate it as not-thinking rather than 'no-thought'. One could perhaps put it very approximately and say it's a sort of functioning, a sort of feeling (unclear) where there are thoughts, but thoughts are just a free expression of your total function and not a sort of narrow channel into which you force yourself, or with which you identify yourself. 'Not-thinking' doesn't mean that you stop thinking. Or as Hui-neng says in another passage, you would be just like a block then, just like a lump of wood. So what does it mean then by 'not-thinking' if it doesn't mean not thinking? It means thinking,

but (unclear) thinking.

Buddhadasa: Lack of emotional involvement with the train of thoughts.

S: But it doesn't mean just stopping thoughts, and Hui-neng makes that quite clear later on. He criticizes those that think that meditation in this sense means just stopping their flow of thoughts. [20] I don't think it's anything sort of abstract or conceptual at all in fact. I think we have to be very careful about this translation. In Sanskrit it's (unclear) which could really be translated as not minding. It's not not having thoughts, it's more like not minding. It's not minding instead of minding. You don't mind. You don't mind about anything. Not that you don't think about anything, you don't mind about anything. The Sanskrit word means the function of 'not minding'. You could say it is not engaging in mental activities, but that again gives a completely different slant, because you can be thinking but not minding.

Sulocana: Not trying to restrain them or direct them.

S: Right, that too, but you don't mind them. You don't mind thinking, you don't mind not thinking. You don't mind the thoughts. You don't mind anything. It's more like that than not having any thoughts.

There is a meditation state in which you don't have thoughts, but the state of not minding is a much higher state. It means not having any particular conditioned mental attitude. That's what it really means: not thinking, not minding, not having, not being identified with any particular conditioned mental activity; but not just stopping thinking, you'd be just like a post. That's not what Ch'an Buddhism is all about. It's not-minding. Our connotations of not-minding are a little sort of suggestive, but we could give it a slightly more sort of Buddhist connotation and use it in a fuller more spiritual sense, not-minding, even non-minder. But not-minding in a positive sense. It's not that mental functioning stops, but there is a sort of (unclear). It's not that the Zen man doesn't think, it's more that he doesn't mind.

pp.116-7 "Enlightenment is gained by a meditation not inhibited by a specific formula. The Platform Sutra fails to explain the process, except to insist that it is something that must be accomplished by the individual for himself." In a way it is not a set process. It's not first of all you do this and then you do that. That is why it has been said that meditation is more like an art than a science. So it can't be reduced to a specific procedure. You can have a technique of concentration, i.e. a series of techniques leading up to the dhyana states, but not a technique for gaining Enlightenment or even any of the higher dhyanas. It's much more of an art that you sort of learn, learn by doing, but you can't reduce it to a regular procedure that you can then pass on to someone else. [21] It's not like that. It's more subtle, more intangible.

p.117: "Sitting in meditation (tso-ch'an) is defined in words attributed to Hui-neng (sec. 19): 'In this teaching "sitting" means without any obstruction anywhere, outwardly and under all circumstances, not to activate thoughts.

“Meditation” is internally to see the original nature and not to become confused.’ The definition is clear but the process is not. It is a rejection of formal meditation procedures, as advocated in other schools of Buddhism and Ch’an. It is, however, by no means a rejection of meditation itself.”

What the editor has said isn’t very clear. He’s presumably someone who hasn’t practised meditation and has no access to this himself. But what the position seems to be is, well, one can say it’s all quite clear from the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. You practise meditation like you practise anything else, but without the expectation that the meditation is going to lead you to Enlightenment. Yes, in a sense it is, but you mustn’t take that too literally. So you know that the practice of meditation is not going to lead you to Enlightenment, but you practise meditation all the same. So you could say that you practise meditation to get rid of unskilful mental states and once you’ve got rid of those, well, your own true pure nature will spontaneously manifest itself. You can put it that way. But to practise meditation - ‘oh if I practise hard enough and long enough I’m going to get there’ - that’s one extreme. The other extreme is: ‘oh, meditation won’t help me to gain Enlightenment therefore I’m not going to meditate.’ The Middle Way is, ‘I’m not going to gain Enlightenment by means of meditation, but all the same I’m going to meditate.’ That’s what the Perfection of Wisdom says and that’s apparently what Hui-neng says.

This is paradoxical but true. Early Buddhism on the whole is non-paradoxical. It does suggest that first you practise this, and then you practise the other, and then you practise something else, and eventually you get there, but it isn’t really like that. But if it is sort of said before people can really see it from their own experience they then give up practice altogether, but you’ve got to keep up the practice, even though you know that in the strict sense that it’s not a question of you are doing something which will gain you a certain experience called Enlightenment. That isn’t how it works at all, but still you must engage in the practice. It’s only on the basis of the practice that you can realize, actually realize, that practise doesn’t get you there, but if you don’t practise you won’t realize that, so you just keep on meditating all the time. (unclear) but not as a result of what you’ve done, though at the same time, not without it. But (?)it (?)could (?)be (?)said (?)to (?)be (?)on (?)the (?)basis (?)of (?)it [or] (?)it (?)is (?)the (?)basis (?)of (?)it. That’s why sometimes it’s quite possible to carry on even though you don’t know why you are carrying on and can give no reason, no explanation, no justification; [22] you just carry on, and very often the time comes when someone says to you, ‘Why do you meditate?’ and you answer, ‘I don’t know,’ but it doesn’t matter any more. You just sort of know that that’s what you’ve got to do and you don’t have this definite concept about, ‘if I keep it up for four years, five years, even ten years, I shall be very near Enlightenment.’ You don’t have that any more, but you know that you’ve just got to carry on. You know that Enlightenment will dawn in the end, sooner or later. But you are not particularly bothered about that, but you know this is what you’ve got to do in the meanwhile.

This is the absolutely right thing: that you meditate, practise right livelihood etc. etc. That's where it's at. Enlightenment? OK, yes, if it comes it comes, if it doesn't it doesn't; meanwhile I'm meditating, I'm practising right livelihood quite happily. If Enlightenment wants to come then let it come, I'm not saying it shouldn't, but you are not sort of thinking in the very literal (unclear) way of practice as leading you right to Enlightenment within a sort of measurable timetable. You see that that doesn't really apply, not really, but it may be helpful to think like that for a while. You just carry on. I quoted Oliver Cromwell some time ago; he's reported to have said that a man never flies so high as when he doesn't know where he's going. It's a bit like that, because when you know where you are going in a way you limit yourself. Even when you say your destination is Enlightenment, well what is that? It's only a concept at this stage. So why limit yourself to your own concept of Enlightenment? Just keep on flying, that is to say just keep on meditating and just take off.

"Meditation is internally to see the original nature and not to become confused. The definition is clear but the process is not." The process isn't clear because really it isn't a process. If it was clear it wouldn't be at all clear, it would just confuse people. They would then think that they had the procedure and could apply it and then would proceed to do that quite faithfully and successfully and be no nearer to Enlightenment than before, perhaps even further away.

"It is a rejection of formal meditation procedures." Not it isn't. It's not an attachment of undue importance to them. It's not a rejection of the practice itself, it's a rejection of the wrong explanation of the practice.

Wolf: It's not a rejection of, as when we sit in meditation like being [23] just aware of one's breathing rather than being aware of not minding one's thoughts.

S: Right. It's said that don't think that this is a sort of regular procedure for gaining Enlightenment. You just sit and meditate.

pp.117-8 "The sermon now leaves the elucidation of the various terms and concepts adopted by Ch'an and shifts its attention towards the area of Mahayana Buddhism in general. It turns to what appears to have been a basic concern of T'ang Buddhism in general: the conferring of the Precepts on an assemblage of monks and laymen. Here they are described as the 'Formless Precepts', but no attempt to define the term is made. Formless might best be conceived of as an adjectival reference to the Absolute. These portions of the sermon (secs. 20-26) in which Hui-neng requests the assemblage to repeat in unison what he is about to say, and in which the compiler states in a textual note that the various formulas are to be repeated three times, deal with the Precepts. We cannot tell whether any particular ceremonies were involved in this instance; however, the conferring of the Precepts seems to have had a considerable vogue at this time among a variety of Buddhist groups, so it is conceivable that it had some kind of ceremonial significance. The precepts given here represent basic concepts that are applicable to Mahayana Buddhism as a whole. Based on the text, they may be divided into five categories: (1) the threefold body of the Buddha (sec. 20);

(2) the four great vows (sec. 21); (3) the formless repentance (sec. 22); (4) the three refuges (sec.23); and (5) the preaching concerning the Prajnaparamita (secs. 24-30). While these sections deal to some extent with what might be called peculiarly Ch'an teachings, they seem clearly to serve a wider purpose: the general initiation of a group into Buddhism as a whole."

This seems to be a rather amplified sort of going for refuge within a specifically Mahayana context, and it suggests, as it were, or its introduction at the particular point in the sermon suggests, that the audience, the assembled monks and nuns and devoted lay people and followers and so on, are not going to get very much out of the teaching, out of the sermon, unless they have first committed themselves. And therefore Hui-neng, as it were, pauses in the midst of the talk, having given a bit of biography, and says, 'Well now let's all commit ourselves, now let's go for refuge, now let's repent and reform; only then will we be really able to get anything out of the teaching. In other words it's ordination in the real spiritual sense, a commitment, and without that basic commitment the teaching is just words, you don't really take it in, you don't really experience it, you don't really practise it. It's almost as though everything that Hui-neng has said before that is a bit like our sort of beginners classes leading up to the preordination class and that particular (?)script is like the ordination itself, the commitment, and afterwards you are able really to take in whatever is said, whatever you learn, because you are actually committed. And it becomes something real, not just a matter of words or interesting theory or a possibility; it's something that vitally concerns you.

p.118: "The Prajnaparamita doctrine, which may be considered the last of the five Precepts mentioned above, is enlarged upon. Here the idea so widely associated with Ch'an, 'seeing into one's own nature', is emphasized (sec. 29). Enlightenment is not to be sought outside, but within the mind of the practitioner himself; for 'the ten thousand dharmas are all within our bodies and minds' and; 'unawakened, even a Buddha is a sentient being, and .. even a sentient being, if he is awakened in an instant of thought, is a Buddha' (sec 30). Here again the idea should not be conceived of as original to the Platform Sutra, for various canonical works are invoked to lend them authority. The Diamond Sutra, particularly, is singled out for attention. Man must gain awakening for himself; if he cannot do so he must find a good teacher to show him the way. But, in the end, the best and only teacher is oneself: 'If standing upon your own nature and mind, you illumine with wisdom and make inside and outside clear, you will have your own original mind. Presumed throughout is the doctrine that holds that the Buddha nature is inherent in all sentient beings, and that to discover this nature is to see one's own original mind."

In this section too we can see that the Platform Scripture is not only, as it were, echoing Mahayana Buddhism, but the whole Buddhist tradition, which said right from the beginning that you gain Enlightenment yourself. You can gain it by your own effort quite by yourself, or you can seek the help of a teacher, but in any case it's by your own effort. Again there is nothing very distinctly Ch'an or

Zen; it's the same fundamental Buddhist teaching.

p.120: "Among the other sections of the work we find the thoroughly obscure disquisition on the thirty-six confrontations (secs. 45-6), whose origins are quite unknown. The sections containing the transmission verses of the Chinese Ch'an Patriarchs (secs. 49-50) and the list of the Indian and Chinese Patriarchs of the sect (sec. 51) reflect the peculiar concern of Ch'an with establishing itself as a legitimate school within Buddhism as a whole. Transmission verses of this type, as has been noted, were fairly widely use at the end of the eighth century."

You notice here there was a very different preoccupation in those days. It can't really be said to be a preoccupation of Hui-neng. His sermon or sermons, his sayings and answers [24] to questions are compiled into this total work we call the Platform Scripture. Some of this material at the end reflects the concern which came to be felt by some of his followers, and followers of followers, within the school later on. They were concerned whether the Ch'an school, if in fact it was called that in those days. Anyway their particular tradition coming down from Hui-neng could be regarded as orthodox Buddhism. That was what they were concerned with. They wanted to sort of make it clear that they were Buddhists, that they belonged to the original Buddhist tradition, hence all of these lists of Patriarchs going right back to the Buddha. They wanted to prove that point, which is rather different from the concern of Zen people nowadays when they almost suggest that they are independent of Buddhism sometimes. But there, maybe not on the part of Hui-neng himself, but his followers and disciples within the (?)very (?)early (?)days, the concern was to show that they were part and parcel of the Buddhist spiritual tradition, and that's why they became so keen on drawing up these rather dubious lists of patriarchs and sort of tracing their descent back through them.

Buddhadasa: They are dubious are they?

S: Oh yes, very much so. They differ widely in different sects. I don't think it was an original Indian list. It was compiled by the Chinese or by the Ch'an people themselves taking hints from various sources.

p.120: "There are several sections whose primary concern is to attack the teachings of Northern Ch'an (secs. 37, 39, 48-9) and to extol the Sudden Doctrine at the expense of the so-called gradual teaching. These reflect the struggle for supremacy between the two schools," after Hui-neng's death, "a problem that had resolved itself by the time that the Platform Sutra was composed." About eighty years after Hui-neng's death.

Buddhadasa: How did the Southern and the Northern schools come into existence?

S: The Fifth Patriarch had a number of disciples of whom the most gifted was the one whom we know as the Sixth Patriarch: Hui-neng. At the same time there was a quite gifted head monk who is (unclear) in that sort of contest of the verses, and his verse showed he wasn't really Enlightened. Anyway, whether or

not that was so he continued to be a disciple and he afterwards - after the death of the Fifth Patriarch - became a teacher. Hui-neng was of course teaching, but whether he was then known as the Sixth Patriarch or not we don't know, but the school [25] divided into two branches which were known as the Northern and Southern schools after the death of the Fifth Patriarch. It would seem from all that we know that the Northern school, which was known as the Gradual school led by Shin-shau, this head monk, became very popular and influential. But meanwhile Shen-hui, Hui-neng's disciple, was continuing the tradition of the Sixth Patriarch, as we call him now, along with other disciples, and they gradually caught up with the Northern school. There was a very famous meeting at which Shen-hui denounced the Northern school and its methods and advocated very strongly Hui-neng's approach and insisted on his general recognition as the Sixth Patriarch, and then from that point the Southern school came more and more into favour and became very influential, and shortly after that, as a sort of manifestation of this increased influence of the Southern school, this Platform Scripture was compiled from, of course, original material, and the Northern school in effect died out.

From the Platform Scripture itself, though these two schools are called Northern and Southern, and Gradual and Abrupt, we see that Hui-neng seems to have regarded the whole distinction as rather artificial, of Gradual and Sudden, because in a way we see these schools even quite soon after his death adopting a somewhat more sectarian attitude than he himself adopted. He didn't criticize the gradual approach; he merely said there's no real distinction: some people attain quickly, others don't. So it's as if after his death his teaching became identified with the Southern school, and that of the head monk with the Gradual school. Some of Hui-neng's followers seem to have taken the side of the so-called Sudden as against the so-called Gradual, but that doesn't seem in accordance with Hui-neng's own attitude at all, as far as I can see from the Sutra itself. Even now you could say that to think of Zen as such as a sudden as opposed to a gradual teaching isn't according to the Platform Scripture.

Mangala: What about the Seventh Patriarch? Presumably he would have been a disciple of Hui-neng's.

S: Well there was no Seventh Patriarch. In a sense there's no one distinguished individual, there are a number of distinguished disciples. The Patriarchate with the robes, that was discontinued.

Mangala: The point I'm making is that maybe there wasn't one Seventh [26] Patriarch, but presumably there were people who, if not enlightened, were quite close to it, so therefore it would seem that they would carry on after Hui-neng's death, so that in that case they would see the difference between the Sudden and the Gradual school was just an illusion if you like. I can see that could happen if there weren't anybody after Hui-neng to sort of put the matter right; presumably there were.

S: Shen-hui himself very strongly took sides; he called a big meeting of all

the Ch'an people at which he actually denounced the Northern school as not representing Buddhism, so he seems to have taken sides with the Southern school as opposed to the Gradual school quite decidedly, and on the whole Zen seems to reflect that; though in terms of abruptness rather than in terms of quickness.

Buddhadasa: The impression you get from the Sutra is that the Southern and Northern schools were basically very honest. It's almost as though, also, that Hui-neng could see that this was going to happen so the disciples didn't even bother to enter the contest.

S: Yes, they just wanted to follow him.

Buddhadasa: It's a sort of group following and an individual following.

S: In a way, yes. But it must also be emphasized that the whole early history of Zen is very confused. We refer to the Sixth Patriarch or the Fifth Patriarch, but it may well be that those terms were not in use then. It's rather like the line of the Dalai Lamas. We refer, for instance, to the First Dalai Lama and the Second Dalai Lama, but the use of the title Dalai Lama came into existence several generations later and they were retrospectively called the First Dalai Lama and the Second Dalai Lama. They were not known as such in their own day, but that's a retrospective tidying up of history. It's much the same with the Zen Patriarchate. Later on, some hundreds of years after it was all tidied up, and Bodhidharma was the First Chinese Patriarch and Hui K'o was the second, but it seems that these terms were not in use in their own day. They represent the later Zen historians sort of tidying up of the whole history which was actually much more chaotic and confused if you like, in a (unclear) way than most Zen history would lead us to expect. It's rather like the early [27] history of Christianity and the twelve apostles. In Christian art they are sometimes shown garbed exactly like cardinals and referred to as the first college of cardinals, and they are shown with their red hats and tassels and everything as though they were all sort of fully fledged in that sort of way right from the start, whereas we know it wasn't.

Questioner: (unclear)

S: There weren't schools, and this is the great feature of Chinese Buddhism, not schools in any sectarian sense or as separate organizations. You had temples specializing in particular aspects of Buddhist study, or it was a tradition known to be particularly good at those studies, and you had individual masters specializing in different branches of Buddhism or in reading different scriptures, but you didn't have a sectarian Buddhism. You didn't have Buddhist sects or anything of that kind. It's only after Buddhism went to Japan that it became sectarian in the modern sense.

But let's try to see this clearly. Who was Hui-neng? What do we really know about him? He was an ordinary sort of person; he was illiterate and he lived somewhere in China in a village and he'd lost his father, as we know from his autobiography, but at that time, Buddhism was in the air and Buddhist

scriptures were known, and there were monks around the place, and so on and so forth. So it happened that Hui-neng, hunting around for firewood or something one day, heard someone reciting a sutra, that was a popular practice like in this country we might hear someone singling a hymn or reading a piece out of the Bible. So he heard something from the Diamond Sutra, and he said, 'That's it!' He intuitively understood. He had a sort of Path of Vision experience when he heard that. And then that was that.

So later on he came to hear that there was someone called the Fifth Patriarch, a famous teacher staying in a monastery: 'I'll go there,' and he went there and the Fifth Patriarch seems to have recognized at once what sort of person he was, but he could foresee all sorts of things (unclear) so he let him work in the kitchen, then he initiated him and recognized his attainment, and probably that was his teaching and then he gained Enlightenment. So Hui-neng was wandering around, as we know from the autobiography, and eventually he came to a monastery or temple where he settled down [28] - well it was a sort of temple - where he lived and he started talking and giving discourses, and people gathered around, and sometimes touring monks visited him, Vinaya specialists and (White) Lotus Sutra specialists and local officials and Confucian scholars, and they started gathering, and sometimes whole audiences would hear him talk and he answered questions, and some of them made good spiritual progress, gained Enlightenment, and there were a number of those, and by the time he died he had quite a few Enlightened disciples, and that's how the whole thing went on. But where's the Zen sect? Where's the Zen school? Nothing about that at all. He didn't start up any sort of organizations or anything of that kind. He administered the refuges and precepts, he insisted on the commitment, but there is nothing like a separate school. This is very characteristic of the whole pattern of Chinese Buddhism.

Question: (unclear)

S: Well in much the same way. It wasn't the full Tantric tradition. It was what the Tibetans call the lower of the outer Tantra, but in much the same way these Indian monks went over to China, started teaching and gathered followers, and established themselves in a temple, but there's no sectarian organization. Some monasteries were famous for the Vinaya, and if you wanted to be a rather strict monk you went and got your ordination there and you were usually given a certificate to say that you were ordained as a monk at such and such a temple with a sima. Because monks were permitted to beg for their food - the government allowed that - and they didn't want people just to take advantage of that and pretend to be Buddhist monks and mislead the public, so you usually got a certificate from where you were ordained and you showed this certificate. At first there were no separate monasteries for Hui-neng's disciples, no separate temples. They taught and they practised in any Buddhist temple that happened to be around. They were welcome there. They could teach, they could practise. There was no question of, 'Well this is a non-Zen temple and you are a Zen Buddhist and therefore you can't come here. They didn't think of themselves

as Zen Buddhists or Ch'an Buddhists; you were just a Buddhist. Followers of Hui-neng, yes, in that particular spiritual tradition, but not as belonging to any sectarian body. That only developed in Japan.

Subhuti: Would this even extend to Taoism and Confucianism, with Taoists and Confucians staying in Buddhist monasteries? [29]

S: Oh yes. Buddhist monasteries became very popular retreats for even literary-minded Confucianists. If a Confucian scholar wanted to get on quietly writing his history of Sung dynasty bronzes or something like that, he'd go quietly away to a Buddhist monastery and do it because it was the right sort of environment and he was quite welcome there - though as a rule, usually he wouldn't drink wine while he was there - but again some monasteries weren't all that strict, but where they were strict the Confucian scholar would conform and he wouldn't drink wine there, and he wouldn't bring his lady friends there, and he'd do whatever he had to do and help the monastery library by offering good non-Buddhist works, and the monks would be his friends. In the literary history of China, there are many accounts of famous literary figures, some of them quite reprobate, who make friends with the individual Buddhist monks and go to stay with them in their monasteries, and be quite welcome there. It was a very big practice of Chinese Buddhism. You don't get this even in Indian Buddhism.

Mangala: You say there wasn't this sort of Zen sect, Hui-neng wasn't known as the Sixth Patriarch and so maybe he was just known as some wise man who happens to live in a certain building and had certain disciples. What made him specifically Buddhist even?

S: This is a question that arose at the very beginning when Buddhism was introduced into China. It was certainly felt as something foreign, un-Chinese, even anti-Chinese and disruptive. Some orthodox Confucian scholars were very much against this, because Buddhism, not in its actual teaching so much as in certain practices, greatly offended Confucian orthodoxy. Therefore Buddhism appeared to the Confucians, even the Taoists to some extent, as a foreign body and even as a threat - that is, Buddhism as a whole. Where it offended was on the social level: just as in India Buddhism offended against the institution of caste, in China it offended on two grounds: its attitude towards the family and married life and its attitude towards the emperor. On these two scores it greatly offended. The Chinese, especially the Confucianists, had no conception of monastic life. They felt it was your bounden duty to marry and beget children and continue the family name; not to continue the family name was a terrible thing, a great sin. And there were these monks who weren't even married, not having any children, not [30] even having a family name, giving up the family name and having only a monastic name. To a Chinese mind this was really terrible: to neglect to maintain the continuity of your family. They thought this was really bad and dreadful and they didn't like this aspect of Buddhism at all. On the other hand they didn't like the Indian idea which the Buddhist shares that the spiritual individual who's renounced the world is (unclear) to the secular authority. For instance in India no ordained person, no monk, sadhu,

brahmin, bhikkhu - whether Hindu, Buddhist, Jain - is expected to show any respect to any householder, even if he's a king. The king respects the monk, not vice versa. But in China the Emperor was the head of everything, he was the divine ruler. Everybody respected this. There was a big controversy in early Chinese Buddhism whether the monk should bow to the emperor or the emperor should bow to the monk. The Buddhists insisted that the emperor should bow to the monk, or at least that the monk should not bow to the emperor, and the Confucians insisted that even monks must do this sort of ceremonial kowtow when they first appeared in front of the emperor. In the end they worked out a compromise; that the monk honoured the emperor by not bowing to him! This they found acceptable. Confucian sentiment was deeply offended when emperors became Buddhists. That was all right, but when emperors showed respect to their Buddhist teacher even by bowing before him, this deeply offended the Confucian officials. So Buddhism was regarded as a sort of (unclear) not because it taught about the void and so on - this was quite acceptable, they didn't mind that - but because (1) it disrupted social family life or showed not sufficient respect for family life, and (2) because the monks did not show respect to the emperor in the traditional way. It's very interesting that in India the orthodox brahmins were not offended by the teaching of anatma or Nirvana or a different theory of rebirth. They didn't bother about that. But Buddhism's rejection of the caste system: that's what bothered them. In the same way, in China, they didn't mind the teachings about the void and all those Buddhas. They could accept all that, or not bother about it. But the fact that the monks did not marry, that they did not beget children, that they did not salute the emperor: this really bothered them, these sort of social things. That's rather significant.

Mangala: I wonder if there could have been anything as mundane as [31] that which separated the Southern and Northern schools, or whether it was just purely a matter of intellectual theory about ...

S: It's very difficult to say. There is no indication of that.

Mangala: Or maybe some kind of practice or something like that.

S: Though of course the Northern school enjoyed great imperial patronage and great respect of the court for quite a few years. I think that - though we don't know much about Chinese Buddhism - I often think that maybe Chinese Buddhism has got more lessons for the Buddhist movement in this country than any other form of Buddhism.

Devamitra: Could you say in what way?

S: Well first of all the introduction of Buddhism into China is a bit comparable to the introduction of Buddhism into this country or into Europe. For instance when Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon, or when it was introduced into Tibet or Japan, what was the position? Those countries had no culture of their own at that time. Culture came with Buddhism. In the case of China there was already a strong culture. There were already great artistic achievements. There was already a high degree of (?)political organization and so on. So just as in

the case of England when Buddhism was introduced, already there was a lot of culture and a spiritual tradition and so on.

And then again in the case of the Chinese they were very politically minded. They had a strong civic consciousness. They had a great love of the arts, especially literature and poetry, as the English do have. There was a good strong tradition of scholarship and study and all these things, and they weren't all that religious in the Indian sense. The Chinese are rather sober. They don't go in for all this Indian exaggeration, a bit like the English. Among all the peoples of Europe the English have probably shown least aptitude for mysticism and philosophy, certainly not as much as the Germans or the Italians or the Spaniards. The English are a bit hardheaded, a bit practical, empirical. The Chinese are very much like that, but at the same time with a wonderfully imaginative poetic literature. So there's quite a bit of resemblance I feel. The Chinese population in those days was about 50 million, which is what the population of England is now, and the Chinese were a bit sceptical about monasticism and monks, and the English are really. So there is a certain common background. And [32] Chinese Buddhism is non-sectarian, it's human, the humanistic (unclear) is there. There are just Buddhists. There are different traditions, but there are no sects or schools or anything like that. It's just Buddhism.

Certainly not for several hundred years was there anything like a Zen school. There were just Buddhist monks and especially influenced by the tradition of Hui-neng, and studying the Platform Scripture, and also reading the other scriptures, observing the common Vinaya, and some of them were even reciting the mantra of Amitabha.

Chinese Buddhism is very broad and non-sectarian, humanistic, it's down to earth and appreciative of the beauties of nature, a bit literary and a bit scholarly. So Ch'an, recently Zen - this is what Suzuki decided - was a tendency or that sort of tendency within Chinese Buddhism which sort of reworked the whole of Buddhism, but illuminating specifically Indian teachings which had very little to do with the essence of Buddhism itself and made Buddhism as a whole more acceptable to and in accordance with Chinese ways of thought and Chinese ways of feeling. And this is Zen. For instance the Chinese monk eventually adopted the robe of the Confucian scholar-cum-recluse. What sort of a robe does the Japanese wear? Black. And where does this come from? It doesn't come from India. Who wears black in India? Nobody. What they usually wear is a black overgown and inside it's grey or sort of blue, a rather soft flaky blue. These are the colours considered appropriate to the scholarly class, which included the Confucian scholars, the Taoist hermits or sages, and so on. But they didn't entirely neglect the Buddhist tradition and the Indian tradition; on ceremonial occasions like the ordination of monks, in the temple over the black robe they wore an appropriate yellow robe, but otherwise they just wore a garment which (?) assimilated the indigenous type of scholar and sage - i.e. Confucian and Taoist, and just within the monastery or temple, on ceremonial occasions or for processions, they'd don the yellow robe. Just like the Tibetans: they wear red,

and on ceremonial occasions they put on the yellow robe. Otherwise they just wear the red.

Mangala: Was there ever a developed monastic tradition in Chinese Buddhism?

S: Oh yes, there was. They had that fully, according to Sarvastivadin [33] tradition, and in some areas quite strictly. Again in China, one of the great features was that Chinese Buddhism was never an exclusively monastic Buddhism. In China the lay follower had a very important position, much more important even than in India. In India very quickly monasticism developed and the real Buddhist was the monk, but in China you had many real Buddhists who were just laymen, who never took monastic vows, but who even became quite famous people, and Hui-neng's ordination comes after his Enlightenment - his monastic ordination, the shaving of the head and all that. So Chinese Buddhism is also very much a lay Buddhism, or maybe it's very balanced. You can be a fully practising Buddhist without being a monk in China, where say in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka, tr.] it would be impossible, or in Thailand it would be impossible.

Even in modern times there have been some quite well known Buddhist teachers who've been laymen. There was one who revived the whole of the 'mind only' tradition. This was because you had the educated laity to begin with. Buddhism wasn't introduced to a lot of yahoos. There were these highly cultured, literate, cultivated, serious-minded Confucian and Taoist sages and poets and writers, and many of them did not see any need to become monks in the formal sense. They took the refuges, they became upasakas, some continued to live at home, others in little huts in the mountains. They didn't see any need to join a monastery or to become a monk. They got on with their spiritual life and practice just the same. In Chinese Buddhism, as in English Buddhism I hope, it was the Going for Refuge which was important more than monastic ordination.

Buddhadasa: So monasteries were not a final commitment to the monastic life. It could be for a long or a short term, and come back to adopt a lay life after that?

S: Yes. It's not even a question of adopting a lay life, because many of the Confucian scholars were sort of into scholarship and philosophy and so on anyway. They had that sort of culture which you didn't find in India, apart from the brahmins. You had a literary class in China and many of them took up Buddhism with full enthusiasm without feeling any need to become Buddhist monks, whereas in India if you wanted to enter religion fully you practically had to become a monk. (unclear) They were the only sort of study centres of quiet places.

Buddhadasa: So the urge to become a monk inside a monastery is highly suspect? [34]

S: Yes. If people say - and I say this from my own experience - I want to become a monk too quickly, that's very suspect. It usually means someone who just wants to opt out and have a fairly easy time, usually it's just that. I've seen so

many become ordained and then leave it, or leave Buddhism altogether. So we need to know more about Chinese Buddhism.

Buddhadasa: What's happening there at the moment? Are there any indications that Buddhism is surviving?

S: One hopes it does.

Subhuti: I saw a picture of a Chinese Buddhist Association meeting and at the end of the hall there was a picture of Chairman Mao.

S: But again we must remember that Buddhism in China underwent at least three really terrible persecutions and it did survive. It might even survive still. But then it raises the whole question of whether traditional Buddhism or Buddhism in its traditional form can survive, or is adapted to survive, in the modern world. This is partly what the Friends is all about. We are trying to continue the authentic tradition under conditions of the modern world without adapting in the sense of sacrificing anything of the spirit. In the old days it was quite easy: you got the ear of some powerful king who said, 'Oh yes, have those 10,000 acres. Want a couple of millions for building a temple? Here they are.' And it was all done, or, 'Here you are I'll give you twenty villages to support you. How many monks? 3,000, yes OK,' and then the 3,000 monks would come along. You can't do things like that now.

Charles Luk's introduction [i.e. the Foreword, tr.] to his translation.

p.11: "We take refuge in the Buddha, We take refuge in the Dharma, We take refuge in the Sangha, We take refuge in the Triple Gem within ourselves." You can see it's a Buddhist writing at once. He starts off with the refuges.

"The Altar [i.e. Platform] Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch is a resume of Mahayana Buddhism and the Buddha's Transmission of Mind, called Ch'an (or Zen in Japanese) which is outside of the teaching. Ch'an really began to flourish in China after the Patriarch expounded at Pao Lin monastery the doctrine which later was developed and divided by his Dharma descendants into five sects, namely Kuei Yang (Ikkyo Zen), Lin Chi (Rinzai Zen), Ts'ao Tung (Soto Zen), Yun Men (Ummon Zen), and Fa Yen (Hogen Zen)." Only two of those survive.

"This sutra is not a book of obscure dogmas and impractical theories. It is essential for every student of Mahayana and especially for every adherent to the doctrine of mind. A serious Ch'an practiser will easily find that its teaching, if put into practice, can enable him to discover his errors and mistakes which seem imperceptible and are the first things to be uprooted before he can make real progress in his self-cultivation." So that's putting it in a rather blunt way, that at least to begin with the main function of the sutra is to help you discover your own errors and mistakes, which is not the spirit in which [35] most people take up the study of Zen literature.

"A keen student of Mahayana will be able correctly to interpret all sutras after he has well understood in the Alter Sutra." You see these references to Mahayana;

there are only two short paragraphs and already he's said three times: it's "a resume of Mahayana Buddhism", "essential for every student of Mahayana" and "a keen student of Mahayana". How firmly he integrates Ch'an or Zen with Mahayana Buddhism, and he of course is a Chinese Ch'an follower.

"All of us are accustomed to the deep-rooted habit of splitting our undivided whole into subject and object by clinging to the false ideas of the reality of an ego and of phenomena, which are responsible for our mental creation of all kinds of illusion with their accompanying pairs of opposites and all sorts of names and terms which are devoid of real nature. The Patriarch's doctrine consists in wiping out all these contraries which owe their seeming existence only to their mutual dependence. Consequently, if a practiser succeeds in stripping his mind of them and if he is firm in his determination not to stray from his absolute self nature, as taught in the sutra, the result will be that his self-natured Bodhi will manifest itself after all self-created obstructions have been removed." This is very forthright indeed.

"The teaching is open to every man irrespective of his education or social standing. The Patriarch, as he himself related, was an illiterate commoner of a border religion, depending for his subsistence on the sale of firewood in the market-place; he was also called a barbarian at the monastery of the Fifth Patriarch. This shows that the self-natured Bodhi is immanent in every man, whether in the East or in the West, rich or poor, and superior or inferior, and will appear when all mental discriminations have ceased." You see? Something that appears, something that is produced.

Buddhadasa: He uses the word immanent. As though it's already existing.

S: Yes, it's there, as it were, in us.

p.12: "In order that prajna (wisdom) which is self-possessed can manifest itself, it is imperative that we make the 'three studies' which are essential for our self-cultivation for realizing our minds. They are: Sila (morality-discipline), Samadhi (mental imperturbability), and Prajna (wisdom) and we should know that Sila begets Samadhi and that Samadhi begets Prajna. They are like the legs of a tripod which cannot stand if one of them is lacking."

He's really very sort of forthright and practical and with these three subjects: sila, samadhi, prajna. He comes right back to basic Buddhism, or something that runs through all Buddhist literature whether Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana. You see the difference of approach of the traditional Ch'an Buddhist and the scholar? This is much more direct and sort of attacking as it were.

"Repentance and reform are the prerequisites of Sila because without repentance and reform, we shall never be able to practise Sila, which alone enables us to put an end to our feelings and passions and to realize singleness of mind, that is a mind free from disturbances, or pure mind. This imperturbable state of mind is called Samadhi, which alone enables our self-natured Bodhi to manifest itself. Samadhi is the state of an enlightened mind and wisdom is its perfect function.

The Patriarch compared Samadhi and Wisdom to a lamp and its light and to a body (substance) and its correct function.

"When Samadhi and Wisdom are attained, the practiser is liberated from all worries, anxieties, distresses, troubles and whatever causes them, and will attain the state of Nirvana. He should have a perfect knowledge of this state in order to be completely enlightened.

"A serious practiser should seek his own enlightenment to teach and enlighten others before he can expect to realize his self-natured Buddha, since no selfish man can attain Buddhahood. For this end, the Patriarch taught us how to take the four Universal Vows that consist in saving the countless living beings of our minds, in putting an end to the boundless troubles (klesa) of our minds, in studying the endless Dharma doors to enlightenment which are immanent in our self-nature and in achieving the attainment of Buddhahood inherent in our own self-nature.

"The Patriarch never strayed from his self-nature which teaching his disciples in their quest of the truth,..."

So he taught not only from his own experience, it's more like his own being. What he taught was the spontaneous manifestation of his own Enlightened being. Even if he referred to scriptures he wasn't teaching from the scriptures; he was teaching, as it were, from himself, just as the Buddha did.

pp.12-13 "...for either delusion or enlightenment comes only from the self-mind. His doctrine was later developed by his Dharma-descendants who also did not stray from their self-minds when teaching their own disciples. Even today an enlightened Ch'an master will not stray from the self-mind when instructing his disciples, in spite of the fact that the technique now in use differs from the ancient methods, for if we stray from the mind, we shall be unable correctly to interpret the doctrine and understand all the sutras expounded by the Buddha."

From this it is clear that the constant factors, as it were, down the centuries, in the case of all real Ch'an or Zen masters, is the fact that they speak out from their own Enlightened being. The methods and techniques may vary from century to century, but this is what remains constant. They are speaking, sort of as it were, spontaneously out of their own Enlightened consciousness, backed up by the scriptures, yes, but they're not teaching from the scriptures or speaking on account of what they've studied in the scriptures. They speak out giving expression through themselves. You get a bit of an impression of something of [36] the (?)training from this writing itself, the direct and very strong way in which he speaks, as though the author has got something of this.

p.13: "In our efforts to quiet our minds, we have to uproot all our old habits and in this respect nothing more instructive and inspiring than the Altar Sutra and the Diamond Sutra because they teach us to wipe out the notion of the existence of an ego which is the source of all our troubles and the direct cause of our useless suffering in our transmigration through the six worlds of existence."

Our useless suffering. You don't have to suffer. You go on suffering if you want.

"This Altar Sutra, as well as the Diamond and Heart Sutras presented in our First Series, are not for only one or a few readings but should serve as our daily lessons and permanent guide for our practice of self-cultivation. Even if our roots are really inferior and if we cannot expect an instantaneous enlightenment immediately, we can be certain that if we are 'stubborn in our practice and if we succeed in disentangling our minds from externals, we will make appreciable progress in the right direction, will at least enter 'the stream' and will set up a bridge-head for our transcendental path."

Though he's speaking as a Ch'an Buddhist he doesn't adhere one-sidedly to sudden attachment. He says even if we "cannot expect an instantaneous enlightenment immediately." He's not insisting that it must be sudden [or] it must be abrupt. He recognizes that in the case of many people there's a gradual progression. . .

Ratnapani: He just says we may not expect a sudden Enlightenment immediately, but you might still get a sudden Enlightenment.

S: . . . at the end; but don't expect a sudden Enlightenment quickly. It's a gradual process leading up to a sudden Enlightenment.

"The Patriarch urged us not to lose sight of our fundamental thought for an instant and if we follow his teaching seriously and refuse to stray from this thought of our self-nature, we will achieve something that will surpass all our expectations." Like what I said earlier on: "something which will surpass all our expectations".

"It is called the Altar Sutra after an altar erected in the Sung dynasty." It's NOT an altar; it's what other writers call an ordination platform. In Sanskrit it's the sima. In Indian tradition, as it developed later on, an ordination - that is a monastic ordination - could not be performed anywhere. The Buddha apparently gaily performed ordinations anywhere: in the forest, in someone's house, under a tree, in a cave - but later on a tradition developed after the Buddha's day that ordination had to be performed, or ordination had to be given, within a special consecrated area which belonged to the Sangha, and in the fully developed Vinaya that's followed even now by the Theravadins. It takes twenty monks to consecrate a sima, that is to say one of these consecrated areas within which the ordination is performed. Even nowadays ordinations are performed only within such areas, and not all temples have these areas; some have, some haven't, but only within these can ordinations be performed. There are only one or two exceptions, for instance one rather extraordinary exception is that you can perform an ordination outside a sima provided you do it in a boat on a river. That's one exception: it's [37] the usual one.

So when Buddhism went to China and Japan, of course, the same tradition was introduced eventually, when monasticism got really established there, but very often emperors wanted to limit the number of monks who were ordained, so

sometimes he just prohibited monks from being ordained for ten or fifteen years, but also sometimes they allowed the simas to be consecrated only in very few monasteries, so that very few monasteries had simas, and very often it seems in China the area was not only demarcated, it was raised, and it became a sort of platform, and that's why it is translated sometimes 'ordination platform'. And when monastic Buddhism went to Japan monasticism was by that time rather weak anyway, and in Japan there are only two or three of these ordination platforms, but everybody was ordained on the same ordination platform.

But what happened in Japan was - this was the beginning of sectarian Buddhism - some of the breakaway schools didn't want to have to go back for their ordinations to the old simas, so they broke away and they developed a sort of ordination of their own and did not have any longer the old monastic ordination. They used the Bodhisattva ordination as the basis of their ordination. But in Chinese Buddhism, whether you were a Ch'an follower or whether you followed the Pure Land school or you studied the Lotus Sutra, as a monk you had your ordination in any one of the big old monasteries that had an ordination platform. So this was a sort of unifying factor. You didn't have to have a separate ordination platform or platforms for each school or sect.

Buddhadasa: How big are the platforms?

S: Well now they tend to be (unclear). They have to be consecrated with nine posts and the land has to be donated to the Sangha by the king. This is where the secular authority comes in, but this is later fully fledged monasticism. You certainly didn't get this in the Buddha's day.

Buddhadasa: Did they have group ordinations?

S: In Chinese Buddhism you get the group ordination quite commonly, and this is what you often get nowadays, or you used to get in China within living memory. You get it even now in Vietnam and in Taiwan. You often get a couple of thousand young monks ordained at the same time when you get an enormous hall, but the hall itself is the sima and in that case the nine boundary posts are sort of really spaced out, but the average size, especially in Theravada countries, is about [38] the size of this room [the library at Abhirati]. They usually ordain you one by one and not in groups, though it can be done in groups. Originally it seems that the whole monastic area was the sima, but then it became identified with just that particular area within the monastery. It was originally called (unclear) and it was bound up with the observance of the rainy season retreat. But this is the sort of development that we can well ignore. It came after the Buddha's own day and it was relevant to the Indian conditions. It didn't succeed all that well in China. It died out in Japan. It's something we need not bother with very much, even though it's kept up in the Theravada countries. If you go to Ceylon or Burma and you are ordained as a monk you would have to receive it in one of these simas. When I was ordained there were only two simas in the whole of India: one was at Sarnath and one was at Kusinara. I was ordained at Sarnath, but now that's about six or seven and anyone can use the sima, as it

were, any group of monks. It's not a sectarian thing. You see the great difference between Yampolsky and Charles Luk?

Chintamani: I wonder how much is lost in translation whether from Chinese or Sanskrit or Pali.

S: Well a lot is lost always, but I think the real question is how important is what is lost. I'm sure some things which are lost are not very important.

Chintamani: I'm thinking especially that there are a lot of untranslatable terms in Sanskrit.

S: That's true. I think in the case of Chinese it's even (unclear). Chinese is much more concrete and condensed and less abstract. In Sanskrit there are a few words which will just have to be naturalized: Dharma will have to be naturalized, Buddha will have to be naturalized. You can't really introduce such expressions as Enlightened One or Awakened One. I don't like the word Enlightened at all because it suggests eighteenth century Enlightenment, sort of rationalistic enlightenment.

[39] Chapter 1: Autobiography of Hui-neng (A Buddhist Bible pp.497ff)

"Once when the patriarch had come to Paolam Monastery Prefect Wai of Shiu-chow and the other officials came there to invite him to deliver public lectures on Buddhism in the hall of Tai-fan Temple in the city." That's rather interesting. When the patriarch arrives he is asked to deliver public lectures on Buddhism. They didn't ask him to talk about Zen or Ch'an. They didn't ask him to conduct a sesshin. What they wanted as public lectures on Buddhism. We can see even from this right from the very beginning that Ch'an or Zen as a separate entity didn't exist in the eyes of the people of that (?) day, the Prefect Wai and other officials, that the patriarch Hui-neng was a prominent Buddhist, a great spiritual Buddhist figure, and they just asked him to speak on Buddhism, to give public talks or lectures on Buddhism.

"When the time came, there were assembled Prefect Wai, government officials and Confucian scholars about thirty each, bhikshu, bhikshuni, Taoists and laymen, nearly a thousand in all. After the Patriarch had taken his seat, the congregation in a body paid him homage and asked him to speak on the fundamental truths of Buddhism. Whereupon His Eminence delivered the following address."

There are one or two points to be noticed here: the mixed nature of the audience. It seems that everybody was interested. You had government officials, administrators, Confucian scholars, then you had the bhikshus, Taoists and no doubt a large miscellaneous body of laymen, all together; according to this version nearly a thousand in all. It's as though anyone with any sort of cultural or spiritual or intellectual pretension was interested and they came along. "After the Patriarch had taken his seat, the congregation in a body paid him homage." I'm not sure what that means, whether it means they all did a small kowtow or whether they all just bowed to him or something of that sort. But this is rather interesting and significant. The Chinese have always been great ones for

etiquette. When I started my own lecturing career, which was in Singapore, it was in Chinese temples, and I remember that after the lecture every single member of the audience came up to the speaker and bowed and said a few words of thanks and then went quietly away. They were nearly all elderly ladies in little black suits. This is very much the Chinese custom. It's not even Buddhist but it fits in very well with Buddhism, but they started by paying their respects to me in whichever way it was. "... and asked him to speak on the fundamental truths of Buddhism." So again you get this: that he wasn't asked to speak on Ch'an or Zen, but on the fundamental truths of Buddhism.

"Whereupon, His Eminence delivered the following address." His Eminence in Dwight Goddard's version. In [40] the Yampolsky version he's just referred to as the Master.

Ratnapani: It seems significant that it was the government officials who gave the initial invitation for him to speak.

S: Yes, because they were probably the leading citizens, as it were, and took a leading part in all affairs and were probably highly educated men themselves - Chinese government officials very often were - they might even be poets and writers. We know that that time, which is the start of the Tang dynasty, was a glorious period of Chinese culture, and that many of the greatest poets like Tu Fu and Li Po served as administrators and governors and magistrates for the greater part of their life and wrote their poems just the same. So when we read, say, 'government officials' we mustn't think of dry-as-dust civil servants, the type that we get now. They were very likely cultured men who knew the Confucian classics and were writers of poetry and really appreciative of art and spiritual things in general. So as soon as it was known that the Patriarch, as we call him, or Hui-neng, had arrived - this very well known, this leading Buddhist figure - they were all very keen just to hear what he had to say, so he was asked to speak on the fundamental truths of Buddhism.

"Learned audience, our self-nature which is the seed or kernel of Bodhi (the wisdom that comes with enlightenment) is pure by nature and by making use of it we can reach Buddhahood directly." Now this is his first statement. It's quite important. I think the meaning comes out more clearly in Luk's version. According to Luk, what is said is, "Learned Friends, our self-natured Bodhi is fundamentally pure and clean. Use only this mind (of yours) for your direct understanding and attainment of Buddhahood." In other words, not only when you are listening to the talk that I'm now going to give, but in all your spiritual life, don't use your reason - in the sense of don't use your reason in a narrow and exclusive sense and be guided by that - follow you might even say intuition - except that intuition is a rather subjective and psychological thing - make use of your own real nature; rely on that and try to follow, try to do everything, in accordance with the reflection, as it were - because it's no more than that at present - of Enlightenment within yourself. Just allow that to function, allow that to guide you, listen as it were with that, try to listen with the deepest part of yourself, listen with true awareness, not just rationally, not just intellectually.

So in Dwight Goddard's translation [sic. It's Wong Mow Lam's translation, though heavily edited by Dwight Goddard, tr.] it's 'by making right use of it', well [41] the meaning is clear, but it's not our ordinary minds making use of this self-nature. It's more like allowing that self-nature to function, allowing our own true being to come out as it were. Try to understand and try to follow Buddhism with that. It's the seed of Enlightenment which is already there within you. So right at the beginning we see that Hui-neng raises a very important point, he strikes a very important note, something really fundamental. Don't just listen with your ear. Don't just listen with your ordinary mind. Allow the seed of Enlightenment within you, as it were, to do the work. Allow that to function, allow that to guide you in your spiritual life.

"My father, a native of Fan-yang, was dismissed from his official post and banished to become a commoner in Sun-chow in Kwang-tung. My father died when I was quite young leaving my mother poor and miserable, to my great misfortune. We moved to Kwang-chow (now Canton) and lived in very bad circumstances. I was selling firewood in the market one day when one of my customers ordered some to be sent to his shop. Upon delivery and payment for the same as I went outside I found a man reciting a Sutra. No sooner had I heard the text then my mind became at once enlightened." In other words an experience of the Path of Vision instantaneously.

pp.497-8 "I asked the man the name of the book he was reciting and was told that it was the Diamond Sutra (Vajracchedika). I asked him where he came from and why he recited this particular Sutra. He replied that he came from Tung-tsang Monastery in the Wong-mui district of Kee-chow; that the Abbot in charge of this temple was Hwang-yan who was the Fifth Patriarch and had about a thousand disciples under him; and that when he went there to pay homage to the Patriarch, he found him lecturing on the Diamond Sutra. He further told me that his Eminence was in the habit of encouraging the laity as well as his monks to recite this scripture, as by so doing they might realize their own essence-of-mind and thereby reach Buddhahood directly." So we find here also an emphasis on this particular scripture a little different from the later somewhat iconoclastic attitude of Zen. The Fifth Patriarch not only lectured on this sutra, but encouraged his disciples to recite it so that by doing so they might realize their own essence of mind and thereby reach Buddhahood directly. Recitation meant not just repeating the words, but turning it over. That's a very important point actually. There's a Sanskrit word *pariyaya*, which literally means turning over or revolving. It's got a double meaning. It means reciting in the sense of reciting out loud and it also means revolving in the mind, turning over in the mind in such a way that you penetrate to the spiritual import. There's a rather interesting account of this whole question of *pariyaya*, this revolving of a sutra, in this case the (White) Lotus Sutra in that little volume of studies presented to Lama Govinda on his 75th birthday. Tucked away in the back somewhere is a little study on the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. One of the things that the author discusses is this question of the *pariyaya* of the sutra, and he points out very clearly and convincingly that this *pariyaya* of the (White) Lotus Sutra was

not just a recitation of the text, but a sort of mantra-like repetition of the sort of inner essence of it leading to definite spiritual experience, and he's got quite a bit to say which is quite interesting about the way in which the fundamental import of the sutra is used as the basis for actual spiritual practice, not just recitation and study.

So this is the sort of recitation that the Fifth Patriarch would have [42] encouraged. Our word 'recitation' is very very weak here. It's not only repeating the words of the scripture but revolving them in your own mind as well; dwelling upon it, meditating upon it. You could even learn it by heart, especially if it's a short text, and you could then repeat the words of the text to yourself in a quiet sort of meditative way and make them the basis of, as it were, contemplation in a meditative mood. Then of course you could dwell upon the inner meaning eventually independent of the actual words of the text, and this would be really sort of revolving the text and really penetrating into the sutra. This is what Buddhist tradition has in mind when it speaks in terms of recitation, though of course often this was misunderstood and people just recited as we shall see later on. The word in Sanskrit is Dharmapariyaya: revolving the Dharma.

Sulocana: Is this a prayer wheel?

S: In a way it is, in a very literal sense. There is the Dharma. There is a text inside being revolved, not just a mantra.

Hridaya: Do you think that our own phrase 'learning by heart' has any significance?

S: Well even learning by heart suggests committing to memory, not necessarily understanding or penetrating to any meaning.

Hridaya: Now it has that sort of meaning but I wonder if it had any deeper meaning much further back.

S: It might have had other sort of connotations, because in the Middle Ages if you learned things as we would say by heart, especially monks in monasteries, (unclear). In many Christian monasteries they knew the psalms by heart. They chanted them, but they were supposed to contemplate the meaning as they did so. (unclear) From contemplating the meaning of the words you get a feeling of what the words sort of point to beyond the words.

Devamitra: Was this a specific Ch'an practice?

S: We have to be careful here because it wasn't a Ch'an practice, it was a general Buddhist practice. It may be that later on it tended to be neglected in what became the Zen tradition, but there's no doubt that right down to the present, in Ch'an monasteries or Zen monasteries, the Diamond Sutra [and] the Heart Sutra are recited. Whether they are revolved in the traditional way I wouldn't like to say, but certainly I've not come across any sort of reference to this revolving in books about [43] Zen. In books about Zen and Zen monasteries you may find

quite a few references to sutras being chanted, but you get the impression that it is just chanting. You don't get the impression of revolving in this sort of way.

But what it basically means is that through the personal recitation of the text which you've learned by heart, or even a mindful reading of it and then as it were pondering upon the meaning of the words and finally getting through to the inner essence, you come to a sort of understanding or insight, even experience, which gradually becomes disassociated from the words, and on which you can dwell and which you can increase and intensify, and in this way come to a closer contact with the innermost essence of the text, or what the text represents or says. This is what *pariyaya* really is. Just as in the visualization exercises, by visualizing you gradually build up a certain feeling, a certain experience, and then you can as it were stop visualizing and remain with that feeling or with that experience. You go from form, as it were, to formlessness. It's much the same with the *pariyaya*, but it's there from words to wordlessness, from the meaning as conveyed by words to the meaning as not conveyed by words, which means of course a lot deeper. So it's this sort of thing that is being spoken about here, which the Fifth Patriarch was in the habit of encouraging the laity as well as his monks to recite this scripture. He wasn't just asking them to bawl it out every morning. He was asking them to engage in a definite spiritual exercise in this sort of way.

Another point is that in the early days of Buddhism we know that nothing was written down for several hundred years, but there were all sorts of traditions that were committed to memory, learned by heart, and monks - as we call them now - used to gather together and recite and listen. So they would ponder in the same sort of way. That's why in Buddhist literature we have so many repetitions in the early literature, because it wasn't intended to be read. We sometimes think, 'Well, this isn't much as literature.' Well, it wasn't literature, it was intended for recitation, and you listened to it as you listened to (unclear), and there were lots of repetitions, and sometimes you would go through whole lists of things. For instance the reciting monks reciting a traditional what we now call a text would say, 'Oh monks, all is impermanent. What is impermanent? The ear is impermanent, the eye is impermanent, the nose is impermanent,' and you'd go on like that: sense is [44] impermanent, touch is impermanent, water is impermanent, fire is impermanent, the heavens are impermanent, the earth is impermanent. So we say, reading it in a book, 'Well how boring; why doesn't he come to the point? Why does he keep on repeating himself?' But that wasn't the situation there. You have a group of monks sitting there in the middle of the night, all calm and meditatively reciting this, and it would be very sort of melodious, though at the same time austere, and every time you recited the monks would get a sort of deeper insight into these various aspects of impermanence. But then when the oral tradition was written down in a book, then you could just read it and then you can start skipping, 'Oh I understand, of course these things are impermanent, I know that. I don't want to read this. I want to get on to something interesting.' It has a totally different effect.

So much of the early Buddhist literature, especially Pali literature which as literature seems quite unattractive, is simply a written redaction of oral material of this sort which was intended to be recited by monks, that is to say really spiritually dedicated people, for other spiritually dedicated people when they gathered together in a very solemn manner on the occasion of say a full moon or a new moon. And when they were in a meditative mood one particular monk would just recite. You get it even now sometimes and it sounds quite different. There are even records of some of the sutras being chanted very slowly and it conveys a quite different effect, a quite different impression, than when you just read it in a book.

So again this is the sort of thing that the Patriarch was encouraging. And I don't know what the present Zen practice is, but from all that I've read about Zen monks and Zen monasteries I get the impression now that it is just a sort of rapid chant, but not anything of the nature of a real revolving, and it's much the same (unclear) with the Tibetans. Sometimes when it's a puja and there are mantras involved, yes, there is something quite different there. But I've also heard Tibetan monks reciting the whole canon - you know. They often do this. The whole 108 volumes of the Kanjur, the Tripitika in Tibetan, is often recited by a body of monks at a layman's house as an act of merit. This is quite a common and popular practice, or was. You'd invite five or ten monks to your house and they would spend the whole day reciting the canon. I've seen them do this and listened to them, [45] though it's just a very rapid chant and they are quite clearly not in any sort of meditative mood.

So this is not a revolving. It seems on the whole that the Buddhist world in the east, as far as I've been able to make out, had rather lost this Indian tradition of revolving, of a sort of mindful, musical chant on a very solemn occasion, just to listen to and made the subject of real contemplation and making full use of all the repetitions in this sort of way. This seems now not to be done. I've also noticed that Tibetan monks when they recite don't always recite everything. And there's a special sort of rapid repetition in which they recite only every tenth page. But it sometimes happens in, say, Ceylon. Sinhalese monks chant very well and they pride themselves on their chanting; they take a sort of aesthetic pleasure in it. So even though they don't have the intention of this famous spiritual exercise I would say that sometimes it worked out like that because the chanting is just so good that it has that effect quite spontaneously, and you can't help really being absorbed, and if you understand even a little Pali you can follow the meaning quite easily.

In Ceylon lay people are really sort of fascinated by the monks even though they don't understand it. But just listening to it it has a soothing and a concentrating effect and they'd have a general awareness that this is the Dharma, it's the teaching of the Buddha, so at least there would be a strong devotional feeling, even though there isn't any actual understanding. So there's this whole aspect of Dharma life let's say - let's not say religious or spiritual life. This whole aspect of the Dharma life is very important and very valuable. But we must recollect

that this pariyaya is always a sort of chant, even though it's sometimes just on a monotone. But it isn't just a reading as we would read or are now reading aloud from this; it's a definite chant, and the text chanted is very often versified - or it can be divided as though it was verse and chanted as though it was verse - and this has a quite different effect, a different rhythm, and it's got a little (?)melody as in the case of the Western Gregorian chant. There's quite a different effect than when you just read those words.

Ratnapani: I feel that our Heart Sutra tends to be bashed out a bit now. It's not very pleasant to listen to usually, and too fast.

S: That has to be watched; who can get there first. The Tibetans certainly do this and very often the Sinhalese too. It's really rapid and they [46] put a lot of energy into it, but it isn't always very mindful, certainly not very concentrated. I've noticed that when I've done the Heart Sutra on occasions, I've felt people trying to speed me up, maybe unconsciously. But you need to dwell on the words to give yourself time to concentrate.

It sometimes seems to me that it's a pity in a way that there are so many books on Buddhism that we can just read them, and when we can just read them, just skip through them, you usually get so little out of them. It seems that in the old days when there weren't many texts around, very often people got much more out of them and went through them again and again, remembered them by heart, and chanted them and reflected on them. Dr Conze has a little passage in one of his books in which he says that Buddhism - for want to a better word - started to deteriorate after things started being written down. Think how much you can know about Buddhism and how many books you can read without ever getting down to any practice. You can think then that you know about it and that you have a right to have an opinion about it, you are willing to discuss and propound and pontificate. Maybe our whole culture practically has become over-literary in a way.

p.498: "It must be due to my good karma accumulated from past lives that I heard about this and that later on I was given ten taels for the maintenance of my mother by a man who advised me to go to Wong-mui to interview the Fifth Patriarch. After arrangements had been made for my mother's support, I left for Wong-mui which took me about thirty days to reach.

"I paid homage to the Patriarch and was asked where I came from and what I expected to get from him. I replied that I was a commoner from Sun-chow in Kwang-tung and had travelled far to pay my respects to him, and then said, 'I ask for nothing but Buddhahood.'

"The Patriarch replied: 'So you are a native on Kwang-tung are you? You evidently belong to the aborigines; how can you expect to become a Buddha?'" The Fifth Patriarch was clearly testing him.

"I replied: 'Although there are Northern men and Southern men, but North and South make no difference in their Buddha-nature. An aborigine is different from

your Eminence physically, but there is no difference in our Buddha-nature.’”

You get a bit of this even today when you are sometimes given the impression that poor Western people have a much more difficult time gaining Enlightenment than the more highly gifted Easterners who are constitutionally more spiritual, but I think there’s no basis for this whatever.

"He was going to speak to me further but the presence of other disciples made him hesitate and he told me to join the other labourers at their tasks. ‘May I tell Your Eminence,’ I urged, ‘that Prajna (transcendental Wisdom) constantly rises in my mind. As one cannot go astray from his own nature one may be rightly called, ‘a field of merit’ (this is a title of honour given to monks as a monk affords the best of opportunities to others, ‘to sow the seed of merit’). I do not know what work Your Eminence would ask me to do.’

“‘This aborigine is very witty,’ he remarked, ‘Go to the work-rooms and say no more,’ I then withdrew to the rear where the work of the monastery was carried on and was told by a lay brother to split firewood and hull rice.”

It’s as though the Fifth Patriarch knew instantly what the situation was and what was going to happen: “He was going to speak further to me but the presence of other disciples made him hesitate.” He saw at once that Hui-neng was a person with a definite spiritual realization. Presumably the other disciples didn’t have that realization and he couldn’t talk to Hui-neng without giving rise to confusion and misunderstanding on their part, so he didn’t say anything further to Hui-neng at that time. But Hui-neng has it seems something to say. It’s a though after all he hadn’t so far met in his whole life, as far as we know, anybody of any real spiritual attainment. This was [47] his first time. It was the first time he could communicate, so there was a great sort of upsurge, as it were. He says, “May I tell Your Eminence that Prajna constantly rises in my mind. As one cannot go astray from his own nature one may be rightly be called a field of merit.”

This requires a little bit of explanation, this idea of punya-kshetra, the field of merit. It’s very important in traditional Buddhism, more perhaps in the Theravada, and it comes up again and again. Punya has a sort of double meaning: it means merit and it also means virtue. Punya is, as it were, the karmic credit that you have in your account as a result of virtuous deeds. So the idea of punya is very closely connected with the idea of karma, that if you perform skilful actions there’s a long term tendency that good and pleasant things will happen to you. This is because you have accumulated, under the law of karma, punya. So this is punya in the sense of merit. But at the same time you’ve performed those skilful actions, you’ve created the punya. So this is punya as virtue. It’s got these two aspects. So in Buddhist literature when you encounter the word punya it has this double connotation: it’s your own good actions and the good that comes to you as a result of your own good actions. This is punya.

Sometimes, especially in Chinese Buddhism, punya is said to be of two kinds: red and white. The Chinese are very concrete you see. So there’s red punya and

there's white punya. Red punya is punya which leads to an increase of worldly happiness, a more successful worldly life here or hereafter, but white punya is that which leads to Nirvana. So the Chinese made this sort of distinction. Sometimes they are called pure merit and impure merit. Pure merit helps you to get to Nirvana, impure merit will get you merely long life, wealth, a happy rebirth and so on and so forth.

Ratnapani: Do they say what produced the red or the white punya?

S: Yes. For instance one can say it's not so much a question in the difference in the actual action, it's more a question of the difference in the attitude. For instance if you engage in puja or if you give dana hoping that this will give you a good rebirth, well that's what you will get, you'll create the impure merit. But if you have this strong and fervent aspiration that by doing these things (unclear) not just a happy rebirth, but to Nirvana, then it will be a pure merit. It's mainly this distinction.

Ratnapani: You are still doing it for something though. I would have thought that the white would have been doing it just as an expression of good will. [48]

S: No, because then you wouldn't really be there. So you could say that those merits would be neither pure nor impure.

That's merit, so let's now look at the field of merit. In Buddhism, right from the beginning, you find this idea - which just may be a bit strange to us in the West - that the force of an action, whether for good or for bad as we would say, is intensified according to the spiritual status of the person to whom it is done. In other words if you do a good action, a punya, to someone who is spiritually developed, it is more meritorious and therefore more helpful to you than if you do it to someone who is less spiritually developed. And similarly the consequences, the demerit, is more serious if it's a person of high spiritual development, so that if for instance you offend a Buddha that is very demeritorious indeed. If you offend someone who isn't a Buddha, though serious it's less so, and so on right down the scale. So those beings who if you give anything to them will produce for you, as it were, a lot of merit, a lot of merit, are technically called a field of merit, a punya-kshetra. And traditionally the Sangha is said to be the field of merit par excellence, or a good monk or a spiritual teacher is said to be a field of merit in the sense that anything offered to that particular group of people or that particular person rebounds more to your spiritual benefit than something offered to anybody else. So this is why I say in all Buddhist countries the tendency is to want to make your offerings to someone who has some degree of spiritual development - this is considered better for you even if that person doesn't actually need the actual thing that you offer. He may not benefit from it at all, but you will benefit from your offering of it.

Chintamani: Sounds to me that if you press the right button the right thing will come out the other end.

S: Do you really think so? Try to think of it concretely: suppose you've got in

front of you the Buddha. Just try to imagine, suppose that you had lived at the time of the Buddha, and there's the Buddha and you've got the opportunity of offering the Buddha something. If you know that it's the Buddha, that you've actually got that good fortune to offer the Buddha something, even something that would be useful and helpful to the Buddha, for instance, material food or a robe or two, and you know that this is the Buddha to whom you are offering and you've [49] at least some sort of feeling of what a Buddha is, that he is something far more than the ordinary person, then surely the feeling with which you give instinctively, or your feeling on that occasion, will far surpass the intensity of your feeling when you are just giving to an ordinary person. You may feel very kindly disposed and glad to help, but if you were at all aware of what a Buddha was or who a Buddha was, the feeling with which you gave could be quite overwhelming intensity. But you have to see and recognize. It's not that if it happens to be a Buddha to whom you give then automatically you get an increase of punya; it's not like that. But if you didn't know it was the Buddha, well, there is no reason for there to be that intensity and therefore wouldn't be that special excess of punya, but you'd be much more deeply stirred if you knew it was a Buddha and appreciated who or what a Buddha was, and the act of giving would come from a far greater depth with a far greater significance. So I think this is the way in which it needs to be looked at. But not that technically speaking certain people are monks and therefore technically speaking if you make offerings to them you get more merit. Sure, there are some Buddhists who think like that, but that isn't really what it's all about.

But in the same way if you can bring yourself to commit an offence against someone whom you know is spiritually developed and you can feel it in some part of you, that's a much more serious matter, a sort of violation of your own nature. This is why, for instance, leaving aside Buddhas and so on, parricide and matricide are regarded as quite serious offences in Buddhism, more than ordinary murder, because look at the mess you have to get yourself into to even think of taking the life of your own mother or your own father, what a violation of your own self. So this is something far more terrible and catastrophic than just getting very angry with some other person and becoming so mad that you are ready to kill them. In other words if you killed your own mother or your own father the probability is that you would be in a far worse mental state than if you just killed somebody else. It's also rather interesting - this is in passing, I'm not sure what the significance of it is - that according to the Theravada tradition, a Buddha cannot actually be killed by anybody. It's as though the Theravada tradition almost refuses to contemplate the possibility of being so wicked as to actually succeed in killing the Buddha, that they are doing such terrible harm to themselves. [50] Wound him, yes, but not kill him. It's as though their imaginations sort of boggled at that. They just can't think of it, anybody doing such harm to their own selves, not to speak of the world, to actually take the life of a Buddha. It goes beyond their imagination.

So you get therefore this idea of a field of merit. Those who are on the spiritual path, those who have some degree of spiritual attainment, being a greater field of

merit. Therefore Hui-neng says, “As one cannot go astray from his own nature one may rightly be called a field of merit.” He seems to be referring to himself here. I notice this little exchange is not found in the Tun-huang manuscript which is much more matter of fact. It’s as though he’s saying, ‘Well I’m a field of merit. What do you propose to do? Are you going to give me something?’ This is what he seems to be getting at in this little exchange, ‘and therefore I don’t know what work you are going to ask me to do. If I’m a field of merit you should be giving things to me.’ So therefore the Fifth Patriarch says, “This aborigine is very witty. Go to the work-rooms and say no more.” He realizes this is dangerous, there’s something now in the monastery which could really upset, he realizes he’s got a really spiritually advanced person on his hands and he knows exactly what that means: it means trouble, trouble from the less developed. He can see it all, all the things that are going to happen - the jealousy, the dispute over the patriarchship, maybe the attempts to take Hui-neng’s life - he sees it all. He knows what he’s about because he’s the Fifth Patriarch.

“I then withdrew to the rear where the work of the monastery was carried on and was told by a lay brother to split firewood and hull rice.” So Hui-neng’s quite content with that. He also knows what’s what. They’ve understood each other at once. He doesn’t need to say, ‘Well why should I be sent to the work room?’ He knows the Fifth Patriarch knows what he’s doing, so he just goes there and he’s told by a lay brother, an upasaka, to split firewood and hull rice, that is, taking the husks off the rice.

p.499: “More than eight months after, the Patriarch met me one day and said, ‘I know that your knowledge of Buddhism is very sound, but I have to refrain from speaking with you lest evil men should harm you. Do you understand?’ ‘Yes, Sir, I understand,’ I replied.” Look at that: more than eight months later. Apparently Hui-neng was just splitting firewood and hulling rice for eight months. He never said anything, he knew it would be all right, he trusted the Fifth Patriarch, he knew what it was all about. “‘And I will not go near your hall, lest people take notice of me,’” That is to say the hall where presumably the lectures were being given. All during that period he never went near the big hall where the lectures were being [51] held. He didn’t hear any lectures. He just had that initial exchange with the Patriarch. Meanwhile he was splitting firewood and hulling rice. This is very typical, and we can say it contrasts very much with the attitude of people nowadays. If they are kept waiting a few days they get a bit upset: ‘Why is notice not being taken of me? Why am I not getting some teaching? Why haven’t I been told what to do?’ etc etc. But not in Hui-neng’s case; he just went on splitting firewood, hulling rice, eight months, just waiting, well maybe he wasn’t even waiting, it wasn’t even necessary to wait. He went on just from day to day doing those jobs, and then just by chance, as it were, the Fifth Patriarch happened to meet him.

“One day”, it might have been weeks later, it might have been years later, we don’t know, “the Patriarch assembled all his disciples and said to them, ‘The question of incessant rebirth is a very momentous one, but instead of trying

to free yourselves from that bitter sea of life and death, you men, day after day, seem to be going after tainted merits only.'” Though they are engaged in so-called religious practice, though they are as it were - we are not told - monks, but at least they are listening to the lectures and might be doing some meditation, but he says they seem to be going after tainted merits only. Your attitude is really not right, he says, you're just trying to improve things within the samsara. You're not really aiming at Nirvana.

“‘Merit will be of no use to you if your essence of mind is polluted and cloudy. Go now and seek for the transcendental wisdom that is within your own minds and then write me a stanza about it. He who gets the clearest idea about what Mind-essence is will be given the insignia of the Patriarch; I will give him the secret teaching of the Dharma, and will appoint him to be the Sixth Patriarch. Go away quickly, now, and do not delay in writing the stanza; deliberation is quite unnecessary and will be of no use. The one who has realized Essence of Mind can testify to it at once as soon as he is spoken to about it. He cannot lose sight of it, even if he were engaged in a battle.” This is quite important. “Deliberation is quite unnecessary and will be of no use.” Just thinking out the matter will be of no use. “The one who has realized Essence of Mind can testify to it at once,” because it's his own self. This expression 'Essence of Mind' doesn't seem to have been an original Sanskrit expression, at least not in that form. It doesn't seem to be a literal rendering of any Sanskrit original, but it's quite clear in the light of general Mahayana teaching what Essence of Mind means. It's what you find at the bottom of your own mind when you break through, and you go down and down as it were within yourself, and you come to the limit of yourself as an individual, and you break through there into what is beyond your own individual mind. It's a little bit like the alaya in its absolute aspect, the store consciousness in its absolute aspect, which is there at the bottom, as it were, of your own phenomenal mind, phenomenal being. But once one is in contact with that, or one has realized that, you can speak about it spontaneously, directly, because [52] you are in contact with that, and if someone asks you about it you don't have to stop and think; you just function, you just respond, because that is you. It isn't something separate from you, it's just you functioning. If someone asks you about the Essence of Mind he's asking you about yourself so you can at once respond. You don't have to stop and think. It's just you. So”He cannot lose sight of it, even if he were engaged in a battle.”

In later Zen of course this sort of situation becomes quite important, especially when the Rinzai Zen, the Samurai, took up Zen and even tried to cultivate the Zen attitude to help them in battle. But that's a rather different thing, it means the whole situation is sort of reversed. The Fifth Patriarch says, “He cannot lose sight of it, even if he were engaged in a battle.” It's as though in medieval Japan they sort of turned it the other way around and as it were said to themselves, ‘Well I want to be very fearless and steadfast in battle.’ These Zen people say that if you've got their realization even a battle won't disturb your mind, so that would be a really good thing to get, to really help you fight and win battles. So some of them seem to have gone into it in this sort of

way, with this sort of spirit, and succeeded up to a point, because of course if you have some sort of Zen training you can meditate and are disciplined and obedient and mindful, of course that will be useful even when you are fighting. But what is sometimes overlooked is the fact that when the Essence of Mind really manifests itself you won't want to fight, you won't be able to fight. And this occasionally happened to Samurai who had a real spiritual realization, they just stopped being Samurai. But the idea of the Samurai mentality sort of using Zen to further its own purposes seems to be quite a decline, and there is a danger I believe in the West of this sort of attitude creeping in: trying to use Zen or something of that sort of enable you to function in the world, just because you are told that when you've got it then nothing can disturb you, everything will be well, everything will go properly. I remember hearing Mr Christmas Humphreys justifying sentencing people to death on Zen grounds. He was a judge, and this was before the death penalty was repealed, and he was once asked how he could sentence people to death being a Buddhist, and he justified it very eloquently in terms of Zen, quoting passages of this sort, and he really believed it. So this can happen. We have to be very careful about it. All that the Fifth Patriarch says is that you cannot lose sight of it even if you were engaged in a [53] battle, but to try to get it so that in a battle you may be mindful and therefore more successful, this is just a misuse or an attempted misuse of Zen.

Chintamani: Is this where the confusion has arisen with people trying to get the Zen experience through martial arts?

S: Yes. It seems to me, though, that many of the people who've got this sort of misunderstanding don't actually do martial arts. It seems to me, from the people I've seen that do martial arts, you tend to get rather beyond the martial arts frame of mind. Paradoxically they turn out to be nice gentle people after two or three years of karate. It's more the theoreticians and people who've got something to justify. Of course it links up with the Bhagavad Gita. There is a passage where Krishna says to Arjuna, 'Fight, you are a warrior. Fight. It doesn't matter, it's your duty, fight. No one is really killed. It's I, God, doing this, you are only the instrument.' So some expositions such as Christmas Humphreys' and Alan Watts' link these two, the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita on the one hand and this sort of misinterpreted or misapplied Zen on the other: 'you can even fight, you can kill, if you've got the right sort of Zen mind it doesn't matter. It'll all drop off from you, it won't touch you.' And then this is sort of amplified and extended: 'You don't have to change anything. If you're a warrior be a warrior - you can practise Zen all the time. If you're a judge sentencing people to death it doesn't matter, you're just doing your duty, you can even have a Zen mind.' So therefore you don't have to give up anything, you don't have to change anything, right livelihood becomes unnecessary. You just do whatever you were doing before, but you've got your Zen Essence of Mind.

Now of course there is a certain truth in this. That's why it is so dangerous. It sounds very plausible because there is an element of truth in it. Sometimes you just can't change anything. You find yourself in a very difficult situation, there's

nothing you can change externally, all you can do is fall back on your own state of mind regardless. But if you're not careful this sort of teaching, this sort of attitude, can be used as a justification for the status quo, that nothing needs to be changed. This is what has happened in India with the brahmins. They say, 'Why bother about changing the caste system? Of course it's unjust. What does it matter whether you are an untouchable or whether you are a brahmin, you can realize God, but why should you bother whether you're a brahmin [54] or an untouchable? It doesn't matter. What really matters is that you should be able to realize God. That's open to all. There's no need to change anything socially, no need to have social justice. You should all just try to realize God whether you are a brahmin or an untouchable or whatever.' So this is a very dangerous sort of attitude, but it's all the more dangerous because there is an element of truth in it. But this certainly isn't the Buddhist attitude, and this certainly isn't the attitude of real Ch'an or real Zen. But this can be very insidious and it can sound very plausible. If you are in a situation where you cannot change things externally, well, you just have to go along with the way things are and just attend to your own mind. But you won't very often find yourself in that sort of situation. Usually there is a great deal of room to change things externally and should do so when it's necessary.

You've got quite a bit of this sort of attitude in another way in the last century with the famous Victorians telling the poor, 'What does it matter if you are poor? What really matters is that you should be a good Christian.' The rich were telling the poor this sort of thing. So you can see the harmful consequences. So let's not go along with any attempts to interpret Zen in this sort of way. It has, it seems, happened in Japan with the military arts. They try to use Zen in this sort of way.

"Having received this instruction, the disciples withdrew and said to one another, 'There is no use of our making an effort to write a stanza and submit it to His Eminence; the Patriarchship is bound to go to Elder Shin-shau, our Master, anyway. Why go through the form of writing, it will only be a waste of energy.' Hearing this they decided to write nothing, saying, 'Why should we take the trouble to do it? Hereafter we will simply follow our Master Shin-shau wherever he goes and will look to him for guidance.'" So now you being to get a glimpse of the attitude of the majority of people in that temple. They were like a lot of sheep. They were quite happy there and they were quite happy following, they followed their teacher, the elder Shin-shau. They seemed to follow him more than they followed the Fifth Patriarch, really. They probably respected the Fifth Patriarch and listened to his sermons, or maybe dozed through his sermons, but the one they really followed was the elder Shin-shau, so they felt, 'What's the use of our trying? We'll just follow him, leave it all to him.'

So what about Shin-shau. What was he thinking? "Shin-shau reasoned within himself, 'Considering that I am their Master, none of them will take part in competition. I wonder whether I should write a stanza and submit it to His Eminence, or not. If I do not, how can the Patriarch know how deep or how

superficial my knowledge is? If my object is to get the Dharma, my motive is pure. If it is to get the Patriarchship, then it is bad; my mind would be that of a worldling and my action would amount to a theft of the Patriarch's holy seat. But if I do not submit the stanza, I will lose my chance of getting the Dharma. It is very difficult to know what to do."

So it's quite clear that Shin-shau was quite sincere person. He probably was very conscientious, tried hard to train the monks, to be as it were a (?)father, but he wasn't really Enlightened and he knew it. So he sort of pondered and reflected within himself very seriously, but because he wasn't really Enlightened he got quite confused, he didn't really know what [55] to do.

Ratnapani: This mention of 'getting the Dharma' and 'the secret teaching', I thought there wasn't any mention of a mind to mind transmission that the Patriarch could give.

S: Well if we judge by what happens later on it seems that the teaching refers to the true understanding or the true interpretation of the Diamond Sutra, because it's this Diamond Sutra that the Fifth Patriarch expounds to the Sixth Patriarch, i.e. Hui-neng. So apparently what Shin-shau has in mind is a sort of exposition of the inner meaning of the Diamond Sutra itself. As regards this question of a 'secret teaching', the Tun-huang manuscript just says 'the Dharma', nothing about a secret teaching. So it's the Dharma as taught in the Diamond Sutra particularly, as it were containing the essence of it.

Ratnapani: More like a one-to-one seminar where he expounded that.

S: Yes, rather than a sort of public lecture in more general terms.

p.500: "In front of the Patriarch's hall there were three corridors the walls of which were to be painted by a court artist named Lo-chun, with pictures suggested by the Lankavatara Sutra depicting the transfiguration of the assembly, and with scenes showing the genealogy of the five Patriarchs, for the information and veneration of the public." The reference to the Lankavatara Sutra is interesting. This is apparently very important in the early history of what later became Ch'an in China, and some scholars are of the opinion that the so-called Ch'an school originated among a group of students of the Lankavatara Sutra. You recollect the situation? This is the Tang dynasty. For four to five hundred years the sutras had been translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, and each new translation was received with great eagerness, and people at once got down to the study of them, and this is also what happened with the Lankavatara Sutra. When the Lankavatara Sutra was translated into Chinese its profundity and also abstruseness attracted a lot of students, not just to study or understand it intellectually, but really to get at the spiritual meaning of it. It's also interesting to recollect that according to later Ch'an or Zen tradition, Bodhidharma, the so-called First Patriarch of the Chinese tradition, brought the Lankavatara Sutra from India to China, not the Diamond Sutra. Scholars tell us that the Diamond Sutra became popular as from the time of the Fifth and Sixth Patriarch, but that earlier on it was the Lankavatara Sutra that was more studied in the

tradition which later became the Ch'an school, so therefore some scholars feel that the Ch'an school itself in China sprang up from among these students of the translation of the Lankavatara Sutra, and [56] as they gradually started putting it into practice then the Ch'an school arose. So it is therefore that we find this reference to the Lankavatara Sutra. This sort of links the new Ch'an, if you can call it, of the Fifth and Sixth Patriarchs more connected with the Diamond Sutra with the old Ch'an of the previous patriarchs - more connected with the Lankavatara Sutra. There are several instances in the Lankavatara Sutra which are very characteristic of Ch'an in general: the emphasis, for instance, on the directness of experience, and the revulsion, the turning about, the sort of spiritual conversion, the suddenness of the experience, and so on.

"The genealogy of the five Patriarchs," that is, their descent from one another, "for the information and veneration of the public." No doubt many people who came were illiterate, even though it was China, so these pictures were painted so that people could see them and understand all about them and develop some devotional feelings.

"When Shin-shau had composed his stanza he made several attempts to submit it, but his mind was so perturbed that he was prevented from doing it. Then he suggested to himself, 'It would be better for me to write it on the wall of the corridor and let the Patriarch find it himself. If he approves it, then I will go to pay him homage and tell him that it was done by me; but if he disapproves it, well, then I have wasted several years' time in this mountain receiving homage which I did not deserve. If I fail, what progress have I made in learning Buddhism?'" So from this too we can see the sincerity of his approach. He didn't have the full relationship, but at the same time he was a sincere and conscientious person.

p.501: "At midnight of that night, he went secretly to write his stanza on the wall of the south corridor, so that the Patriarch might know to what spiritual insight he had attained. The stanza read:

'Our body is like a bodhi tree; Our mind a mirror bright. We carefully clean them hour by hour, And let no dust alight.'

As soon as he had written it, he returned at once to his room, so no one knew what he had done. In the quiet of his room he pondered: 'When the Patriarch sees my stanza tomorrow, if he is pleased with it, it will show that I am (spiritually) ready for the Dharma; but if he disapproves of it, then it will mean that I am unfit for the Dharma owing to misdeeds in previous lives and karmic accumulations that so thickly becloud my mind. What will the Patriarch say about it? How difficult it is to speculate.' He could neither sleep nor sit at ease; and so in this vein he kept on thinking until dawn.

"In the morning the Patriarch sent for Lo, the court artist, to have the walls painted with pictures and went with him to the south corridor. The Patriarch noticed the stanza and said to the artist, 'I am sorry to have troubled you to come so far, but the walls do not need to be painted now. The Sutra says 'All

forms and phenomena are transient and illusive'; we will leave the stanza here so that people may study the stanza and recite it. If they put its teachings into actual practice, they will be saved from the misery of being born in evil realms of existence. Anyone who practises it will gain great merit.' The Patriarch ordered incense to be burnt before it, and instructed all his disciples to pay homage to it and recite it, so that they might realize Essence of Mind. After his disciples had recited it, they all exclaimed, 'Well done!'

That midnight, the Patriarch sent for Shin-shau and asked if he had written the stanza. Shin-shau admitted that he had written it and then added: 'I am not so vain as to expect to get the Patriarchship, but I wish Your Eminence would kindly tell me whether my stanza shows the least grain of wisdom.'

"'To attain supreme enlightenment,' replied the Patriarch, 'one must be able to know spontaneously one's own self-nature which is neither created nor can it be annihilated. From one momentary sensation to another, one should always be able to realize Essence of Mind; then all conceptions of the mind will be free from any graspings by the mind. As one thing is being realized as to its reality, so the mind will reflect all circumstances and conditions as being a state of naturalness. This means that the mind in its pure state is truthful. For if the mind is able to see things truthfully in their pure state it sees them to be the same as its own essential nature of Supreme Enlightenment. You had better return now and think it over for a couple of days and then submit another stanza. In case the new stanza shows that you have entered 'the door of enlightenment,' I will transmit to you the robe and the Dharma.'"

So the Patriarch gives Shin-shau a teaching. Not just teaching in the ordinary sense; he tries to as it were reveal to him what the Essence of Mind is really like and he speaks out of his own realization of the Essence of Mind to give Shin-shau some sort of glimpse of what it is like in the hope that this will stimulate him and he can realize the Essence of Mind for himself and spontaneously produce another stanza which will show that he has realized his Essence of Mind. So he's as it were giving him another chance, he's really helping him, he's giving him every opportunity, he realizes his sincerity and conscientiousness. So he first of all makes it clear indirectly that he hasn't realized his Essence of Mind, but this is what the Essence of Mind is like, this is what it ought to be like, this is the sort of state or experience you've got to produce the stanza from, now go away and try again, not just try to write another stanza on the basis of what I said, but just exert yourself for a few more days. Try to realize this state I've pointed out to you and then the stanza will just come. So he gives him in this way another chance: 'If you can do this I will transmit to you the robe and the Dharma.'

"Shin-shau made obeisance to the Patriarch and went away. For several days he tried in vain to write another stanza, which upset his mind so much that he was ill at ease as though he was in a nightmare; he could find comfort in neither sitting nor walking." I don't know whether [57] this is intentional, but, "For several days he tried in vain to write another stanza." It doesn't say he tried to

realize his Essence of Mind. In other words his mind was too much on writing the stanza. If he'd concentrated on realizing his Essence of Mind then the stanza would have come automatically when required, so it's as though he missed the point. He thought it was all about a stanza. It wasn't about a stanza at all, it was about the Essence of Mind. So even though the Patriarch asked for a stanza, he asked for a stanza from the Essence of Mind. So it wasn't really a question of fabricating a stanza which more clearly expressed the Essence of Mind, it was a question of realizing the Essence of Mind. If you've got that then the stanza will come any time, if you're asked for it on the spot, a number of stanzas. But he rather missed the point it seems in spite of all this conscientiousness and sincerity. He just sat there trying to produce a satisfactory stanza, maybe with some memory of what the Fifth Patriarch had said, and tried to produce a little verse which would adequately sort of express his understanding of what the Fifth Patriarch had said. But that wasn't good enough and that wasn't really what the Fifth Patriarch wanted him to do. The Fifth Patriarch was encouraging him to try to realize his own Essence of Mind, and you get the stanza that way. But apparently Shin-shau didn't quite get the point.

Ratnapani: But to realize the Essence of Mind is quite a tall order too!

Buddhadasa: He might have been quite close to it.

S: Also he had been the head monk and a teacher of others for quite a while, so maybe the Fifth Patriarch thought it was time to put a bit of pressure and see. He knew how gifted the newly arrived Hui-neng was, perhaps he knew that he was going to get the patriarchship anyway, but he used the opportunity to put the other chap, Shin-shau, on. He might even have known that he wasn't going to make it at that time, but that was an opportunity of bringing him to the point, maybe bringing him to realize his own sort of inadequacy in this way, and perhaps he knew that in the future maybe he would make it, but not now. So anyway, in the meantime he puts the pressure on because you never know in a way, he might make it, give him a chance. If not, too bad, he'll get it later one. Hui-neng will get the patriarchship.

"Two days after, it happened that a boy who was passing by the room where I was hulling rice, was loudly reciting the stanza written by Shin-shau. As soon as I heard it I knew at once that its composer had not yet realized Essence of Mind. Although at that time I never had had instruction about it, I already had a general idea of it." This is quite important. You mustn't take this word 'idea' too seriously. Hui-neng said he hadn't had [58] instruction about the Essence of Mind, not just instruction in the intellectual sense, but he already "had a general idea of it". It's as though he was saying, well, he'd had himself a realization of the Essence of Mind, but it is not yet full and clear. It's sort of quietly hazy. It's there, he can feel it, he can experience it, he knows what it is, but he hasn't fully entered into it. It's not a full, clear, as it were sharp realization, yet. This is a quite important distinction. You can have a quite genuine realization which is still nevertheless a bit blurred, hazy, unclear; you need to work on it more, make it sharper, make it clearer, make it brighter. And he knew this, but he

had enough experience to know what the Essence of Mind was and to recognize whether somebody else had it or didn't have it.

pp.501-2: "‘What stanza is this,’ I asked the boy. ‘You aborigine,’ he said, ‘don’t you know about it? The Patriarch told his disciples that the question of rebirth was a momentous one, and those who wished to inherit his robe and the Dharma should write him a stanza and the one who had the true idea of Mind-essence would get them and become the Sixth Patriarch. Elder Shin-shau wrote this ‘formless’ stanza on the wall of the south corridor and the Patriarch told us to recite it. He also said that those who put its teachings into actual practice would gain great merit and be saved from being born in the evil realms of existence.’"

This boy is a sort of typical character, a bit perky, and he's learned the stanza and he's going around reciting it loudly, and he obviously looks down on Hui-neng and calls him a barbarian and aborigine, and he's rather pleased that he knows all about it. And he's able to tell Hui-neng exactly what's going on in the monastery and he knows all about what the Patriarch says and about the elder Shin-shau writing his stanza, and what the Patriarch said about the stanza. But obviously he hasn't got the faintest idea of what is really going on, he's just a bit of a little parrot. But anyway he also plays his part in the story.

Wolf: The Patriarch qualifies the meaning of the stanza because he says that reciting it will save you from being born in the evil realms of existence. He doesn't say it will gain you Enlightenment.

S: Well he does earlier on, actually he does. It says, "The Patriarch ordered incense to be burnt before it, and instructed all his disciples to pay homage to it and recite it, so that they might realize Essence of Mind." This is what he says earlier on. Whether they actually would just by practising that stanza, that's a moot point, but that's what he told them at the time, at least to encourage them. But the boy is only interested apparently in experiencing great merit and not being reborn in the evil realms of existence. He leaves out the bit about practising it to realize Essence of Mind. Maybe he wasn't very interested in that.

"I told the boy that I wished to learn the stanza also, so that I might have the benefit of it in future life." He's very modest, as it were. He [59] doesn't say anything about gaining Enlightenment here and now.

"Although I had been hulling rice for eight months, I had never been to the hall, so I asked the boy to show me where the stanza was written, so that I might make obeisance to it. The boy took me there and as I was illiterate, I asked him to read it to me." The boy, you notice was literate.

"A petty officer of the Kong-chow District, named Chang Fat-yung, who happened to be there, then read it clearly. When he had finished reading, I told him that I also had composed a stanza and asked him to write it for me."

His stanza just came on the spot.

"‘Extraordinary,’ he exclaimed, ‘that you, also, can compose a stanza.’ ‘If you

are a seeker of supreme Enlightenment, you will not despise a beginner,' I said."

Hui-neng has a slight sense of humour. He's being a bit ironical here.

"‘Please recite your stanza,’ said he, ‘I will write it down for you, but if you should succeed in getting the Dharma, do not forget to deliver me.’"

But he also is a bit shrewd and he has his eye on the main chance (unclear) in the Buddha's own day with his five companions sort of hanging around in the days when he was practising asceticism. If he did make it they would be the first to benefit. So when (unclear) they seem to have no feeling for the Buddha himself individually, they were just there, they were just around to get whatever they could spiritually, but not in a very spiritual manner it seems, and in a not very spiritual attitude. So this person also, this petty officer of the Kong-chow district, is not unintelligent and he realizes that maybe there is something here, This barbarian, this aborigine, he's produced a stanza. You never know!

Buddhadasa: It's not sarcasm do you think?

S: That's also true, yes, as it were. He brushes the boy aside. Hui-neng had asked the boy to read for him, but that petty officer happened to be present and he seemed to have volunteered to do this. He also probably has got something from Hui-neng's slightly ironical remarks: "If you are a seeker of supreme enlightenment, you will not despise a beginner." "Please recite your stanza. I will write it down for you, but if you should succeed in getting the Dharma, do not forget to deliver me." Not teach me, or show me the way, but deliver me, as though it's something you can just do automatically as a sort of favour for me. Maybe he thinks of the Patriarch as a bit like the emperor. If you grovel enough then you will get the favour without any effort on your part.

"Later on seeing that a crowd was collecting, the Patriarch came out and erased the stanza with his shoe lest jealous ones should do me injury. Judging by this, the crowd took it for granted that the author of it had not yet realized Mind-essence." You can see how blind the crowd is: "Later on seeing that a crowd was collecting," oh, a second stanza being [60] written? What's this? What's happening? Who's going to get it? Who's going to be the patriarch? All the monastic politicians wondering what was going to happen. So "the Patriarch came out and he erased the stanza with his shoe," which means almost a sort of contemptuous treatment, "least jealous ones should do me injury". Already the Patriarch sees this is going to give rise to terrific repercussions and he wanted to minimize the harm as much as possible. So the majority of people in the crowd, they know that the Patriarch has wiped it out. They "took it for granted that the author of it had also not yet realized Mind-essence." They weren't able to see for themselves, they just had to go by the Patriarch's actions. But they didn't know why he did that. They hadn't an inkling. They just thought that he'd done it because the stanza wasn't good enough.

"Next day the Patriarch came secretly to the room where the rice was being hulled and seeing me at work with the stone pestle, said, 'A seeker of the Path

risks his life for the Dharma. Should he do so?' Then he asked, 'Is the rice ready?' 'Ready long ago,' I replied, 'Only waiting for the sieve.' He knocked the mortar thrice with his stick and went away." Their third little dialogue. It's only the third time that they've met in all this time. "At work with the stone pestle." Apparently, according to some other text I read, if you weren't heavy enough to work the (unclear) or whatever it was that hulls the rice, you attached a big stone to your waist to give you more weight when you were on the treadle. So the monastery has preserved this stone right down to the present. So there was Hui-neng with this great stone attached to the waist to give him more weight on the treadle while he was hulling the rice. "A seeker of the Path risks his life for the Dharma. Should he do so?" He came straight to the point: this is a really dangerous business. If you want the Dharma, OK, but your life may be in danger. Are you ready? But Hui-neng didn't even (unclear) to that question. So the Fifth Patriarch asks, "Is the rice ready?" They weren't really talking about rice, so Hui-neng says, "Ready long ago." I've been here eight months, or ten months, it might be two or three years by then. "Ready long ago. Only waiting for the sieve." There's still something more you see. He's got this general, not quite clear and bright sort of realization. He's got to clarify it, sharpen it and that's what he means by having it sieved. There is still some more work to be done. He - that is the Fifth Patriarch - knocked the mortar thrice with his stick and went away. They are not wasting any words.

p.503: "Knowing what his signal meant, in the third watch of the night, I went to his room. Using his robe as a screen so that no one would see us". My own opinion is that he must have covered the window with his robe. It's not that he sort of held it, because again if there [61] were any other monks in the room they'd obviously know something was going on. But my own impression is that he (?)hooked his robe over the window as a sort of curtain so that no one would know what was going on inside and, "he expounded the Diamond Sutra to me". That is, he took the Diamond Sutra, and going through it word by word, line by line, he explained it thoroughly to Hui-neng, what it really meant. It's interesting that he doesn't sort of teach him directly out of his own experience. He uses the sutra as an instrument. That's his as it were link with the tradition, with the Buddha himself.

"When he came to the sentence, 'One should use one's mind in such a way that it will be free from any attachment', I suddenly become thoroughly enlightened". There's a whole lot that could be said about this. It's the sort of non-sticking mind. Use your mind; think, think about things, but don't let the mind stick, let it be completely free, function with complete spontaneity. So when he was talking about these things, expounding these things, Hui-neng suddenly became thoroughly enlightened and realized that all things in the universe are Mind-essence itself. In other words he wasn't thoroughly Enlightened before, but he was halfway there, three quarters of the way there, but not fully Enlightened. But the exposition of the Fifth Patriarch's was that sort of twentieth stroke that finally split the rock as it were. He became thoroughly Enlightened and he "realized that all things in the universe are Mind-essence itself." That's

rather interesting because the Diamond Sutra doesn't say anything about all things in the universe being Mind-essence itself, [or] mind itself. So that's quite interesting. It suggests that the two - the Diamond Sutra and the Lankavatara Sutra - through their language is different, the basic thing, the fundamental teaching, is the same thing. So his realization then was the realization which the Sutra described rather (unclear) in the first chapter, that all things are just mind; everywhere there is just mind, one mind, pure, clear, transcendental radiant, just one mind everywhere. That was his realization. A complete and apparent realization, and it came, as it were, with a crash. It just came suddenly, but the preparation had been as it were gradual. He'd had this sort of Path of Vision experience when he heard the man reciting the Diamond Sutra. We aren't told anything more about his early life. He might even have been a good faithful Buddhist. He might have been making offerings to the monks and going to a temple. We just don't know. On the [62] other hand he might have been just a naturally gifted person. It might have been his first actual contact with Buddhism, we don't know. It could be either way, but now here on this occasion he has the full, clear complete Enlightenment and he sees that all things are Mind-essence itself.

"I said to the Patriarch, 'Who could have conceived that Mind-essence is intrinsically pure! Who could have conceived that Mind-essence is intrinsically free from becoming and annihilation! That Mind-essence is intrinsically self-sufficient, and free from change! Who could have conceived that all things are manifestations of Mind-essence!'"

This is interesting. "Who could have conceived?" He'd had a good general idea of it, as it were, but when it comes to the full realization it's an overwhelming and unexpected thing even to him. Even he is taken by surprise. Even Hui-neng, though he'd had this Path of Vision experience and though he had this general idea, as he puts it, of the Essence of Mind, he feels it is there, he can recognize it, he knows whether somebody has it or doesn't have it, he can recognize that the author or that stanza doesn't have it, hasn't realized his Essence of Mind, but even he knows that. He knows that the Fifth Patriarch has realized his Essence of Mind, but even he - when the full experience comes, when the full realization comes - even he is taken by surprise. It's just mind. Pure mind, nothing else. So who could have conceived that it would have been as pure as that? It's something you couldn't possibly anticipate or expect. So in a way it's an expression of wonder, of astonishment. That's his initial reaction.

"Thus at midnight, to the knowledge of no one, was the Dharma transmitted to me, and I consequently became the inheritor of the teachings of the 'Sudden' school, and the possessor of the robe and the begging-bowl." This is quite important: "was the Dharma transmitted to me." Now it's clear from this what Dharma transmission means. If you do speak of a transmission at all in the literal sense, it's an experience. Not that an experience goes literally from one person to another, but using the Diamond Sutra as a means, the Fifth Patriarch was able to lead the Sixth Patriarch, as he came to a full realization of his own Essence

of Mind. So this suggests that the Dharma and all the other dharmas, or the dharmas in all the other (?)senses, are just a means to that. So the transmission of the Dharma is the transmission of the experience of Enlightenment itself, and then of course the Fifth Patriarch [63] bears witness: 'You've got it. You've experienced now what I've experienced.' So in that sense the Dharma has been transmitted. It's not something literally transmitted from one to the other, but the Enlightened Fifth Patriarch giving the final touch.

"You are now the Sixth Patriarch," said His Eminence. "Take good care of yourself and deliver as many sentient beings as possible. Spread the teaching; keep the teaching alive; do not let it come to an end. Listen to my stanza: 'Sentient beings who sow seed of Enlightenment In the field of causation, will reap the fruit of Buddhahood. Inanimate objects which are void of Buddha-nature Sow not and reap not.'"

It doesn't seem all that different, this particular verse, from the verse by the head monk Shin-shau, but no doubt it is really different because it's spoken by the Fifth Patriarch. What he's really saying is, spread the teaching, keep the teaching alive, deliver as many sentient beings as possible, because, after all, sentient beings do have this potentiality, they can become Enlightened, so do your best. This is what he is really saying in this verse. Probably verses in Chinese as in Sanskrit, once rather more easily in that way than verses in English.

"His Eminence further said, 'When Patriarch Bodhidharma first came to China, few Chinese had confidence in him and so this robe has been handed down as a testimony from Patriarch to another.' That's rather interesting, "few Chinese had confidence in him." They didn't know who he was. Here's this person who just appeared - he said he was from India, but we don't really know - but he arrived and he said he's a Patriarch - if that is in fact what he did say - at least he said he's a master and he's got the Buddha's true Dharma and he's transmitting that. But few Chinese have testimonials, so this robe has been handed down as a testimony from one patriarch to another. I can't help feeling here that the Fifth Patriarch is saying, 'Well look how foolish the Chinese are. You have to produce a robe and say look, this is the robe, this robe has been handed down. And then they'd believe you. Oh look he's got his patriarch's robe.' But they don't look to your own sort of actual experience; they look at external things. To me it seems rather as though the Fifth Patriarch is saying that, and in a way criticizing the Chinese." Few Chinese had confidence in him." Not what one might have expected. They didn't immediately recognize his greatness and attainment. It seems as though they only really believed him when he produced the robe and so, 'that must be the patriarch because he's got the robe,' and then they believed him. They weren't able really to see or understand for themselves.

"As to the Dharma, as a rule it is transmitted from heart to heart," that is, from mind to mind directly, "and the recipient is expected to understand it and to realize it by his own efforts." This is what happened of course in the case of the Fifth and Sixth Patriarchs themselves. The Fifth Patriarch expounded - basing

himself on the Diamond Sutra - the Dharma to Hui-neng and this precipitated Hui-neng's final [64] Enlightenment, which was of course the result of his own efforts. "From time immemorial it has been the practice for one Buddha to pass on to his successor the quintessence of the Dharma," and in this sort of existential way, "and for one Patriarch to transmit to another, from mind to mind, the esoteric teaching." The English word 'esoteric' is frequently misunderstood. It's not another separate teaching which is kept secret, but it's simple the experience itself. "As the robe may give cause for dispute," it's something concrete and material, "you will be the last one to inherit it. If you should again hand it down to a successor, your life would be in imminent danger." We can think of all the disputes in the Middle Ages in Europe, even contesting acceptance of the papacy, even wars have been fought to settle who was the right pope, because that (unclear) crown represented not only a spiritual tradition, a religious tradition at least, but great worldly position and influence and power, even political power. "You must now leave this place as quickly as you can, lest some one should harm you." This is rather strange and rather ominous.

Hridaya: Do you think it's a sign that the times have changed because for five patriarchs it's always been safe to hand over the robe and the bowl, but then suddenly there is great danger in having them?

S: It seems too that the question might arise, 'Well in what does the danger consist?' It's as though up to this time, Ch'an, to use that term whether appropriate or not, hadn't been very popular, hadn't been very widespread, just a few people involved, perhaps just a few of those students of the Lankavatara, and maybe each patriarch, so it seems, had just one rather close disciple, but by the time of the Fifth Patriarch it had become much more as it were popular. The tradition became better known, widespread, there were more people around. So it wasn't just a question of transmitting the patriarchate as it were, just to one person, or if there had been two or three very gifted people and it was transmitted to one. There were whole crowds of people and they might have their own ideas as to who was suitable as the successor, and in this particular case, the monks who followed Shin-shau, the head monk, would be very disappointed that their teacher didn't get it: somebody else; this barbarian. Suddenly they hear that he's been made the Sixth Patriarch and this really stirred up their feelings, as we shall see. So this becomes a matter of danger. So this seems to me the way in which that developed, that when he had only just got a very few students or maybe even only one, then there was no difficulty in transmitting the Dharma and the robe. But in a [65] big monastery you've got crowds of monks and they are all very eager: 'Who's going to get the robe? Who's going to be the next patriarch?' it becomes almost sort of a bit political. They want their teacher to get it and they'll be angry if someone else does get it and their teacher doesn't. They become really aroused and so it becomes dangerous.

Ratnapani: Buddhism seems to have gone from being very much a minority thing right through to fossilization with the attitudes of those monks.

S: You find this in anything that becomes really popular, that more people start

coming in for the wrong reasons and therefore they bring in with them their very worldly and non-spiritual attitudes. For instances, there was the Fifth Patriarch living in this temple and delivering his lectures, so no doubt many came who were really sincere, wanted to understand Buddhism, wanted to practise, wanted to gain Enlightenment. But a lot of others might have come just out of curiosity and might start thinking, 'What are all these people after? There are hundreds of them. Maybe I should go too and find out what it's all about.' But their basic motivation might not be very spiritual, but they also go along, they join the audience, they listen, they start calling themselves disciples. In this way you get a rather large crowd, a rather large following, and very naturally the average level starts going down. This happens all the time in all spiritual movements; to survive the spread while maintaining the standard is very difficult. It's as though the history of a religion or spiritual tradition is like this. This means it's also getting bigger and more successful in a worldly sense, but spiritually speaking it's going down. It's as though there is an optimum development where you get the largest possible extension or widest possible extension compatible with the maintenance of spiritual standards. After that you can continue expanding, but the level seems to go down, at least the average standard. In the Buddha's early career he was just adding one Arahant to another, they all became Arahants, but by the time of Ashoka when there was a very big Sangha and many spiritual teachers, then lots of people started flocking in just attracted by the free board and lodging which was being lavishly provided. It seems as though this always happens. You first of all sort of win public support and respect on account of your really good genuine spiritual qualities, speaking of a particular movement and therefore you attract [66] a lot of support and a lot of help, and money also comes, but once you've reached a certain point, and you become well known and the whole thing is well established and there are certain facilities available, then people start coming for the wrong sort of motives and then degeneration sets in. It's very difficult to keep things balanced. So keep expanding but keep up the standard.

When the robe was the symbol of a patriarch, you were just no better than a beggar. If you look at Bodhidharma, what is Bodhidharma? He's no better than a beggar. A penniless Indian arrived, he'd got no monastery, got no followers, maybe just got one book with him, and he just lives where he can, and one or two people are going to him. Who's going to bother about stealing the robe, even if it is the robe of the Patriarch? It doesn't mean anything, it's just the robe of a beggar. But by the time of the Fifth Patriarch, the Patriarch is now the head of a large monastery. He's highly respected by government officials and scholars and he's got thousand of monks under him and a vegetable patch of thousands of acres, a lot of wealth coming in. Then the robe of the Patriarch is worth having because of all the things that go with the robe and the patriarchate. Therefore unqualified people might start aspiring for it. It might become a subject of dispute. But on the other hand you can hardly help that sort of development. You are not going to stop sincere people coming, and you might have a large number of sincere people. But when you've got a large number even of sincere

people, others are going to start joining in for the wrong reasons. But in a way it's a situation you can hardly avoid. You just have to do your best.

p.504: "As it was the middle of the night when I thus received the begging-bowl and robe, I told the Patriarch that as I was a Southerner I did not know the mountain trails and it would be impossible for me to get down to the river. 'You need not worry,' he replied, 'I will go with you.' He then accompanied me to the Kiu-kiang landing where we got a boat. As he started to do the rowing himself, I asked him to be seated and let me handle the oar. He replied, 'It is only right for me to get you across.' (This is an allusion to the sea of birth and death which one has to cross before the shore of Nirvana can be reached.) To this I replied, '(So long as I was) under illusion, I was dependent on you to get me across, but now it is different. It was my fortune to be born on the frontier and my education was very deficient, but I have had the honour to inherit the Dharma from you; since I am now enlightened, it is only right for me to cross the sea of birth and death by my own effort to realize my own Essence of Mind.'"

In Sanskrit of course this would be a proper pun: to ferry across means to ferry across in the literal sense, but also to take someone to the further shore, the other shore, to Nirvana, because the Fifth Patriarch is technically the teacher, so it's his job as it were to get the Sixth Patriarch across.

"'Quite so, quite so,' he agreed." They understand each other quite well. They are just enjoying this little exchange. They are not really trying to catch each other out.

"Beginning with you (Ch'an) Buddhism will become very widespread." That "Ch'an" is not really in the text: 'Beginning with you Buddhism will become very widespread.' But the translator seems to think that it must be Ch'an that is meant here, but it doesn't [67] say so.

Wolf: Was there a Ch'an Buddhism at that time going along parallel with Buddhism?

S: Not really, no. There was just the people practising and delivering their sermons and so on, expounding the Diamond Sutra. Where's Ch'an? No sign of Ch'an, in a distinctive sense.

Wolf: But the Buddha held up the yellow flower and one man understood what it meant.

S: That was Buddhism.

Wolf: That didn't evolve as a sort of separate branch?

S: No. What happened was that centuries later, in China, when Zen became a sort of sect, or was starting to become a sect, someone traced back the beginning of Ch'an as a sect to that incident, but there is nothing to do with Ch'an in that incident. It's just Buddhism, If you look at the Pali scriptures there is a passage where the Buddha is asked a question - he remains silent - asked another question - he remains silent. You could say that's Ch'an, but it isn't, it's

Theravada Buddhism. It's the Dharma. So there doesn't seem to be any Ch'an anywhere, actually. Ch'an means meditation. So there's a sort of double use of the word in the Buddhist sense and the sort of sectarian sense. You can say that when the Buddha held up the flower, that was the beginning of Ch'an. You can say that, but I don't know whether the Buddha thought like that. There's no reference to Ch'an in the text. He just held up a flower and transmitted the Dharma, if he transmitted anything.

So I don't see Ch'an coming into it at all, and it's the same here. Here are these worthies giving their lectures on the Dharma and referring to the scriptures, and quoting the sutras and expounding the sutras, and having their little exchanges, but there's nothing about Ch'an. It's exactly the same thing as you got in the Buddha's day - and you get in Ceylon and you get in Tibet and you get anywhere else in the Buddhist world. But the sutra itself, the Platform Sutra, sees to provide very little basis for anything to be identified as sort of sectarian Zen. It's just Buddhism, just Dharma. So this is quite interesting, that the Patriarch says, "Beginning with you, Buddhism will become very widespread." Perhaps [68] he does mean their own particular presentation or interpretation or line of transmission, but it hasn't become a sect.

Ratnapani: It seems that it would obviously change going to a different kind of people. It'll change when it comes here. Perhaps in the future we'll be called...

S: Yes. We say that we are just Buddhists, and it has been pointed out that Dogen, who is regarded as the founder of the Soto Zen school in Japan, never spoke of his school or tradition as a Ch'an or Zen school; he always spoke in terms of Buddhism and the Dharma. He never spoke in terms of Ch'an or Zen as a school or as a sect of a special tradition; he just spoke of Buddhism. But people say, oh, Zen is this and Zen is that, and they take out all the best bits from the Buddhist scriptures: oh that's Zen, that's us, our sect, our school, you haven't got that, it doesn't belong to you. Zen versus Buddhism. This is completely false, completely misleading. You could say that there is no such thing as Ch'an, no such thing as Zen, we refuse to discuss Buddhist Zen, Dharma Zen; there's only the Dharma, that's all we are concerned with. Forget all about Nyingmapas and Gelugpas and Soto and Rinzai and Theravada. Basically it's just Buddhism, it's just Dharma.

"Do not begin preaching too soon; (Ch'an) Buddhism is not to be easily spread." The translator puts Ch'an in brackets you notice. Suppose we accept that, then what follows? It follows that Ch'an Buddhism is spread by teaching. This is rather interesting. "Do not begin preaching too soon; (Ch'an) Buddhism is not to be easily spread." So the modern Zen people would perhaps be rather surprised by the idea of Zen being spread by preaching, just like Buddhism is spread. So if they insist on having Ch'an there then let them say, well, clearly Ch'an is to be spread by preaching. But even the Sixth Patriarch is asked not to preach too soon. Even he is warned that Buddhism, or whatever it is, is not so easily spread, and that's also quite interesting.

Devamitra: Even by a fully Enlightened person.

S: Even by, yes. You could even say that it is easier to teach Buddhism when you are not Enlightened, because you will be closer to people's ordinary intelligence, but for a Buddha to preach is really difficult, because his teaching is the real teaching that's not sort of easily understandable by anyone. So occasionally it's better to let lose a very junior Bodhisattva. He's not too remote from the worldly people. But for a Buddha to start preaching would be [69] sort of really asking for it.

Wolf: Isn't there an example of this in Christ who preached and then was crucified for what he said?

S: Well he didn't say very much. He did get crucified for what he said, which shows you just can't be too careful. He didn't even speak about the Void or Enlightenment or anything like that. He just gave this sermon on the mount, which is comparatively innocuous by Buddhist standards. He didn't even say anything about getting rid of the ego or shunyata, and even so they crucified him. You really do have to be careful.

"After saying good-bye, I left him and walked toward the South. In about two months I reached the Tai-yu Mountain where I noticed several hundred men were in pursuit of me with the intention of recovering the robe and begging-bowl." The robe and the bowl have now become symbols of the patriarchate and symbols of powers. You get the robe and the bowl and you are made, as it were.

"Among them, the most vigilant was a monk of the name of Wei-ming whose surname was Chen. In lay life he had been a general of the fourth rank. His manner was rough and his temper hot. When he overtook me, I threw the robe and the begging-bowl on a rock, saying, 'This robe is nothing but a testimonial; what is the use of taking it away by force?' When he reached the rock he tried to pick them up but could not." This is quite interesting. You can take this in two ways. You could say it's a symbolical incident. The robe is not to be taken by force. Of course you can take a robe by force. What you can't take by force is what the robe symbolizes. So maybe it's a symbolical incident. On the other hand, you don't know. Things that we call miracles do happen and it may be that actually quite literally he tried to pick up the robe from the rock and he couldn't. There are all sorts of strange stories that one hears about things of this sort and they seem quite inexplicable, but whichever way one takes it the fundamental meaning remains the same: that Enlightenment, or what Enlightenment represents, is not to be appropriated by force. Even if you do manage to steal the robe, you can't steal what the robe represents. So really you are (unclear) and sooner or later your (unclear)-lessness will be exposed. You may have the robe, but you are not the Patriarch. You may have the Patriarch's seat, but you haven't got his spiritual understanding. You may have the Patriarch's title, but you don't have his Enlightenment. Sooner or later this would become obvious; you can't keep it up indefinitely.

"Then in astonishment he shouted, 'Lay Brother, Lay Brother, ((Hui-neng,

although appointed the Sixth Patriarch, had not yet been formally admitted to the Order).” A little correction here. He had been admitted to the order, the sangha, in the widest sense, but not to the monastic order, not to the bhikshu sangha. He was an upasaka. He’d taken at some time or other the refuges, he’d committed himself as an upasaka, but he wasn’t a monk.

Buddhadasa: This is interesting from a Zen point of view as well. [70]

S: Yes, right, because the modern Zen attaches quite a bit of importance to being a Zen monk and monastic ordination, and doesn’t attach so much importance apparently to the upasaka commitment and the refuges. So, “Hui-neng had not yet been formally admitted to the Order.” It just isn’t like that. He made his basic commitment, which was to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and that was what really mattered.

So then, “I have come for the Dharma, I do not care for the robe.” He had, it seems, a sudden rush of realization. Suppose you take it quite literally that he tried to pick up that robe. He was, we are told, in lay life a general of the fourth rank, “His matter was rough and his temper hot.” But he may have been in a way a sort of sincere person with quite a lot of energy who could change easily. So we can just imagine this scene of Hui-neng throwing down the robe on the rock, and he takes it, he grabs it, but he can’t pick it up, he’s sort of tugging and pulling and the robe won’t move, and then he realized: this is not the way, I can’t get it by force. It’s a bit like the hunter in the Theravada scriptures [Angulimala Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 86, tr.] who’s trying to catch up with the Buddha and he’s running like mad and the Buddha’s walking slowly, but he can’t catch up, and he’s really sort of terrified by this, and he realizes in the end what is happening. So it’s a bit like that we may say, very likely, it could have been like that, that he’s tugging and straining and trying to lift this robe off the rock and he can’t, and then it just suddenly sort of occurs to him, ‘What on earth am I doing? There’s something here beyond this. I’m going the wrong way about it.’ Then he thinks, ‘I’ve come for the Dharma.’ He just suddenly changed. ‘I don’t care for the robe. I don’t want the position, the power, that the robe so I thought represented. I want the truth. I want the Dharma.’

“Whereupon I came from my hiding place and took the position on the rock of a Patriarch. He paid obeisance and said, ‘Lay Brother, I beg you to teach me.’” So you see the sudden change, the conversion.

“‘Since the object of your coming is for the Dharma,’ said I, ‘please refrain from thinking about anything and try to keep your mind perfectly empty and receptive. I will then teach you.’” I don’t think he meant a forcible repression of thought, but as it were letting all the thoughts just die away, being completely open, completely clear, completely receptive, “I will then teach you.” Only when you are in this state of mind, which really means a state of high meditative consciousness, then I’ll teach you. It’s as though he’s saying, well, you (unclear) the samatha, the tranquillity, tranquillization, and then I’ll introduce, as it were, the insight, the vipassana, the wisdom on that purified ground, [71] that purified

basis, then I'll teach.

"When he had done this for a considerable time". It may have been hours, it may have been days, weeks, months, years; we don't know. It's only translated a "considerable time". My own guess is it must have been some months. They must have stayed together and the Fifth Patriarch must have encouraged him just to be completely calm, completely pure, as it were empty, just let thoughts die away; not a negative state, just a pure awareness with no distractions. In other words a really and truly and peaceful meditative state.

"I said, 'Venerable Sir' ". He's addressing him as a monk, which is also quite interesting. Here's the Enlightened Patriarch, who's technically only an upasaka, and his disciple is technically a monk, so he addresses him politely: Venerable Sir.

"At the particular moment when you are thinking of neither good nor evil, what is your real self-nature (the word is physiognomy)." Your face, your physiognomy. What's your true face? In other words what are you really like? What is your true nature, your true being, when you've no thoughts, when you're not thinking in terms of good nor thinking in terms of evil? Who are you then? As if to say, above and beyond all. He's sort of pointing out his own true nature. He's asking him to look at it and see it. "As soon as he heard this he at once became enlightened." As soon as it was pointed out, because he was prepared; the ground was prepared. Perhaps we can understand from all that we know about this, though it isn't very much, how this can come about. He believed it. He was a soldier, he was a general, even though only of the fourth rank, and he was hot tempered and a bit hasty. So he had his energy out at least. He wasn't blocked. He was direct, aggressive, even violent. He chased after the Sixth Patriarch, followed him for two months at the head of a band of monks who wanted to seize the robe, and he had the sort of effrontery, the boldness, to try to seize that robe. But when he sort of realized that it couldn't be done, then there was this tremendous revulsion and then as it were the Sixth Patriarch made him go right to the other extreme, if you can call it an extreme: be calm, be quiet, be receptive, no thoughts. And he kept him at this we don't know how long; maybe weeks, maybe months, maybe years, and then he taught him, when his mind was perfectly purified and he was in this highly meditative state. Then he told him: when you are neither thinking of good nor evil, who are you then? What's your true nature? When he said that, under those circumstances, [72] those conditions, then that man at once had the experience of being Enlightened. I'm not sure whether it was complete, supreme Enlightenment or a satori-like flash on which he would have to work. That wasn't really made clear.

Subhuti: But he then asks for more teachings.

S: Right, yes, but he asks.

"But he asked, 'Apart from these sayings and ideas handed down by the Patriarchs from generation to generation, are there still any esoteric teachings?' 'What I can tell you is not esoteric.' I replied, 'If you turn your light inward, you

will find what is esoteric within your own mind.’” So what is esoteric is not a teaching. There’s no question of an esoteric teaching in the sense of esoteric ideas or doctrines or even practices. What is truly esoteric is the experience, so therefore the Sixth Patriarch says, “What I can tell you is not esoteric” by its very nature. “If you turn your light inward, you will find what is esoteric within your own mind.’ In other words the Enlightenment experience itself.

“‘In spite of my stay in Wong-mui,’ said he, ‘I did not realize my own self-nature. Now, thanks to your guidance, I realize it in the same way a water drinker knows how hot and how cold the water is. Lay Brother, I am now your disciple.’ I replied, ‘If this is the case, then you and I are fellow disciples of the Fifth Patriarch. Please take good care of yourself.’ He paid homage and departed.”

In other words whatever I’ve gained, as it were, I’ve gained from the Fifth Patriarch. He’s my teacher. Very often in the East it’s sort of good manners not to refer to anyone as your disciple so long as your own teacher is living. You regard them all as his disciples, and usually only after his death, if you do so at all, do you refer to others as your disciples.

“Some time after I reached Tso-kai, but as evil-doers were again persecuting me, I took refuge in Sze-wui where I stayed with a party of hunters for fifteen years. They used to put me to watch their nets, but when I found living creatures entangled in them I would set them free. At meal time I would put vegetables in the same pan in which they cooked their meat. Some of them questioned me and I explained to them that I could only eat vegetables. Occasionally I talked to them in a way that befitted their understanding. One day I bethought myself that I ought not to pass so secluded a life all the time; I felt that the time had come for me to propagate the Dharma. Accordingly I left there and went to the Fat-shin Temple in Canton.” It’s his own inner feeling, you see. He didn’t work it out in any way, he just felt the time had come to propagate the Dharma. Therefore he’d stayed in complete obscurity and lived with this party of hunters in - they may have been more unsuitable company, in a way, and he occasionally helped them. No one knew what he was or where he came from.

Buddhadasa: I think this is the only reference to vegetarianism.

S: Yes, I think it is in this particular sutra. In the Lankavatara there is (unclear)

Chintamani: I noticed in another version of this that it said that although he only ate vegetables, he used to mop up the gravy with them.

S: Well it says here that he put his vegetables in the same pan in which they cooked their meal.

Buddhadasa: And hunters being poor people probably had only one pan.

S: And he couldn’t help then but eat maybe a bit of the gravy. But at least he showed he was willing to be vegetarian.

Mangala: I like the way in which he says that he told them he could only eat [73] vegetables. He didn’t try to make any great moral principle out of it.

S: Of course Chinese Buddhism has always been very strongly vegetarian. Traditionally it is, among the Chinese tradition. It's mainly because the Chinese were on the whole followers of the Mahayana and the Mahayana does attach importance to vegetarianism. So Chinese monks traditionally were strict vegetarians. This is how vegetarian cookery came into existence in the Chinese Buddhist monasteries. I remember that when I used to give my talks in Singapore in the Chinese temples, there was always a vegetarian feast after, and the Chinese temples, even there, were noted for their expert vegetarian cookery. I can remember some of those feasts even now, and all the dishes that they used to prepare.

pp.505-6: "At the time I reached that temple, the monk Yen-chung, Master of Dharma, was lecturing on the Maha Parinirvana Sutra. It happened one day when a pennant was being blown about by the wind, that two monks entered into a dispute as to what was in motion, the wind or the pennant. As they failed to settle their difference, I suggested that it was neither; that what actually moved was their own mind. The whole group was surprised by what I said and the Master Chen-yung invited me to a seat of honour and questioned me about various knotty points in the Sutra. Seeing that my answers were precise and accurate, that they inferred more than book knowledge, he said to me, 'Lay Brother, you must be an extraordinary man. I was told long ago that the inheritor of the Fifth Patriarch's robe and Dharma had come to the South; very likely you are the man?'

"To this I politely assented. He made obeisance and courteously asked me to show the assembly the robe and begging-bowl which I had inherited. He further asked what instructions I had received at the time the Fifth Patriarch had transmitted the Dharma to me."

There's one interesting point here: the monk, the master of the Dharma - the Dharma master - this is a sort of title for the teacher versed in the scriptures - lecturing on the Mahaparinirvana Sutra. But it's very clear from the context that he didn't have a completely Enlightened understanding of the text and he took the opportunity of questioning Hui-neng about the sutra, and Hui-neng - who may or may not have even read the sutra before - was able to answer his questions just directly out of his own experience. This is what one finds very often happening with someone with actual experience. As soon as he is asked questions, even from the scriptures, he can sort out difficulties and knotty points that scholars could sort of pore over for years and try to sort out just with the help of their intellect. So the Dharma master realizes that here is someone quite unusual.

"I replied, 'Apart from a discussion' - a discussion mind you - this is the Sixth Patriarch and we are supposed to be dealing with Zen - a discussion! "on the realization of Mind-essence", that is, on the occasion of the exposition of the Diamond Sutra, "he gave me no other instruction. He did not refer to Dhyana nor to Emancipation." Now what does dhyana mean in Chinese or Japanese? It's Ch'an or Zen, "nor to Emancipation," that is, to emancipation from the wheel of life, suffering, etc, the four noble truths and all that sort of area. He

only spoke about realization of Mind-essence, the One Mind, which precipitated that realization. But there's not even any question of meditation. That's rather interesting. Meditation helps, yes, sure. [74] It helps prepare the ground, but you can easily get on without meditation. That's Zen, and that's quite a thought. "He did not refer to Dhyana nor to emancipation"; the Fifth Patriarch, at least, said nothing about Ch'an.

Ratnapani: But surely there is no Ch'an for him to talk about.

S: No dhyana. No Ch'an in the sense of dhyana. No meditation.

Ratnapani: In what sense is the word dhyana used here?

S: Presumably he's using the word in the ordinary Buddhist sense because he's talking about Buddhism: dhyana corresponding to samadhi in the sense of the second stage of the three great stages of the path, the superconscious states which you reach as the result of the practice of concentration and meditation. But apparently he said nothing about those, nothing about dhyana, nothing about emancipation.

"The Master asked, 'Why not?' I replied, 'Because that would mean two kinds of Dharms. That is not the Buddha Dharma, for the Buddha Dharma is not dual in its nature.' He then asked, 'What is the Buddha Dharma that is not dual in its nature?'" This is very important. It's also profound and perhaps it's a bit obscure. It's as though, according to the Sixth Patriarch, the Fifth Patriarch did not want to speak in terms of one thing leading to another. He wanted, as it were, to go straight to the point, and therefore he spoke simply about the realization of the Essence of Mind. And if you can talk in terms of Ch'an or Zen at all, then this is what it is all about. That's in fact what Buddhism itself is all about: the realization of Essence of Mind, the realization of Enlightenment. So it's this that the Fifth Patriarch pointed to directly. There's no question of sects, no question of Zen, it's just Buddhism. If he'd also spoken about dhyana and said that if you practise dhyana then that will lead you to the realization of the Essence of Mind, he would have been speaking in terms of steps and stages or, in a sense, the gradual path. But he didn't want to do that. Perhaps he didn't want to do that because he saw that Hui-neng was a highly gifted person and it wasn't necessary. He could get it easier. So according to Hui-neng, the Fifth Patriarch did not speak about dhyana because, inasmuch as he's already spoken about the Essence of Mind, if he then went on to speak about dhyana you'd have two things to practise. There'd be the realization of the Essence of Mind and then there'd be the dhyana, and that would be a dualism because [it's] one thing leading to another, whereas the Fifth Patriarch didn't want anything leading to anything, he just wanted Enlightenment itself. The realization of the Essence of Mind is (?)continuous [75], not going from this to that. So this was a non-dual approach, a very high approach, and one which was suitable only for very highly developed disciples. So it's also important that Hui-neng says, "Because that would mean two kinds of Dharms. That is not the Buddha Dharma, for the Buddha Dharma is not dual in its nature." In Buddhism, as it were, there are

not two principles or three principles or four principles, not even one leading to another, not just one principle, just one thing, that is, the realization of the Essence of Mind, and as soon as you can get that into view the better. So it's a very very advanced point of view indeed, one which most people are just not capable of. You have to go by the gradual path, as Hui-neng later on himself recognizes.

Wolf: You have to be a field of merit first I presume, which is what is said earlier in this chapter.

S: Yes. You can put it that way too, yes. But you have to be a field of merit in either case, but in the sense of the sudden teaching and the invocation of that one principle. You have to be very advanced to understand this. Otherwise you've no alternative but to go step by step from one principle to another. But basically Buddhism is concerned with one thing, and eventually you have to stop going from one thing to another, one stage to another. Just stop and realize that one principle which is the Essence of Mind. But if you are highly gifted you can stop quite soon in your spiritual career, otherwise you just go on as it were to another for quite a few years. But in the end you just have to stop. You don't get there by indefinitely going from one thing to another, becoming more and more advanced. Eventually you just have to make that leap or that jump. If you are highly gifted you can do it right at the beginning, but not otherwise. So basically, from the highest point of view, Buddhism is non-dual; the Dharma is non-dual. There's this one principle which is the Essence of Mind. Here is something more characteristic of what afterwards was called Ch'an or Zen Buddhism.

And this is of course very much the standpoint of the Lankavatara Sutra or even the Perfection of Wisdom. The Perfection of Wisdom texts say hardly anything about the practice of meditation, they just show you shunyata, as it were, just reveal shunyata, and leave you to get on with it as best you can. But Indian Buddhism on the whole is very much Buddhism of steps and stages, and Tibetan Buddhism too, but Chinese Buddhism, this principle of the immediate Enlightenment, the one principle, going straight for it, comes out much more [76] strongly, especially in what we term Ch'an. And if there is anything to be identified as Ch'an in the body of Chinese Buddhism, it is this tendency to insist on going as it were straight to the point. But it also requires a fairly high degree of spiritual development already, and also contact with a very advanced not to say Enlightened master who can sort of point it out on the spot just like that. If you've got these two - the advanced disciple and the Enlightened master - it's very (?)difficult if (?)not (?)impossible to have this sort of sudden or abrupt transmission of experience, you are better off than on the gradual path, even though at the end of the gradual path you come to a sudden realization, as it were.

"I replied, 'The Mahaparinirvana Sutra which you are expounding teaches that Buddha-nature is the only way. For example, in that sutra King-ko-kwai-tak, a Bodhisattva, asked the Buddha whether those who commit the four serious sins,

or the five deadly sins, or are heretics, etc., would thereby root out their 'element of goodness' and their Buddha-nature. Buddha replied, 'There are two kinds of 'goodness elements': an eternal element, and a non-eternal. Since Buddha-nature is neither eternal nor non-eternal, therefore, the Buddha's essential nature is not to be regarded as 'eradicated', it is to be regarded as already 'non-duality'. There are good natures and evil natures but Buddha's essential nature belongs to neither; it is non-dual. From the point of view and prejudices of ordinary people, there is a difference between the physical sense-ingredients and the mental and conscious ingredients, but enlightened men know that they are not dual in nature. It is that nature of non-duality that is Buddha-nature."

This is a rather difficult reply, but what in fact Hui-neng is saying is that that Buddha-nature which is the subject matter of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra is non-dual, and [it is] this non-dual Buddha-nature which is the subject matter of the non-dual Buddha Dharma. I'll go into that a little bit more if you like. In the sutra, the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, which is one of the more advanced Mahayana sutras, according to Hui-neng's exposition, "In that sutra King-ko-kwai-tak, a Bodhisattva, asked the Buddha whether those who commit the four serious sins," that is to say taking life, deliberate theft, sexual misconduct, and falsely claiming supernormal powers, the four serious sins, "or the five deadly sins," that is to say wounding a Buddha, killing an Arahant, parricide, matricide, and creating schism in the spiritual community, "or are heretics," that is, tirthikas, those who believe for instance in annihilationism or nihilism or who believe in a permanent soul or God etc, "would thereby root out their 'element of goodness' and their Buddha-nature."

This seems to have been quite a point of discussion in Chinese Buddhism and Indian Buddhism to some extent. Mahayana sutras taught anyway that all sentient beings were in possession of Buddha-nature and could therefore become Enlightened. So the question which arose - and this was discussed, sometimes (?)floored - whether there are some beings who are so wicked, so depraved, that they actually destroy their own root of goodness and their own Buddha-nature and make it impossible for themselves ever to become Enlightened, and if so what you had to do to bring about that terrible result. Was it committing the four serious sins, or the five deadly sins, or being a heretic indulging in wrong views, or what? So this is the question [77] which is reflected in this particular sutra, when this particular Bodhisattva asked the Buddha whether these "would thereby root out their 'element of goodness' and their Buddha-nature." So what does the Buddha in this sutra say in reply? He says, "There are two kinds of 'goodness-elements': an eternal element and a non-eternal." One could say that the non-eternal goodness element was that as the result of which you can secure for yourself a good rebirth. That can be temporary, but (?)pure, and then there is the eternal element on account of the presence of which you can gain Enlightenment, at least from a certain point of view. So what does the Buddha say? "Since Buddha-nature is neither eternal nor non-eternal, therefore, the Buddha's essential nature is not to be regarded as 'eradicated' ". I think it seems to me that there is something missing here: "or non-eradicated". If you

want to sort of complete it, I think that should be added. So you can't speak of the Buddha-nature in terms of eradication or even in terms of non-eradication. It goes beyond those. It's non-dual. This is the point that Hui-neng is getting at within the context of this particular discussion. He's (unclear) of an attempt to categorize Buddha-nature as either this or that: Is Buddha-nature something to be eradication or something which cannot be eradicated. So he points out that the Buddha is saying Buddha-nature is essentially non-dual. You can't really speak of it as either able to be eradicated or not able to be eradicated. The very essence of Buddha-nature requires that it is non-dual, so you can't say that it can be eradicated, you can't say that it can't be eradicated. This is what the Buddha is saying. So Hui-neng is sort of recapitulating this whole discussion, and he says, according to this sutra of which you are the master, on which you give lectures, Buddha-nature is non-dual, and in the terms of this particular discussion it's not something that you can eradicate by your sins or not eradicate by not sinning. It's non-dual. And then he goes on to connect back this discussion with what the master, that is to say the Dharma master, has just asked him. And what was the question? "What is the Buddha Dharma that is not dual in its nature?" He says, "That non-dual Buddha-nature, which can be neither eradicated or non-eradicated, that is identical with the Buddha Dharma." So he's sort of transferring from the context of the sutra to the context of their own discussion, transferring from what was said about the Buddha to what is then said about the Dharma, or asked about the Dharma to the same context of non-duality.

So the Buddha Dharma is not dual in its nature. It's not a particular teaching or idea or doctrine. It is that non-dual Buddha-nature [78] which is the subject matter of that Parinirvana Sutra which the Dharma master has just been studying and lecturing on. It's as though Hui-neng is saying that if you really understood that sutra which you are lecturing on, you wouldn't have needed to asked this question. The Dharma is non-dual. Buddha-nature is non-dual, and since they are both non-dual, well, they are the same. It's as though it's this non-dual Buddha-nature which is the subject matter of this non-dual Dharma which is what the Fifth Patriarch was talking about and which (unclear).

Ratnapani: Just purely intellectually, I know the answer to that question; it's non-dual therefore the question doesn't apply. It's strange that the master should be all tangled up over it.

S: Well not really, because you don't see it. Yes, intellectually yes, and no doubt he can explain it and all the rest of it. No doubt in the course of his lectures he'd explained in great detail many examples (unclear) that the Buddha nature was non-dual. But with Hui-neng he was in a sort of existential situation.

Ratnapani: So he turns his knowledge to the reality of the Dharma.

S: Yes, (unclear) and where he got his real existential answer which is in a sense what he already knew, but he only knew it intellectually. And you can sometimes have this experience yourself, that you can read something and you

can understand it, you can talk about it, but a time comes when you realize that you did not understand that. You thought you did at the time, and in a sense on a certain level you did, but in another sense, on a completely different level, the real level, you did not understand it at all, even though you'd actually been talking about it (unclear) this Dharma master. He was talking about the Parinirvana Sutra, giving lectures on the Parinirvana Sutra, talking of the non-duality of the Buddha-nature. The Buddha's nature was neither to be eradicated nor not eradicated. He probably went on for hours and hours about it. So Hui-neng is saying, as it were, 'Well the non-dual Dharma is that non-dual Buddha-nature. That's all. That's what Buddhism's all about, what that sutra is all about: that non-dual Enlightenment experience.' In a sense you know it already, but though you've been talking about it for so long, you just haven't seen it.

"There are good natures and evil natures but Buddha's essential nature belongs to neither; it is non-dual. From the point of view and prejudices of ordinary people, there is a difference between the physical sense-ingredients and the mental and conscious ingredients." That is to say [79] division of body and mind, "but Enlightened men know that they are not dual in nature. It is that nature of non-duality that is Buddha-nature." (unclear)

"Master Yen-chung was pleased with my answer. Putting his hands together in a token of respect, he said, 'My interpretation of the Sutra is as worthless as a heap of debris, while your discourse is as valuable as pure gold.' Subsequently he conducted a ceremony of initiation, receiving me into the order, and then asked me to accept him as a pupil." Yes, apparently he was an experienced elder monk. He had monastic ordination, and though there is this (unclear) it's as though the Buddhists of this area had come to know about the Sixth Patriarch and how Enlightened he was and how inspiring, though he was quite happy just to remain just an upasaka. So this particular master who he had just enlightened - he was a qualified monk apparently - arranged for poor old Hui-neng to be sort of ordained as a monk, just to satisfy everyone that he had a right to receive (unclear) (?) favours. But spiritually speaking it wasn't necessary at all, so the Dharma master ordained Hui-neng as a monk and then became his pupil, spiritually speaking.

So it seems to me that we have to try to avoid this sort of situation where this sort of ecclesiastic situation doesn't correspond with the spiritual one. You can have a certain amount of difference or even a tension between the two, but not too much. I've certainly seen this myself in the East, when in some cases you got monks who'd been in the Order (unclear) etc, for twenty or thirty years and who therefore get tremendous respect and a very high seat and so forth, but who spiritually remained exactly where they were all those years, and there might be upasakas who only take the refuges and observe the precepts but who've become spiritually advanced, but technically, as it were, in ecclesiastical terms, there's the monk sitting there up on the throne, with everybody bowing before him, and that upasaka is just relegated to a corner and gets no respect at all.

But, all right, you can have a certain amount of this in any spiritual position, but if you've got too much the whole thing breaks down. So I think that with regards to our own movement we have to be very careful of things like this and be very careful about too many ordinations, of so many degrees of ordination, and make quite sure that if you do have different degrees that they correspond to something in actual life and experience, or if you don't, well this is something to be understood and not marked off in some form of ordination. But you can see that all that is really important is to be an upasaka. That's all Hui-neng was, and he got Enlightened. So it can't be all that important to have ordination as a [80] monk if it helps to live in that sort of way. And also to be ordained in that sort of way, well fair enough, but it may not be absolutely necessary, at least not for everybody, and it is after all the upasaka ordination which is the basic ordination, because it's then that you go for refuge, and even a monk can do no more than that.

"Thenceforth under the Bodhi tree." Now this is supposed to be, according to some other text I read, a bodhi tree planted by a visiting Indian monk some hundreds of years before, who is alleged to have prophesied that a great master would one day sit under this tree planted by that particular temple and discourse on the Dharma. And that prophesy is supposed to have been fulfilled by Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch. So, "Thenceforth," he says, "under the Bodhi tree." In a way it's just like the Buddha himself. "I have discoursed about the teachings of the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs." This is interesting because there has been no actual reference to the Fourth Patriarch or his teaching before. Hui-neng has only referred to the Fifth Patriarch, but no doubt in the teachings before that he'd been referring to the teachings of the Fourth Patriarch as well. "Since the Dharma was transmitted to me in Tung mountain I have gone through many hardships and often my life seemed to be hanging by a thread." He seems to have aroused a great deal of hostility, as we've seen already, and his life was sometimes in danger. "Today I have had the honour of meeting Your Highness, and you, officials, monks and nuns, Taoists and laymen, in this great assembly. I must ascribe this good fortune to our happy connection in previous kalpas." It's a sort of standard Buddhist attitude. Whether he really felt this or whether he was just using the conventional Buddhist phraseology, it's difficult to say.

"Those who wish to hear the teachings should first purify their own minds; and after hearing it, each must clear up his own doubts, even as the Sages have done in the past." Here he indicates what the training essentially is: that if you wish to hear the teaching, purify your minds; after hearing it clear up your own doubts, just as the sages have done in the past.

"At the end of the address, the assembly felt rejoiced, made obeisance and departed." That was his discourse. That was his sutra, his discourse spoken on that high seat, the Alter Sutra, Platform Sutra.

Mangala: (unclear)

S: Yes, we saw that the analysis of the text divided the whole thing into two:

first of all his sermon, and then various material added, or compiled, i.e. answers to questions and so on and so forth. But the basic thing seems to have been this opening discourse. (unclear)

I would say that just speaking practically, we have to be a bit careful [81] here. It's probably very difficult if not impossible for most people to purify the mind, to make progress without meditation. But what I think Hui-neng is concerned to guard against is insisting that one particular method of practice is absolutely essential, purification of the mind is essential. But some people, even though they may be a minority, may be able to do that without meditation, and you've no right to say to someone, well, you can't be a real Buddhist, you can't be really making any progress, because you are not sitting and meditating. They may be purifying their mind in some other way, without meditating - that is sitting and meditating. I'd say that probably most people do need to sit and meditate in order to purify their minds, but we have to be wary of taking that as an invariable rule.

Ratnapani: Like Hui-neng. He had a sudden realization from hearing the Diamond Sutra, but there may have been kalpas of meditation behind that.

S: Yes. This is very much the traditional Buddhist view. If you do see somebody who does go ahead very rapidly, well he must have done work in previous lives, and therefore you don't apply to yourself: 'Well he hasn't meditated, but he's making good progress, therefore I need not.' That doesn't necessarily follow at all.

Voice:

S: Well it depends who. It wouldn't be a mistake if you could sort of continue revolving (unclear) and get deeper and deeper into it. It wouldn't be a mistake, but if it happened that you just got bored and fed up with it. If you decided (unclear)

If there were only, say, three books in the monastery library, well maybe you could stick with one for a year. It becomes rather difficult when there are so many books around. You can't help hearing about them and knowing about them and being curious, and when perhaps you don't have all that much knowledge and your mind is very distracted and you need a bit of variety perhaps, to keep you at the same fundamental thing, not to speak of lectures even. You could I'm sure, some people could, get Enlightenment by just revolving one verse of the Dhammapada. It can't be (unclear). You have to cater for the mind craving for variety, at least (unclear) the variety of presentations of the Dharma. So [82] that even though the form is different, the mind is given satisfaction from the difference of form and you're not getting bored, but you're still preoccupied with fundamentally the same things, and maybe one should try to have that sort of attitude whatever you do. Whether you're doing a puja or whether you're meditating, working, you're occupied fundamentally with the same thing.

Devamitra: If one turns out to be perpetually bored with a practice (unclear)

S: With a practice? Well give yourself time. You may be able to break through the boredom, but you may need a sort of wider range of practice just to sort of (unclear). It depends on your temperament, and as you get deeper into a practice you find more and more in it; you certainly don't get bored. But it depends very much on the nature of your own individual mind. You may have a very quick mind, active mind. You may like to deal with a number of different things, and practise different methods (unclear).

Buddhadasa: I've often wondered about that, and it sometimes occurs to me that there is enough variety in the practices (unclear).

S: You don't want such a variety you can't really get into any of them. I think that for most people two or three practices at the most. And also it makes a difference how much time you can spend on your practices, using the word 'practice' in the narrower sense. I think that if you've only got one hour a day then one practice; you've got no time for more. But if, say, you are on a lengthy retreat and you've got the whole day, then by all means do three or four different practices at different times during the day. Depending on temperament you could get more and more deeply just into one or you could get really fed up with one and be in danger of giving up that practice altogether, just because of a lack of variety. In that case you would be well advised to supplement with two or three other practices.

But it's difficult to lay down a hard and fast rule. The main thing is that you must keep at it, not so limited that you become down and bored and sort of crippled, but not so much variety that that variety itself (unclear) becomes a source of distraction. Suppose you had to practise all forty kammattanas [the meditations described in the Visuddhimagga, tr.] every day, you wouldn't get deeply into any of them [83] would you? On the other hand just one, if you had the whole day might not be enough, so you just have to find where is the mean. For some people the mean might be two practices, for some it might be five or six. You just have to find out for yourself. But even if you've a number of practices, sort of keep very much in mind that they are all aiming at the same goal. I know it's very tempting when you come across a new book and a new method (unclear). It's all right for a little while, but sooner or later you must settle down just to one or two or three practices which hang together (unclear)

Anything stand out particularly this morning? Anything you feel he underlines for you (unclear)? Anything pointed out that you weren't clear about before?

Buddhadasa: Yes, formal monasticism, the whole monastic element of Buddhism seems less important, going for refuge is sort of higher. The Sixth Patriarch was one of us.

S: Yes, right, yes, the Patriarch. Yes, maybe he had a nice white kesa (laughter) instead of a dirty old robe. It was probably a bit ragged by that time; it had been handed down from India. It's interesting also he had the bowl, because as an upasaka he's not entitled to a bowl, strictly speaking.

Subhuti: Or the robe.

S: Or the robe, yes.

Buddhadasa: He carried it? He didn't wear it?

S: Yes, he seems to have carried it from what we can gather. So they weren't sort of insignia.

Buddhadasa: A thing that's underlined for me (unclear) to one crucial point all the time.

S: Well this is perhaps what Hui-neng was getting at, or the Fifth Patriarch was getting at, talking in terms of non-dual Dharma. Don't let the mind just go from one thing to another, one interesting aspect to another, but just sort of take up something really fundamental and focus it on everything. One can easily do this sort of periodically. I think I've mentioned before there is a sort of practice whereby you practise, say, the six perfections. And you one day one may practise nothing but dana, one day practise nothing but sila, because [84] if you've got six perfections just to practise in one day, well it's too much. You can't really remember them all. But suppose you are practising nothing but dana for a whole week, just giving in every situation. In every situation all that you can see is, 'How can I give?' in one way or another, well you could even spend months practising that, or according to some texts, even if you practise nothing but dana the whole of your life, that would take you to Enlightenment.

Subhuti: You could practise prajna in this way (unclear).

S: Right, yes. To the extent that prajna can be practised, sort of it's in a rather different category, it's more like allowing the prajna to manifest and then applying it.

Buddhadasa: If you were practising the Perfections in order, you wouldn't start with prajna.

Subhuti: Well this seems to be the one that he gives. When I look back over what we've done today, looking through the chapter, there were various sections which I tended to, in a sense. I've no idea what they mean in terms of experience. What can you do with them? There they are, what kind of bearing do they have on me, on where I am and how I look at things?

S: In matters of prajna or wisdom which you've merely understood in the ordinary way have no bearing at all in (unclear). There's nothing you can do with them except just to take them as generally supportive of your overall commitment to the Buddhist way of life etc. But there's not anything really that you can do with that. Something much more simple and elementary is more manageable and even more useful perhaps for the time being.

Buddhadasa: (unclear)

Subhuti: One doesn't know. In a basic and fundamental way one is deluded.

S: Which is a very healthy realization.

Devamitra. It's like a continual process of realizing how ignorant you are. It seems endless.

S: (unclear) the ordinary man goes on knowing more and more and learning more and more, but the man of Tao learns less and less and knows less and less. [A famous saying of Lao Tzu, tr.] [85]

Day 3

p.507: Discourse on repentance. "At one time there was a large gathering of literary men and commoners gathered in Kwong-chow, Shiu-chow and other places, to listen to the Patriarch's words at his monastery of Tso-kai."

S: It's rather interesting to see that there's a different kind of people on this occasion. The (?)scene of the first sermon, if you can call it that, was apparently a rather official occasion; we're told that the invitation was originally extended to the Patriarch by Prefect Wai of Shiu-chow and other officials, and there were present some government officials, Confucian scholars, bhikshus, bhikshunis, Taoists, and laymen. But this gathering seems a rather reduced one. It's a large gathering of literary men and commoners. It's almost as though they were the (?)stayers, you know, the government officials went back to other things and the Confucian scholars went back to their Confucian rites and study of the classics, and the bhikshus went back to their monasteries and observed the rules, and bhikshunis likewise, and you get left, as it were, the literary men - the arts people you could say - and commoners, you know, just ordinary folk who were interested, gathered from these various places to listen to the Patriarch's words at his monastery at Tso-kai.

Ratnapani: Would not possibly though literary men cover Taoists and Confucians and even the government officials?

S: It could do, but it's rather interesting that they do use this expression. They say literary men, without specifying, as if to say there were definite reasons which literary men should be there or literary men as such, irrespective of whether they were anything else as well, and commoners.

p.508: "Let us now sit down together in the Indian fashion."

S: Now what does that mean? Cross-legged. That's rather interesting. The whole sutra shows a lot of Indian influence. It's more akin to traditional Indian Buddhism in many ways than to later Chinese Buddhism. So it seems as though, you know, they had in a sense almost the same sort of problem - if it is a problem - that we have: the Chinese were accustomed to sit on chairs, you know, the Confucianists and the Taoists and so on and so forth. They sat on chairs. They weren't accustomed to sitting on the floor any more than we are. But along with Buddhism came along many Indian customs and observances, including sitting on the floor, sitting cross-legged for meditation. So it's as though at the beginning of the lecture they were all sitting up on chairs. This is what it suggests. Then

the Patriarch says, “Let us now sit down together in the Indian fashion.” We can all sort of visualize the scene, you know, there’s this hall, probably, and rows and rows of chairs, and the Patriarch climbs up on his platform. It’s [86] probably more likely a raised seat on which he sits, probably cross-legged, to deliver his discourse rather than a dais or anything of that sort. And having got up there and spoken his few preliminary words he says, well come on, let’s really get down to it - push back those chairs against the wall and let’s all sit down on the floor in the Indian fashion. In other words he transforms it from a sort of public meeting and a lecture to something more practical, (unclear) an actual Buddhist occasion, and this shows in what develops subsequently. What does he say then?

p.508: “First I will light the five kinds of incense that belong to your essential nature, then I will show you what is meant by ‘Formless Repentance’.”

S: Usually the first thing that is done on Buddhist occasions is you burn incense - at least that one offering. But Hui-neng isn’t going to do that in the ordinary way. He says, all right, we’ll have the incense offering. We’ll light in fact five kinds of incense. But what are they? And he’s got his own interpretation of this. It’s rather as though, you know, someone down at the Archway centre was to say, well, we’re going to start the proceedings this evening by lighting a candle. All right, what candle? Candle of meditation. No candles on the shrine, you know, just the candle of meditation. So he gets them all sitting down in Indian fashion, but then he goes off, as it were, at a tangent. He doesn’t sort of continue in the sort of ceremonial fashion. He goes straight through the symbolism, and he says, “first I will light the five kinds of incense that belong to your essential nature, then I will show you what is meant by ‘Formless Repentance’.” So “When they were seated the Patriarch continued.” He’s got them there all sitting on the floor, you know, something’s actually going to happen. It’s no longer just a lecture. They’re actually going to start practising Buddhism. And what happens then?

Chintamani: Would those five kinds of incense be the five wisdoms of the ‘Dhyani’ Buddhas?

S: The five ‘Dhyani’ Buddha tradition belongs more to the Vajrayana and there’s no trace of that, but he gives - you will see - he gives his interpretation (?) about the five kinds of incense.

p.508: “The first is the Sila Incense (Behaviour) which symbolizes that our minds is free from taint of misdeeds, evil, jealousy, avarice, anger, spoilation and hatred. The second is Samadhi Incense which symbolizes that our mind is serene under all circumstances - favourable or unfavourable. The third is Prajna Incense which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we constantly seek to realize our Mind-essence with wisdom; that we refrain from all evil; that we do all kinds of good acts with no attachment to the fruit of such action; and that we are respectful toward our superiors, considerate of our inferiors, and sympathetic for the destitute and those in trouble. The fourth is the Incense of Liberation, which means that our minds are in such a perfectly free state

that they cling to nothing and bother themselves neither with good nor with evil. The fifth is the Incense of 'Knowledge gained because of the attainment of Liberation'. When our minds cling to neither good nor evil, we should take care not to let them go to the other extreme of vacuity and remain in a state of inertia. At this point we should study and seek to broaden our knowledge so that we can understand our own minds, thoroughly understand the principles of Buddhism, be considerate of others in our dealings with them, get rid of the idea of 'self and 'existence', and realize that up to the time when we obtain enlightenment (bodhi) our true nature (tathata) is immutable."

S: Now all this is very standard teaching indeed. Does anybody recognize it?

Buddhadasa: The threefold path.

S: Yes, the threefold path and - actually this is the fourfold path or even fivefold path; it's really a summary of the Theravada. First of all you get sila, which is the whole ethical observance, the sila (unclear), but does anybody notice anything odd about his explanation about sila?

Ratnapani: Behaviour. [87]

S: Behaviour?

Ratnapani: Well normally it's good behaviour or upright behaviour.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: But I presume here it takes that for granted, behaving ...

Buddhadasa: (unclear) it's normally, you know, the ten precepts.

S: Ten, yes, or five even.

Buddhadasa: Yes, but he hadn't described them as that.

S: Well what does he describe?

Subhuti: it's the mind, (unclear) not just the behaviour.

S: Right. Exactly. So it means that traditional, or one might even say conventional, explanation of sila is entirely with regard to actions; but Hui-neng's interpretation is entirely psychological. Right behaviour means freeing the mind of such and such and such and such. You see the points? Though he is, as it were, covering Theravada-type ground, or Hinayana-type ground, he's got a very individual approach to it. So, the first is the sila incense - behaviour or ethics, or ethics and manners, or morality, which symbolizes that our minds are free from all taints of misdeeds, evil, jealousy, avarice, anger, spoliation, and hatred. In other words, he's saying, as it were, that what is important about morality is not just observing precepts externally, but getting rid of those unskilful mental states which cause you to misbehave. This is what morality, this is what right behaviour or upright behaviour, really is. He's giving a very strongly psychological emphasis. Of course, the Theravadin would agree with this completely, but it isn't put in this way in the Theravada. In the Theravada,

morality or sila is always explained as abstention from such and such wrong actions - abstention from harming, abstention from taking the not given, though obviously you can only so abstain if your mental state is at least partly skilful.

Subhuti: It seems to be progressive in its morality. In Theravada you begin with actions and slowly sort of work (unclear), but in this its ...

S: He begins, as it were, higher up.

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Yes, this is true, yes. All right, what does he say about samadhi? "The second is Samadhi Incense, which symbolizes that our mind is serene under all circumstances - favourable or unfavourable." But this goes rather beyond what is usually understood by meditation. It's a state of unshakeable mental security and serenity and peace, which is the same all the time. So already he's given a quite advanced interpretation of samadhi. It's more like the yogakkhema or cetovimutti of the Theravada - the liberation of mind, liberation of [88] consciousness, or freedom of mind, freedom of consciousness. Or it's again rather like that verse at the end of the Mangala Sutta. Do you remember that? 'He whose firm mind, untroubled by the touch of all terrestrial happenings whatsoever, is freed of sorrow, stainless and secure - this is the greatest blessing.' That state of mind which is completely imperturbable - free from sorrow, free from grief, free from any sort of change, completely calm and tranquil under all circumstances. This is what he means by samadhi; not just the state you get by practising meditation, not the temporary high. Hui-neng's got no time for temporary highs; they're not meditation, though they may help you to get into it. But not having any highs or lows, being all the time in a state of unshakeable mental serenity. This is samadhi as he understands it, that is to say, samadhi within the context of this preliminary path. He'll have more to say about samadhi in an even more advanced sense later on.

Chintamani: Is that what he was saying, (unclear) about not minding?

S: Yes. Yes. When you are in samadhi in this sense you're not minding because you're not reacting. You are calm and imperturbable all the time. So Hui-neng is saying, first of all get rid of all those unskilful mental states which are the natural causes of wrong behaviour; that's sila. And then establish yourself in a higher state of consciousness which remains the same under all circumstances; that is samadhi. So "The third is Prajna Incense, which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we constantly seek to realize our Mind-essence with wisdom; that we refrain from all evil; that we do all kinds of good acts with no attachment to the fruit of such action; and that we are respectful of our superiors, considerate of our inferiors, and sympathetic for the destitute and those in trouble." This seems to be a bit of a rag bag frankly. The essential part seems to be the first part: "The third is Prajna Incense, which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we constantly seek to realize our Mind-essence with wisdom." So what does this mean? Inside you've got this pure, tranquil mind. It's the same under all circumstances. So what is prajna?

Prajna is this tranquil unshakeable mind freely operating as required. It's not just a static (unclear) it comes into operation. And when that imperturbable mind comes freely and spontaneously into operation, then this is called wisdom. And what does it come into operation for? It comes into operation to investigate, as it were, or to investigate into, and to realize, Mind-essence. Now this is quite important for Hui-neng's later teaching. It's a sort of anticipation, and it also ties up very well with traditional Theravadin teaching, though Hui-neng goes on a little more deeply into it than the Theravada - at least nowadays - does. Maybe we ought to go a bit more into this anyway, because it's rather basic. I expect everybody's familiar with the distinction of samatha and vipassana. Yes? [89]

Ratnapani: Not very clearly.

S: Not everybody. Anybody? Can anybody say anything about this?

Devamitra: The difference between concentration and insight.

S: Yes. Yes. Samatha literally means pacification, calming, tranquillization, and the full term is samatha bhavana - the cultivation of mental tranquillity - and the Theravada, and the Mahayana to the extent that it inherits the Theravada tradition, understands by samatha bhavana all the exercises which lead to the experience of the dhyanas, but which fall short of insight, and the actual state which you attain as a result of those exercises, the actual dhyana states themselves - all this is samatha bhavana. All this of course is mundane. It represents the development of a higher level of consciousness within the samsara. It corresponds to the deva states, if you like. That is what is meant by samatha bhavana. And according to the Theravada tradition there are certain concentration exercises which pertain only to samatha bhavana, which don't help you to develop insight. For instance, according to Theravada tradition the metta bhavana helps you to develop samatha, but is of no use for developing vipassana or insight and all the different kammattanas, the forty exercises which are classified from one point of view in this way - whether they enable you to develop samatha only or samatha plus vipassana.

So those exercises which enable you to develop only samatha do not directly lead to Enlightenment. Samatha is a basis for vipassana, but it's also a basis which can be lost. So is this clear what samatha is? It's a state of higher concentration, of higher consciousness, which is still mundane. And samatha bhavana is that kind of meditation which develops this consciousness. You could say - I often used to say this - it's meditation in the purely psychological sense. You can get up into these states without being a Buddhist, without believing in religion, without believing in Enlightenment, on purely psychological assumptions. So this is samatha. And what is vipassana? Vipassana literally means insight. So the full term is vipassana bhavana - the development of insight, which means the development of insight into the real nature of things, into the real nature of the world, the real nature of the samsara, and the real nature of what is beyond, the unconditioned, Enlightenment, and so on.

So a vipassana type meditation is a meditation which enables you to develop actual insight. Yes? For instance, the full satipatthana practice as described in the Satipatthana Sutta. This comprises both samatha and vipassana. Or the analysis of one's being into the five or six elements, or the contemplation of the twelve nidanas: these are all insight practices, though you mustn't think of them just as exercises. On the level of vipassana, strictly speaking they can't be an exercise. They're a sort of support you can say. You can have a samatha type exercise which is just an exercise and you get into a state of mind, but you can't have a vipassana-type exercise, you know, which almost automatically if you operate it long enough helps you to develop [90] insight. That's a much more subtle matter. That's more of an art than a science. So you've got samatha and you've got vipassana. So is this clear? And you get this running through all Buddhist meditation practice. You get it in the Mahayana, you get it in the Vajrayana, and you'll find, if ever we do get round to studying 'Dhyana for Beginners', that the great master Chih-chi has got quite a lot to say about samatha and vipassana - meditation and insight, or tranquillity and insight - in his treatise on 'Dhyana for Beginners'.

Ratnapani: Bhante, I've noticed new people at the centre who've just come back from India and who were doing meditation there, and asking what they were doing, and they said, 'Well I was doing a vipassana meditation, I did a two-week course, ten hours a day.' It doesn't sound very likely in the light of this.

S: Right, exactly. Now, what is nowadays known as vipassana meditation is a special Burmese method - it is Burmese because it originated in Burma about fifty years ago - which is quite popular with some people, but which does not represent the classical tradition of vipassana type meditation. When people say they've been doing vipassana meditation they don't mean in this way or in Chih-chi's way, or in the traditional Theravada way, they mean in this new Burmese way. It's called sometimes the New Burmese Satipatthana method. Several of my own friends have done this, and when I came to England in 1964 a lot of English Buddhists were very interested in this and were doing it, usually with not very good results. One of the techniques of the practice seems to be to try to speed things up and have very intensive courses, and in the course of these very intensive courses quite naturally a lot of tensions develop and there are very uncomfortable and painful experiences, and usually the person is then told, 'you are experiencing the truth of dukkha and you've got an insight into dukkha - a vipassana of dukkha', and therefore it's called vipassana type meditation. But it seems to me that they confuse a purely psychological experience with an actual spiritual or transcendental insight, and at one stage they were issuing certificates of attainment, and I remember I went once to a place called Ajmer in India to visit a local Indian Buddhist who'd been to Burma, and hanging on his wall I saw with my own eyes a certificate in English signed by Mahasi Sayadaw who is the chief vipassana teacher of these days. The certificate said that he had completed a course in vipassana and had become a srotapanna or stream entrant (unclear) and I subsequently raised my voice against this sort of thing, because people were getting certificates to say they were stream entrants,

[or] that they were anagamins, and (unclear). I don't know whether there were Arahats, but certainly those other degrees. And this seemed to me completely unhealthy, because that young man certainly didn't seem a stream entrant to me. He seemed just as we was before. So this whole course, this whole sort of [91] approach, seems to me to generate a very unhealthy attitude. It was very intensive, very psychological, and it tended to attract very neurotic people I found, and quite a few people were seriously disturbed mentally by this. This was at Hampstead when I was there, and on my arrival, oh, I had a lot of people coming to see me about this. They had all sort of strange symptoms - usually symptoms of tremendous tensions. I just had to ask most of them to stop, and several went into mental hospital and never came out again - at least three. And it seems to have died away, it seems to have died a natural death. Again I must say that some vipassana teachers are gentler than others and get sometimes quite good results. This must also be said, because more intensive practice sometimes does some people quite a lot of good, but I certainly know many cases where people have pushed themselves far too hard and have merely broken down and increased their natural tensions, and this hasn't been good at all. So it's this whole system which is usually referred to nowadays as vipassana meditation.

Ratnapani: He did describe to me the actual practice of going around the body, sort of feeling around it internally, and if you found anywhere you couldn't then working on that. That's the sort of technique (unclear)

S: I think also, now - I mean I've been describing things as they were ten years ago - but I think now they've even incorporated them in encounter groups - techniques and things like that. Some of the vipassana teachers anyway. But the general feeling of the whole system is very unspiritual and sort of psychological. But they seem to identify psychological experience with spiritual insight. I think that's quite clear.

Ratnapani: They did seem pretty alienated.

S: Yes, this seems very much a characteristic, and this is what produces the tension. So I don't encourage this at all, even though I know some people certainly benefit by taking such courses, but on the whole I'm not happy about it at all.

Devamitra: Can I just ask you about this? I think that Dhiravamsa teaches this method and I've heard some very positive things about him.

S: Yes, right. Well he's one of the gentle ones. I don't know whether he's teaching it now. He has done. He was, yes, I would say he was one of the gentler ones, but in the earlier days when I came over in 1964, he was teaching it then. He wasn't teaching it nearly as violently as his predecessor, who was a Canadian monk [Ananda Bodhi, tr.]. Yes, it may have been that in some cases, so far as he is concerned, results are quite positive, but I'd still be very cautious about the thing as a whole, very cautious indeed.

Chintamani: I believe that the people at the Beshara centre certainly do vipassana

meditation, and when I asked them what they did and they said we just sit. [92]

S: Oh well they've got hold of the wrong end of the stick - they've probably mixed it up with Zen. I think I rather get the suspicion that by this time vipassana meditation covers a rather wide range of practices and they've probably got away a bit even from the Burmese New Satipatthana method.

Buddhadasa: One characteristic seems to be this course thing. You go along and do a short course and therefore you are encouraged to have results.

S: Well let's sort of go into this a little bit more. It's an intensive course? Well it's like our own retreats very much. It's an opportunity just to get down to it without distraction and do more than you normally would do. Now this is clearly quite necessary and quite sound. But you can also go on to reason, therefore, that it does you good to have a retreat of this sort or an intensive period. Suppose you do ten hours meditation a day, well that's obviously very good, but if you could do twenty hours that would be twice as good. And that sounds quite reasonable, but it isn't like that necessarily, not for everybody. Ten hours a day could you do a lot of good, twenty hours could give you a breakdown, not a breakthrough. So it's rather as though those who emphasize the intensive course are quite determined to get results at all costs. It's almost as though they don't care what sort of results. It's as though they haven't got confidence that if the Dharma is practised for a sufficiently long period there will be results. They don't seem to have that faith and that confidence, but they want the results to come very quickly and tangibly. And sometimes I get the impression that the teacher wants to reassure himself, you know, that he is able to teach and produce results, and that very tangibly in front of his own eyes within a very short period. Even if people are sort of breaking down and going off to hospital it doesn't matter, he's getting results. In this way it seems a bit like the encounter group sort of approach, because people don't really understand what is happening - there's no real apprehension of the goal, not a sort of real spiritual ideal. But if you're doing something, getting some sort of result, something happening, then they felt it's all right. But this is quite dangerous.

Wolf: You're not giving time to the transformation, path of transformation.

S: Not giving any time at all, no. So, sure, yes, periods of intensive training are very good, but one must go about it quite mindfully. Even very intensive periods for some people are very good indeed, even necessary, but not putting everybody automatically through this very intensive sort of situation and hoping for the best, hoping something will come out of it, at least for some of them. That's a different sort of matter. People could really be damaged by this. So, you know, the intensive course has its place, but it must be used judiciously and knowing what one is doing. Otherwise (unclear) [93] that you feel nothing's happening and you get a bit uneasy: 'Oh, maybe I'm not doing it right or maybe I'm not putting enough into this retreat, so OK, try to speed things up a bit, make it more intensive, get things happening,' and you reassure yourself in this way, because fundamentally you've no faith in the power of the Dharma. And also

people themselves want quick results, a crash course in Nirvana - well you see them advertised, in America at least, a three week course with the attainment of Nirvana - they're advertised! And people will go along. It may well be that some people are benefited, I don't say that they wouldn't be, but this sort of approach seems to appeal to a very unspiritual side (unclear) not to a spiritual side.

Devamitra: It's sensationalistic.

S: Sensationalistic and greedy. But it's the ego wanting to grasp something called Nirvana, this is what it really is, another spiritual goody. Anyway let's get back to this, because we haven't finished by a long chalk. So what happens according to the traditional Theravada way of practising meditation? What happens? First of all, having observed the precepts faithfully for a certain period at least, you take up your concentration exercise, you practice samatha bhavana, you purify and pacify your mind, you get gradually into a higher state of consciousness, you get into the dhyanas and you have a certain experience of the dhyanas - the superconscious states as they are sometimes called - and you gradually allow your whole being, your whole mind, to be sort of permeated and pervaded by the dhyana experience. Do you know what I mean? Have you got the idea? You know, as you get into the meditation more and more, you experience it more and more and you feel it influencing your whole being, including your mind. Your mind becomes fresher and clearer, sharper and brighter. Yes? This is what happens, eventually, (laughter) but then what happens? You take as it were this mind, which is no longer your old conditioned mind, although it isn't an Enlightened mind by any means. You could say it's a purified conditioned mind. It's a brighter mind, a clearer mind, and with this mind you start investigating the truth. You start turning over in your mind, or reflecting on, the truths which you've heard, which you've read in Buddhist scriptures. You start, say, reflecting on impermanence or upon selflessness, or even on Nirvana. Because your whole mind has been purified by the dhyana experience and it's much sharper and clearer, you start just seeing. As you reflect, say, on Nirvana you don't start cogitating and worrying as you usually would, but you just get a sort of glimpse, a sort of vision. And this is what is called vipassana. And this is how vipassana arises, or how it is cultivated according to Theravada tradition. Yes? Now Hui-neng is saying much the same thing, very much the same thing. What does he say? When he comes to prajna, which don't forget corresponds to vipassana: "The third is Prajna Incense, which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we consistently seek to realize our Mind-essence with wisdom." You've already achieved that state of samadhi which he defines as the absolute state of [94] imperturbability and tranquillity and peace under all circumstances - favourable and unfavourable. And then prajna consists in using this purified mind, this stable mind, to investigate the nature of reality. This is the way prajna arises. This is prajna - the functioning of that purified mind.

Mangala: So prajna is equivalent to vipassana.

S: Roughly, yes.

Mangala: And samatha with samadhi.

S: Roughly, yes. There are little shades of difference, but roughly they do correspond.

Ratnapani: When, before, we looked at the Eightfold Path first as a practice and then as an expression, it seems that here, that likewise, he's ... you've got the sort of the ordinary Theravadin practice, and he's got the same thing only it's very much higher.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: He's looking ultimately ..

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: ... at once.

S: Transposed to a higher level, as it were.

Ratnapani: Yes, this to me is very characteristic of whatever I've come across that's been called Zen, that - not mentioning the ordinary samatha and vipassana, but - everything else is a oneness, oneness or nothing at all.

S: Yes, right.

Ratnapani: And I wondered is that general of Zen? Is it what they try to do, or claim to do, or back up in any way?

S: Well I think again we have to look at the historical background. For instance let's try to think what the situation was like in China at the time that what we call Ch'an arose. The scriptures had been produced, the scriptures had been translated: the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures, (White) Lotus Sutra, Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Lankavatara. Lots of intellectual Chinese Buddhists were busy studying them and writing commentaries (unclear) editions. The monastic order had been introduced, the monastic rule had been introduced, bhikshus were observing the precepts quite rigidly, there were bhikshunis, various practices had been introduced. So what usually happened in that sort of situation is that everything, if you're not careful, becomes a bit too settled, a bit formal, a bit formalistic something of the spirit is lost. And then someone has to draw attention to this and (?)reaffirm the [95] spirit. So I think that what we call Ch'an was originally partly, to some extent, not so much a separate school as an attempt to keep alive the spirit of Buddhism.

You see the same sort of thing happening sometimes in Theravada countries even today when a certain monk - like for instance Bhikkhu Buddhadasa in Thailand has - while remaining a faithful Theravadin he's trying to revise the spirit. So this is all that Hui-neng was doing. Maybe he found that some of the monks were very formalistic, just as they sometimes were in India, and they were scrupulously observing certain rules and manners and customs and monastic etiquette, but they weren't bothering so much about their mental state. So therefore he tried to upgrade sila, and didn't speak about the observance of the

precepts - they were observing the precepts quite well - but about their mental state, which it was much more necessary, the skilful mental state. So I think we can see Ch'an partly as a movement within Chinese Buddhism as a whole to keep alive the inner spirit rather than as a sort of independent sect or school. So I think this accounts for this sort of upgrading tendency of Ch'an, which is I think quite definitely there and we'll encounter it again in connection with the Pure Land teaching. Hui-neng gives his own very spiritual interpretation of that. So this is what happens when you have an established tradition - and by this time Buddhism had been established in China for four or five hundred years - this is what happens when you have an established tradition and it's all settling down and becoming a bit too settled, a bit too comfortable, and the spirit is being lost a bit. So someone like Hui-neng draws attention to this and insists on the revival of the inner spirit of the whole thing. So I think this accounts for this sort of upgrading and reinterpreting attitude of the Zen movement. Of course nowadays Zen itself, it seems, has become very rigid and formalistic and narrow and sectarian.

Ratnapani: You know, when one manages to organize the ultimate too (unclear) the upgrading.

S: Quite, yes, and then if you formalize the upgrading it becomes just one-upmanship. I'm afraid Zen is very often guilty of that. Then you distinguish between Zen and Buddhism, and Zen, of course, goes one better than Buddhism. But Hui-neng is not doing this. He's reviving the spirit of Buddhism itself.

So "The third is Prajna Incense, which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we constantly seek to realize our Mind-essence with wisdom." That is to say this activity of that purified mind. This activity of investigating into the truth and trying to see reality - this is prajna in the more Theravadin sense. It's in this way that insight arises, insight develops. So therefore it's no use trying to develop vipassana without samadhi first. This is something of course which [96] does happen in the modern vipassana tradition - they don't attach much importance to samadhi or samatha; they try to go directly into vipassana, and they try to get you into that just by building up tensions rather than taking you through samatha or samadhi.

Devamitra: Would it be true to say that as long as you are still working through psychological problems, there's no point in even attempting any kind of vipassana practices.

S: There's no point in trying to develop vipassana so long as you don't have any real experience of samadhi, because then it will be just an intellectual understanding and you may confuse that with a genuine insight. So the basic Buddhist tradition, which is very strongly and very rightly emphasized in the Theravada, is that you must first purify your conditioned mind through the practice of the dhyanas before you can think of directing it towards reality and using it for the investigating of reality. And it's only when you've used it in that way - that purified mind in that way - that insight will develop and

you'll have a higher understanding of things and eventually develop wisdom. So it's the interposition of samadhi that makes all the difference between the intellectual understanding and the insight. You can have a first class intellectual understanding but no insight whatever. And sometimes a person can have a very limited intellectual understanding, but if their mind had been sort of saturated in the dhyana experience - well you'd see things differently .. have direct insight, as Hui-neng did.

Devamitra: For instance, in my own practice I can experience a reasonable degree of concentration in meditation and I'm fully aware of that state, and then you come out of the meditation and you just start indulging - or at least I just start indulging - in my kind of old neurotic states again. Is it ever that this kind of samadhi must already be permeating through to one's every activity before one can even begin, you know, to...

S: No. At least penetrating to and permeating one's mental activities, at least that. Usually what happens, the usual procedure is that you practise the samatha bhavana, and when you've gained a fair degree of experience of the dhyanas then you go on to a vipassana type practice in the same sitting as it were, and you use your sort of purified mind - the phrasing is in the Pali scriptures very often 'the mind pure and flexible'. The flexibility of the mind is stressed very much, and the suggestion seems to be that in its ordinary state the mind is very crude and stiff, but through the practice of the dhyanas, through the practice of samatha, the experience of samadhi, the mind not only becomes more flexible, not only becomes more refined, not only becomes more clear and pure, but becomes more flexible as well - it can be used in the real sense - becomes a more flexible instrument for the investigation [97] of reality. So therefore the usual practice is, according to Theravada tradition, that you go from samatha bhavana straight into vipassana bhavana in the same session, you know, without allowing your samadhi experience to be sort of dissipated by going back into the world.

Mangala: And so it corresponds very roughly to the practice we sometimes do of mindfulness of breathing and walking and chanting followed by just sitting.

S: Right, yes. Just sitting can be, I would say, though the Theravada might not agree, an insight type of practice. It can be. But you see the pattern according to the Theravada and the standard sort of procedure? First you observe the precepts - you restrain the more unruly manifestations of your unskilful states, and then you gradually get into a concentrated mental state, you gradually experience higher states of consciousness and your mind becomes transformed by those - your mind becomes clearer, purer, brighter, sharper, more flexible, and then, in the Buddha's own words, you bend that mind to the investigation of the truth. You try to see things as they are - with that mind. It's not a completely spiritual mind. It's not an Enlightened mind. It's only a purified and flexible mundane mind, but it's very different from your ordinary mundane mind, so it's with that mind that you investigate the truth and in this way the vipassana or prajna arises. So sometimes it happens that you know the scriptures quite well intellectually, and then you go through a course of meditation and you

purify your mind, and it will sometimes dawn on you what your intellectual understanding was all about. It's as though it was sort of something empty and the samadhi experience fills it and you think, oh yes, that's what that was all about. In a way you knew it all before, but in a way you knew nothing. The intellectual sort of shape was there, but there was no content to that shape, but the samadhi experience gives it content and then you have insight, not just intellectual understanding. So this is the standard procedure, really not only for the Theravada but for Mahayana meditation, even Vajrayana meditation.

Devamitra: Does this correspond to what I've heard you've been talking about recently - the Path of Irregular steps and the Path of Regular steps?

S: It does connect, but it isn't (unclear). So when you practise first of all sila, then samadhi, and then prajna, this is the Path of Regular Steps, but when you try to develop insight without a very strong basis of samadhi and a very shaky foundation, you can see that this is the Path of Irregular Steps, and then you'll find, you know, the vipassana, if you do manage it, it's very abortive and you can't develop it, you can't increase it, it remains very weak, so you have to go back then and strengthen the samadhi, and you might find that very weak, why? [98] Well because your morality is so short and so you might have to go right back and observe the precepts very strictly for a while and then come on to the samadhi and then come back to vipassana. You can certainly have odd experiences - that is, occasional experiences - all the way up, you know, but if you want to develop very strongly and powerfully, then you have to come back and develop in accordance with the Path of Regular Steps, because it says you can have an experience of a higher stage before the lower stage has been perfected, but you cannot perfect a higher stage until a lower stage has been perfected. You cannot have perfect samadhi until you've got perfect morality, but you have some samadhi experience while your morality remains very dubious indeed. But if you want to perfect your samadhi you will have to perfect your morality first, your moral observance, your ethics.

So this is standard Buddhist teaching, very basic, and it runs through all the three yanas, and Hui-neng is giving his own distinctive emphasis. But there are some other things added under the heading of prajna incense which are quite good, but which seem a bit unnecessary in a way: that we refrain from all evil - well one would have thought that came earlier anyway, it seems a bit unnecessary here - that we do all kinds of good acts with no attachment to the fruit of such action. Well that's also quite important. You do all sorts of good acts, but in a non-attached way - not claiming them for yourself. And that we are respectful towards our superiors, considerate of our inferiors, and sympathetic for the destitute and those in trouble. This seems to be a vague echo of the Sigalaka Sutta almost. Perhaps there's no need to say much about that. It doesn't really belong to this exposition, I think.

Subhuti: I wondered if that "we do all kinds of good acts with no attachment to the fruit of such action" corresponds to sila paramita transformed by prajna paramita.

S: It could be. It's a sort of spontaneous goodness.

Subhuti: Yes.

S: Not a disciplined goodness.

Subhuti: I wondered if it might be translated, the translation might not have brought that out sufficiently.

S: Well let's see what the other translation...

Sulocana: That would mean no compassion, wouldn't it?

S: Let's see what Luk says. There seems to be a different arrangement of material.

Buddhadasa: Yes, Christmas Humphreys puts this chapter right towards the end.

S: (unclear) Here we are, yes [p.50] "Third, the fragrance [99] of wisdom. If your self-mind is free from obstructions," - this is Luk - "if you constantly use your wisdom to look into and illumine your self-nature, if you do not commit evil actions, if while performing good actions your mind is free from all graspings, if you respect your superiors and have kind thoughts for your inferiors and if you have sympathy and compassion for orphans and those in distress, this is the fragrance of wisdom." It's more or less the same, isn't it, except the word compassion actually occurs. But perhaps it does develop it to the Path of Transformation.

Subhuti: This one says that although we do all kinds of good acts yet we do not let our minds become attached to the fruits of such actions which does sort of bring out the sort of prajna.

S: Yes, the prajna aspect, yes. Anyway, we've got here so far sila, samadhi, prajna. Now we've got a fourth one: the fourth is the Incense of Liberation. You get this also in Pali. In Pali you get this fourfold set - sila, samadhi, prajna, and vimukti or vimutti, again and again. This is still a standard Theravadin formula, which again recurs throughout Buddhist literature, whether Mahayana or Vajrayana or any other. The fourth is the Incense of Liberation, which means that our minds are in such a perfectly free state that they cling to nothing and bother themselves neither with good nor evil. In Pali tradition vimutti or vimukti or liberation, which comes in the positive nidanas by the way, is twofold - cetovimutti or liberation of mind and pannavimutti or liberation of wisdom. So it's a state of completely non-conditioned. But there's a fifth one after that. The fifth is the Incense of 'Knowledge gained because of the attainment of liberation.' This seems to correspond to the Pali knowledge of the destruction of the asravas. This is the last of the twelve positive nidanas. So you often get also in Pali not only the three, not only the four, but the five - sila, samadhi, prajna, vimukti, and asavakkhayanana, or asravaksayajnana in Sanskrit. This is a standard set. I must emphasize this again. This is a standard set throughout the Theravada Pali literature. Even though Hui-neng gives his own individual twist to it all, it's standard Buddhist teaching. And he says, "When our minds cling to neither

good nor evil, we should take care not to let them go to the other extreme of vacuity and remain in a state of inertia. At this point we should study and seek to broaden our knowledge so that we can understand our own minds, thoroughly understand the principles of Buddhism, be considerate of others in our dealings with them, get rid of the idea of ‘self’ and ‘existence’, and realize that up to the time when we obtain enlightenment (bodhi) our true nature (tathata) is immutable.” So he’s giving a little sort of Mahayana touch right at the end. Otherwise, as I’ve said, it’s all standard Buddhist teaching. [100]

Mangala: “Up to the time when we obtain enlightenment our true nature is immutable.” So what happens when we attain enlightenment?

S: You don’t gain anything extra. Your true nature hasn’t changed. You’ve awoken to your true nature, but it isn’t that it wasn’t there before so it remains immutable up to the time that you wake up to the fact that it’s been there all the time, but it’s always there. Again this is the more Mahayana way of looking at it. The Theravada doesn’t put it quite in that way; it’s quite content to say you realize Nirvana. It doesn’t say anything about realizing it was there all the time anyway. That can be misunderstood. So the Theravada, perhaps rather wisely, doesn’t say anything of that sort. It leaves you that to find out for yourself.

So this is rather interesting. Here’s Hui-neng who is the Sixth Patriarch of Ch’an or Zen and he’s giving very basic instructions straight out of the Theravada Pali scriptures apparently with just a slight Mahayana emphasis in the interpretation. Nothing more than that.

Are there any questions on this whole section? It’s quite important from a general Buddhist point of view. You should know all this very thoroughly indeed, you know, apart from this particular context - what is sila, what is samadhi, what is prajna, what is samatha, what is vipassana, and so on. This is all absolutely basic.

Mangala: What are these five steps collectively known as? The collective sort of group name.

S: I’m not sure. I’ve a vague recollection that they are sometimes simply called the four or the five skandhas, but in a different sense from the others, skandhas simply meaning divisions.

Subhuti: I’m not very clear about the latter two .. vimutti and asravaksaya.

S: Well vimutti, one can say, is the state of freedom, of complete spiritual transcendental freedom that you attain as the result of a full understanding of the meaning of truth due to the exercise of prajna. So vimutti in a sense corresponds to Nirvana or bodhi, and in the fifth stage is not only being Enlightened but knowing that you are Enlightened. This is always mentioned in Pali texts, strange to say. There’s always a sort of distinctive emphasis on this - that you are not only Enlightened, but know that you are Enlightened, obviously not in a sort of egoistic sense, but perhaps to stress the complete awakening, though

of course the Pali texts put it negatively - knowledge of the destruction of the asravas. That you've completely destroyed everything pertaining to the samsara. That you've nothing more to do.

Subhuti: That is knowledge that the asravas are actually destroyed? [101]

S: Yes, yes, yes, and that there's nothing more to be done.

Chintamani: Oh, I see. It's more like knowledge of the results of Enlightenment, or the, what results, yes.

S: Well knowledge of the fact that whatever hinders Enlightenment is now completely removed. There's no further work for you to do. It's done - katam karaniyam - that's the phrase, done what was to be done, the job is done katam kariniyam. This occurs hundreds of times in Pali.

Chintamani: Can you spell that out please?

S: Asravaksayajana?

Chintamani: Yes.

S: [spells it out] It's in the Three Jewels by the way - The Stages of the Path. [p.111, 4th edition, tr.]

Subhuti: I think it might be a better translation to talk in terms of knowledge that the asravas are destroyed than knowledge of the ...

S: That's true, yes.

Subhuti: Because I've never really understood what that meant.

S: Oh, it's quite definitely knowledge. Well the literal translation is "asrava destruction knowledge". It means the knowledge that the asravas have now been destroyed and Nirvana has been fully and finally attained, and that one is now completely Enlightened.

So these are the five stages of spiritual attainment and spiritual practice according to the Pali scriptures, and they reappear throughout the (unclear). Not just the sila, samadhi, prajna; the full text would include five.

Subhuti: One can talk about prajna as being identical with Enlightenment, and even samadhi as being ...

S: Yes, but then of course you need a different term to represent the activity of that purified mind in investigating reality. You can use vipassana for that, you can use prajna. Hui-neng himself uses prajna for that, later on. But in a way, vipassana or prajna is not really something that can be cultivated in the same way that samatha can be cultivated. It arises when you use your purified mind for the investigation of reality. Or it may not - sometimes it may not. But there's no sort of standard technique which is guaranteed to work, that's why we say it's much more of an art than a science.

Chintamani: Can vipassana for instance spontaneously arise as a result of samadhi, for instance if one was to have attained dhyanas in successive periods of meditation so that there was a constant flow and then was just living - encountering situations, could vipassana arise as a result of one's meditation? [102]

S: Oh yes, certainly. And it could arise, for instance, when you were, say, reading a text - you had a clear insight into it based ultimately on your previous samadhi experience. This is certainly possible, yes. Sometimes it happens that there is a sort of obstruction due to maybe your psychological constitution or your mental state at that time, which prevents you reaping the rewards immediately. There's a delayed action, and it may come to you later when you're just sort of quiet and still.

All right, let's go on then if we've dealt with that paragraph.

p.508: "Learned audience: This five-fold Incense perfumes us from within; we should not seek it without."

S: It's as though he is saying, well, don't bother with this ordinary sort of ritual incense burning. This is the real incense burning. It's these five kinds of incense that you should be setting light to within, not without.

p.508: "Now I want to explain to you this Ritual of Repentance which is designed to expiate our sins whether committed in the present, the past or future lives; and whether physical, or by word, or by thought. (In Buddhist thought, sin is considered not in a legal sense as something to be punished, or forgiven, or atoned for by sacrifice, but in its cause-and-effect aspect of Karma and its maturing.)"

S: (unclear) So what is Hui-neng now saying? He says, "Now I want to explain to you this Ritual of Repentance." He's given a broad introduction to the whole path. He's sort of mapped out before them sila, samadhi, prajna, vimukti and then knowledge of the destruction of the asravas. He's given them a bird's eye view of the whole spiritual path in predominantly Theravadin terms, but with a slight Mahayana emphasis especially towards the end. And then he says, as it were, what's holding us back? Well, for want of a better word, it's our sins. So he says, "I now want to explain to you this Ritual of Repentance which is designed to expiate our sins whether committed in the present, the past or future lives; and whether physical, or by word, or by thought." And then the editor adds, you know (unclear). So having given them this bird's eye view of the whole path Hui-neng now wants to start them actually practising. Practice begins with repentance, and that's very, very interesting - repentance and purification we could say. All right, let's go on then, see what that repentance is.

p.508: "Please follow me carefully and repeat together what I am going to say."

S: Then they recite, apparently, all together, just like we do the sevenfold puja.

Devamitra: "May we, disciples (from such and such a village), be always free

from the taint of ignorance and delusion. We repent of all our past, present and future sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or in ignorance. May their Karma be expiated at once and may they never rise again.” [103]

S: It seems to me that though there seem to be three sort of states that are repented of, they seem to cover the five poisons. Do you remember what the five poisons are?

Voices: Greed, hatred, jealousy, envy...

S: Envy also and conceit. Anyway you get the general idea that you’re repenting of your various unskilful states and the deeds that you’ve done as a result of them and you’re trying to wipe them out.

Buddhadasa: Could repentance and confession be synonymous here?

S: In effect, yes. When you confess you’re bringing all your evil actions and thoughts and words out into the open and you’re expressing regret for them, you’re not just indulging yourself and sort of bragging about them, and you’re confessing and repenting and you’re resolving and promising to do better for the future. Let’s go on and read the whole of this and then have a general discussion about it.

p.509: “As you will notice, there are two aspects to this repentance ritual. One refers to repentance for past sin; we ought to repent for all our past sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or ignorance, arrogance or dishonesty, jealousy or envy, so as to put an end to all of them. This is one aspect of repentance. The other aspect refers to future conduct. Having realized the evil nature of our transgression we make a vow that hereafter we will put an end to all evil deeds committed under delusion or ignorance, arrogance or dishonesty, jealousy or envy, and that we will never sin again. This is the second aspect of repentance. On account of ignorance and delusion, common people do not always appreciate that in repentance they must not only feel sorry for their past sins, but must also refrain from sinning in the future. Since they often take no heed as to their future conduct, they commit the same sins over again almost before the past ones are expiated. How can one call that repentance?”

S: One could say that repentance represents the making of a new start, turning over a new leaf, beginning to lead a new life, giving up the old, like, making a fresh start, and realizing the need to do this - that the past wasn’t very good and you need to change, and you resolve to change. Repentance is very much like this. You notice there’s no reference to any feeling of guilt or remorse. It means that quite objectively: just look back over your own past, or yourself as you were, and you say, well, this just isn’t good enough, I’m going to change this, there’s going to be a fresh start, from this minute. That’s the real repentance. So Hui-neng is emphasizing this right at the beginning, as if to say that you must start with this feeling that you are going to make a completely new start - that the past wasn’t good enough, that past ‘you’ wasn’t good enough. There’s going to be a completely new ‘you’. So this is repentance. Any questions?

Subhuti: It occurred to me you said there's no question of guilt involved. [104]
I wonder whether guilt should really, if that isn't really what guilt is. Do you
know what I mean? We tend to ...

S: (unclear) what it actually is?

Subhuti: Yes, or what it should be, but we use it for fear of retribution rather
than a deeper acknowledgement of ...

S: I don't think it's even a fear of retribution. I mean guilt generally is a sort
of awareness that if people knew they would think badly of you, and you want
them to think well of you. At the same time you feel you don't deserve that.
You feel all bad about it. That's the feeling of guilt usually, isn't it?

Buddhadasa: (unclear) lingering regret as though you've caused an effect to
happen that you can't wipe out, but you can't resolve it.

Chintamani: (unclear) didn't really want it to happen.

S: I think guilt's more than that. I think it's worse than that.

Devamitra: It's kind of anxiety.

S: Guilt is anxiety too, yes. It involves anxiety because you're afraid of losing
someone's approval or affection.

Wolf: Not just your own?

S: Not just your own, no.

Wolf: ..because of being aware that...

S: I think guilt is to a great extent a social thing.

Buddhadasa: Something you're not prepared to admit.

S: Because you don't want to face up to the fact that you've forfeited something
that you very much want, i.e. other people's approval, and perhaps you haven't
got enough strength of mind to stand on your own two feet without it. You
can see an animal looking guilty. Have you ever noticed this? You can see a
dog, even a cat, looking guilty. Now what does this mean? It realizes it's done
something it shouldn't have done and you're not going to give it the affection it
wants because of that. It's forfeited your affection and it becomes all sort of sly
and slinking. And I think it's much the same with humans - with children and
adults. I think guilt is more of this nature. And in Christianity it's that you've
forfeited the approval, or even the love, of God - that God is angry with you.

Sulocana: It's not always a person that's being feared.

S: I think there's a person around somewhere.

Wolf: I feel there are situations where you feel a different part of your make-up
feels guilty about something that a baser part of yourself has done and other

people don't come into it, surely, in a case like that, but you still feel guilty.
[105]

S: Yes, when you've introjected the other person, you see. You've got your own little (unclear) inside which is looking down on that nasty dirty part of you that's done it, and disapproving, and that part of you therefore is squirming and feeling guilty. You've introjected your parental figure perhaps, or even God.

Buddhadasa: That's what I was referring to (unclear).

Wolf: This would be useful in getting to know yourself, I should say, if you have this feeling and (unclear).

S: Well why do I feel like this? I mean is it something that, you know, is objectively right, or am I just being rather foolish and too bothered about what other people think? Some people feel guilty about being Buddhists.

Chintamani: It'll be quite a revelation for a lot of people when they suddenly discover one day that they believe in God.

S: Hmmm. Are people acquainted with this feeling of guilt?

Voices: Yes.

Buddhadasa: There are two or three things in the back of my head that one day I'd really like to get out of the way.

Mangala: I think it's quite hard to get this guilt from worrying you (unclear) worrying you about something you've done.

Ratnapani: I think guilt makes you worry. I think if there's no guilt the worry won't worry, it's be a more cool consideration of what's been done or undone.

S: Well guilt ties you to the past, doesn't it?

Voices: Yes.

S: And this is what Hui-neng may be getting at in parts: unhook yourself from the past, make a fresh start. You can't make a fresh start if you're feeling guilty because guilt ties you to the past. The thing is what I did yesterday or the day before, even ten years ago. Or maybe even unconsciously: you were not thinking, but the mechanisms are there, something you did as a small child, but it's completely forgotten.

Voice:

S: You wanted to be punished.. (unclear)

Sulocana: (unclear).. and it wasn't bad things really it was just against the grown-up rules made one feel guilty. [106]

S: If as a result you're still suffering from that, you're still a child oppressed by the grown-up rules.

Wolf: And this would be why we feel guilty about not making a fresh start in fact.

S: You'll tie yourself in endless knots.

Buddhadasa: (unclear) personal introduction of a personal super-ego (unclear)

S: Well this is just straightforward Freudian teaching. According to Freud what we call the conscience is the introjected voice of your parents saying, 'Don't do this, Johnny, don't do that,' and therefore you don't need to have your parents around for the rest of your life because you've got them inside and they are controlling you from inside. This is what he calls, in his language, the super-ego. I mean, you can read it all up in Freud: ego and super-ego.

So I think my own feeling is that it always comes back to a person and that it's always sort of something to do with parents. It may not actually be parents, but it's sort of parental. And if you're not careful you'll take the Buddha like this, you know, the Buddha laying down all these rules.

Buddhadasa: You're not being mindful.

Chintamani: Don't pick your nose in front of the rupa.

S: But I think there's also quite a bit of floating guilt just as there's quite a bit of floating anxiety. You feel guilty even though you're not aware of having done any particular thing that you ought to be feeling guilty about.

Chintamani: That really shows itself in trying desperately to please everyone.

S: Why should you care so much about what other people think and try to please them? You're teetering on the brink of guilt all the time.

Subhuti: There's a sort of guilt for existing, isn't there, that sometimes arises (unclear)

S: Why do you think this is?

Subhuti: I should think actually because parents make you feel unwanted, make you feel that your existence is a nuisance.

Devamitra: I think a word which was sort of constantly flung at me when I was a kid was, 'Don't you feel ashamed?' and (unclear)

S: Well that has connotations of guilt. [107]

Devamitra: I sometimes still squirm for things that I did when I was a kid, you know. I'll be sitting on my own and a sudden recollection will come up and I'll screw up inside and an incredible feeling of yes, I did feel ashamed.

S: Well sometimes parents say things like - this is what I was told some time ago by someone - we've given you all this wonderful education and you've thrown it all away, and we've saved up for this and we've spent money on it and we gave you the very best, but you don't appreciate it, and so on and so forth: 'Don't you feel ashamed of yourself?'

Ratnapani: They don't even have to say it. My parents didn't say it - they knew they shouldn't say things like that, but they felt it sometimes and I picked up on that, although they intellectually had an understanding of what harm they could do.

Devamitra: Is there a sort of... for a lot of negative emotions there's a kind of positive equivalent, you know, something positive. What is it with guilt?

S: Oh it's the, as it were, the Buddha-pride: 'How could I do such a thing? After all, I have been inducted into the family of the Buddha. I am a would-be Bodhisattva,' or you can say, 'Well, I have been ordained. How can I be guilty of such a thing? I couldn't possibly do that. I'd be letting down the side. I'd be letting down the Buddha. I'd be letting down all my friends.

Wolf: Isn't it rather easy also to load your own hang-ups which you can't cope with back onto your parents? How is this something we could think about here? Because there's an awful lot of people who come through all these sorts of things without hang-ups in a balanced way, but there are one or two of us perhaps that (unclear) that we have our hang-ups and perhaps there are certain reasons for these hang-ups. So why, before we find out these reasons (unclear), you know, shelve them onto, 'Well that's my Dad's (?)fault, Mother's (?)fault because they made me feel guilty,' and so on. I think shouldn't this be looked at rather coolly and ...

S: Well I think this often happens when you do look at things coolly. You see that it was your parents, and that this is in actual fact where it started. And so it isn't sort of just throwing the hang-up on to them. You see that the aetiology of it is there, but now it's up to you to do something about it, but you do see that that's how it all started.

Subhuti: There's no question of blame; it's a question of a rational investigation.

S: Of course, sometimes it happens the son isn't being good and he's not getting on well and he blames his parents in an indiscriminate way without actually seeing that they had done something which is producing these effects in him. [108] That obviously isn't helpful to anybody because it's a portmanteau blaming of the older generation. But I'm afraid only too often - and I know this, dealing with people - parents seem to play such a negative part. I'd say eight out of ten of the people who come into the Friends, at least, have got a negative history of parental influence, eight out of ten easily. How many people have we got in the Friends - maybe we're not sort of characteristic - that keep up a quite happy, healthy, positive relationship with their parents? They're very, very few; at best they tolerate them, or, 'Oh I suppose I ought to go and see them again, don't look forward to it very much,' and so forth. That seems to be the average picture. It seems a great pity. But I think even though this (unclear) to blame, it's up to the children to work on it, and not only that to work on their relationship with their parents and try to make it more positive. Otherwise it's something left over from the past and you (unclear) by resentment if not by guilt.

Chintamani: And by doing that you can really become aware of how in many ways in resolving the situation with the parents you're not resolving inner conflict. It's very much the parents within - as you say it's not the parents outside.

S: There's not much point in leaving home and you carry mum and dad around with you all the time.

Wolf: And one hears examples of this (fault in recording) . . . six months, but when it goes on for six years, six years.

S: Once you've seen, 'Well yes, OK, it was my parents, that's how it all started, well then you can start working on it, but once you're started working on it, well, that should be resolved sooner or later. You can blame your parents for what they did, but you can't blame your parents for what the introjected parental image is continuing to do after you've seen through the whole thing. It's up to you to root out that introjected parental image. The fact that it remains there is not their fault. That's your fault. But out from the past, you know, is the main message here. Guilt ties you to the past, resentment ties you to the past, and maybe you can say that if you don't have a relationship with your parents in the present your relationship with them will be a relationship in the past. I think one can say there is no such thing as a non-relationship with your parents. You always have a relationship with your parents, whether you like it or not. You can't get away from that fact. It's either in the present and therefore healthy to the extent that it's in the present, or it's in the past and to the extent that it's in the past it's unhealthy. If you don't relate to them as an adult you must relate to them as a child, but there's no non-relating to them. In other words you can't leave your parents. That's impossible - not until you become enlightened anyway. You can't leave your parents, so you might as well have a [109] positive relationship as a negative one. You've no choice.

Chintamani: This comes back to . . .

S: So if you've allowed your relationship with your parents to fall into abeyance it means that deep down you're relating to them still as a child. Unless of course you have you know developed, matured, you've tried to establish a mature relationship, and they are not capable of that - sometimes that happens - and as a mature decision you don't see very much of them, or even not see them at all. That's different. But that's very rare it seems. Usually the relationship is allowed to fall into abeyance, which means it remains immature. So this is one of the things I've been emphasizing recently: that as individuals develop they must sort out their relationship with their parents. I think this is quite important. They must have a mature positive relationship, if the situation permits, in the present. It doesn't mean, of course, living with your parents, or necessarily seeing them every day, but whatever relationship is there being very open and positive and in the present. Otherwise it remains something unsorted out and ties you to the past, remains something a bit infantile or at least immature. So all this can be included also in repentance, this is one to the things that repentance involves. So do you relate to your parents here and now in the present or do you still

feel a little boy when you go home? Some people do. Maybe it's your parents' fault: they don't see that you've grown up, but have you tried to tell them or communicate the fact? Don't just say, 'Oh Mummy, I'm grown up. Look!' But you know just by relating to them as a human being, if that's what you're after.

Wolf: It's quite possible that the parents themselves are still hung up over their parents.

S: Oh yes, but this - one could say - is part of the whole meaning of repentance. Anyway, I think we'd better stop there and have our coffee. . .

..[apres cafe]..

S: Well whatever society does, well I'm going to do so and so - regardless. I think sort of take this stance from henceforth and if you see an Order member falling in love you should take it as a sort of crisis in his psychological and spiritual development and rally round - I mean this is really serious, you know, usually it isn't a healthy thing at all and can be really seriously set back by that, even lost. This is really like being possessed and taken over.

p.509: "Learned Audience: Having repented of our sins, we should take the following all-embracing vows: Listen very carefully. Our Mind-essence is potentially an infinite number of sentient beings. We vow to bring them all unto deliverance. We vow to get rid of the evil passions of our minds, inexhaustible though they seem. We vow to learn the countless systems of Dharma in our Mind-essence. We vow to attain the Supreme Buddhahood of our Mind-essence."

S: These of course are the four great vows, four great Bodhisattva vows, [110] of the Mahayana. So it seems at this point Hui-neng is introducing the audience to the Bodhisattva ideal, to Mahayana Buddhism specifically. You see? First of all he's given a sort of resume of the Theravada, then he's spoken about repentance as the first step, and then he's speaking about the development of the Bodhisattva attitude, even the Bodhicitta, we may say, as expressed in these four great vows of the Mahayana, these four Bodhisattva vows. Usually these are translated as the vow to deliver all beings from difficulties, the vow to get rid of all mental defilements, the vow to learn the Dharma, being different interpretations and presentations of the teaching, and the vow to deliver, the vow to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. But here again Hui-neng adds something of his own which is what is brought out in the sentence. "Our Mind-essence is potentially an infinite number of sentient beings." This more literal translation which we get elsewhere reads: "We vow to bring to deliverance all the sentient beings of our own mind." This is Hui-neng's sort of distinctive contribution which reflects the Lankavatara-type teaching. That you mustn't think that the individual beings, the dharmas, are something separate from your mind. Here of course it's meant not the individual mind, but the One Mind, which is ultimately your mind, though not your mind in the sense that your individual mind possesses it, but which is the ultimate Truth of your mind, of you, which you can get down to sort of piercing through all the different layers and levels of your own mind until you come out beyond your own mind on the

other side and find the One Mind. And it's that One Mind which is equally the mind of all sentient beings. So you're really taking the vow to deliver all the sentient beings of your own mind, your own One Mind, True Mind. So he presents all the vows in this sort of way against this sort of Lankavatara-type background. In other words he makes it clear it's not something individualistic in the ordinary sense. So we may say that by means of these vows, pranidhanas, Hui-neng introduces the audience to the Mahayana attitude. This is what it really means, but we still don't have anything Ch'an or Zen-like, but he gives an explanations so let's go on to that.

p.510: "We have vowed to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings; but what does that mean? It does not mean that I, Hui-neng, is going to deliver them. And who are these sentient beings, potential within our minds? They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind, and such like - all these are sentient beings. Each of them has to be delivered by oneself by means of his own Essence of Mind; only by his own deliverance, is it genuine."

S: It's not very easy to understand what he means, but he seems to mean something like this: first of all, we have now vowed to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings - "but what does that mean? It does not mean that I, Hui-neng, am going to deliver them." It's more that if you speak in terms of Hui-neng at all, Hui-neng is going to allow the light of the One Mind to break through his own individual mind with that light of the One Mind, which is not 'his' but which manifests through him, which is going to effect the work of deliverance. [111] It's more like that - just like the Bodhicitta. When you take the Bodhisattva Vow you don't say, well, I'm going to deliver everybody, I'm going to save everybody, but you practise in such a way, you develop such an attitude, that within the depths of your individual mind the Bodhicitta can arise, the Bodhicitta can emerge, and it's that Bodhicitta working through you that is going to lead others to Enlightenment. It's that cosmic will to Enlightenment manifesting through the individual that effects the Bodhisattva's task. So it's something like that which is meant: "It does not mean that I, Hui-neng, am going to deliver them."

And in any case, who are these sentient beings potential within our minds? "They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind and such like - all these are sentient beings." Each of them has to be delivered by oneself, by means of his own Essence of Mind; only by his own deliverance is it genuine. One can take this in two ways: metaphysical and psychological. Metaphysically one takes it in the light of the Lankavatara Sutra: the One Mind is ultimately my mind, because I can break through my mind into that One Mind and realize it. So can all other living beings, so we've all got the one same mind. So we all belong to it. We are all beings of that one true mind. So all the sentient beings that have to be delivered are sentient beings of that one true mind, which is my mind. So, in a sense, when I work trying to help others - 'I' as identified with that one true mind - essentially I am only trying to deliver, am only trying to purify, the beings of and within my own mind. They're all the manifestations of that One Mind as I am. So in trying to save them, it's me or, if you like, the

One Mind, that's come to purify itself. This is how I should think and feel. Not that it's me as an individual has any particular (unclear) doing all the work.

But that's metaphysically. Psychologically one can say it's even more interesting. Why? They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind, and such like - all these are sentient beings. (pause) (laughter) (unclear) This relates to something very important indeed. It's more elementary, it's more simple to understand. It's very important. That is the fact that we are not integrated. We are not (unclear) individuals, we're a collection of selves pulling in different directions, and almost the first thing we have to do is to unify our different selves, unify our energies, and this is one aspect of concentration and meditation, it's a process of progressive self-unification. That's why you feel more energy - because the energies have come together, they're not fighting against one another now, they're all working together, they're one stream of energy. And this is why you feel much better, much more yourself, when all your energies are together and you're integrated. Until then it's like being split into a number of selves, even warring [112] selves, and every now and then this self is victorious, rules the roost for a while. This is why you can't sort of work away at something over a long period, because sometimes the decision to work is taken by one particular self, but after a few days that self is deposed and another self is ruling and it's trying to get on with its thing. You haven't got one unified self which is carrying forward the whole thing all the time. That's why you've got all these ups and downs. So this particular passage seems to refer to that: "They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind, . . . all these are sentient beings." Even our particular mental states sort of function autonomously, and this is very much akin to what we were talking about a little while ago: possession. We've got a lot of sort of autonomous complexes, you know, in our unconscious, to use psychological language. Every now and then they come up and they take over and 'we', in other words all the other selves, are helpless. Temporarily they are uppermost, they are strongest, and there's nothing that we can do about it.

So maybe what Hui-neng is saying from a psychological point of view is that we must unify ourselves, we must deliver all these sentient beings of our own mind, yes, our own mutual mind. In other words we must destroy their autonomy. We must unify them. We must unify ourselves: "Each of them had to be delivered by oneself by means of his own Essence of Mind." Integrate them in the light of a higher spiritual principle. They are all on the same level, but this isn't a question of one becoming stronger and keeping all the others down. It's a question of invoking some higher aspect of oneself, one's own Essence of Mind, one's own True Mind, and bringing them all together in the light of that. That is what is required.

I remember a sort of terrible experience I had some time ago with someone who fell I love. I don't know whether I've told this before, some of you might have heard this. This happened when I was at Hampstead, and I had a friend in advertising, and this friend had another friend in advertising and this other friend happened to fall in love with a girl in advertising who was also, who was in

love with the first friend (unclear) this is how it goes round the merry-go-round. Anyway, this second friend didn't know that the girl was in love with the first friend who remained on friendly terms with him. Anyway what happened was this: one day this friend of mind - the first chap in advertising - he came to see me at the Hampstead Vihara and he said, 'I'm really worried about so and so.' and he told me the whole story. Apparently this other chap had fallen very violently in love with this girl who didn't want anything to do with him, but he pestered her and pestered her to such an extent that she had to call in the police and he'd been warned off. He wasn't allowed to approach her or to accost her. And this had been going on for some months and the chap had been getting more and more [113] miserable and he turned suicidal and in the course of the day at work - they worked together - he'd been saying that he was going to commit suicide. And this friend of mind said, 'You know, I think he might do it. I feel quite worried about him,' he said, 'so much that I've given him the telephone number here and I've told him that I'll be here at seven o'clock this evening. If he feels like ringing me he can ring me.' But then he said, 'I hope you don't mind.' So I said of course not. So at seven o'clock the chap did ring and he said he was going to commit suicide. He was ringing from home about two or three miles out of London. He was going to commit suicide. Well this friend of mine was talking to him on the phone from seven till nine, and he had his own problems. Anyway, this chap, he sort of covered the phone and said, 'Would you mind talking to him?' I'd never met him or spoken to him on the phone. So I saw this friend of mine was in quite a state (unclear) so I said, 'OK I'll do what I can.' So this friend of mind said to his friend, 'I feel a bit tired now; I just want to go outside for a bit of air, but if you don't ring off I've a friend here. He's a psychologist and a Buddhist monk, he might be able to help you.' So the phone was handed over to me. I started talking to this chap. As soon as he spoke to me I had a definite intuition, in fact I knew, this man was possessed. He'd been taken over and there was no hope. It'd gone too far. And it was as though I'm not talking to him, I was talking to some entity that possessed him. But anyway I did what I could, and to cut a long story short, turn by turn we were talking to this chap without stopping until two o'clock in the morning, when my friend felt it was OK, you know, nothing was going to happen. So we rang off, but told him to call back if he felt like it. At seven o'clock in the morning there was a phone call from this chap's mother that he'd committed suicide at five o'clock that morning, those three hours after ringing, and that was that. [Moving Against the Stream, p.100, tr.]

But what I remember was my impression that he was possessed. I wasn't talking to anything human, the sound of the voice and everything: it was a possession. Now what actually happened I wouldn't care to say, you know, whether it was some demon or some autonomous complex, but that was my actual impression and experience: that he was possessed. At the very least there was some other part of himself that had become completely autonomous and was a sort of negative part. And that had taken control of the whole personality and there was nothing you could do about it and that was driving him to destruction. So

this is in a way what happens if you let these things get out of hand, if you let any sort of unhealthy mental state possess you, if you don't do something about it. So this is why perhaps Hui-neng says that all these minds within ourselves, the infatuated minds you could say, the deluded mind, [114] the hating mind, you know, will just go on and on without reference to the rest of the being, the personality. These sort of autonomous complexes: they must all be delivered, their autonomy must be destroyed. There must be one complete, whole, integrated person, otherwise you just can't go ahead. But each of them has to be delivered by oneself by means of his own Essence of Mind, but this of course doesn't seem that one of the selves among your various selves becomes stronger, and this holds down the rest. No. That isn't deliverance. It's only the Essence of Mind, it's only by invoking the higher spiritual principles within yourself that you can bring all these together and integrate them. Only then is it genuine. All right, let's hear what else Hui-neng has to say.

p.510: "Now, what does it mean, 'delivering oneself by one's own Essence of Mind?' It means the deliverance of the ignorant, delusive, and the vexatious beings that spring up within our own mind, by means of Right Views."

S: Let's stop there. It means the deliverance of the ignorant, delusive, and the vexatious beings that spring up within our own mind, by means of right views. And this is really very important. He speaks of these - oh, let's go back a bit. Let's not go ahead too rapidly. If you have an unskilful mental state and if you indulge it, if you feed it, it becomes like, like an individual being. It develops a sort of life of its own independently of you. It becomes a sort of autonomous complex, a sort of being. This is the dangerous situation that can arise. For instance, if you allow hatred for a while and you indulge it, then you can build up that hatred and so much energy goes into it, there's so much of you in that hatred, it almost develops a life of its own and there's nothing that you can do about it. It's quite irrational. So therefore Hui-neng speaks of the deliverance of these ignorant, delusive, and vexatious beings that spring up within our own mind. And how are they to be delivered? By right views. So this stresses the importance of right views. Obviously and one could also say that they've sprung up because of wrong views.

Now just take an ordinary example, what we've been talking about, say, falling in love. This is strengthened by wrong views: that everybody falls in love, you know, it's something you have to go through, it's a wonderful sort of state, it's the real basis of marriage, it's what life is all about. These are all wrong views. Yes? So you can counteract this only with the help of right views, and this is one of the reasons why, and we were talking about this recently somewhere, the tenth precept is - what is it - abstention from miccha-ditthis. And this seems to be more and more important. It just seems to me of late, just thinking things over, that even within the Friends we are infected with all sorts of wrong views which distort our whole approach to Buddhism and our whole approach to the spiritual life. So this is a very important aspect indeed, and therefore Hui-neng goes on to say: "With the aid of Right Views and Prajna, the barriers thrown

up by these delusive and ignorant beings may be broken down; so that each of us will be in a position to deliver himself by his own efforts. The false will be delivered by truthfulness; the delusive by enlightenment; the ignorant by wisdom; and the malevolent by benevolence; such is genuine deliverance.” [115] This is the practice of cultivating the opposites, you remember. You oppose right views to wrong views, love to hatred, Enlightenment to non-enlightenment and so on.

Chintamani: So something like infatuation could come under ignorance.

S: Yes, it involves ignorance certainly, in a spiritual sense. But I think, as I said, this whole question of right views and false views is a very important one and we have to try to become aware of the extent to which we are influenced by false views and especially those that disguise themselves as advanced thoughts or progressive thought or liberal thinking - anything up to date and fashionable that people tend to get into. We must be very suspicious of this or at least very wary about it. There’s a sort of climate of opinion which is contemporary and supposed to be progressive that we take for granted as true regardless of whether it’s in accordance with the Dharma or not. Often we don’t even examine it or we assume that the Dharma must be in accordance with that.

Ratnapani: It can be said that (unclear) to have opinions and I mean one obviously can’t get away from them because it’s, well you haven’t got the knowledge therefore (unclear) in a way, but opinions themselves I feel are - right or wrong - opinions can be a bit - are risky things, say. If one has an opinion it should automatically be examined.

S: Right. It may turn out to be right. It may turn out to be the right opinion, it may be very helpful, but it should always be examined and you should know as best you can that it is (unclear) but not just assume anything or accept anything because it happens to be around. But there seems to be a sort of, what shall I say, in the media especially, a whole sort of band of people which poses the up to date, the progressive, the fashionable, the advanced, the liberated, and they are not anything of the sort at all, and a lot of people tend to sort of take their cue from them under the impression that they are being liberated in the psychological sense, not Buddhist sense.

Chintamani: (unclear) the reactions of the time.

S: Right. But some of the things they say, taken objectively may be quite true and valid. That’s OK if we find on examination that they are, but what I’m getting at is we tend to accept automatically what the fashionable communicators say. We tend to be influenced by them against our knowledge. We don’t know that we’re being influenced, but we are - we are not free from that - and even our vision of Buddhism is distorted. For instance a famous example was - this is the influence of psychology, perhaps psychology misread - that you mustn’t suppress anything. If you’ve got a feeling you’ve got to let it out. Now how many of our Friends have had this idea? It’s got to be let out. But it certainly isn’t the Buddhist point of view. Experience your feelings, but then consider, [116] well is it skilful to express it or not. If it isn’t, don’t. But not that you’ve

got to express it at all costs regardless of the cost to yourself or others. But some people seem to have the impression, 'Well I've got to express my feelings at all costs. Well if others don't like it too bad. If it isn't good for them well too bad. It's what I want to do and that's my thing. But that isn't the Buddhist attitude. But we seem to have - even within the Friends - to have taken this over quite a bit from sort of non-Buddhist influences and ideologies. It's sort of currently fashionable.

Ratnapani: I feel that, on this fashionable thing, within the Friends we have even good positive bits of the Dharma come into fashion and go out. One week everybody's into such and such a phrase or teaching, and another month it seems to be something else. (unclear)

S: I've not been in a position to know this for more than a year now. Which bits for instance?

Voice: Spiritual Materialism.

Ratnapani: Yes that was the one. Everybody had that book for a few weeks.

Voice: Uh?

Ratnapani: 'Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism' [by Chogyam Trungpa, 1973, tr.] (unclear) were coming up with the same phrase and the same angle on things.

Buddhadasa: (unclear) on the national level that everybody's using at the moment in the media (unclear). Everybody's using it now.

S; (unclear) 'at this present moment in time' (laughter), that is to say: now! (laughter) 'At this present moment in time'. See what I mean? This is they statement they give. But they all pick it up, everybody (unclear).

Buddhadasa: 'And as for me personally' (laughter).

Ratnapani: 'I' went right out of fashion.. You couldn't say 'I'. 'One' was OK, you know.

Buddhadasa: On the other hand I feel that when we do start thinking about things worth saying on Dharma matters (unclear) it shows we are beginning to work together on other levels among the Order.

S: I think it doesn't matter much that different aspects [117] of the Dharma are fashionable at different times, because after all it is the Dharma, and so long as the period during which they are fashionable they do good, and maybe they correspond to people's needs at that particular time, but I'm referring more to fashions in false views.

Ratnapani: But there's even a fashion in right views.

S: (unclear) If it happens that a number of people in the Friends are going through the same sort of spiritual difficulties or the same stage of spiritual

growth and are therefore finding particular passages helpful at the same time, well you couldn't really dismiss this as just a fashion.

Ratnapani: No.

S: But if it was that someone read a book and started using certain phrases, and other people picked up the phrases without reading the book, you know, it just became the sort of phrase to use, you could regard that as a fashion.

Subhuti (unclear) (regular steps)? [118]

S: Next paragraph.

p.510: "As to the vow, 'to get rid of the inexhaustible evil passions', that refers to the transcendence of our own unreliable and illusive thinking faculty by the transcendental Wisdom (Prajna) of our Mind-essence."

S: Hmmm, that's rather interesting: that we get rid of the evil passions - that's klesas, defilements, all unskillful states. You get rid of them ultimately only by means of wisdom - transcendental wisdom. So he's going right from the ethical into the transcendental. It's not just a moral matter. It means there's no solution to a problem on its own level.

p.510: "As to the vow: 'to learn the countless systems of Dharma'; there will be no true knowledge until we have been brought face to face with our Essence of Mind, by our conforming to the orthodox Dharma on all occasions."

S: 'Orthodox Dharma' is probably, if it does represent a Sanskrit original, corresponding to Saddhamma or Satyadharma - the true, the real Dharma, doctrine, teaching, truth, law - not orthodoxy of course in the Western Christian, Catholic sense as, you know, dogma laid down by an authoritative body. So, "There will be no true knowledge until we have been brought face to face with our Essence of Mind, by our conforming to the orthodox Dharma" - the truth, the real principle, the true teaching - "on all occasions". This is very important. If you want to come face to face with the Essence of Mind you must conform to, be in harmony with, or practise, the real truth, the real teaching, on all occasions. No exceptions, no loopholes: on all occasions. So it's completely uncompromising.

p.510: "As to the vow: 'to attain Supreme Buddhahood'; I wish to point out that when we are able to control our minds to follow the true and orthodox Dharma on all occasions, and when Prajna already arises in our minds, so that we can hold aloof from both ignorance and enlightenment, and can do away with falsehood as well as truth, then we may consider ourselves as having realized our Buddha-nature, or, in other words, having attained Buddhahood."

S: So in other words Hui-neng is giving his own rather individual explanation of, or interpretation of, the four great vows of the Mahayana, and there's a little bit of what we may perhaps call Ch'an from all that. Otherwise it's just plain, straightforward Mahayana Buddhism.

p.510: “Learned Audience: we should always bear in mind that we are following the Path for thereby strength is added to our vows. Now, since we have taken the fourfold vows, I will teach you the Ritual of the threefold Guidance.” [119] The threefold guidance is - it seems to correspond to the three ‘going for refuge’, but let’s see in detail.

pp.510-11 “We take ‘Enlightenment’ as our Guide, because it is the fruit of both merit and wisdom. We take ‘Orthodoxy’ as our Guide, because it is the best way to get rid of desire. We take ‘Purity’ as our Guide, because it is the noblest quality of mankind.”

S: These are the refuges, but there’s a slight twist at the same time. Incidentally, I’m not quite sure whether all these things are in the right order. Hui-neng’s discourses and sayings were compiled after his death. But you notice that we first of all had a resume of the whole path from the Theravada point of view - a resume of the path in terms of sila, samadhi, prajna, vimutti, and knowledge of the destruction of the asravas, and then after that we had repentance, and then after that we had the four great Bodhisattva vows. And now we come to the three refuges, and this seems to be rather late in the day because according to the standard three yana tradition the refuges come first, representing the Hinayana, and then comes the Bodhicitta and the four great vows, representing the Mahayana, but here we’ve got the refuges after the four great vows, which seems to be the reverse order. Whether there’s any reason for this I don’t know - it may transpire later - but it’s also possible that they just got transposed in the course of generations, you know, when these things were being compiled and written down. Let’s go through them: “Now, since we have taken the fourfold vows, I will teach you the Ritual of the threefold guidance. We take Enlightenment as our Guide,” that is Buddhahood or the Buddha, or we go for refuge to the Buddha or to Buddhahood, “because it is the fruit of both merit and wisdom.” Now what does this mean?

Buddhadasa: The actual going for refuge or the ... yeah.

S: The fact that he used the expression ‘the Ritual’ seems to suggest it is an actual practice and initiation and ordination. “We take Enlightenment as our guide”, Buddhahood or the Buddha, “because it is the fruit of both merit and wisdom.” In Mahayana generally there’s quite a lot said about punya sambhara and jnana sambhara - the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom. Usually the word jnana is used, not prajna, in this context. So what does this represent? Sometimes it’s said that there are six paramitas: dana, generosity; sila, morality or ethics; ksanti, patience, acceptance; virya, energy; samadhi, meditation roughly speaking; prajna, transcendental wisdom. Now these are the six perfections to be practised by the Bodhisattva as he develops towards Buddhahood. Now sometimes it is said that there is in strict fact only one paramita, which is prajna, prajna meaning here actual direct insight into the nature of reality - the One Mind if you [120] like, sunyata, the void, Nirvana, the essence of mind - this is prajna. So it is said that sila - ethics - when conjoined with prajna, becomes a paramita; it is not a paramita by itself. Dana similarly -

giving conjoined with prajna or wisdom becomes a paramita, a means to supreme Buddhahood; not conjoined it doesn't become a means to supreme Buddhahood. So in this sense prajna is the only paramita.

Buddhadasa: It's like the five spiritual faculties where mindfulness has to apply to all...

S: Right. So you can say therefore that you can divide the paramitas into groups: those which lead to Enlightenment and [of] which there's only one - prajna - and those which do not by themselves lead directly to Enlightenment, but lead to it only when associated with prajna, in other words dana, sila, ksanti, virya, samadhi. All right, suppose you can't develop those five so-called paramitas in dissociation from prajna. If they don't lead to Enlightenment, if they don't develop wisdom or Buddhahood, what do they develop? Well, the result is, the answer is, punya. Punya is what you develop, or what you create, by the practice of the paramitas dissociated from wisdom. Yes? So in a way you can reduce all the five paramitas to punya. So you've got not five paramitas and one paramita, you've got punya and jnana. Yes? So how does punya show itself? Punya represents the perfection of the mundane. Do you get this? Punya represents the highest possible development of the mundane side of your being and therefore it's said that's why a Buddha or a Bodhisattva is born with a perfect physique, tall, handsome, well proportioned, strong, healthy, successful, rich, prosperous, famous - this is punya. So punya represents the highest possible development of all merely mundane faculties and talents and gifts. This is punya.

So in a Buddha you've got both of these. Enlightenment in the fullest sense includes both. It's punya and jnana coming together. The Buddha is not simply some weak, stunted, miserable person who is in possession of, you know, Enlightenment. A Buddha is one who is a perfect human being too. He's physically perfect, mentally perfect, emotionally perfect, and even perfect from a worldly point of view - he's successful, prosperous, and so on as a result of his practice, you know, of those five paramitas. And conjoined with that, transforming them, and having them as its medium, there is the jnana. So this is very important in Buddhism generally and in the Mahayana. Suppose for instance the Buddha had been Enlightened but he had a weak body, suppose he wasn't even strong enough to go about from place to place preaching, suppose he was so sickly that he died just after gaining Enlightenment, well what use would that be? So it's stressed very much in the Mahayana sutras that by virtue of his practice of the five paramitas in previous lives he has reached the pinnacle of mundane perfection. So in the context of Buddhahood you get conjoined together the perfection of [121] the mundane and the perfection of the transcendental, and the perfected mundane becomes a medium for the expression of the transcendental. That is why the Buddha is shown as a perfect human being in the prime of manhood, you know, thirty-five years of age - halfway through life - maybe that's symbolical though it's a historical fact too: fully developed, vigorous and well proportioned, and so on. Now coming to iconography you see the Buddha has two halos. Yes? The one round the body

represents his perfection of punya, his accumulation of punya. The one round the head represents his accumulation of jnana. So therefore in the Mahayana great importance is attached to the creation of merits - in fact in all forms of Buddhism - if you are to do good deeds, to perform actions which will result in your being perfect, a perfect being within the mundane. In other words Buddhism doesn't see the spiritual as requiring the mutilation of the mundane or the material. You get this? In other words in a way Buddhism has very much the Greek ideal, though infinitely more as well: that the mundane is to be perfected and that perfect mundane is to be blended with the spiritual, with the transcendental, and used as its medium of expression.

Buddhadasa: Terrific!

S: Hm? Yes? So this is the union of punya and jnana.

Buddhadasa: (unclear)

S: So this is why you get the standard description of the Bodhisattva in the Mahayana texts. What does it say about the Bodhisattva? It says that he is young, vigorous, with large limbs, well-proportioned, handsome, well-spoken, attractive, popular. He is rich, has much business, is influential with the king, has many wives, has many children, much property. What does all that represent?

Buddhadasa: (unclear)

Chintamani: This is presumably why Shakyamuni, he called the earth to witness that he had spent the last hundreds of thousands of years perfecting ...

S: Yes, and therefore he is qualified to sit on that seat. He'd built up his foundation.

Subhuti: The thirty-two marks of a superman mean you'll either be a universal monarch... [122]

S: You could turn either way, and you get these thirty-two marks by, you know, your practices, according to Buddhist teaching, in previous lives.

Chintamani: So that's why a Bodhisattva is portrayed iconographically with jewels and silks.

S: Right, like a young prince at the pinnacle of human life.

Buddhadasa: Vajrabodhi has an interesting view, he says it's his experience (unclear) that he found that people that are spiritually aware tend to be very politically aware and very concerned with the world and politics and relatively mundane matters, but also with higher things.

Subhuti: (unclear)

S: (unclear) Yes. This is why I think also from a Buddhist point of view it's a good thing that we have yoga and karate, and even though I must admit in the past I haven't lived up to what I'm saying now but that was only because I didn't know any better then, but I know better now and can therefore deliver

the exhortation even though I haven't served as a model myself. I think it's very important that those who are into Buddhism and meditation should also attend to the physical side of things and develop themselves physically also, that to be a good Buddhist and a good meditator you do not have to be a thin, weedy, narrow chested, underdeveloped sort of individual.

Buddhadasa: The Buddha was a Kshatriya wasn't he? The warrior caste.

S: Yes.

Buddhadasa: Join the army soldiers.

S: It might even involve going off to the East and, you know, doodling around in a monastery for a few years. (laughter) Maybe it isn't surprising that quite a few of our Friends have been in the Army or in the Wrens or even in the Girl Guides and Brownies. You get the impression that Buddhism's attitude towards the world - yes it's ascetic, yes, sure, Buddhism sees that all worldly things are impermanent, but the general Buddhist attitude towards worldly things is very much that of the Greeks, especially towards, you know, the human body and so on. [123]

Devamitra: You say you were thinking in terms perhaps [of] giving a lecture on wrong views. I mean maybe this is another possibility because there does seem to be a tremendous misunderstanding. . .

S: There's a great misunderstanding about money; that money's such an unspiritual thing, you should have as little to do with it as possible and not even give any to the Movement, because it's such a spiritual movement that it mustn't be contaminated with money.

Devamitra: (unclear) Trungpa has made reference to the constant use of the word 'bread', the euphemism. It's almost as if money has become a word that you can't (unclear)

S: Ah that's quite interesting. Yes.

Devamitra: People won't say, 'Give us some money,' [it's] 'Give us some bread, man,' you know, it's as though money is a black word.

S: Ah that's very interesting. Yes.

Ratnapani: I want fifteen pounds [from] each before the end of the retreat. (laughter)

S: Fifteen slices of bread (laughter). Yes, that's quite a point though, yes. Well why not say 'money'?

Devamitra: Yes, why not?

S: And I've mentioned this before, but some of you haven't heard it. Some years ago I got quite an important tantric meditation from a very famous Nyingma lama or guru, and he sat up on his throne - he was a bit unconventional in some ways - and he wore a Hawaiian shirt with pictures of hula-hula girls on it, a

cowboy hat, and his breast pocket was stuffed with hundred rupee notes - bulging - and I always thought, 'Well there's some meaning in that (unclear), take it all in his stride. And that's why there is even a god of riches, or Bodhisattva or Buddha of riches, in Tantric Buddhism.

Buddhadasa: It's got nothing to do with Mara?

S: No (unclear)

Devamitra: Do you think that people feel guilty about money. I mean I know it's the sort of thing that I've experienced quite a lot.

S: I can only say that I don't and never have done, but let others speak for themselves.

Devamitra: But, you know, I mean, why avoid using the term when it is very definitely something people do? It's something very current.

S: You think Trungpa is correct in his diagnosis?

Devamitra: I don't know, but it certain... [124]

S: I've a feeling he is, actually. I think he's right. 'Bread' is just a nice, earthy and, you know, natural, simple, and primitive. But 'money'...

Buddhadasa: (unclear) somebody suggested once that it might be a symbol for potency.

S: Money?

Buddhadasa: Yes, well, something like that.

S: Well it is power. I think people are a bit shy of power. I think they feel weak and therefore unable to exercise power. I don't know, you know, the renunciation of money is a sort of abdication of power in a way.

Devamitra: Maybe we need a few Vajrapanis!

Chintamani: Possibly it's (unclear) so many terrible things done in the name of money and it becomes a dirty word because of that.

S: But I mean terrible things have been done in the name of ideas, but you don't give up ideas.

Other voices: ... in the name of religion.

Chintamani: And people do give up religion.

S: In the East, Buddhist monks traditionally, especially Theravada monks, do not handle money, but there's never any suggestion that money is dirty. There's no such expression as filthy lucre. It's just so much more convenient, you know, if you just go around with your bowl each day. You know, it makes everything so simple. It's not that money is bad and therefore has to be given up. It's just the simplest way of doing things. But of course, now, it isn't any longer and in some parts of the Buddhist world you have to go through really elaborate

procedures not actually touching the money, but sort of really using it and sticking to the letter of the law - well that's no good. But in those societies you can get by without handling money and you just get your support in kind, it is very convenient. (pause) So there's no point in being afraid of the world. You don't necessarily become more spiritual by giving up these things. So the Mahayana especially seems to say, well, have them and use them, so that you get your Bodhisattva surrounded by all his wealth and grandeur and his wives and children - dozens of them. And he seems completely equal to it, he's perfectly capable of looking after it all and getting on with his Bodhisattva career at the same time. It's rather staggering if you take it really seriously. He's got this enormous joint family to look after and all these business enterprises. At the same time he's a good Bodhisattva. And this is a quite typical portrait of a Bodhisattva in the Mahayana sutras.

Devamitra: Can I just ask another point? You said you were unsure about this initially, I mean, you were saying about yoga and karate. [125]

S: Well that was twenty or thirty years ago.

Devamitra: Oh.

S: When I ought to have been doing these things more and I didn't.

Devamitra: You thought that for yourself it would have been helpful if you'd done those things then.

S: Maybe yes, maybe no, but I certainly think it's helpful for people that I know now, say people coming along to the Friends, their abstention from these things if often based on a false view.

Buddhadasa: (unclear) the body, isn't it?

S: Again, you see, I think it's true to say that there'll be far less emotional tension and fewer emotional problems if people were more into physical things, especially sport. You know, what an unathletic lot, you know, we are in the Friends, even though people are mostly young, but how many engage in sport and so on? I think it would probably be very good if they did more.

Subhuti: I don't think anybody does, do they?

Ratnapani: Watching people on the Heath bashing the hell out of each other at rugby, for instance, I couldn't imagine it any more, because they're so...

Buddhadasa: (unclear) if you've ever played rugby.

Ratnapani: I have. (general hubbub)

Buddhadasa: ...you know, you don't bash people.

S: No. I'm not necessarily thinking of competitive sports. You don't have to compete, you don't have to do anything against anybody.

Buddhadasa: (unclear) Malcolm was interested in forming a mountaineering club (unclear) a few people out there (unclear)

S: But I think this is - as far as I have observed - a psychological fact, that if you, if the question [is one] of bodily experience, if you experience your physical body in action more, you are less troubled by psychological and sexual problems. This is absolutely axiomatic.

Devamitra: I know when I really get into my yoga practice, the problem of sex (unclear) isn't there, but when it's not there it seems to come to the surface more.

Chintamani: They say that sexual intercourse is equivalent.. [line lost from transcript]

[126] [Transcriber's note: the tapes from which the commentary on chapter three were recorded were in a very poor condition and difficult to decipher.]

Chapter 3: Prajna

"On the following day Prefect Wai asked the Patriarch to give another address. Having taken his seat, the Patriarch asked the assembly to first purify their minds (by a period of dhyana-silence) and then to join in reciting the Maha Prajnaparamita Sutra, after which he gave the following address:

"Learned Audience: Prajna, the principle of wisdom, is inherent in every one of us. It is because of the delusions under which our minds labour that we fail to realize its presence, and that we have to seek the advice and the guidance of the more highly enlightened before we can realize it is our mind's Essence. You should know that as far as Buddha-nature is concerned, there is no difference between an enlightened man and an ignorant one. What makes the difference is that one realizes it and the other is ignorant of it. Let me speak to you now about the Maha Prajnaparamita Sutra, so that each of you may attain wisdom. Listen carefully while I speak."

S: The text doesn't certify which Maha Prajnaparamita Sutra. There are more than thirty-five of them. What the Chinese tended to do originally was to compile groups of sutras into one great big sutra, with individual sutras forming chapters in the big works. They did that with the (unclear), and they seem to have done it, to some extent, with the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. So it may be simply that Hui-neng is referring to just the whole body of those Perfection of Wisdom sutras and the general trend of their features. It's unlikely that any particular individual Perfection of Wisdom sutra is in mind.

"Learned Audience: There are many people who recite the word, Prajna, the whole day long, who do not seem to know that Prajna is inherent in their own nature. The mere talking about food will not appease hunger, but that is the very thing these people are doing. We may talk about the 'Doctrine of Voidness' for myriads of kalpas, but merely talking about it will not enable one to realize it in his Mind-essence, and the talking will serve no good purpose in the end.

The name, Maha Prajnaparamita, is Sanskrit and means ‘great wisdom to reach the opposite shore.’”

S: There is an ambiguity in the word Prajnaparamita, or at least it’s got more than one meaning. It’s usually translated as perfection, or even transcendental. This is why you often get Prajnaparamita translated as the ‘Perfection of Transcendental Wisdom’. But it also can be translated as wisdom or ‘great wisdom to reach the opposite shore’. This is a more literal meaning, ‘the opposite shore’ [being] that of Nirvana or Enlightenment.

"Now, what we ought to do with it is to carry it into practice with our mind; whether we recite it or do not recite it matters little. Mere reciting without mental practice, may be likened to a phantasm, a magical delusion, a flash of lightning, or a dewdrop. On the other hand, if we do both, then our mind will be in accord with what we repeat orally. Our very self-nature is Buddha, and apart from this nature there is no other Buddha.

“What is Maha? Maha means ‘great’. The capacity of the mind is great as that of space. It is infinite, it is neither round nor square, neither great nor small, neither green nor yellow, nor red nor white, neither above nor below, neither long nor short, neither happy nor angry, neither right nor wrong, neither good nor evil, neither first nor last. All Buddha-lands are as void as space. Intrinsically our transcendental nature is void and not a single dharma can be attained. It is the same with Mind-essence which is a state of the ‘voidness of non-voidity.’” [127]

S: “Maha means great,” and you notice there’s a sort of transition: you go from the idea of great to the idea of void, or greatness to voidness. This is rather important, especially, and I have spoken about it on other occasions. For instance, you get this prefix maha in many contexts. You get Mahayana for instance and mahasattva. So what does maha mean? It doesn’t mean great in the merely ordinary sense of big. The maha prefix indicates sunyata; the maha prefix indicates something that has gone through the sunyata experience. I remember my friend Mr Chen in Kalimpong used to be very fond of talking about this. We had a number of discussions about it in connection with Chinese Buddhism, especially that maha indicated the sunyata experience. So you can say that the Mahayana really means the yana, the vehicle or path or the way, of sunyata.

Of course the question arises, what is sunyata? Hui-neng will be clearing up a misunderstanding about that a little later one. This is something we discussed in the last study retreat, some of you may remember, recollect, that little incident. What is sunyata? It’s usually translated as the Emptiness or the Void, but that can be misunderstood as we shall see in a minute. Perhaps it’s best to think of sunyata as indefinable - something mysterious even. So we concluded as far as I remember our discussion in the last study retreat on this particular topic. We concluded it by feeling that the most satisfactory English rendering, although it wouldn’t be a literal translation of sunyata was simply ‘mystery’

or ‘mysteriousness’. Supposing we say, for example, form is empty. Well what does that convey to us? But supposing we say, ‘form is a mystery, form is mysterious,’ there is some depth in it, some essence that we can’t quite fathom, can’t quite penetrate, something which baffles, which you can’t describe, which is indefinable. So this conveys, really, just considering the bare English words, this conveys something more than if you were to say form is empty. Rather than say that everything is empty and void, say that everything is inherently mysterious; there is an inner depth that the mind can’t grapple with.

Voice: In the Heart Sutra, when it says that form is emptiness, what is the word that is used for emptiness?

S: Sunyata. Rupam sunyata, sunyata rupam.

Voice: Do you think that you’d be warranted in changing the translation?

S: Well, you might be. You see the Chinese did this. The Chinese on the whole have literary rather than scholarly translations of the sutras. There were scholarly translations, but they never became very popular. For instance, the really popular translation of the Diamond Sutra is (unclear), which is a sort of literary translation. He doesn’t try to translate the Sanskrit text literally, but gives the feeling and meaning. And it’s his version which is always referred to in the Chinese monasteries. So this is a case in point, that if you translate sunyata as emptiness, that is perfectly correct but it doesn’t convey much to us; empty as a meaning doesn’t [128] have the same sort of feel to it as sunya or sunyata in Sanskrit. But mystery has something. It’s not mystery in the thriller sense, that you can find out (unclear), but something that you can’t find out at all. It baffles the mind. It indicates some sort of inner depth that you can’t penetrate.

Voice: (unclear)

S: But it’s more than secret, because something that’s secret can be found out. But literally you can say that it remains a mystery.

Voice: Until Enlightenment.

S: Until Enlightenment.

Voice: Empty is generally a short term for ‘empty of self-nature, conditioned nature’.

S: Right, but when you come to emptiness of emptiness, what do you mean by that?

Voice: Yes, what do you mean by that?

Ratnapani: Mysterious sounds OK at the beginning. I don’t know whether I’m sort of exaggerating my own meditation experience, but sometimes the feel of voidness is there. I don’t know whether, if maybe I’d been brought up with the word mysterious that would also fit; perhaps it would, but voidness, in its empty connotation, does say something indefinable. It seems to cover it better, whereas mysterious doesn’t seem to fit my meditation experience.

S: Yes, but don't forget we're trying to find one word, the best one word. I think there's more chance of mystery (?)meaning than empty (?)meaning. But no one word can really cover it.

Voice: I would have thought sunyata was the best word.

S: Mahasunyata. But anyway Hui-neng says, "What is Maha? Maha means 'Great'. The capacity of the mind is great as that of space. It is infinite, it is neither round nor square." In other words, it is indefinable."Neither great nor small." You can't even say it's great as opposed to small. It's not great in that sense. "Neither green nor yellow ... a state of the voidness of non-voidity." So this is his explanation of maha. In other words, maha indicates a profound and unfathomable experience you can't really (?)designate. As I mentioned, my friend Mr Chen felt very strongly that this is what the Mahayana is all about. That following the Mahayana is, he says, experiencing everything through the sunyata experience. If something has passed through the sunyata experience, then it belongs to the Mahayana. For instances, to give you a practical example, suppose you're observing the precepts, well the question might arise: are you observing them in the Mahayana way? You are observing them in the Mahayana way only if you observe them, or your observance springs, out of an experience of sunyata, only becomes Mahayana through that. So a Mahayana precept [129] is a precept that has been purified by your experience of sunyata. Mahayana meditation is one that starts from the experience of sunyata, at least a partial experience, not otherwise. And Mr Chen said very strongly, I remember, when you do the visualization exercises, if you don't start from a real experience of sunyata, then it's no better than vulgar magic, which is pretty strong. So this is why you find that at the beginning of the visualization practices, when you do them in the traditional way, this mantra: om svabhava suddha sarvadharmasvabhava suddho ham: 'all things are pure by nature'. 'Pure' means void. 'All dharmas are pure by nature, void by nature, I too am pure.' So this is the theme on which your visualization starts. So if you just do a visualization exercise without that preliminary experience, or at least partial experience, of voidness, then it's more sort of psychological-cum-devotional and it belongs to the Hinayana, at best. Not that that's not a good thing. You can get great benefit from that. But it isn't a Mahayana practice, much less still a Vajrayana practice, unless you have first of all a sunyata experience. So that pertains to the Mahayana, [that] which has passed through the sunya experience. Otherwise you can't really refer to it strictly as the Mahayana, not from the spiritual point of view.

Ratnapani: Does that mean that the Mahayana practice starts from around the seventh nidana?

S: You could say that. But in other words there's no such thing really as a formal Mahayana, otherwise you'd be back with the Hinayana again. You're back with formalism. So in other words it seems as though it's best not to say anything about the Mahayana externally, and to have anything Mahayanistic, because it very quickly becomes a sort of mockery. You could say that what

is the Mahayana like? The person practising the Mahayana? Well it could be someone who, on the basis of his realization of sunyata, is leading the monastic life, same as Mahayana meditation, Mahayana philosophy, Mahayana practice in general. If that basis of sunyata experience [is] there then it's useless to talk about the Mahayana.

Ratnapani: Where does that leave the old definition, as I understand it, of the Mahayana: that which is orientated towards the Bodhisattva ideal 'for the sake of all sentient beings'?

S: That's true. The Bodhisattva practises the paramitas and especially the Prajnaparamita, the Perfection of Wisdom, which has as its object, sunyata.

Ratnapani: There was another definition, the Hinayana. I've forgotten the definition that you gave on an earlier retreat.

S: Ah yes, the path of Universal Enlightenment, the path of (unclear). How is it possible except through sunyata? Otherwise you're pretending to be a bodhisattva, unless you've got that experience. So it really means that you can't have a sort of Mahayana sect or a Mahayana school really as apart from a sunyata experience. You can't have a formal Mahayana. So perhaps one shouldn't have an external Mahayana at all, simply because it is a matter of experience. So this is really quite important. In a way one could say it's probably a good thing to say what the Tibetans say: 'to be outwardly a Theravadin and inwardly a Mahayanist'. If you produce your Mahayana sort of externally, sort of prematurely, it becomes even more of a mockery that if you were to produce your Theravada externally. If you say, 'I'm a Mahayanist', it's a very big [130] thing indeed. So you should say that only with the greatest caution. Even to say, 'I am a Buddhist' is a pretty big thing because it is to say, 'I commit myself, I've gone for refuge' therefore. But to say, 'I am a Mahayana Buddhist', well what does that mean? Well, 'I'm thoroughly versed in sunyata and my Buddhism springs out of my experience of sunyata.' That's a very big thing indeed. So even if one has a little experience of sunyata, it's just best to let it percolate through from within, rather than let it sort of base on anything external, or organized. Anyway let's carry on.

p.514: "Learned audience: when you hear me speak about the void, do not fall into the idea that I mean vacuity. It is of the utmost importance that we should not fall into that idea, because then when a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he would be abiding in a state of 'voidness of indifference'."

S: So it seems that it's been a mistake that Chinese Buddhists rather tended to make in the early days of Buddhism in China. Sunyata is the voidness, or emptiness, as so termed, that you got closer to that state by being void and empty in a way that was free from all thought. Hui-neng is pointing out that that isn't the case at all. What reason does he give?

"The illimitable void of the universe is capable of holding myriads of things of various shapes and form, such as the sun and the moon, and the stars, worlds,

mountains, rivers, rivulets, springs, woods, bushes, good men, bad men, laws pertaining to goodness and to badness, heavenly plains and hells, great oceans and all the mountains of Mahameru. Space takes in all these, and so does the voidness of our nature. We say that Essence of Mind is great because it embraces all things since all things are within our nature. When we see the goodness or the badness of other people, and are not attracted by it, nor repulsed by it, nor attached to it, then the attitude of our mind is as void as space. In that we see the greatness of minds, therefore we call Mind-essence, Maha.”

S: In a way, Hui-neng was saying that the proof that the Universe is full, that this pure space, that pure infinite empty space, contains all these numberless worlds, and the bigger it is, i.e. the more empty it is, the more it can contain. So, being empty, having an empty mind, doesn't mean not having anything in the mind. It means how to fit everything in the mind; not exclude anything, so that you're able to accept everything into the mind and have the same attitude towards everything. Then your mind really is empty, not just throwing everything out of the mind. So he ends up by saying that an empty [mind] is a mind that is totally accepting [of] everything. Totally accepting mustn't be seen as indifference or preferring this to that; it just takes in everything, has the same attitude towards everything, is completely even-minded towards everything. That's what having a really empty mind is, and that is the Essence of Mind.

p.515: “Learned audience: When ignorant people have ideas, they merely talk about them. but wise men keep them within their own minds and put them into practice”.

S: This is important. “When ignorant people have ideas, they merely talk about them”. This is what we find: there is so much talk about ideas generally, in the Friends, among ourselves, there's so much talk about ideas. And if you're not very careful your whole life practically can be taken over with talking about ideas, and not realizing that you're merely talking about them. Very often you think, because you're talking about them, that we're really concerned with the ideas, but that isn't so. And you're only concerned about them when you're trying to put them into practice. He says, “but wise men keep them within their own minds and put them into practice”. But how many things can you hear people talking about? How many things do people ask about - want to know about - that? Very often practice just doesn't come into it at all. And I remember (unclear) many questions about Nirvana. So many people want to [ask] about Nirvana and want to discuss it at great length. As though it really was something which could be discussed. And it seemed so ridiculous. Yes, you need some discussion to get things clear, to get the ideas clear, but when that has been done, then one has just quietly to put them into practice. But that seems very much more difficult. It's far easier to pick up [131] another book, another set of ideas, and to stagnate. And so Hui-neng says, “When ignorant people have ideas they merely talk about them.” It's not that talking about them is bad - really talking about them - “but wise men keep them within their own minds and put them into practice.” Do you want to read on?

p.515: “There is also a class of foolish people who sit quietly and try to keep their minds blank; they refrain from thinking of anything and then call themselves ‘great.’”

S: This was apparently a genuine misunderstanding, but one does find in Chinese Buddhism that people just sat trying to get rid of all thoughts, trying not to think of (unclear). And they might have succeeded, and they think to themselves they had realized the Truth, the Void. But Hui-neng isn’t having any of that. “Concerning this heretical view, I have no patience to speak.” A bit of Zen here. “You should know that the capacity of the mind is very great since it pervades the whole universe wherever the domain of Law extends. When we use the mind we can consider everything; when we use Mind to its full capacity, we shall know all.”

So his attitude is really, as regards the process, (unclear) mind. It’s not excluding that that is not enough. He does not make the mind empty by ‘embracing all things’ but just by taking in everything, adopting a similar attitude towards everything, making the mind universal. It is the universal mind that really is the empty mind.

p.515: “Prajna comes from Mind-essence and not from any exterior source. Do not have any mistaken notion about that. To cherish mistaken thoughts about that is to make a ‘selfish use of True Nature’. Once the ‘True Nature’ of Mind-essence is realized, one will be forever free from delusion. Since the capacity of Mind is for great things we should not busy it with trivial acts.”

S: This is the opposite of (unclear), the explanation by (unclear).

“(That is, the mind that can realize Mind-essence through the right practice of dhyana, ought not to be sitting quietly with a blank mind nor wasting its resources on idle talk.)”

S: It does seem that the explanation is a bit limited. Let’s see what Hui-neng says. “Since the capacity of Mind is for great things we should not busy it with trivial acts.” So you can say, even for the individual, the capacity of the individual is for great things. We should not busy ourselves with trivial things. This is very simple but it is very meaningful too. But most of the time we don’t realize what we’re really capable of and we waste our time on all sorts of small matters. And in this way life goes on. So it’s not just a question of even doing meditation properly, rather than sitting with a blank mind, but it has a much more general application.

Voice: (indistinct)

S: The precepts will be trivial things if you just observe them out of fear of the police. They’re not a trivial thing if you observe them with a view to Enlightenment.

p.515: “Do not talk all day about ‘the void’, without practising it in the mind. One who does this may be likened to a self-styled king who is really a commoner.

Prajna can never be attained in that way and those who act like that are not my disciples. What is Prajna? It means Transcendental Wisdom. If we steadily, at all times and in all places, keep our thoughts free from foolish desire and act wisely on all occasions, then we are practising the Paramita of Prajna.”

S: There are two aspects. The aspect of keeping the mind, or the thought, free from foolish desire, and acting wisely on all occasions. It must be the inner space that must be pure, it's not just wisdom in the ordinary sense, but in a very high sense. In other words, there must be this high samadhi experience, and then one puts that samadhi-like experience into operation as is required by the circumstances of life. And this is the action of “wise men”, not merely [132] acting wisely in the cautious and preventative sense, but in the sense of putting into operation in the affairs of life this pure samadhi-saturated mind through the practice of dhyana. But this is the paramita prajna, according to Hui-neng.

“One foolish notion is enough to shut off Prajna; one wise thought will bring it forth again.” It is very easily lost, but it is also easily (unclear) up. “People in ignorance or under delusion do not see this; they talk about it with their tongue but in their mind they are ignorant of it.”

Hui-neng is probably having a go at the philosophers. Apparently, when the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were first translated into Chinese, the Chinese scholars and literary people found them absolutely fascinating. And they made special studies into the Perfection of Wisdom sutras on a philosophical and intellectual basis. And they evolved a sort of philosophy on this basis of these Perfection of Wisdom sutras. It was called the dark philosophy because it's very obscure, and sometimes the philosophers were called the dark philosophers. So it seems that Hui-neng may be getting at some of these people who study the Perfection of Wisdom sutras and talk about them, philosophizing on the basis of them, even writing about them, but never getting down to any Buddhist practice. In many cases they weren't Buddhist at all. They merely had an intellectual interest in this.

pp.515-6: "They are always saying that they practise Prajna, and they talk incessantly about 'vacuity', but they have not realized the True Void. Prajna is Wisdom's Heart; it has neither form nor characteristic. If we interpret it in this way, then it is, indeed, the Wisdom of Prajna.

"What is Paramita? It is a Sanskrit word (commonly translated, 'ideal') that means, 'to the opposite shore'. Figuratively it means beyond 'existence and non-existence'. By clinging to sense things, existence and non-existence are like the ups and downs of the billowy sea. Such a state, metaphorically is called, 'this shore'; while beyond existence and non-existence there is a state characterized by non-attachment that has the undisturbed calmness of running water, that is called, 'the opposite shore'. This is why Prajna is called, Paramita.

“Learned Audience: People under illusion recite the Maha Prajnaparamita with their tongue and, while they are reciting it, evil and erroneous thoughts arise; but if they put it into practice unremittingly they will come to realize its True

Nature. To know this Dharma is to know the Law of Prajna; and to practise it is to practise Ideal Wisdom. He who does not practise it is an ordinary man; he who concentrates his mind on its practice, even if it be but for a moment only, he is the equal of Buddha. An ordinary man is Buddha! and defilement is Enlightenment (bodhi). A passing foolish thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened thought makes one a Buddha. A passing thought that clings to sense-objects is defilement; a second thought that frees one from attachment is Enlightenment.”

S: You notice in fact how much you change from times to time as between these various extremes. As Hui-neng rightly says, “A passing foolish thought makes one an ordinary man,” and when you’ve got an Enlightened thought in your mind, then just for that fraction of a second even, “you’re an equal of the Buddha”. We change like this so many times. In the course of a day we might find even hundreds of times. One moment we’re in the realm of higher consciousness, then we’re overcome by a deluded thoughts, and there’s an instance of greed when you might be rather irritated, then you might pick up some Buddhist book, get all inspired for several minutes, then after that you get upset, and then become really violently angry.

This is how the whole day goes on. We’re constantly changing: one moment like a god, the next moment like a demon, another like a hungry ghost, then maybe like a being in heaven; ups and downs, up and down we go in the wheel of life, wheeling around, how many hundreds of times in the course of a day. This is what is happening most of the time. This is one of the things we should be aware of. So it’s not so much a question of attaining a higher state as just staying there when you’ve attained it, and not allowing it to be lost, which is what usually happens. We find that people very often have a beautiful meditation, really gone away for a whole hour maybe, but within five minutes of coming out of the meditation room they’re lost into something completely different. So when we’re constantly transmigrating every day, through all the six realms of existence, up among the gods, down among the beings in hell, across to the asuras, and back to the pretas, so we ourselves: part of the day we are Buddha, part of the day we’re a human being, part of the day we’re an animal, we’re an animal most of the night when we’re sleeping, unconscious. Part of the time pretas, part of the time an asura. So we can see this happening, we can see the wheel turning. So it’s a question of stabilizing ourselves within what is best. We do have these higher experiences, we might even have them quite frequently, but we’re unable to settle down in them and [133] stabilize ourselves there. We just seem to go round and round. We might even visit the Pure Land occasionally, but we don’t stay there very long. In a moment we’re back again among the pretas. We seem to like it that way. We get a bit restless. It’s as if we’re in a happy blissful state too long, we’d rather hanker after something a bit more. And this is really (unclear). So we can stay in a quite calm, happy, contented situation, but we want to change it.

Voice: A little confusion here: one flash of enlightenment and that’s enough.

Is he really saying one thought of enlightenment you're the Buddha and then you're not? I can't quite get ...

S: I would say if one takes this literally, "an enlightened thought makes one a Buddha", it makes nonsense of the whole passage. If you had really been made a Buddha, you can't fall away from that. So this isn't to be taken literally. But you can have a flash of quite genuine insight, in the sense of vipassana or prajna does have an overall effect on your whole being, however slight, and there is therefore an overall permanent effect that is never lost. What I was saying earlier on, that within samsara meditation in the ordinary sense, a dhyana experience within samsara, within the wheel of life, a dhyana experience can be completely lost. But a vipassana or insight or wisdom experience is never completely lost. You may not identify with it, but there is a permanent effect from it on your whole being which makes it easier later for you to have another vipassana experience. So you mustn't take Hui-neng quite literally. You cannot actually be a Buddha one instant and then be a non-Buddha. Otherwise what you'd (unclear) a permanent enlightenment. You could fall away from it. You can't have a momentary experience of full Enlightenment; that's impossible. Of course it does sometimes happen in the case of some people that there's one very powerful experience lasting (unclear) which has a completely overwhelming effect on their whole being, the whole mind, (unclear) a high level of spiritual conversion. This is possible, but usually what happens is that we just get a flash. But we've seen it if only for an instant and there's a permanent gain from that. It makes it easier next time. It makes it easier (unclear). But if it is anything mundane, then we can completely lose it. But we know that from our own experience with dealing with human relationships. In the sense of the vexed question of falling in love, we were discussing yesterday [being] up in the heavens one moment and down in hell the next. Up and down, up and down, dozens of times a day, depending upon the whims and fancies of the particular object of your infatuation, by your own silly subjective fancies and ideas. This is what can happen. And when you are in the hell realm, it's as if you have never been in heaven; you can't really remember that. And when you're in heaven, you think (unclear) in hell and you go backwards and forwards between the two. And it sort of pulls you apart sometimes; you're a bit disorganized.

Voice: It says in the paragraph, "defilement is Enlightenment".

S: Well, there's two points of view. There's the ordinary way in which we have to speak, which is inevitably dualistic: Enlightenment is eternal, peaceful, wisdom, knowledge. But even this is just the mind - the dualistic mind - looking at Enlightenment. If you go more deeply into it, well, you cannot categorize Enlightenment. You cannot even say that it is that, as opposed to this. You cannot even say that it is good as opposed to not-good. You cannot even say that it is Enlightenment as opposed to non-Enlightenment. It's all relative. Even beyond the opposition between itself and what is not itself. [134]

So even in the end the distinction of nirvana and samsara, wisdom and ignorance, bodhi and defilement, and you can even identify these opposites in the

Enlightenment experience. But obviously this is something to be realized and realized later on, not something to be taken literally and applied literally here and now. Otherwise you can say, well, if enlightenment is defilement, why get rid of defilements? It's quite logical but completely wrong. That won't get you there. So it's as though you need a dualistic framework to arrive at a non-dualistic conclusion. And this produces a certain sort of tension in the spiritual life, even a certain sort of intellectual contradiction and paradox has to be accepted. You can't but face life with a dualistic framework. But you know, intellectually at least, that your objective is non-dualistic. Dualistically in your experience, from this to that, from this shore to that shore. Even Hui-neng himself uses that sort of language. But when you get to that shore, you look back and see that there's no distinction between this shore and that shore. But you won't arrive at that unless you have your spiritual life in practice within this framework of dualism, this shore and that shore. It's something very difficult to accept intellectually. You sort of accept that there are things you can understand intellectually, but because we only understand intellectually, they're nevertheless not within that framework. Or they wouldn't in that framework. You have to act on the basis that they wouldn't in that framework. You have to act on the basis of what you've recognized as insight of limited validity. And this is why a little learning is really a dangerous thing. We really are unfortunate in a way that we can look into scriptures that we're not really spiritually prepared for, and a sort of half-baked intellectual understanding of them which doesn't help us in the least. In a way that's rather unfortunate.

Voice: I've noticed people in beginner's meditation classes and courses, you come across people who've read Krishnamurti. They cannot accept the fact of the need for a technique. It's quite difficult to break through that one.

S: Well, what Krishnamurti says is true. But so what? Stick it in a cover and consume it later on, but it's not for now. But to put yourself in that is true, but it's not all right to practise now: 'I've got to practise now on the basis of something that I know is not ultimately true.' So it's a very difficult position to adopt. It was much easier in the old days when you went off in all innocence without having read any books on Buddhism, you just had to practise with a particular teacher or monastery and you were just given the teaching as you needed it. This is a much more easy route, a much more helpful situation. But now we've got to read it all and know it all nowadays, before we even start practising anything. There is a great difficulty in a way. We know all about the Void and about Nirvana and this, that, and the other before we've even started going for refuge. So there is a long unknown, or at least a temporary forgetting to be done, before we can all get started, and in this connection books on Zen are absolutely creating havoc, some of them. The sutra of the Sixth Patriarch is pretty clear if you read it carefully, it doesn't encourage misunderstandings. But these little books on Zen, brought out at frequent intervals by western intellectuals, this is no good at all. Even dear old Dr Suzuki has done some harm. Not intentionally - some of his books are very good in themselves, but they just get seized hold of by the wrong people and used in the wrong sort of way. It

seems that one can hardly prevent this. Say that everything is public, everyone who can run can read, and so on, everybody considers themselves entitled to their opinion. And look at the harm that it does, in the spiritual sort of way. And see how it was in the old days: these things were closely guarded and you [135] prove your readiness and your worth. You were placed under a long novitiate and admitted in all due pomp and ceremony into the inner sanctuary after long preparation, and then it really meant something to you. But now you can sort of flick through, look at, look into it, talk about it. It's all not taken as seriously. It's very sad.

Voice: How do you see that we can practise it in the terms of the FWBO?

Voice: (unclear). Is that what you mean?

Voice: No, I mean generally among even ourselves.

S: It was in this sort of connection that we were talking on the last (unclear). of the path regular steps and the path of irregular steps. This is where it comes in. So what is the path of irregular steps? Does anybody know this?

Voice: (unclear) flash to the heights then you cannot get any further because you haven't, and you go back to the beginning.

S: And the path of regular steps is of course building up, taking it stage by stage, not going into the second stage until the first stage has been constructed. So it's as though, owing to the circumstance today, that practically everybody follows the path of irregular steps at first. You cannot help that. Your first contact with Buddhism might be the Diamond Sutra, you see. It may be good, it may not be good. You get into the Diamond Sutra. This is almost my own experience. I knew a little bit about Buddhism before then, the life of the Buddha, an outline of Buddhism, but the first thing to make any impression on me was the Diamond Sutra, and then the sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, the Sutra of Wei Lang as it was called then. It was only a long time afterwards I thought about being vegetarian. It was only when I was about 21, I think it was, some Dutch Theosophist friends pointed out to me that if I claimed to be a Buddhist and so practising compassion, I ought to be a vegetarian. And believe it or not, it never occurred to me, because I was so preoccupied with Buddhist philosophy, the Void, Sunyata, Zen, Mahayana, Suzuki: this is what really attracted me. And this sort of dull ethical stuff, I wasn't especially interested in that. I had actually never thought about whether I ought to be a vegetarian or not until it was pointed out to me. Then of course I saw, 'Yes, obviously, why not?' So I became a vegetarian forthwith.

That's really going back to elementary ethics from the Perfection of Wisdom, the Sutra of Hui-neng and so on, coming from the path of irregular steps back to the path of regular steps. So I think this is what has to happen. That you cannot but spend some time - under the conditions in the West, and under conditions under which we come to know about Buddhism - you cannot but spend a time on this path of irregular steps. And you can make some progress on the path

of irregular steps, but eventually you will find that if you want to go further, you have to come back to the path of regular steps and consolidate from the beginning. And then you realize that you understand it, and you quite mindfully put aside for the time being the more advanced things of which you might have had a little experience but which you know you cannot fully develop until you have perfected the earlier stages, and you go back to these earlier stages and work on them. You might even go right back to your precepts, and think, well I'm not going to read anything about Buddhism, not read any books about Zen, not going to do any more [136] about meditation. I'm just going to really work on the observance of the precepts for a year or two and at the same time carry out my duty as a member of the Order and a good Buddhist and so on. But I'm going to concentrate on the precepts. So this is quite a sort of viable situation. I think this is the sort of pattern for the Movement generally.

But I think very few people will be following the Path of Regular Steps from the beginning. It's almost impossible. The only people who might are the non-intellectuals, and there are not many of them around. The sort of people who do karate, many of them. They can work on the path of regular steps and you notice that some of them tend to do this. They're very serious, very down to earth, they don't bother about philosophy, don't read about Zen, they don't read the Diamond Sutra, but they are very concerned about things like honesty, and for paying their way, and keeping their word and so on. This is really good. They've started at the beginning and they're laying down a very solid foundation. And whereas the more airy-fairy people - you meet so many of them - they can tell you all about the Diamond Sutra, but when you (?)shake it in front of them, well they just move quickly out of the door. So look at this terrible contradiction, this is how it comes about. So I think, to come back to what was asked, that if we can help people to see the historical situation that would be a sort of (?)recline when dealing with these people.

Voice: I find that I have to develop and almost syllogistic argument going right back to the beginning in terms of path of vision and path of transformation, the structure on which to hang ...

S: So long as it's making it clear that they haven't attained the path of vision just because they've got an intellectual understanding.

Voice: There's that dialectical relationship between the two paths, you have a sort of primitive vision as it were which then you change a bit.

Voice: Can I come back to this point about the Path of Regular Steps? At the moment I'm trying to sort of relate this to my own practice, and I'm not quite clear exactly where I'm at with it, with respect to regular and irregular steps - how far I need to go back. Whether I need to go right back to the precepts and concentrate on that - whether this is something that the Movement as a whole sort of needs to go back to. Very recently I felt a tremendous unreality of the whole, and there is no solidity and I see it in myself as well. But I felt very frustrated because I couldn't quite locate it, I didn't know what was wrong. I

felt that something was and I'm not clear in my own mind. [137]

S: My own personal feeling, and I mentioned this on the last retreat, is that the Movement as a whole, the Friends as a whole, Order members as a whole, has come to the point where they need to make a much more definite transition from the path of irregular steps to the path of regular steps. I think this is a general need. I think that almost everybody is involved in this.

Voice: But this is going right back to basics, basic Buddhism, precepts, morality?

S: I would say it was more like a checking out process.

Mangala: It's kind of like we're reaching saturation in a sense and we're now really getting down to the . . .

S: The honeymoon is over now, you're settling down into the marriage, which is much duller and more serious.

Mangala: But much more real and more rewarding.

S: Yes. You've had your honeymoon in Buddhism, and now you've got to get down to married life with Buddhism.

Voice: Can I ask something further? I know it sounds a bit unfashionable, but could one ask for a framework? I know it's kind of asking for something (unclear) but I sometimes feel really lost, because I feel a kind of direction. I feel I'm heading somewhere, but because the direction isn't that direct I feel that the need for some kind of framework in which one can operate, get down to basics.

S: I think you're perfectly right, but it's significant I think that only very recently people in the Movement, within the Order, have been thinking of living this way at all, and that two years ago especially people tended to be very resistant to this. If you had even mentioned this in a very general way, as I have done myself, they wouldn't be at all happy with it and would feel they needed to be free and open and why limit yourself etc. But now they are coming down to this - some at least.

Voice: I kind of feel that's why we've ended up with the kind of newsletter we've had of late, completely out of touch, bullshit most of it. I feel quite ashamed about the latest newsletter. But that is the final straw as far as I, [138] well, these were various straws in the wind. To me, it's quite simple in this instance. I mentioned the dana bowl, that's one. It seems extraordinary, as I have seen myself, especially when I was at Centre House and when I was giving a series of lectures there and we were then looking for new premises and we were trying to raise a little money, we didn't know what our position would be, what the rent would be, etc. And I saw these people while giving the lecture, all starry-eyed about the Bodhisattvas, Nirvana, and all the rest of it. But when someone asked them to give something or suggested they should give something, a very strong resistance in some cases, very strong even on the part of people quite able to give a little. Then there was the other famous occasion when, for instance, Vera, as she was, or Debbie, would say, 'Would someone like to help with the washing-up?'

They'd been hearing about dana and bodhisattva practice, taking it all in, saying how wonderful to save all sentient beings, and no one would stir. Not a single person sometimes. This was really (?)unfortunate. So it's pretty clear that now people are getting round to it themselves, people as a whole in the Movement and within the Order, and this preoccupation with high mental ideals, it's not enough. This is not the spiritual life. Yes OK one mustn't (unclear). This is the path of irregular steps. But the Movement as a whole now has to get back to the path of regular steps, and this is beginning to happen and it's showing itself in the increased seriousness on the part of some people, and even taking an organizational responsibility more seriously than they used to. And in this way it's becoming a little more solid. But there is much room for improvement, great room for improvement, almost infinite room for improvement.

Voice: It seems to me that the important thing is, or what is indicated is, that it all comes back to very fundamental awareness. If one considers every situation that one (is in), all the possibilities of the situation, and the consequences of one's actions, not kind of mapping them up like in a rule book, but considering every element of the situation, and what is best for that. This seems to me to be the basis of the precepts.

Voice: I thought of that and I said that considering that at one time I resented ... I came out of quite an authoritarian school where I resented all the rules.

S: That's another thing I have found. With nearly all Friends any suggestion that you ought to do this - even the word 'ought' - is regarded by many people as such a dirty word. People just don't want to hear it. Or 'duty' - that's another dirty word - or 'responsibility'. And [139] it seems as though most Friends have had to go through a fairly lengthy period of reacting against all these things. There was a fairly mechanical reaction - but many now seem to be coming to an end of the reactive phase and they're prepared to consider things objectively, like duty and responsibility in the real sense, not just imposed from outside, but willingly involved, accepted by themselves.

Voice: It seems to me with the precepts that while one accepts that this is the way in which somebody who was completely aware of all the factors involved in any situation would behave, one is not and so these are kind of guidelines which you may even apply to yourself in an unaware way. You may not be aware of why you shouldn't. You apply them without being fully aware of the context in which you apply them, to begin with.

Voice: Just from that point of view of awareness I find because if I'm in a situation of say 'taking the not-given' which applies on every level, or whatever, I don't find myself walking around with a rulebook in my head. I find myself, having recited these precepts so many times, having acquainted myself with them, that when I'm in the situation in which I find it would be more convenient for me to bolster up my own image in everybody's eyes, or just even materially, taking something that could be useful to me, I don't say, 'Oh look I'm not going to do that because if I don't such and such will...' The precepts as it were pop

up and force an awareness of what the consequences would be if I did that.

Voice: I'm sorry. I find that unconvincing.

Vangisa: To bring it to a very practical level, [on] the last summer retreat I left some money to be sent [transcriber's note: something about subscriptions being paid for magazines, then not receiving the goods]

S: Well this has been going on from the beginning. But it's a situation that it would be very difficult to deal with until more recently, but if I said I'd found out about this to someone, well, 'look, you ought to have done that'. But when I say this word 'ought' it sparks off such a reaction in this person and they feel less like doing this than ever. And this has been the sort of situation we've had to work with. But this is now beginning to change. And partly because people begin to feel, maybe not with full awareness, but they can't get any further ahead unless they go back and strengthen their foundations.

Voice: It seems almost a weeding process. [140] And also I mean it's associated with miccha-ditthis, many false views - one hears many justifications, 'Oh, I didn't want to do that, no I thought I'd do better getting into my feelings,' etc. etc. I did it late so I didn't think it was good to push myself,' - just letting it flow these days. You've heard it all haven't you?

Voice: That's another one, 'you've got to go through it so I might as well'. This is a justification.

Ratnapani: People talk about taking time off to go through things. I suppose this is valid where there is something so big happening that they just don't want to be distracted from the experience.

S: Right, I'm sure it doesn't happen quite as often as that. I'm sure.

Voice: Quite honestly my own feelings, I've been quite incapacitated at times, I was incapable of doing anything efficiently. That wasn't a kind of indulgence but a fact.

Voice: I think what we have suffered from in the past is that people have been objectively incapable of doing things but insisted that they were capable. (laughter)

Voice: The whole thing needs a very clear balance between (unclear)

Voice: Do you think we could afford to err a little in the other way now?

S: I think we can. Bend the bamboo a bit on that side, so it comes back straight maybe.

Voice: I kind of feel that there is a kind of intellectual grasping of things, and it's kind of like this is the miccha-ditthi, it is that which is wrong view.

S: What is it that people go for? Anything advanced, anything tantric, secret, esoteric, mysterious, Zen, Tantric, Vajrayana. If there was a good honest book on the precepts, who'd read it? No? It's as though those who read books

on Buddhism are one removed from Buddhism, that's how they approach the Movement, they don't want to know the Movement, they're not in the Movement but in the fringes of the Movement, teetering on the periphery. [141]

Voice: This is true but there seems to be in some quarters at any rate a (unclear) encroachment. This is something that people go through. It's a result of the way that things have been, an acclimatization process. It's unfortunate and it's not ideal but it's a fact.

S: One could say that of India, if anyone just talks with Indian intellectuals. It isn't just a Western phenomenon by any means, and the Buddha seems to have encountered it in his day among the cultivated brahmins and he seems to have come down on this kind of thing. It's certainly, if anything, worse in India. They're better at it and more sophisticated intellectually, even quite ordinary people, and they can go on talking about Nirvana, Brahman, the world being an illusion, happily for hours on end. It's worse there if anything. The English aren't so metaphysically inclined. And also - I must emphasize this again - we tend to come across only a particular kind of person. The average English person is more practical and down to earth than the average Friend. Vajrabodhi wrote a recent letter to me from Finland and he said that his experience in Helsinki is completely different from being in London, because the fact that he's involved with Buddhism and he's trying to start a Buddhist movement is involving him in all sorts of weird, eccentric, unbalanced, unpleasant, difficult, undesirable people whom he'd never have met if he'd not been a Buddhist. And he said that whereas in London it was a very good experience to come into the Friends and the Order etc, and a very positive thing, he said there it was something quite different. It's something to be borne, to be tolerated, in the hopes that something better emerges later on. So we don't always get the most healthy sections of the population interested in Buddhism and I've certainly noticed a big change over the years I've been involved. When I think of the people now involved in the Friends and the people who used to come along when I was at Hempstead there is a tremendous difference. The people who used to come along then were really difficult. Not just (unclear) people, you know, people with a problem like (unclear) have now, but really difficult, cantankerous, unsettled people very often - and very rigid and older, not many young ones in those days. You couldn't do really very much with them or for them. It's very very much better. So I'm going to write to Vajrabodhi along these lines. But certainly those that come along initially are not always even the best, not even a good average of the population. So it becomes all the more important to get into contact with ordinary people, who are not intellectually inclined, who don't read all the latest books on Zen etc - just very down to earth people who are looking for a better way of life and some means of developing themselves. It's that sort of person whom we have to get to more, [142] bypassing all the rejects and outcasts and so on.

Voice: It's very interesting that (unclear) said that originally the Buddhist Society were given a free advert in Time Out each week, and he was kind of

checking this out over the years and since the adverts went out he got quite a good response from it, but over a period of about five years he could count on the fingers of one hand the number of people who came from Time Out.

S: I think we have had quite a few people from Time Out.

Voice: Yes but an incredible turnover of Time Out types as well.

Voice: I think that's fair enough. A lot of people will inevitably be turnover types, but perhaps this is in a way good because they mention it to someone sooner or later. It seems that in the course of the last two years it's built up a tremendous network, not consciously, but quite a lot of people know about the Friends now - and Vajrabodhi was saying in this connection that though they get very few coming regularly, word about the FWBO, the centre in Helsinki, has spread practically right over Finland now. So it's there, and it's known about. So if you feel the need you can go there. So it seems as though the Movement itself, before we can go forward, and we've been going forward quite a bit, needs to go back. Even its original members need to go back and things need to become rather more polished in many ways. Have you any ideas in mind on how to solidify this kind of basic experience in practice?

Voice: It's just overall greater conscientiousness starting from the ABC.

Voice: I think it's coming out of the awareness that this is what's got to be done, it's going to happen - it's already started.

S: Also I think it's very helpful that people have become more organizationally responsible, whereas people before tended to be a bit dismissive about the organization side. That was just something to be left to types who need that sort of thing, the bit neurotic indulge in it but the really spiritual people of course could just ignore that and just get on with their own spiritual life. [143]

Voice: It's very interesting the image that enormous numbers of people - OK, I know they react - have got of the Friends; they see them as a bunch of weedy people huddled in blankets sipping cups of tea. I think the problem is that people think that their growth only happens in the meditation.

S: It also means a more manly sort of Movement really.

Voice: I think we ought to be quite concerned about the image we project as a Movement. I think we ought to listen to comments like those much more closely than we do.

Voice: We should be dissatisfied with our own image of ourselves. (unclear) get across a better image.

S: And this is again something that people have certain views about: that we shouldn't bother about our image, and let people think what they will, sort of thing. And this has been expressed in the past. I've heard this a number of times.

Voice: It could be quite an erroneous idea, what Buddhists ought to be. People have such strange ideas of what Buddhists are.

S: I don't know why it is but for some reason or other in this country, people have got the weirdest ideas about Buddhists. I encountered this especially when I came back in 1964 and I was being interviewed at one stage, by Nova, the glossy women's magazine. She said - the woman editor - the impression she'd had of Buddhism was that it was very ascetic, that it was a masculine religion with no place for women. And also she had been rather surprised that she was allowed into the monastery - she expected high walls all the way round - and she said to me, 'are you allowed to sleep with people?'

Voice: Sort of Catholic ideas of monasticism.

S: Trappist, almost but ascetic - repressive, life-denying. So these are the sorts of things. When I was talking on the radio and one of the questions was about what did Buddhists do in the world? Did you ever come out? As if this radio programme was the only time I'd been outside the monastery walls. I don't know where this started... So we're up against this as well, the popular images of Buddhists. Well, there was an instance when someone asked - [144] not me, but another Buddhist - why we burnt our wives? Obviously having in mind the Hindu suttee, the immolation of the widow. There are two or three cases of this in the Indian newspapers every year and it still goes on, but nothing to do with Buddhism. It's rather difficult to burn the average Tibetan or Burmese wife I assure you!

Voice: Talking about the image of the Movement as a whole if you want more of a kind of physical masculine types, I think the current Newsletter [issue no.21, tr.] is more likely to bring in fairies than anything else. I really feel personally that it shouldn't go out.

S: But why do you think that the Newsletter has become like that?

Voice: I couldn't put my finger dead on it but something's very wrong. It isn't solid. It's completely ...

Voice: It communicates people's inexperience.

S: I think that there seems to be in the whole of modern culture a very unhealthy emphasis on the subjective and a preoccupation with the subjective. It shows itself in all aspects of culture.

Voice: It's masturbatory.

S: Sort of. It's sort of the dregs of romanticism. We need a bit more classicism, the emphatic ideal, preoccupation with the object, awareness of the object, concern for the object. Not me and my feelings - my mental states and what not.

Mangala: You can see that through all the Arts and Literature.

S: I mean at the time of the Romantic revival that was fine but it seems to have progressively degenerated. The only person who saw this and saw through it with complete clarity was Goethe. He was interested himself, in his younger days, in (unclear), but he more than once remarked - in fact he was rather annoyed about it - that people just remained there, and thought that he remained there, and he said that the state of mind the book expressed was a disease, and he'd written the book to cure himself of the disease. But he said other people seemed to make a cult of the disease. So he developed into a sort of classicism which incorporated the individual feelings but didn't just revolve around it in an unhealthy, over-subjective way. And analysis, psychoanalysis, psychology, all encourage this very subjective approach, and the whole of modern art is just bits and pieces of your own subjectivity strewn over the canvas and this is what it is. I think it has [145] gone too far in that direction, 'I feel,' well so what? In a way the feeling is less, people in actual fact have got very weak feelings, they don't feel strongly, don't feel powerfully. They're so preoccupied with their feelings - they fritter them away.

Voice: It's also something you can't argue against.

S: An excuse for non-communication. I was reading Karl Popper and he emphasizes this. He's very much against this modern subjective tendency and he says we must return more to the ideals of the enlightenment and rational discussion. He's made quite a strong point there. Apparently a new argument is quite a rare thing because people so often say, 'I guess that's the way I feel.' It just becomes a clash of subjectivism, whereas rationalist is a common element. If you say, 'I feel this,' and he says, 'I feel that': end of discussion, but rationality is the binding thing.

Voice: Feelings are infallible.

S: More than infallible, you know, provide a complete justification. If someone said you're really behaving badly today - your behaviour is really disgusting, 'Well I guess that's the way I feel.' But if you say you ought not to feel like that and you bring in the word 'ought'. 'Who's telling me what to do? Father figure? The pope? I want to be free.'

Voice: 'That's not the way I feel, that's the way I am. @

S: 'You're projecting man.' So this is where it's ended up.

Voice: It's very narcissistic isn't it? (babble of voices)

S: Anyway let's get back to Hui-neng. [146]

p.156: "Maha Prajnaparamita! The Great Transcendental-Wisdom Ideal, supreme, most exalted, foremost. It neither stays, nor goes, nor comes. By it the Buddhas of the past, the present and future generations attain Buddhahood. We should use this Perfect Wisdom to break up the five bundles of aggregates that make up our own personality, and thus get rid of the pollutions and contaminations."

S: What are the five aggregates, or bundles of aggregates? So this is going back to the ABC of Theravada - form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. What does this mean? It means that in the Theravada in so far as we can see the Buddha's own teaching, the so-called personality is broken down into constituent factors. It's not sort of elements or items, but just different kinds of processes going on. In other words it's made clear to us that we're complex, we're a bundle or bundles of activities of various kinds, chemical, emotional, volitional, all balanced together in some way or other. So Hui-neng says, "We should use this Perfect Wisdom to break up the five bundles of aggregates that make up our own personality and thus get rid of the pollutions and contaminations." We should use this prajna, or rather we should use our higher, more developed consciousness, to see Reality in such a way that our identification of ourselves with what we may call the lower self, the ego if you like, is broken up, and we realize our identity with the essence of Mind. Now this raises a very important point and it's not unconnected with what we've been discussing, this whole questions of getting rid of the ego.

I think this is quite a practical problem. People feel the horns of a dilemma or rather in between two (?) ideologies, a sort of psychological attitude, and a more so-called spiritual attitude. All the spiritual teachings tell you to get rid of your ego and people often wonder what that means. But psychology tells you to see yourself, even to develop your ego, your personality at least, be an individual, and where does that leave you? I've dealt with that in the lecture 'Individuality True or False'. And putting it very simply the false self was in a way the old self, the lower self, and the higher self was the next stage of development. The ego is the old rigid self that we're leaving behind, and non-ego, the new self, into which one is advancing. But it's a bit more complicated than that, at least for some people, and very often they don't know what they're supposed to be doing, building up the ego or breaking it down. But I would say that for most people the immediate task seems to be the integration of the self. The integration of the self rather than the breaking down of the self. Well in a sense they haven't got a self. If you take the ego as sort of the harmony, the integration of all the different aspects of one's being, as is envisaged in the five spiritual faculties, well most people don't have an ego yet. So there's no question of going beyond it, the next stage is to develop it.

Voice: Can you say what difference in the ego though (unclear) or again [147] there's so many different angles on that.

S: There's so many different usages of the word ego. The ego is usually defined as the conscious object.

Voice: You also made the distinction in that lecture between positive and negative ego.

S: So you remember how I made it? Corresponding to a higher self? The positive ego being the next stage on?

Voice: The positive ego in the sense that you used it, in terms of experience and

action, and the negative ego is the ego in the sense that the Zen people use it: as an obstruction, as it were, to higher consciousness.

S: It's all connected with the whole question of alienated awareness. Because if you're not careful in trying to be non-egoistic you just alienate yourself from your self as it actually is, or you as you actually are here and now. You get this sometimes with Vedantic teaching when you are not what you really think you are; you are Brahman, you are God, and you go around trying to think, 'Well yes I am God and I'm not really me.' But you might even do it with great sincerity but it doesn't really work - you have to grow into it rather than trying to kid yourself that you're that. I think in a way that this whole sort of question of ego and non-ego rather bedevils the whole history of Buddhism from a spiritual point of view. I think it would be quite useful to just drop it and see it more in terms of growth and development, a more refined development, of the self or the person, even the ego.

Voice: What about the language of the five skandhas?

S: Well, the Heart Sutra says that the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was coursing in the Perfection of Wisdom, looked down, and he saw the five [148] skandhas and that they were empty. Yes, that's the sort of lofty spiritual vision, but the question is where are you now? What is your present experience? You feel that you are you. Do you feel that you have a body? That you are a body? You identify with that, so that's where you've got to start from. Not from anything imaginary.

Voice: Regular steps.

S: Regular steps, yes. And no doubt in the end you'll feel like the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, but you do not feel like him now. So you don't become like the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara just by acting as though you were him, or sort of pretending that that is in fact your point of view, because it isn't. So it's much better to have the sort of attitude, well, there's the Buddha and Bodhisattva up there on the high spiritual state and I'm just here, right? And I've got to go forward step by step, very slowly and steadily, and what it's really like to be up there I don't know. Hm? 'I think I've got a vague sort of idea but I don't really know. But I will know when I get there.'

Voice: You've quoted Eliot somewhere as saying you've got to develop intellectually before you can transcend ... [The Religion of Art, p.148, tr.]

S: Yes, sort of. It seems to me that they were under the impression that they were sort of being non-egotistic people merely weaken their egos, which is quite another matter. It's as though only a person with a strong ego can be non-egoistic.

Voice: No opinions, no (unclear) at all.

S: You notice that people who haven't got strong egos, in a way, in a positive healthy sense, are often very difficult to get on with. The weak person gives a lot of trouble, not the strong person. So I think it is more useful to use almost

regardless of traditional Buddhist training, which after all we are translating literally, it would be more useful for us to think in terms of development of the individual.

Voice: In the Diamond Sutra all these words are expedient as it there's nothing better.

S: This is why the list of the positive nidanas is a very helpful one. It makes it clear that the process of growth and development and progress up the spiral. All right.

p.516: "The three poisonous elements (greed, anger and infatuation) will then be turned into good conduct (sila) and self-realization (samadhi) and wisdom (Prajna). When one is free from defilement, Wisdom reveals itself steadily and cannot be distinguished from Mind-essence. Those who understand this Dharma will be free from idle thoughts. To be free from discriminations, from clinging to desires, from illusions; to set free one's true nature; to use Prajna for contemplation; to take an attitude of neither indifference nor attachment towards all things - that is what is meant by realizing one's true Essence of Mind and (in its perfection) is the attainment of Buddhahood." [149]

S: Going on from what I just said at a tangent, it reminds me of a little phrase - I think it's in one of the gospels - it's certainly a Christian phrase, 'what must I do to be saved?' [Acts 16:30, tr.] Hm? Not what must I think, or what must I believe, or what must I feel, but what must I do, hm? I think that is really the question that has to be raised and answered: what must we do? There has been a lot of thinking and a lot of understanding and even a lot of awareness and a lot of feeling, but what must we do? Because we've got to do something. I think perhaps that sufficient importance isn't attached to this - that as human beings, ordinary human beings, we're doing creatures, we're always doing something, we have to do something. This something which is mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita: that beings never cease from actions, and Krishna, supposed to be the god incarnate, says, I also never cease from action, I'm also constantly engaged in action as the creator, and so on and so forth. So we're doing creatures. So when we take up the spiritual life, it means a change in doing or a change in attitude to doing. But what very often happens is, on the path of irregular steps, is that our minds which are preoccupied with our spiritual life and so on and so forth and doing things remain more or less the same, or else we give up the ordinary doing and we've got not doing which is in line with our ideals and aspirations, huh? For instance, take this question of employment, what I've said to people is that if you take up a part-time job then you'll have more time for meditation, study, and so on, but does that actually happen? What usually happens is that they waste time. Isn't that so? Or do people disagree?

Voice: I think that's pretty true.

Voice: It varies.

S: Yes, it varies. But there's some wasted time or tendency to. So the question

really is of doing. Otherwise I think that the danger is that we find ourselves drifting into - Friends, Order members - slipping into a situation where you don't have anything in particular to do. Which means you get bored, you get dull and listless, and you don't even enjoy your meditation, or a few things that you do - the religious and spiritual things - the zest seems to go up as well. So it's as though the healthy human being has to have something to do. I think it is that maybe that we have to get down to: what do we do. OK we've got these ideals, these aspirations, we're Buddhists, we're Order members, etc, but what do we do? And I think this lack of doing is an aspect of the general lack of masculinity I've noticed in the Movement. Yes? [150] Especially among the men.

Voice: I think there is this tremendous kind of lethargy which is there because there's nothing to do.

Voice: Tentative.

Voice: Well, yes, tentative, sure, but there's nothing that people, all of us generally, want to apply themselves to do.

S: There are several things also that need to be considered: when you go into a work situation it's all laid down, you just walk in and that's your job, you've got to do it. It's laid down. You don't have to think, well, what have I got to do and how have I got to do it. Not in many jobs anyway. You know. This is one of the criticisms that's made. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, that there's something given, it's a situation that actually exists. The job is there to be done. All you've got to do is do it as well and as intelligently as you can. But when it's a question of working for the Friends you're not only the executive, you're the legislative too, huh? It's not only that you've got to do something or that something has to be done, but you're the one who decides what is to be done, at least the details. And there also a difficulty comes in, people tend to discuss and just discuss, and someone remarked recently that - I think I said it myself too - that very often people think that something has been settled and decided when it's only been discussed, hm? You have a very long and satisfying discussion about something. but in the end nothing has been decided, so everything is the same as it was before, and those who are supposed to be doing something or want to be doing something don't have anything to do, because it hasn't been decided what is to be done. It literally has only been discussed. I think a lot of this goes on. So it's as though within the Friends a much more definite sort of situation is required - a bit analogous to the work situation - very much more, down into which they can just step; in a sense so that they don't have to decide.

Voice: I think this would happen when what could be done becomes clearer for people there, otherwise there's a danger of inventing jobs which don't need to be done. But when things are moving, you just slot them in as they come through.

S: As you know in the army they often invent work because it's not healthy to have people just idle, you know. [151]

Voice: You can invent work which is mildly useful but which isn't directly

required by the situation. It's not wasted work. There are a lot of people who are becoming more and more involved and there's no sort of extra step for them to take, and I think if they were given anything to do, more or less, they'd be really happy.

Voice: Rather a waste of enthusiasms, isn't it?

Voice: And they tend to start thinking in terms of giving up their jobs as well, which is from my own experience, you know, it represents a very healthy regard, but it's not usually a very positive step, unless there's something to step into so that's, you know ...

Voice: ... People seem to want to be told what to do and one's always a bit reluctant to tell them.

S: I had this discussion quite thoroughly with Ananda recently and I don't know whether you know about this but he's got the possibility of a better job in the printing works. I said he should take it, but it means he is going to be responsible for a dozen other people and have to give orders, and he said this is his great difficulty, that he can't tell other people what to do. So this is why he can't work with people on the Newsletter because he would have to tell them what to do. It would be easier for him psychologically just to try to do it all himself. This is what he has been doing. But he sees that this is something that he has got to overcome, so he feels now that he should accept this job because then he'll have to get down to it.

I encouraged him to do this. I felt it would be a very good thing if he had this job, quite apart from it being well paid. I said, well you need a bit of money for yourself and the Movement, so take the job and also it really helps him get over this difficulty - that he can't tell anyone what to do. And he can't work with anyone because usually in a work situation there's one person who knows more than the others and who will have to tell the others what to do. But I think that Order members should begin to see things more clearly and not hesitate to tell people what to do. They should do this, should do that. Will you work? OK, well here you are, hm? Well if people have expressed their general willingness to be of help, take them at their word. 'Please do this.' If they don't, say, well I thought you wanted to help, if you don't, well tell me, and I won't ask you again. If you say you want to help, OK, well here's a job. [152]

Voice: [I] always feel you could get across this idea, you know, this is not where you're going to finish up, you're going to continue moving and try to convey some of the enthusiasm you feel toward the Movement, where you think it can go, to the people who are just coming in, otherwise they think that they're the only one who is going to be there: 'I don't want to be there really.'

S: Well also it means dispossessing people of the illusion, deluded people with pseudo-spiritual ideas. A spiritual life in, well, what is most people's idea of a spiritual life? Most would like a beautiful place in the country, sort of lawns, parks, maybe not peacocks but something really beautiful, people floating

around, people of both sexes of course, and mysteriously all the work is done, and you're floating about, people having a wonderful meditation, a beautifully cooked macrobiotic meal, and you read the odd book on Buddhism and there's nothing to bother about. Well you get it in the Pure Land maybe but not here. (laughter)

Voice: Telepathic.

S: Yes? But this is what a lot of people unconsciously look for. They won't find it here on this earth, and you won't get it unless you work bloody hard here. (laughter) (break in recording) ... seems rather a long way from prajna and sunyata but perhaps it isn't thrown away after all? Maybe it's being a bit generous. I know how it is ...

pp.516-7: "Learned Audience. If you want to penetrate the deepest mystery of the Dharma-world and experience the deepest realization (samadhi) of Prajna, you should practise Prajna by reciting and studying the Diamond Sutra (the Vajracchedika) which will enable you to realize Essence of Mind."

S: So I take it everyone is familiar with this.

Voice: With the Diamond Sutra?

S: At least you've read it and know of it. No? This is rather interesting. Some time ago at a rather well attended preordination class, I was just sort of asking questions about their general knowledge and Buddhism, so among other things I asked what was their favourite text or sutra, and nearly everybody said the Diamond Sutra. One person [153] said the Dhammapada but apparently the most favoured were the more abstruse and advanced things. I can't say that I really noticed that people, even those who favoured the Diamond Sutra, were necessarily at a high level of spirituality according to the (unclear) of the sutra.

I didn't go into whether it was really their favourite sutra or whether exactly what they thought ought to be their favourite sutra or what would go down well, I think on the whole, though, it was the Hui-neng. It's rather interesting that although the Diamond Sutra is a very advanced work, a profound work and very difficult work, at least two thirds of the people decided that this was their favourite sutra. Anyway let's go on.

p.517: "You should know that the merit for studying this Sutra is distinctly set forth in the text in laudatory terms; it is immeasurable and illimitable and cannot be enumerated in detail. This Sutra expounds the highest thought of Buddhism and our Lord Buddha delivered it specially for the very wise and quick-witted."

S: That's probably why it was so popular.

Voice: credibility ... Why for example ... scriptural authority?

S: Well yes, the sutra has to be (unclear) on here. For example, "when it rains through the power of the celestial Naga on the plains of India, cities, towns and

villages are drifted about as if they were only leaves of the date tree; but should it rain on the great ocean, the level of the seas of the whole world would not be affected by it.” What’s the point of that? Just like the rains in the plains of India, the flood, the water can’t be contained, hence whole villages are just tossed around just like leaves of the date palm. If you’re not ready, not prepared, if you’re not really ripe, you come prematurely into contact with wisdom, you cannot but misunderstand intellectually, cannot but misunderstand. If just has an upsetting effect, a distressing effect. But only if you’re like the great ocean, and really able to receive and take in, absorb, will it be of any real use to you. So it’s a very serious thought.

The other point is “since they”, that is the wise, “have their own access to highest wisdom through the constant practice of concentration and contemplation (dhyana and samadhi) they realize that they no longer need to rely on scriptural authority.” You know, in Zen there’s this tearing up of the scriptures, not relying upon the scriptures, but that isn’t quite Hui-neng’s attitude. We forget that you rely on the scriptures only, but you have your won prajna. Prajna is the source of all the scriptures. When you’re enlightened yourself you don’t read the scriptures, hm? The scriptures come from your enlightened mind, the absence of enlightened mind. Until you have your own prajna, your own Bodhi-source within you, and realize that and are open to it, you’re going to need the scriptures. This is what Hui-neng suggests here. It’s only when you have your own access to higher spiritual (unclear) through the practice of concentration and contemplation that you will no longer need to [154] rely upon scriptural authority. So the fact that it says “no longer need” suggests that you do need. And no sort of premature (unclear)

I mention in my talks sometimes that some people are very quick to give up the scriptures and not bother, especially the Hinayana scriptures, hardly give them a glance, but they’re avidly reading (unclear) even Krishnamurti books and what not and neglecting the Buddhist scriptures.

p.517: “The Prajna immanent in the minds of every one may be likened to the rain, the moisture of which refreshes every living thing, trees and plants as well as sentient creatures. When rivers and streams reach the sea, the water carried by them merges into the one body, which is a good analogy. When rain falls in a deluge, plants which are not deep-rooted are washed away and eventually they perish. It is the same with the slow-witted when they hear about the teachings of the ‘Sudden School’. The Prajna immanent in them is exactly the same as that in very wise men, but when the Dharma is made known to them they fail to enlighten themselves. Why is it? It is because their minds are thickly veiled by erroneous views and deeply rooted infections, just as the sun is often thickly veiled by clouds and unable to show its splendour until the wind blows the clouds away. Prajna does not vary with different persons; what makes the seeming difference is the question whether one’s mind is enlightened or is beclouded. He who does not realize his own Mind-essence, and rests under the delusion that Buddhahood can be attained by outward religious rites, is rightly called

the slow-witted. He who knows the teachings of the ‘Sudden School’, and who attaches no importance to ritual, and whose mind always functions under right views so that he is absolutely free of defilement and contamination, such a one may be said to have realized his Mind-essence.”

S: I’m not quite happy about this “attaches no importance to ritual”. That seems a bit insensitive. Let’s have a look at the other translations - “Do not place your trust in external practices.” That sounds more like it. This ritual seems to be the reading of the Protestants or ex-Protestants (unclear) Thailand.

p.518: “Learned Audience: The mind should be framed in such a way that it will be independent of external and internal things, at liberty to come and go, free from attachment, thoroughly enlightened, without the least obscuration. He whose mind is thus framed is able to measure up to the standard of the Prajna Sutras. The sutras and the scriptures of both the Mahayana and the Hinayana, as well as the twelve sections of the canonical writings, were provided to suit the different needs and temperaments of various people. It is upon the principle that Prajna is latent in every man that the doctrines expounded in these scriptures is established. If there were no human beings there would be no teachings; hence we know that all teachings are made for man and that all Sutras owe their existence to preachers. Some men are wise, the so called superior men, and some are ignorant, the so called inferior men; the wise preach to the ignorant when they are asked to do so. Through this the ignorant may attain sudden enlightenment and their minds may become illuminated thereby; then they are no longer different from wise men. This does not mean that without enlightenment a man is in a class with human beings different from Buddhahood. The opposite is the truth, he has always been in the same class with Buddhas from the beginning. Ignorance does not separate him from Buddhahood, it only obscures his realization of his true Buddha nature.”

S: So this whole paragraph is of very great general importance, especially where it says, “The sutras and scriptures of both the Mahayana and the Hinayana, as well as the twelve sections of the canonical writings, were provided to suit the different needs and temperaments of various people. It is upon the principle that Prajna is latent in every man that the doctrines expounded in these scriptures is established.” That Buddhism exists for the sake of man, the Dharma exists for the sake of man, a means to lead man in the right direction, and this reminds me of a phrase, almost a refrain, that comes in the Pali scriptures again and again. The Buddha says, let there be a man, or give me a man, who is reasonable: I will convince him. In other words there is something in the individual human being, call it prajna, call it what you will, to which you can appeal. So it’s a question of getting to that. And the Buddha has this very great confidence in the fact that there was in every man, every reasonable man, something that could be appealed to, something that would respond, and he was quite convinced of his own ability to appeal to that sort of conscience.

And another point is he, that is the ignorant person, (unclear) has always been in the same class as the Buddha from the beginning. And this is metaphysically

true, that this is one of the things we can usefully leave aside for quite a while. That is we think generally along the lines of, well you are Buddha already, it is bound to be misunderstood by people. We don't (unclear) but sometimes Zen people do. It sounds a familiar phrase, it has been misunderstood because it suggests all practice is unnecessary, you are that already. Of course you are, in a profound metaphysical sense, but the fact that you are is completely useless to you as you are now. So you need to [156 (there is no page 155)] work on the assumption that you are not that, but that you can become that, if you work at it, you can develop into that. This is really where it is for us at the moment. This is really (unclear) the line of thought. To tell people that already you are a Buddha - that has no meaning for you. You cannot but misunderstand. You cannot possibly take it in the right way, they're not in a position to. So therefore you cannot communicate the truth to them, and therefore you cannot communicate that truth to them at all. So you see it stated in the book that a person is in fact Buddha, well yes that's true, that's what the sutra says. But if you say to someone, 'you are a Buddha,' that's false, he isn't. You don't know what you're talking about to begin with. You don't realize it. Nor does he. It's just words, so there's no point in repeating those words because you're not used to them, not in that context as spoken in that situation, It's not even true. They don't correspond to anything in your experience, or anything in you, so how can they possibly be true? All you can say is, well, you're a pretty feeble specimen of the human race at the moment, but never mind you've got some potentiality to come along and work at it for a few years and you will develop. You will at least become an individual and you will be able then to think eventually in terms of becoming an enlightened individual; that's what lies at the end of the path, although we can't (unclear) at the moment. But to say 'you are a Buddha', you are enlightened, just as you sit there - that is completely false and unreasonable even to mention it, certainly at the beginning. So when you say that, you cannot but speak a lie. All right, let's go on.

p.518: "A gleam of enlightenment is enough to make a living being the equal of a Buddha."

S; Well that's an exaggeration as we saw before. This is not to be taken literally.

"Since all truth (Dharmas) is immanent in our minds, there is no reason why we should not realize intuitively the real nature of Mind-essence (tathata)."

S: No reason at all. The fact is that we don't usually, and require a long and painful, you know, process of training and discipline first.

"The Bodhisattva Sila Sutra says, 'Our essence of mind is intrinsically pure; if we knew our mind perfectly and realized what our self-nature truly is, all of us would attain Buddhahood.'"

S: The importance of that "if" should not be underestimated.

"The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa says, 'At once they became enlightened and regain their true mind.' When the Fifth Patriarch preached to me I became enlightened

immediately after he had spoken and spontaneously I realized the real nature of Mind-essence (tathata). For this reason it is my particular object to propagate the teaching of the ‘Sudden’ School so that learners may know enlightenment at once and realize their true nature by introspection of mind.” [157]

S: Well I personally feel, if Hui-neng did in fact say that, he was being rather naive. Because what was true in his case was obviously not going to be true in the case of everybody. Yes, he did realize immediately, as soon as he heard the Diamond Sutra, as soon as the sutra was expounded to him by the Fifth Patriarch, but it isn’t like that for everybody, hm? Even in the Buddha’s day there were monks who the Buddha exhorted and admonished time and time again. Think of Devadatta, he came to a very bad end. It wasn’t for want to trying on the Buddha’s part. But some people have what Buddhism calls stronger roots of goodness than others, and they are the ones who will have this sort of sudden awakening, when the truth is presented, but others you can go on presenting the truth to for ages and they won’t even awaken. It’s just the opposite sometimes, it seems.

So you mustn’t generalize from your own experience, and if we take this passage literally, Hui-neng seems to be doing this a little bit: “For this reason it is my particular object to propagate the teaching of the Sudden School.” So I would say that even though on the basis of his own assumption you can’t do that. You can only propagate the truth, the teaching, the Dharma. Some people will respond quickly, those with strong roots of goodness, others will respond slowly, and this is what he does say in another passage. I’m a bit suspicious about this reference to the Sudden school because scholars maintain that this distinction of Sudden and Gradual school developed after Hui-neng’s death, hm?

Voice: If you look at previous references to Sudden school it comes in reference to “attaching no importance to ritual”. It’s almost as if it has been added later possibly.

S: Hmm. So if he did say that, I think he’d be rather naive. Sure, he gained enlightenment immediately after the Fifth Patriarch had spoken; it doesn’t mean it’s going to be like that for everybody, although (unclear) a particular school based on that particular kind of reaction. So I’m a bit suspicious about that.

Voice: Could an enlightened being behave in a naive way?

S: I would say not. So therefore I tend to suspect that that passage, or the authenticity of the passage, especially in view of what I was reading in the (Yampolsky), about the whole distinction of the division of Southern school and Northern school, Sudden and Gradual, arising after Hui-neng’s death, and the whole text having been subsequently edited or re-edited in the light of that division. [158]

p.519: “Should they fail to enlighten themselves they ought to ask some very pious and learned Buddhist who understands the teachings of this highest school to show them the right way.”

S: So in other words we come back to the gradual path after all, hm?

“The office of a pious and learned Buddhist who guides others to realize Essence of Mind is an exalted position. Through his assistance one may be initiated into all meritorious Dharmas. The wisdom of Buddhas, past, present and future, as well as the teachings of the twelve sections of the canon are immanent in the mind, but in case we fail to enlighten ourselves we have to seek the guidance of the wise and learned.”

S: “In case”. Maybe he’s just being ironical.

“On the other hand those who enlighten themselves need no extraneous help. It is wrong to insist upon the idea that we cannot obtain liberation without the assistance of the pious and learned. It is by our innate wisdom that we enlighten ourselves, and even the extraneous help and instruction of a pious and learned friend would be of no use as long as one is deluded by false doctrines and erroneous views.”

S: I think there are one or two things that have been misunderstood, certainly by some Western people. On the other hand there are those who enlighten themselves need no extraneous help. Well, I haven’t found anybody in Western Buddhist circles so far who has enlightened himself, or herself. But quite a few people would like to think this, that they don’t need any help, that they can do it all themselves. But it doesn’t seem that there are any such cases at all.

Voice: Thinking like that would seem to get in your way to enlightenment.

S: Yes, not only to enlightenment yourself but even getting help from others to enlighten yourself. I think this is again another sort of popular miccha-ditthi, a wrong attitude. Of not recognizing that you need help, and not being prepared to recognize that maybe somebody else can help you, that you’re just as good as that person and you can do it all by yourself. Why should you take advice or guidance, instruction from him or her? Are you making a list of miccha-ditthis? It’s going to be a rather long one! It’s the sort of (?) (theory that persists) in the wrong sense, that you’ve got nothing to learn, hm? By the way I had, or rather John had, a letter from Karmagra, he seems to be really put off at the centre by the fact that there were people in kesas sitting around considering themselves to be peers, and he didn’t think that anyone was superior, and everyone was equal and he didn’t recognize any distinction, enlightened and non-enlightened, and that was the way he was going to have it. It was quite a wild sort of letter.

Voice: Karmagra? Was he American?

S: He was in charge of the Arts Council, and this seems [159] to have really sort of shaken him, the fact that he came into the category of the unordained. Some people react very strongly to this, as though it’s a sort of privileged position that you (unclear) in merit and they’re left in the unprivileged position. They’re retrograded to a lower status and they aren’t going to have it. There’s quite a strong feeling like this around, as you know it grows out of a feeling of pseudo-democracy, that everybody’s equal, that everybody’s the same, no one’s

higher than everybody else, no one's better anyway. Richer maybe, or more powerful, but not better, no one's better than anyone else.

Voice: I remember we had this discussion at the Friends where somebody accused us of being elitist.

S: I think we have to say that sometimes, that clearing up any confusion about the word itself. So there is - I said to someone who raised this question with me - it's the difference between the committed and the uncommitted. It was an Order member who was hesitant about saying this. I said no, you must say this. There is a difference between the committed and the uncommitted, and I've even heard Order members saying in the past, well, we're not different from anybody else, we're just the same, we're no better, we can't claim that we've got anything which anybody else hasn't got. Well, if you can't, why be in the Order? Not that you've got to claim it in an egoistic sense, but you've committed yourself.

Voice: Well anyway it seems only elitist to the person (?)fighting.

S: Yes. But this is an attitude which we sometimes are very much up against. Again it is based on a miccha-ditthi. So this is one of the reasons (unclear) hear that everyone's the same, everybody's enlightened. But as far as they're concerned at their current level of development that doesn't mean anything, that's just rubbish because it doesn't mean anything. All right, let's carry on.

"As we introspect our minds with Prajna, all erroneous views will disappear of themselves, and just as soon as we realize Essence of Mind we will immediately arrive at the Buddha stage. When we use Prajna for introspection we are illuminated within and without and are in a position to know our own nature. To realize our own nature is to obtain fundamental liberation. To attain liberation is to attain the Samadhi of Prajna, which is intuitive insight. What is intuitive insight? Intuitive insight to see and realize all dharmas (things as well as truths) with a mind free from attachment. In action Prajna is everywhere present yet it 'sticks' nowhere."

S: This is very important. This is one of the most important teachings in the present work and also in the Mahayana generally. The fact that the mind doesn't stick anywhere. There's a very famous example in Zen literature, an anecdote of the sticking mind. You know the story about the two monks and the pretty girl? That's a very good example of the mind that sticks. Everybody knows the story. Anyone who doesn't? [160]

Mangala: I'm sure I've heard it, but I'm not quite ...

S: Someone tell it.

Voice: You mean about the one who crosses the river?

S: Yes.

Voice: They came to a stream that has to be forded, there's water in it and ... a woman is there who doesn't want to get her feet ...

S: A pretty girl.

Voice: A pretty girl, and so one of them carries her across and they get to the other side and he puts her down and on they go, just the two monks. After about half an hour has gone by one of the monks says to the other, 'you know you shouldn't have carried that pretty girl across the stream - that's a very un-monkly thing to do.' Then the first monk says, 'I put her down half an hour ago, you're still carrying her.'

S: His mind is stuck on the girl. We find that this is what happens. Our minds stick when there's a new situation and the mind is still in the past. The mind always sticks in the past. That's where the sticking is. You can't move into the new situation. You find this very much in human relationships, you're stuck in the past. You meet someone, you don't deal with them afresh. Your mind is stuck with what was said yesterday, or what happened yesterday, hm? You must have a non-sticking mind. This is a very important thing and obviously there are all sorts of practical applications, and this is one of the reasons we find it difficult to get on with things, because the mind is not with the present job in the present situation, it's still lingering in the past.

"What we have to do is to so purify the mind that the six aspects of consciousness (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mentation) in passing through their six sense-gates will neither be defiled by nor attached to their six sense-objects."

S: There's nothing wrong with the six sense objects. It's not said that you should keep away from those. Be in contact with them, yes, but don't stick.

"When our mind works freely without any hindrance and is at liberty 'to come' or 'to go', then we have obtained the intuitive insight of Prajna, which is emancipation."

S: There's no more reason why you should stop thinking, than you should stop smelling or tasting, yes? Let the senses function, let the mind function, but don't stick. [161]

pp.519-20: "(Discriminative thought which leads to desire and attachment or to aversion and defilement, is to be controlled in the interests of intuitive thought which leads to self-realization and freedom.)"

S: Discrimination is the intellectual aspect of the sticking.

Mangala: Could you say maybe a bit more about that.

S: About discriminative thought being the intellectual aspect of the sticking? There's quite a bit about this discriminative thought, especially in the Lanka-vatara Sutra. Vijnana - this is the term that is usually rendered as discriminative thought, and especially the klisto-mano-vijnana, the soiled or stained, or defiled mind consciousness, the activity of the ordinary, waking, conscious mind which looks at everything in the light of differences, this and that, the things I like and the things I don't like, especially likings and non-likings, or dislikings. If one's

mind is functioning in this way, and discriminating in this way, then the mind will stick.

For instance, if I give an example, suppose someone says there's a job to be done, some painting to be done. So that's the objective situation. Well your response should be, 'OK let's get on with the painting, it's time for that.' But the sticking occurs when it's not the time for painting. 'I don't like painting,' or, 'we did that yesterday, why should we do it today.' So here the mind is discriminating. I like or I don't like, then and now, and so on and so forth. And because the mind discriminates it sticks. But if I didn't have any conception of, say, today and tomorrow or yesterday and today or what I like and what I don't like, it would just function freely and spontaneously, and that sticking wouldn't arise. We think far too much, it seems to me. We think far too much and sometimes we spend a lot of our time talking about doing something, or whether we should do it, and in half the time it takes to talk about it, we could have done it. All right, next paragraph.

p.520: "Those who understand the way of intuitive insight will know everything; they will have the experience that all the Buddhas have had, and they will attain Buddhahood. In the future, if an initiate of my school should make a vow in company with his fellow-disciples to devote his whole life without retrogression to the practice and commemoration of the teachings of this 'Sudden' School, in the same spirit as if he were serving the Buddha, he would attain without failure the Path that leads to Bodhisattvahood and Buddhahood. He should transmit from heart the instructions handed down from one Patriarch to another, and no attempt should be made to conceal the orthodox teaching."

S: Well again I'm a bit suspicious about this reference to the Sudden school. It seems to me to be one of the interpolated bits, but never mind, let's come on to the next paragraph and the stanza, which is quite important.

"Learned Audience: I have a Stanza for all of you to recite. Both laity and monks should put its teachings into practice, without which it would be useless to remember the words alone. Listen to this stanza:

"A master of the Buddhist canon As well as the teachings of the Dhyana school Should teach nothing but the Dharma for realizing Essence of Mind. We can hardly classify dharmas into 'sudden' and 'gradual', But some men will attain enlightenment quicker than others."

S: That seems quite straightforward and not quite in accordance with what he was alleged to have said earlier on. You just preach, and then it's up to people themselves and their individual natures whether they attain quickly or whether they take their time over it. [162]

"For example: this system for realizing Essence of Mind Is beyond the comprehension of the ignorant. We may explain it in ten thousand ways, But all these explanations may be traced back to one principle. To illumine our gloomy mind, stained by defilement, We should constantly set up the Sun of Wisdom.

Erroneous views keep us in defilement, But right views remove us far from it.”

S: I remember something in this connection. A very important passage in the Pali canon where the Buddha makes it clear that attachment to wrong views leads to rebirth in a state of misery. And it’s quite a striking passage. I don’t remember the details, but he makes it clear especially that if you for instance commit an unskillful action obviously you have the karmic consequences, but if you commit the unskillful action, motivated by a false view, not just out of impulse or weakness, [but] out of that conviction, as it were, then the consequences are far more terrible. So perhaps this is an aspect of the Buddha’s teaching we need to now emphasize more: that wrong views are not just a matter of making intellectual mistakes, they can be quite catastrophic in the long run, from a moral and spiritual point of view. And I think we’re beginning to see this, experience it, to see that it has been happening.

Voice: The wrong views can always be traced back to usually some sort of psychological ...

S: Yes, but the Buddha himself seems to have felt, at least believed, that wrong views were sort of rationalizations, as we would say, of subjective more or less emotional states. For instance he says that *ditthi*, the wrong view of eternalism, was a rationalization of a craving for existence and its opposite a rationalization of what we would call self-hatred, craving for annihilation. But I think you have to meet the wrong views on their own ground, not just say ‘I guess you’re projecting, well that’s your hang-up,’ because they can say that to you as well. You have to reason it out more, which means being more patient, trying genuinely to communicate with the person. It’s so easy to be abrupt and dismissive and say, well, that’s your hang-up. It ends all discussion, all hope of convincing. So you have to reason and argue it out quite patiently, which may be rather a boring business sometimes, rather tiresome, but still you have to do that. That’s the only way usually. Just reason it out in a reasonable manner quietly.

pp.520-1: “But when we are in a position to discard both defilement and purity Then we are absolutely free. Bodhi is immanent in our Mind-essence; Any attempt to look for it elsewhere is foolish. Within our defiled minds, purity is to be found, And once our mind is set right, we are free from the bonds Of defilement, of evil karma, of expiation. If we are treading the Path to Enlightenment, We need not be worried by stumbling-blocks. If we keep an eye constantly on our own faults, We cannot go far astray from the right path. Every species of life has its own way of salvation; They will not be antagonistic one to another. If we leave our own path and seek for another way Of salvation, we shall never find it. Though we plod on till death overtake us We shall only find penitence at the end.”

S: You see, that’s another difficulty in having access to all kinds of literature. You know, we can have access to literature, spiritual literature which is very good in itself but which was perhaps intended for some other kind of temperament, for people of a temperament other than ours. So we’ve got acquaintance with this

vast range of material which in fact is not really intended for us, and sometimes we don't even know our own [163] temperament, or what would be suitable for us. So it's all very hit and miss. Whereas in the old days you just find a teacher, and your teacher would sort of dole out to you bit by bit what you needed, or he might even sometimes say, well, I don't think I'm the teacher for you; I think so-and-so would be, go to him. This happened quite a lot, and you eventually find a teacher who suited you and get the teaching that was suitable for you and which you needed, which helped you. But now we have free access to everything and we become confused.

Voice: What about the teachings, if you like, that are current in the Friends? Do you feel they're particularized or can anyone who comes into contact benefit from them?

S: I've been fairly careful to keep things general and very broad, partly for this reason. I would say that, for instance, the presentation of Mind Reactive and Creative, this is something to appeal to everybody I would say, at least it's something that everybody can understand and accept. And our meditation practices are basic ones, very general ones, nothing particularly esoteric or suited to particular temperaments. There's only one thing I would add and that is I think that willy-nilly we're a bit too orientated to the arty-intellectual, and not enough to the down to earth practical man. But that is more our general attitude and image perhaps, even. But I think there's nothing in our actual teaching that the down-to-earth practical man would wish to quarrel with.

Ratnapani: When you say orientated toward types, in which way (unclear) are orientated then?

S: In principle now, we're not. When I think our general attitude comes: our general airy-fairyness, lack of practicality, pseudo-spirituality, up in the air, being (unclear), yes and like attracting like. But not in the actual teaching if you listen to the tapes and so on. Well, there's nothing to justify that at all. Not as far as I can recollect.

Ratnapani: But for some reason this movement has been attractive to these people. It started with nobody presumably, well almost nobody, and they've come and . . .

S: Well I think there's various things to be considered: one, we started in London. You get a big floating population there, yes? Relatively rootless people? And also it must be said that, after all, Buddhism, however presented, is something foreign: it hasn't been known in this country and [164] the only people who are going to be open-minded enough to come along at first are those who are a bit interested in the foreign and the exotic, not people who are more conservative and traditional, earthbound, so perhaps it's inevitable to begin with, hm?

Voice: I think it's quite important for Order members to get to places like Glasgow as soon as possible after they've been ordained if they come from London .. to see the Friends in a broader perspective. . .

S: How would you characterize them up there then?

Voice: Much more honest somehow.

S: I felt that with the Dutch people. Did you feel anything like that?

Voice: They had a very particular approach. I mean very sort of educated into a certain attitude. They're almost afraid to step out of it.

S: Yes, they were at first. That's true.

Voice: A programmed emotionalism: you should respond in a certain way to certain things.

Voice: And being afraid. The Scotch people seem to be very sort of spontaneous and direct.

S: I think perhaps it's also something to do with the fact that there aren't very many of them in Glasgow, and they've all been very much with Gotami and she is very practical and down-to-earth in many ways, and that might have had its own effect too, since she was actually living at the Centre and some of the people were also staying there. I must say when I talked to them individually at that retreat, I also felt very great honesty and getting right down to it. I also felt the same thing with the Dutch people, when I met with them individually. What they were [165] like individually, what they were like in the meetings apart from study and discussion, I don't know.

Ratnapani: I think they haven't gone through this thing that a lot of Londoners have, a deconditioning process, by smoking dope, growing hair long, getting into art movements and things. I feel like I'm coming back to where I was at the beginning in a sense, having gone through that. And they haven't done that up there. Most of them still live at home, not quite straight jobs, yet they are very much aware that there is this underground thing and they are aware of its benefits, but they're also very much aware that a lot is a load of rubbish - very objective about this.

[Unclear discussion about a Jill Tweedie newspaper article about hippies.] There's so much going on, so much available, that they don't appreciate it. Much of it is for free, so they become very casual in their attitude towards it; they don't realize the things that are offered as it were on a plate are things that some people in some periods of history would have [166] sacrificed their lives to get a bit of. If you wanted to have a copy of the Diamond Sutra a thousand years ago, it wasn't all that easy to come by. Well even in this country a hundred years ago, who had access to these things? But now for anybody, they're all in the paperbacks, but people on the whole don't appreciate it. In some ways we're luckier now than in any previous period in history, almost anybody in any part of the so-called civilized world can go into any sort of decent bookshop and just for only a few pounds he can have a sort of wisdom of the ages from all over the earth in his own language. We've never had this before, anywhere. All the classics of Buddhism, of Confucianism, Hinduism, Taoism, Sufism, Islam, it's

all there. If you spent about ten pounds on paperbacks, five even, you've got it all there, enough for a lifetime.

Voice: . . . problem of boredom.

S: Yes. I think a lot of people get bored because they don't work. It's too much in the head. Of course you can have a surfeit of ideas, thinking and talking and discussing. There's not enough work. Not even enough thought. Let's carry on.

p.520: "If one wishes to find the true way, Right action will lead him to it directly."

S: That's straight out of the horse's mouth, isn't it?

"If one has not a mind to aim at Buddhahood, One will grope in the dark and never find it."

S: Yes, if one has not a mind to aim at Buddhahood, and very few people come along with a mind to aim at Buddhahood or anything like it.

"He who treads the Path in earnest Sees not the mistakes of the world. If we find fault with others, We ourselves are also in the wrong;"

S: I indicated before that we've gone a bit to extremes there and been too full of self-reproach and not thinking that we could be right. But I think we need not apply this too literally. I think we ought to find a bit more fault with others, in some ways, positively, and if we are right in certain respects and urge others to go along with us.

"When other people are in the wrong we should ignore it; It is wrong for one to find fault with others."

S: I can't agree with this altogether, because even in saying that it's wrong for us to find fault with others, you're finding fault with somebody else. [167] You're finding out a mistake. And if we're concerned with the Movement, well, one integral part of that is pointing out to other people if they're making a mistake. It's not fault-finding in a carping sense. I mean the Buddha was constantly pointing out all the faults of his disciples - never let them rest for a moment. (laughter) He used to call them together to tell them off if something was reported to him about their misdeeds or their conduct or misunderstanding and he'd give the individual monks a good telling off. The Buddha was doing it all the time. But obviously it's got to be done in the right spirit, with the right motive, not just sort of talking to other people about the faults of some third party, that's just backbiting.

p.521: "By getting rid of the habit of fault-finding, We get rid of one source of defilement. When neither hatred nor love disturb the mind, Serene and restful is our sleep. Those who intend to be teachers of others Should themselves be skilful in the various expedients that lead to enlightenment. When the disciple is free from all doubts Then it indicates that his Mind-essence is unclouded. This world is the Buddha-world Within which enlightenment may be sought. To

seek enlightenment by separating from this world Is as foolish as to search for a rabbit's horn."

S: Why is it foolish to search for a rabbit's horn?

Voices: It doesn't have one.

pp.522-3: "Right views are called 'transcendental', Erroneous views are called 'worldly', But when all views, both right and erroneous, are discarded, Then the essence of Wisdom manifests itself. Kalpa after kalpa a man may be under illusion, But once enlightened, it takes him but a moment to attain Buddhahood.

"After hearing what the Patriarch had to say, Prefect Wai, the government officials, Taoists, monks, and laymen were all enlightened. They made obeisance in a body and exclaimed unanimously, 'Well done! Well done! Who would have expected that a Buddha would be born in Kwongtung?'"

S: Even though they were enlightened they said 'a Buddha', not 'all the Buddhas'. So it suggests that their enlightenment was just a very clear understanding, just as one often gets at the end of a lecture, just really clear. But unfortunately one loses it rather quickly. With regard to this passage of not finding fault I think this is a good example of a passage that people can quote and use and refer to to justify their own weakness. In this respect the weakness is not standing up for what they believe to be true, and not being able to disagree with other people, or say that other people are wrong or 'you are wrong, I disagree with you,' and really sort of arguing it out.

Voice: Are you referring to the state of mind, not to an actual activity?

S: ... put on a negative carping attitude.

Ratnapani: Habit of fault-finding view it says. [168]

S: Right.

Voice: Fault-finding, looking for faults.

S: Right. Any query on this whole section? It's been rather up in the air but we've been coming down to earth with a bump. This isn't a bad thing. How's your work programme by the way?

Ratnapani: Very well. Good.

Voice: Improves day by day.

S: Right. Well when we're studying a Zen text it'd be surprising if there wasn't any action during the day. I think one of the things that has to be given consideration is, as I said earlier on, what is there to do? Hm? Most people can't be meditating much of the time. It wouldn't be good for them anyway. Nor studying much of the time; that wouldn't be good for them either. So apart from their secular occupation, what are they to do? This affects the whole Movement. I think this is quite a big question. It's all right say, on an occasion like this, to organize a four-hour work period, there is work to be done, something very

tangible, very concrete, but at the Centre very often there isn't. It could be cleaner. [Transcriber's note: inaudible discussion ensued with respect to tidying up the Archway Centre.] [169]

Chapter 4: Discourse on Dhyana and Samadhi

p.522: "Learned Audience:"Samadhi and Prajna are fundamental, but you must not be under the wrong impression that they are independent of each other, for they are not two entities, they are inseparably united. Samadhi is the quintessence of Prajna, which Prajna is the activity of Samadhi."

S: We must try to understand what is meant by these two terms here. Prajna, or wisdom, doesn't present any difficulties. That is prajna in the sense that we studied it yesterday: transcendental insight, especially transcendental insight developed beyond the flash into the fairly steady vision. But what is samadhi? Samadhi here is not just concentration. It's not even just meditation in the ordinary sense. Samadhi represents what we talked about the day before. That is to say the development within oneself of a very high level, superconscious state, or even superconscious stage, of being which remains permanent under all circumstances. That is what is meant by samadhi here. Prajna is what arises when you use that sort of mind, that sort of consciousness, or that sort of being, to investigate into the nature of reality. In other words, prajna is the function of that samadhi. This is what is meant in this context by samadhi and prajna. Samadhi represents that unshakeable state of higher consciousness which has become a permanent attainment if you like, and prajna is functioning especially when it functions by way of the investigation of reality, giving rise to, ultimately, Enlightenment. So Hui-neng says, "Samadhi and Prajna are fundamental", and this is very fundamental in the spiritual life, in his teaching and the Dharma, "But you must not be under the wrong impression that they are independent of each other, for they are not two entities, they are inseparably united. Samadhi is the quintessence of Prajna," that sort of stable entity, as it were. That is to say, I won't say Enlightened consciousness, that's not quite the right term yet, but that higher consciousness which remains the same, which remains stable, that's there at the heart of the functioning all the time, and the functioning is the functioning of that entity itself, and that functioning is what is called prajna or wisdom. So we must rather put aside here our understanding of samadhi as the term occurs in other contexts. This is rather special to the teaching of Hui-neng and even to Ch'an, though ultimately based on Mahayana texts.

p.522: "At the very moment Prajna is realized, Samadhi is simultaneously attained. At the very moment Samadhi is realized, Prajna is attained." Prajna may not [170] be actually in operation. It doesn't sort of come into operation until you apply that samadhi mind, or mind of samadhi, to the investigation of reality. But it's there. You've only got to move that mind, as it were, in a particular direction to investigate something, see something. That is prajna.

Devamitra: By investigation of reality do you mean something formal like actually sitting in meditation?

S: Oh no, not necessarily at all, because samadhi here remains the same under all circumstances, whether you're sitting meditating or not, so it's the same way with prajna. It may arise at any time.

Devamitra: Then in what sense would it be investigating?

S: Well, you might just be looking at something, or something might arise for you to see, and you see it as it is, and that is prajna.

Devamitra: It's not something that you've consciously thought? It's something which has just presented itself?

S: You may of course have a particular, say, problem, that you wish to consider and see in the light of that prajna. So when you have attained that samadhi state, or when that samadhi state is there, you can apply that mind saturated with the samadhi to that particular problem. You just look at the problem and then you see right through it. That is prajna. Or it may be that something just happens, something occurs, something turns up, but your samadhi state of consciousness is there. So with that samadhi state of consciousness you advert to that particular object or matter. Prajna automatically comes into operation; your very seeing of it and through it is your prajna. This is a bit sort of similar to the standard Theravadin teaching about saturating the mind in the dhyanas, and then when it is made flexible by being saturated with them, then you apply it to the investigation of reality. In this way, vipassana arises. It's much the same as that, but transposed, I would say, to a somewhat higher level. Samadhi is seen to be a more stable state, it's sort of transcendental in a way, whereas the dhyana states are not. But it's an analogous sort of operation.

p.522: "A disciple should not think that there is a distinction between first comes Samadhi, then comes Prajna, and first comes Prajna, then comes Samadhi. To think that way would imply succession and cause and effect, whereas they are simultaneous." Samadhi in the more standard, Theravadin sense of course does precede prajna always, but here a [171] different meaning is attached to samadhi, so we mustn't confuse the two meanings.

p.522: "For one whose tongue is ready with good words but whose heart is impure, Samadhi and Prajna are useless because they are not in balance. On the other hand, when one is good in mind as well as in word, and when the outward appearance and inner feelings are in harmony with each other, then Samadhi and Prajna are in balance."

This is not altogether clear. It suggests that if you want just this to happen on these higher spiritual levels, then first you've got to be in a balance on the lower levels, not necessarily spiritual levels. Especially he mentions mind as opposed to word and outward appearance and inner feelings. Samadhi on the higher spiritual level is more like the inner feeling; prajna is like the outer activity corresponding to the feeling. So we've got to have developed originally, or to begin with, a sort of state in which our inner feeling and our outward expression are in harmony. Then when we get to the higher spiritual level the same sort

of thing will manifest. There will be the inner experience, samadhi, and then expressing itself is the outer functioning, which is the prajna. This is what seems to be suggested, though I must admit it isn't altogether clear. It's very much like the equilibrium in the five spiritual faculties, or virya and samadhi, though here samadhi is used in a different sense.

In Charles Luk's translation he uses dhyana instead of samadhi. It seems to infer that the original word in Chinese, which is hsin, has no exact equivalent in Sanskrit, apparently, though I personally feel it corresponds to something like the citovimutti of the Pali texts. Luk's translation doesn't help us very much as regards this particular passage, it's almost as though Dwight Goddard's is the clearest.

Let's go into this a bit more in a sort of general way. "Samadhi and Prajna are useless because they are not in balance." This is linked up, though perhaps [on] a more ordinary level, with the five spiritual faculties teaching. Faith and wisdom are the first pair, then energy and concentration or meditation, virya and samadhi, then, fifthly, mindfulness or awareness. It's a very standard Theravadin teaching which reappears in the Mahayana. The emphasis is that faith and wisdom, the emotional and the intellectual, must balance, must harmonize. If you've got too much faith and too little wisdom you become credulous, you become superstitious. If there's too much wisdom, in the sense of intellectual understanding, and too little faith, you just become a philosopher, an academic; you have a merely intellectual interest in the Dharma. These two must be balanced: the emotional and the intellectual. In the same way [172] you must balance the outward activity (virya) and the inner calm and recollection and meditation (samadhi). These two parts are to be balanced by mindfulness, which cannot go to extremes, which has no opposite, and which is always useful. So here you've got this balance of virya and samadhi, and it's as though the Buddha is saying that from the very beginning of your spiritual life you must balance inner and outer, introvert and extravert as it were, activity and meditation. These should be balanced.

If we look at these words of Hui-neng, it's as though he is saying the same sort of thing with regards to an even higher level. If you've really got samadhi, you'll have prajna. If you've really got prajna you'll have the samadhi. So the inner and the outer, as it were, are one and the same thing. When samadhi functions, that's prajna. When the prajna is at rest, that's the samadhi. They are one and the same thing, different aspects, static and dynamic, inseparable, united. But the passage, to me, seems to suggest that if you haven't harmonized yourself at the lower level, you won't achieve this harmonization at the higher level. This is perhaps very important, because it suggests that at every stage we have to harmonize the inner and the outer. This links up very much with what we were talking about in a more general way yesterday, especially with regards the outer activities. It's really hopeless to think in terms of having a pure and mindful inner state but not having a proper expression of that in terms of everyday life, the activities you are involved in, and so on. These two must harmonize,

otherwise you are out of harmony, out of balance. Do you see this?

Buddhadasa: I think the distinction - if there is a distinction - should be made more clear between harmonizing the outer with the inner, and not necessarily harmonizing the outer with the outer in situations. Otherwise this could be used as an argument for self-indulgence in mundane things.

S: No. What I mean is this: suppose you are involved in various outward things, then the way in which you are involved in them must be a reflection, or even expression, of your inner state and attainment. Let's take a very plain and simple example. For instance, in our own activities in the Friends at the Centre. You have a beautiful meditation upstairs in the shrine [173] room, but when you come downstairs into the sitting room part, keeping your beautiful mindful state, you should act in accordance with that state and introduce harmony and order and mindfulness into the downstairs part and seeing that everything is mindfully arranged, everything is ready, everything is clean. In this way you are balancing inner and outer. But very often, of course, this isn't done. There's a lack of balance between inner and outer. OK, you have higher states of consciousness, whatever, but it must find expression outwardly in terms of virya. Outer must be in harmony with that inner. Otherwise it's not even a true inner.

Gotami: It may be something you have got rather than what you are, and you are just expressing confusion because that's what's going on inside.

Mangala: I think often people mistake also the state of quietism or inert passivity for samadhi.

S: Well this is apparently what they were doing in Hui-neng's days, and so he had to correct that. It seems to me as though Hui-neng is saying that if you haven't sort of become accustomed to achieving this harmony of inner and outer in your ordinary life and ordinary religious experience, you won't achieve this higher place of inner and outer which is represented by the samadhi and prajna. That would be quite useless to you. That teaching would be quite useless. It won't apply to you. You must have habituated yourself - to use a word that might be misunderstood - to be the same, inside and outside. To have both samadhi and virya, to use the Theravadin terms.

Hridaya: So when it says samadhi and prajna here it's using ideal concepts of samadhi and prajna.

S: Well, it means basically that you can't develop them. The teaching of samadhi and prajna in this sense would be useless to you.

Ratnapani: They can't evolve out of balance, so if there's no balance they won't evolve.

S: Right, yes. If you're not a balanced person in this respect, on the level where you already are, you won't be able to create or develop or attain that higher state of balance which is represented by samadhi and prajna. [174] You must be

balanced right from the beginning, and you must be accustomed to being the same inside and outside.

Chintamani: So this starts on the very lowest level with just balancing a reasonable proportion of, say, meditative activities with work.

S: But not just side by side but the one expressing the other. Not three hours of meditation and then three hours of work with a sort of chasm in between.

Chintamani: You apply the meditative states to the work, and the energy to the meditation.

S: Yes. So if this is in fact what Hui-neng is saying, and I think it is, this is very important, and in any case is important in its own right, whether he says it or he doesn't.

Devamitra: I feel that it's a continuity of the same thing. There's just continuing in everything.

S: Yes, quite. Just as with the samadhi and prajna, it's clear. When samadhi functions there's prajna.

Ratnapani: Could, at this level, one somehow make the balance which one apparently can't at the higher level?

S: At the higher level, if you've got it whole, it's balanced. If it isn't balanced you don't get it at all. But at this lower level where we're still trying to integrate; we can either be balanced or unbalanced. At a higher level you can only be balanced. You can't be at the higher level and unbalanced.

Ratnapani: But at this lower level you perhaps have to create the balance consciously in fact.

S: Yes. You are off and you are just going along on a tight-rope, as it were. Sometimes you are in balance and sometimes you are right out of balance. You just have to keep a constant watch on yourself and just add a bit here or take off a bit there to keep the overall balance, because we don't even remain in a stable situation much of the time. The situation affects us as it changes.

Devamitra: If one's outer activities are expressed in an unbalanced way and you discover through your outer activities a kind of untidiness or blank of some kind, what should you do? Quite often, for instance, I come up to my room feeling a bit lost about something and I'll go into my room and just stand there, [175] perhaps for a few minutes, feeling really lost and directionless. My room will be a terrible mess and I'll think I should do something about this, but I get stuck, just standing there, because I haven't got the energy to tidy it up. So I think, well, maybe I should sit down and meditate. But then, no. I get into an incredible quandary. I've come to a crisis point, but I don't know what to do in that situation - whether to meditate or tidy my room in the hope that it will tidy my mind or whatever.

S: It's quite straightforward. You just start tidying up the room gently and mindfully, not putting too much energy into it so that you're exhausted. Then when you've done it sit down quietly - not even meditate - just sit down in a chair quietly and then see what is to be done next.

Devamitra: It sounds so simple, but when it happens it's like coming up against a brick wall. Objectively, now I can see that, yes, that's probably the best thing to do, but not when I get into it. Sometimes I get into it two or three times a day.

S: No. I wouldn't agree with that. You don't get into it. You put yourself into it. You must ask yourself why do you put yourself into it, because if you do it so often you must want to be in that situation, or some part of you must want to be in that situation. So why?

Devamitra: I don't know. [176]

S: But anyway, that no doubt will sort itself out. But, practical advice, start tidying up every time, but gently and slowly, but if it speeds up naturally, OK. You'll find that the inner energy comes, but when it's all nice and tidy. Don't rush into meditation; just sort of nice and quietly or have a cup of tea. Have a cigarette, if you smoke, 'All right here we are, nice and peaceful, tidy. What next? Want to read? Want to meditate? Is there a job to be done? Do I feel like going for a walk?' Just see what's the next thing to do.

But this harmony and balance is very important. It's not just that we have an equal quantity of each, but of one expressing itself, or finding its fulfilment in the other. And this is quite important. One has to try to achieve this balance on whatever level one is. If you aren't a balanced human being you won't be a balanced spiritual being. You can't be a spiritual being at all, apparently. So balance and harmony are very important. This is what the Buddha told Sona when he was marching up and down on his bare feet and he'd left a lot of blood around. The Buddha said, 'Don't go to extremes,' and then told the parable of the lute (vina). The strings shouldn't be too tight or too loose [177] but just right. Usually we are either much too tight or much too loose. We usually go to extremes. We either do too much or too little, but never just what's right. Over-enthusiastic or under-enthusiastic. Over-conscientious or careless, but not just right.

p.522-3: "To an enlightened disciple (who has realized Prajna in Samadhi) discussion about it is unnecessary. To argue about Prajna or Samadhi as to which comes first, places one in the same position with those who are under delusion. Argument implies a desire to win."

S: This is quite an important point. "Argument implies a desire to win." But I think we have to distinguish between argument and discussion or even just presentation of one's own point of view, without even allowing oneself to be drawn into discussion, much less still argument. Also we mustn't sort of shy away from a reasoned exposition of what we think. This is not argument in that

sort of sense. I think everyone is familiar with the argument that is just a desire to win and score, but in avoiding that we mustn't go to the other extreme of keeping absolutely quiet when we actually disagree with people, or letting people get away with what we feel are really wrong statements or wrong ideas. Has this come up in the course you are taking?

Subhuti: The desire to win, yes.

S: Do you find it difficult to intervene and just have discussion and making clear one's point of view, or the Buddhist point of view, without having an argument?

Subhuti: I find it difficult on my own part not to start feeling defensive when somebody seems to take up this position. We are not really discussing what we appear to be discussing. You start defending yourself and not Buddhism.

S: I've heard someone say, 'Why are you Buddhists all so ascetic?' And you reply, 'Oh, I'm not ascetic,' instead of 'What is asceticism?' and 'What does one mean by that?' and 'Why did the Buddha think it was necessary?'

Buddhadasa: Aren't there written down somewhere the methods of answering a question?

S: Yes. The four ways of answering a question. First the direct way. You just answer the question, yes or no, sort of thing. Then there is a way of answering with a counter-question. Then there is the way of answering by making a distinction: that if by such and such a word you mean so and so, [178] then such and such; if you mean something else then the answer is such and such, or under these circumstances yes, under those circumstances no. This was the Buddha's method of answering. It's called vibhajyavada. This is why the early Buddhist were called Vibhajyavadins and the Theravadins are still called Vibhajyavadins: those that answer by making a distinction, or non-dogmatists; those who say 'well it depends on what you mean by' or 'it depends under what circumstances'. The fourth one is that the question is so confused you answer by remaining silent. So, there's the direct reply, the counter-question, the conditional reply you could say, or qualified reply, and then silence.

Ratnapani: Not refusal to answer?

S: You recognize your inability. There's no answer possible because there's really no question. I've a feeling that often in the Friends we sort of shy away from reasoned exposition and defending - if, defensiveness, you can call it that - the Buddhist point of view of what we ourselves genuinely think and feel and tend to be a bit apologetic about our philosophy and therefore a bit on the defensive; not as though we are really, fully convinced, or even if we are really, fully convinced, thinking, 'Oh we mustn't lay it on the other person,' sort of thing, as though they aren't capable of sticking up for themselves almost, though very often they are.

Ratnapani: I don't know if this is general, but in my own case often I feel unable to answer or defend through lack of thinking it through myself and really getting

it straight in my own mind what I do think, what the Buddhist point of view is so far as I am concerned.

S: Well that means that one just has to do more studying, engage in more thought.

Ratnapani: Just thinking is very difficult. Just thinking about one thing, the mind wanders.

S: I find that I usually have a sort of list of things outstanding to think about. The list goes back thirty years. There are some things I'm still thinking about. I haven't come to definite conclusions, sometimes for lack of material or evidence, or because of various factors to be weighed up one against another. But I have this list at the back of my mind that whenever I [179] have a little free time, like when I'm being driven along in the van or something like that, or I'm in the tube, I advert to this problem or that problem, this question or that question, this text or that text, and sort of gradually tick them off. I think one has to be doing this all the time quite consciously and it'll get sorted out in the end.

But what of course keeps happening is that new questions keep getting added to the list and it goes on all the time. You never come to the last question of all and then that's that, because life is constantly changing, new situations are arising, new problems, new difficulties, and you just sort of tick your checklist off and tick them off one by one. I'm referring more to sort of questions about the Dharma especially, because the Dharma is infinite, you'll never come to the end of it. I think that one should do this and have a number of things that you're working on and turn it over in your mind, especially when you are in a meditative mood and see things clearly, and then maybe prajna can come into operation and not just ordinary thinking. I can say quite clearly that there are certain questions which it took me twenty years to see clearly, bearing them in mind more or less constantly all the time, but eventually the penny drops and you think, 'Ah yes, that's it,' and then you see it quite clearly, but sometimes it takes a very long time.

Wolf: Would you call this a flash of insight or prajna when you have this experience?

S: Yes, you can say that. If you're lucky of course it isn't just a flash; it stays and that's that, finished. It means you've seen it for good. Also, another thing is that sometimes if you read a lot, you remember, but you remember things without understanding them. In a way you don't see that there's anything to understand, but sometimes it happens that a situation arises in which that knowledge becomes useful and then you remember it, and then when you've remembered it you see what it really means because you've encountered a situation in which it's become meaningful. Maybe you haven't been in that situation before. That knowledge becomes usable, but from knowledge it becomes understanding and insight.

Wolf: This has been proved evident to me this seminar. I've been reading the Hui-neng Sutra for about a year and never realized there was so [180] much in it.

S: This is what people found on the last seminar, and one doesn't. It's really astonishing how much there is in something when you get down to reading it and discussing it with other people. You don't seem to get nearly as much, not even a tenth, on your own. This is really remarkable and this is why in the Buddhist East traditionally you are not regarded as having studied something, even read something, unless you've read it with a teacher. It doesn't count if you've read it on your own. For instance, when I was given my monastic ordination, the bhikkhu asked what I'd read and studied. Officially I had read only two books, because I'd actually only studied two texts thoroughly with a teacher, and only that counted. One was the Dhammapada, the other was the Abhidhammattha Sangaha, so technically my position was that I'd read two books on Buddhism, both of them Theravadin works. You can see the meaning in this. What you read by yourself doesn't count. Maybe you get something out of it, but you get so much more when you read through it with somebody else. This is what the Tibetans call 'lung'. There's 'wong', 'lung', and 'tzee' [I have taken these spellings from Yogi Chen, 'Buddhist Problems Answered', although he gives a slightly different explanation, tr]. This of course is in the Vajrayana context, though it's valid elsewhere. You get your Tantric initiation, then the text is read over to you, and then the teacher explains the text to you. Otherwise you can't take up the practice. Even in the Mahayana field the Tibetans are very strict about having to read something with a teacher first, even biographies and things like that. I remember a Western scholar came to Kalimpong and he wanted to translate the biography of the Sakya school, and the Tibetans weren't all that happy about him just doing it by himself, and one or two lamas told him that they wouldn't be able to help him do this unless he got the 'lung', the authorization, to read from the head of the Sakya school, who was there. And he read the text over with him and sort of formally authorized him to study that text and translate it, and that's just a biography. There's so much it sparks off when you study it with other people, even fellow students, even not necessarily a fellow teacher but just fellow students, and you definitely get something much more out of it.

p.523: "Light is the quintessence of the glowing lamp, the glowing lamp is the expression of light. In name they are two things, but in reality they are one and the same. It is the same with Samadhi and Prajna." You could say it was like a torch. If you've got a torch you can shine it in any direction to [181] illuminate things. So the torch is like the samadhi. Using it in this direction or that direction to illuminate things is prajna. The lamp simile is a bit static, but one is trying to explain something here which is very difficult to explain. It seems fairly clear none the less.

Devamitra: This brings to mind something which happened recently on the course at the centre. Someone quoted 'be a lamp unto yourself', but there's another half to that. What is it?

S: Yes, it's from the Pali canon. I don't remember the exact sutta. It could be the Parinibbana Sutta, but I think it occurs more than once in the canon.

[Parinibbana Sutta, D.ii.100. Also D.iii.58; D.iii.77, tr.] I think it's in 'Some Sayings of the Buddha'. The Pali is translated as (this is rather expanding) 'abide having the self as one's lamp or island.' The word *dipa* means both lamp and island. 'Abide having the self as one's refuge. Abide having the Dharma as one's island (or lamp); abide having the Dharma as one's refuge.' These are the two halves. You depend on yourself and you depend on the Dharma. You take guidance from the Dharma so you depend on the Dharma, you are following the Dharma, but it's you who are following so you depend on yourself. The other day I found a reference to this by Buddhaghosa, the Pali commentator. According to him the two become the same. Because you are practising the Dharma you have become one with the Dharma, so you are the Dharma. So you are dependent on yourself if you are dependent on the Dharma, and you are dependent on the Dharma if you are dependent on yourself, which seems a very good explanation. It's by virtue of your practice that you become one, so that you are the Dharma, you are the embodiment of the Dharma. Though just by being yourself, you are following the Dharma in that case. Not being yourself in this sort of wretched psychological sense, but being yourself truly because you've absorbed the Dharma. So in that case, depending on yourself, depending on the Dharma; taking refuge in yourself, taking refuge in the Dharma. These become one and the same thing.

Devamitra: Did you say that dependent on the Dharma you become yourself?

S: No. To begin with the two are separate. Here's yourself, your weak, miserable wretched self struggling to follow the Dharma, and there's the [182] Dharma which you are following, the principle, the truth, the path. So to begin with the two are separate. There's the Dharma out there which you are depending on and trying to follow, here's yourself and you are trying to follow the Dharma with your own efforts and so you are having to depend on yourself in that way, but eventually, as you follow the Dharma more and more, you are assimilated to the Dharma, you become in harmony with the Dharma, you become one with the Dharma, you become the embodiment of the Dharma like the Buddha's Dharmakaya. The Dharma is his body as it were. So when that stage is reached, the two are one. To depend on yourself is the same thing as depending on the Dharma. To depend on the Dharma is the same thing as depending on yourself. They are unified, harmonized.

Devamitra: So it comes back to having a dualistic framework for a non-dualistic goal.

S: Right. But also there's another expression in Pali: 'Brahmabhuta Dhammabhuta'. This is a phrase which occurs again and again. It isn't referred to in modern expositions of the Theravada. The only one who sort of resuscitated it was Mrs Rhys Davids and it's translated as 'Abode as one having become Brahma, abode as one having become the Dharma'. Dhammabhuta or Dharmabhuta, one who has become the Dharma. It's a very important word in the original Pali, but it's never presented this way in modern Theravada expositions. You should be one who has become the Dharma, who is a living embodiment of

the Dharma.

Devamitra: Why the first reference to Brahma?

S: That's rather interesting. In early Buddhism, as far as we can make out from the Pali texts, Brahma and Dhamma go together. Brahma was often addressing a mixed audience, as it were, and he wanted to make his meaning completely clear. There's nowhere you get brahmakaya and dhammakaya in Pali. You get brahmacariya and dhammacariya. So it's as though Brahma was a word with more Hinduistic overtones, though there was nothing corresponding to Hinduism in the modern sense then. Dhamma was the Buddha's own more sort of special word, but he used both. Just as you get sramana brahmana, sramana [183] being the more as it were Buddhistic word, brahmana the more Hindu word, making meaning clear to his audience. So abide as one having become Brahma, having become the supreme, the sublime, the lofty, the noble, the spiritually exalted. Abide as one having become the Dharma, the spiritual law, the spiritual principle, the truth. It's one and the same thing actually.

If speaking very loosely to a mixed audience in this country, we might say, 'Fix your mind on God, fix your mind on Nirvana.' Not that we literally ourselves believed in a God, but we know that word would mean something to the audience. But at the same time you want to add the Buddhist bit so we use the word Nirvana too. Or if you were talking about prayer, but you backed it up by meditation: 'when you pray, when you meditate'. You're using a sort of double term to make yourself fully intelligible, to get across to the audience.

So we often see this in Pali - Brahma and Dhamma - but the Brahma bit fell out of use, though it was quite a good word, and the word Dhamma remained in use. For instance there was brahmacariya; brahmacariya later on means celibacy, but brahmacariya in the Pali texts usually means the Brahma-faring, as it's translated: the Brahma-like life, the noble life, the lofty life, really the spiritual life. The Buddha, when he gave his charge to the first bhikkhu disciples when he sent them out, he said, 'lead the brahmacariya. This word cariya means walk, practise, just like the Bodhisattva in the Heart Sutra is coursing, charioting, in the Perfection of Wisdom. It also means experience, literally walking. Mrs Rhys Davids talks of the Brahma faring, the Brahma walk, which is quite literal. So you've got this word brahmacariya, which later on becomes a bit attenuated and means simply celibacy. It's certainly got the connotations of celibacy, because Brahma, if you look at it in the more mythological sense, is a great being inhabiting a higher superior world, a spiritual world, though still within the samsara. There celibacy is the rule. There's no distinction of sex on those levels. So celibacy is implied, but brahmacariya means much more than that. It means the holy life, as it's sometimes translated. So sometimes the word brahmacariya is [184] used, sometimes Dhammacariya: the walking according to the Dhamma, the practising of the Dhamma, the experiencing of the Dhamma, the coursing in the Dhamma. Then again the Brahmakaya: one who has become the embodiment of the spiritual. The Dharmakaya: one who is as it were the Dharma personified. You find both of these sets in Pali.

Devamitra: The reason why I brought this up initially, about ‘be a lamp unto yourself’, was that somebody on the first night of the course left, on a sheet with a list of mantras on it, this line, which Subhuti thought was rather pointed, but we didn’t know what the other half was.

S: Well the answer is the Dharma. This shows you how careful you have to be about quoting. You’ve got the devil quoting scriptures for his own purpose. If someone wants to be a lamp unto themselves in the full sense then fine, come along. We find our lamp in the Dharma, in the Buddha, and if you’re a lamp unto yourself that’s great. We believe in Pratyekabuddhas too: ‘Off you go; you don’t need us...’

Devamitra: Well if that was the ideal they were really trying to follow they wouldn’t have come along in the first place.

Buddhadasa: Well in a sense there’s no distinction.

S: Well eventually. There is to begin with, but you eventually unify the two by your practice. By your practice you close the gap. Instead of speaking about the Dharma you speak the Dharma. In this connection I sometimes refer to the case of Confucius. I don’t remember the exact wording. I’ve quoted this before, referred to it before. He gives a little potted biography of himself. He says something like this: ‘When I was twelve I was fond of study; when I was twenty I started to understand things; when I was forty I was faithful to all the rules, and when I was fifty-five I had cleared up all my doubts.’ He ends up with ‘When I was seventy (or something like that) I could follow my own desires without worrying,’ because he’d become so one with what he’d been studying that he didn’t have to refer to any external standard. He could be himself and he was being that; but that came at the end of a long life and a very disciplined life, and a hard life, a sincere life.

p.523: “To practise samadhi is to make it a rule to have the mind in concentrated attention on all occasions (that is, not to let the mind wander from the thing in hand), no matter what we are doing, walking, standing, sitting or reclining.”

These are the [185] four noble postures: walking, sitting, standing, and reclining, and you can have four kinds of Buddha image, so this raises an interesting point. These are called the four noble postures, or even the four postures of a Buddha. The Buddha can be represented in any of these four ways. You get first of all a walking Buddha. There are images of the Buddha showing him walking, he’s faring. Especially you get these nowadays in Thailand. They’re not all that common, but in Thailand I think you get them more than in any other Buddhist country. Then of course you’ve got the standing image, and you get some very famous ones in India and Ceylon and in Bamiyan, ancient ones like the famous Mathura Buddha. Then of course there’s the sitting Buddha, the so-called Parinirvana Buddha, the Buddha at the time of the parinirvana. I remember that, in this connection, the late Dr Ambedkar, who was the leader of the ex-untouchables (such as those who became Buddhists) once raised this point with the monks at Sarnath. He said, ‘Why do you always have a sitting

Buddha? The Buddha spent the greater part of his time as far as we know walking from place to place and preaching, so why did the Buddhists always favour this sitting Buddha? Why don't you have more walking Buddhas? The impression you get from the images is that the Buddha was always sitting down whereas actually the Buddha was more often walking.' So actually for some of the ex-untouchable Buddhists I did get quite a beautiful walking image of the Buddha from Thailand, and I installed it in a temple in Maharashtra. But this is a point worth considering, because Hui-neng says 'not to let the mind wander' - in other words to be in a meditative state when we are in the four postures, 'no matter what we are doing', whether we are walking, whether we are sitting down, whether we are reclining, or whether we are standing. It's not just a case of meditating in the sense of sitting and meditating. It's a state of mind that should be there under all circumstances. It's that which we are trying to develop. This is the important point here.

But what about this question of the Buddha image? We seem to have taken it for granted that we are always going to have seated Buddhas. Well that's fine and appropriate in a meditation room, but what about elsewhere?

Subhuti: I think this may contribute to the popular image of the [186] Buddhist as being someone who is rather withdrawn and not involved with the world.

S: There are some very powerful standing Buddhas like the Mathura one and the one at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, really massive and powerful, and there are some quite good Thai walking Buddhas. I don't like the Thai way of representing the Buddha. They represent him as sort of tripping along which doesn't seem quite appropriate. Maybe we have to work on that. I don't know about the reclining Buddhas. These would probably be thoroughly misunderstood, especially in the Friends. I don't think we'd better introduce the reclining Buddhas just yet. We'll have that in our Buddhist old folks home!

Devamitra: We could have one for the karate class!

S: Maybe, yes. I think they could stand it. I don't think we could.

Devamitra: They have a very beautiful Japanese rupa at the Buddhist Society which is standing.

S: Yes. I think I know the one you mean.

Devamitra: The only problem is that it's very reminiscent of many Catholic Christs, and this might not have the right kind of connotations for many people.

S: I personally feel that we ought to think more in terms of the Mathura type. The Mathura type of Buddha image was very powerful, massive kind, and especially the standing Buddhas are really very good, very impressive indeed. They are huge with rather heavy features and rather massive limbs, slightly stern looking, even in abhaya mudra: don't fear, be not afraid.

Again we mustn't take anything for granted. We always tend to. Do we always want to have seated Buddhas? We have to ask ourselves this and decide and

not just take it for granted that we just happen to get seated Buddhas, so it's seated Buddhas we have to have, sort of thing.

Chintamani: Or do we want Buddhas at all?

S: Yes. Well we have discussed that, but I don't think we've ever discussed what kind of Buddha: seated or standing or walking.

There used to be a very famous Hindu preacher: a kirtani. They would do a kirtan tale on the Ramayana or the life of Brahma. It's a mixture of exposition of a very emotional kind with sort of devotional songs in between. [187] There was a very famous kirtanist called (?)Kokloji Maharaj who was famous all over Western India. He had a big following and entourage and a big ashram, a big monastery. He was a very diplomatic man. Some people thought he was over-diplomatic for a spiritual man. Anyway he was a great diplomat and I was told that in the ashram he had a beautiful shrine, and in most Hindu temples there's a sort of stand or seat for the image, or a table. He had a very beautiful one but it was completely empty, and he used to say, 'Put there whoever you like. Imagine there whoever you like. I don't mind, it's up to you.' This went down well because he could have all sorts of followers. He could have Vishnuvas and Shivites and he would offend nobody, and I think this was partly for diplomatic reasons, but it worked quite well.

Buddhadasa: Muhammad has still not been represented?

S: He has, but only by the unorthodox. Often he wears a veil. All the figures wear a veil, you see only the eyes or even not the eyes sometimes. Even the eyes are covered with a sort of white cloth, but you get the figures.

I must say that when I was in India I felt very dissatisfied with much of Buddhist art, even traditional art. Much of it is just hackneyed and stereotyped. I think one wants to avoid that. When I look, say, at Egyptian work, though there is an enormous amount of it and though it's strictly according to tradition it doesn't seem very stereotyped to me. It all seems a very high standard and with great feeling in almost all of it. One can't really say that about Indian work or Tibetan work. Lots of Tibetan thangka paintings are very capable, but there's nothing really in them at all.

Buddhadasa: No life in them.

S: Yes, no life, no spirit, no expression, no feeling. So I think we have to be very careful in the field of Buddhist art. Because it's a Buddha it isn't necessarily Buddhist. A lot depends on the feeling of it all. I like as much as anything the Wei Chinese art, with this rather sort of gothic elongated form with lots of floating drapery. It's very spiritual some of that, but not at all like the Indian or Tibetan. On the whole Indian art doesn't appeal to me very much and Indian Buddhist architecture doesn't appeal to me [188] much. It doesn't seem very Buddhist in a way. It's as though Buddhism just made use in a rather casual way of the current sort of artistic trends, and they are reflected in Hindu art and Jain art as well as in Buddhist art, and sometimes it isn't anything specifically

Buddhist, unless perhaps you get the odd artist who is a Buddhist and who feels strongly and produces a work of art accordingly and that stands out.

p.523: “Do not let your mind be ‘crooked’ and try to be straightforward with your lips only.” Here again the harmony of the inner and the outer.

“People should practise straightforwardness but should not attach themselves to anything.” I don’t know how literal this translation is, but the word straightforwardness is quite interesting. “People should practise straightforwardness.” There seems to be rather a lack of straightforwardness among people. I’m talking especially about people that we know and are in contact with. I’m not speaking about the world at large.

Buddhadasa: If deviousness is the opposite then this is true,

S: Yes, deviousness is the opposite.

Ratnapani: I remember a discussion in which, I think it was from a slightly negative and alienated state, I was picking up on people introducing what they were saying with ‘perhaps’, ‘it seems to me’, ‘it could be said that’, ‘one might feel this’. Everything was an apology. It was an Order meeting and everyone began with an apology without, I think, exception.

S: I wouldn’t say this was a lack of straightforwardness. I would think it isn’t as bad as that. It’s more uncertainty, or not putting the whole of yourself behind and possibly leaving an escape route in case you’re challenged or questioned. You didn’t actually say that, you only said ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe’.

Ratnapani: Well there is a mindful ‘perhaps’ where you don’t know, an honest straightforward ‘perhaps’, but the feeling wasn’t that. The whole thing was a tangle for an hour.

S: So, “People should practise straightforwardness but should not attach themselves to anything.” Or you could say not attach yourself to the views that you are being straightforward about, not attach in an egoistic sort of way.

Devamitra: So that perhaps if you are being direct about something and [189] honest about how you see it and stating it, at the same time be open to the situation.

S: Yes, be direct but don’t be dogmatic. If you are dogmatic then of course you are attached, you are not being just straightforward and direct.

Gotami: I’m beginning to find it very difficult to begin to try.

S: To be straightforward?

Gotami: Yes. I get foxed sometimes when I don’t even know what I feel anyway.

S: This was something which was very noticeable on the Anglo-Dutch retreat. There was a lot of straightforwardness and directness, much more than we usually encounter.

Gotami: And there was a lot more energy.

S: Right, yes. With deviousness the energy has to flow in so many windings and twistings that it loses its impetus, it loses its force.

p.523: “People under delusion believe obstinately that there is a substance behind appearances and so they are stubborn in holding to their own way of interpreting the samadhi of specific mode, which they define as, ‘sitting quietly and continuously without letting any idea arise in the mind.’”

This is meditation in a merely passive state. This may be quite useful as a preliminary practice. If you’ve been rushing around all day, yes, you have to begin by just sitting quietly, letting the flow of thoughts subside, but this is not what meditation is all about. This is just a preliminary or introductory stage. Meditation essentially means getting in - with the help of a sitting practice at first - a higher state of consciousness or a vibrant or brighter state of consciousness which you can then maintain under all circumstances whether you are sitting or walking or even flying. This is what meditation is all about really.

“Such an interpretation would class us with inanimate objects; it is a stumbling-block to the right Path and the Path should be kept open. How can we block the Path? By attachment to any definite thought; if we free our minds from attachments, the Path will be clear, otherwise we are in bondage. If that practice of sitting quietly and continuously without letting any idea arise in the mind,’ is correct, why on one occasion was Saraputra [sic] reprimanded by Vimalakirti for sitting quietly in the forest? (This is not thinking that blocks the Path, but attachment to definite thoughts.)” Yes, there is nothing wrong with the thinking process. We shouldn’t try to inhibit that. It’s when it sticks; that’s when the trouble starts. Meditation is not an indefinite process of retreat, withdrawal, quiescence. That has its place, especially in the early stages, but meditation mustn’t end there.

Mangala: I think the word straightforwardness is very good in this context. It implies vigour and honesty and simplicity and openness and virility as opposed to just quiescence.

Wolf: Do you think that this attitude of Buddhism stopping when you [190] walk out of the shrine room might be encouraged by the fact that the shrine room is a special place which you go to do your practice, and you have an image there which helps you to do that, but then as soon as you go outside you forget all that, there’s nothing to remind you.

Subhuti: I think that inevitably you come out of the meditation room and forget it. It’s something you only do half an hour a day or whatever, but it gradually builds up and the emphasis comes more on carrying it out.

S: Then eventually you manage to maintain the state of mind from one sitting session to another and you’ve got your in-between practice anyway - you should be repeating the mantra, or at least remaining very mindful, which links one period of actual practice with another, so that you are never completely out of

touch, however thin the connecting thread may become. It may be just a hair, but it's there. It's not completely lost.

p.523: "Some teachers of concentration instructed their disciples to keep a watch on their minds and secure tranquillity by the cessation of all thought, and henceforth their disciples gave up all effort to concentrate the mind and ignorant persons who did not understand the distinction became insane from trying to carry out the instruction literally. Such cases are not rare and it is a great mistake to teach the practice."

I don't know whether there's much of that around now, but when I came from India in 1964 and came into contact with people who were practising the so-called vipassana method, there was certainly a great deal of mental disturbance among them, usually brought about by severe tension, and at least three went into mental hospital and as far as I know stayed there, probably still there, so we do have to proceed a bit cautiously.

Devamitra: Do you think that this could be one of those passages which the Zen people have taken quite literally in this way: 'I can think it all out.' It seems to me to be wide open to that misinterpretation.

S: Yes because, you know, it is quite clear that according to the standard teachings of Buddhism, according to the Pali scriptures and the Mahayana scriptures too, the second dhyana is a state in which there is no mental activity. As you get into that dhyana, mental activity naturally dies away. It's not a question of forcible suppression of thoughts, but as you become interested in your object of concentration and more and more absorbed in it thoughts naturally die away. So it's true that that is not the higher stage. It is a quite low stage even, but it's a very necessary stage and it is a stage and it's one particularly relevant to us when we have too many thoughts and too many distractions. [191] So I think that sometimes the Zen people do insist on this too much: that meditation isn't just emptying the mind, isn't just getting rid of thoughts, and that they almost go to the opposite extreme, at least on paper. But I don't know that nowadays there is actually any meditation master or any disciple actually practising in this sort of way. I've never come across any anyway.

Devamitra: Practising in what kind of way?

S: Just trying to suppress thoughts or to forcibly just to sit there with a completely empty mind. Do people ever actually try to do this or has anybody actually advocated it? No within my knowledge.

Gotami: I think it is an idea which is quite current among people who are not associated with Buddhism but have heard about it, and they say, ah, meditation, that's where you sit down and try to stop thinking.

S: I wonder where they get the idea from, when so far as I know nobody ever teaches anything like that.

Buddhadasa: It's probably the only mental process that they are familiar with.

Mangala: I sometimes hear the word trance being used.

S: Well even Dr Conze unfortunately uses the word trance to translate dhyana. There seem to be some very strong misunderstandings about Buddhism, but I find it very difficult to track down where or how they originated because they seem so completely baseless.

Ratnapani: I had this idea that it was not thinking because I'd heard in a lecture that the second dhyana was a stage of non-thought, so I said, right, here goes the second dhyana, I won't think. I don't know how that came about but I had that for quite a while and I was actually suppressing the thoughts. I don't know whether I actually had an idea about it.

S: It is the thoughts that die away rather than the thoughts that are suppressed.

Chintamani: I was practising like that for quite a while and really worried because I couldn't do it. I think it came from such phrases as truth is beyond thought. [192]

p.524: "Even in time of dispute and quarrel, we should treat intimates and enemies alike and never think of retaliation."

This is quite difficult to accomplish if one takes this at all seriously or even quite literally. One can get a glimpse of this mental state if one practises the metta bhavana, but it's very different from our usual mental state. One could even say that if one had even something of this state then there won't be any question of dispute or quarrel. They just won't arise anyway. This attitude of even-mindedness towards all beings or all the people with whom one comes into contact, the same love and the same good will towards all. This is something not very easy to cultivate. It's so easy to have favourites, and of course you get on with some people better than with others, but you should try very hard to keep up the same good will towards all, even if you aren't involved spiritually with all. You need to have the same general attitude, positive attitude, towards everybody.

Chintamani: I think this possibly confuses a lot of people who don't know much about Buddhism and consider it indifference.

S: Equanimity can come later of course. When you've got the same good will and the same compassion, you rejoice equally, then by sort of concentrating on developing the aspect of same, then you develop equanimity; but the love, compassion, and joy must be there first, otherwise it's just indifference. This is very important. Do you think there's much misunderstanding on this score that Buddhist equanimity is regarded just as a sort of indifference? Where does it come from?

Gotami: I think it's very difficult for people to imagine a feeling of that kind. The most they can think of is loving and caring or worrying about. And that's the highest they can imagine. They can't imagine a quiet tranquil state of mind which is higher than that.

Buddhadasa: I think it's basically an honest misinterpretation, because this is how in a sense Buddhism is seen: Himalayan sages. Buddhism doesn't appear, let's face it, to take an active interest in the world.

S: But it isn't even an active interest in the world, but that the sage - even if he's sitting in the Himalayas - has the same and equal good will and love towards all. [193]

Buddhadasa: Yes, we no doubt can accept that, but the average lay person who is not a Buddhist may not and would not even consider the idea.

Subhuti: I wonder if this is partly to do with the alienated awareness you came across to begin with at Hampstead. A lot of people were considering themselves Buddhists and behaving in what they called a detached way, but it was simply that they weren't experiencing anything.

Ratnapani: The term indifference is used too, particularly in describing higher states. I've come across 'benign indifference', and it's not that difficult to forget the benign.

S: Lama Govinda once told me that some years ago he attended an inter-religious conference in Milan organized by the Catholics. He said that there was a very good friend of ours, a bhikkhu called Amritananda. He was one of the nicest people you could wish to meet, so friendly and kindly, but when he spoke about Buddhism - his English wasn't all that good - he referred to cultivating indifference towards everybody. Lama Govinda said that the assembled Catholic theologians absolutely pounced on this, and poor Amritananda got into serious difficulties. He himself was anything but indifferent to other people. He was a very warm-hearted sort of person although unfortunately he used that word. Lama Govinda had to come to the rescue, but he said that it was really amazing how the Catholic theologians pounced on this: that this is Buddhism, Buddhism teaches indifference, whereas Christianity teaches charity and love towards all.

Ratnapani: I've had experience of talking to people about the metta bhavana and they can't imagine good will towards someone without attachment.

S: Well, with all my contact with Buddhist monks in the East they were noticeably kind and warm-hearted and friendly and expansive, much more so than the lay people usually, because they were less worried and more carefree. It was quite noticeable. Monks are usually chubby and wreathed in smiles. Lay people are usually rather haggard and worried looking. We used to joke about this among ourselves. The monks used to feel quite sorry for the lay people and the lay people would feel quite envious of the monks, but they were quite unable to emulate [194] them. The monks were a happy lot and a kindly lot, not at all like the Western idea of a monk, gloomy and ascetic. They were really warm-hearted and friendly, nearly all of them, much more so than lay people.

Sulocana: It seems also that people expect an exaggerated showing of affection.

S: You get that in some little groups that we know of. I've met them in India,

I've met them in England. There's a tremendous demonstration, as it were, lots and lots of hugs and sweet smiles and so forth, but it all seems a bit of an act.

Sulocana: They feel it couldn't be there unless it was shown like that.

S: But again something else occurs to me. It's as though in this country, at least in some circles, some strata of society, people have lost a lot of warmth and they don't know it any more. They don't know what it means to be in contact with people in a warm friendly sort of way. There isn't much of that. It's as though it doesn't hold in their experience. So if you start talking about indifference and equanimity they think it's something even more like that you are after. They haven't got the sort of basis of positiveness in their own experience with other people so that they can go into a more detached friendliness. So equanimity means much more like cutting off altogether. I've certainly noticed this myself: that in India, as you mix with people, people do seem more friendly, perhaps even on the continent, certainly in America. But in this country people seem to a great extent in ordinary social life, at least in some circles, lacking very much in warmth and genuine human feelings.

Chintamani: It's very noticeable in Greece, the extent to which people went out of their way to be friendly.

p.524: "In the thinking faculty, let the past be dead." This is very important too. We carry too much of the past around with us. We've got it with us anyway, there's no need to think about it as well.

"If we allow our thoughts, past, present and future, to become linked up into a series, we put ourselves under restraint. On the other hand, if we never let our mind become attached at any time to any thing, we gain emancipation. For this reason we make 'non-attachment' our fundamental principle." Here again the language is of non-attachment. I remember I had a friend in Bombay who had his own religious movement [195] and was quite a yogi, etc. I disagreed with quite a few things of his, but one of the things he said was very good. He was a Parsee by birth, not a Hindu, and he used to say, 'Spiritual teachers talk about non-attachment, detachment. All that's a load of rubbish, the wrong way to talk; we should talk in terms of attachment, being attached to the right thing, being attached to your teacher, being attached to meditation. Don't talk always in terms of non-attachment, it's very unhealthy.' This was his very strong opinion and I felt inclined to agree with this. Also I have mentioned that words in Pali and Sanskrit which are grammatically negative have a positive flavour. For instance like our word immortal: it's not just negation of mortality, 'immortal' is something positive in itself. Most of the Indian grammatically negative words are like that, but when we translate from a book 'no this' or 'non that' it's just purely negative. There's no positive connotation. So a literal translation doesn't give the real meaning, and there are so many sort of negative words.

Devamitra: With regard to this question of attachment I remember Dhammadinna commenting once that she'd been once on sesshin and had felt to be almost in a position where she was craving for a puja. This is something I think

I have experienced too on a sesshin, and at the sesshins that we have done at the Centre when you get to the puja at the end it's almost like a feast. Would you say that was an unhealthy attachment or what?

S: It doesn't matter. If it's [to] the Buddha it will work itself out. If the object is right it will work itself out.

Devamitra: So you can use that attachment?

S: Well you don't even need to use it in a way, it's a good and healthy thing.

Buddhadasa: I would have thought that it was only an attachment if you went away sort of having done your puja still sort of anticipating that, still lingering there instead of looking outwards again.

Ratnapani: I guess it's like craving Nirvana, there's nothing else we can do about Nirvana at this stage. [196]

S: What else can you do? We get these silly objections from all sorts of non-Buddhists who think that they are being so clever when they say, 'Oh Buddhists talk about getting rid of desire, but Buddhists desire Nirvana. Ha! You're contradicting yourself,' which is so stupid. You get this again and again. If people talk like this you should really show them no mercy; really expose them on the spot. Of course you must crave for Nirvana. What else can you do? Of course you desire Nirvana. When you get there then you can bother about not desiring Nirvana any more. You don't need to when you've got it.

Chintamani: I've noticed in the past that you've always talked about craving in terms of neurotic desire.

S: Yes. I didn't in India. It wasn't necessary there. But after coming here I speedily found that it was necessary to distinguish (unclear) 'desire is fine'.

Buddhadasa: Aspiration is a word you have used in connection with this.

S: Yes, though that's a bit high-faluting, as it were. Desire Nirvana, desire to lead a good life. In biblical language, hunger and thirst after righteousness. And craving: if you feel craving for a puja it's a good healthy sign, a good healthy spiritual appetite. The chances are that your sesshin was a bit alienating and you want to get back to some real genuine religious feeling.

Chintamani: In that kind of context I've been able to discover two distinct kinds of craving. There's a kind of tortured, wide-eyed, sunken-cheeked sort of craving, and then there is the other which is just a feeling that I want to correct a balance somewhere.

Devamitra: I suppose in that situation it's a need rather than a want.

S: Right. A craving is when you are after something not for its own sake but because it serves as a substitute for something else, and then you never satisfy yourself because it isn't that that you really want.

Mangala: I think very often in actual practice there isn't really very much to worry about. If you desire something and you feel good about it then there isn't much problem.

S: But often we say, shall I? should I? shall I not? [197]

Mangala: Well if it's like that I think there isn't much desire there. If there is a really strong desire then there isn't really any question as to what to do. You just do it and feel good about it.

S: Or find out afterwards whether it was a mistake or not. Someone came to see me at Cokesford [Cottage, near Tittleshall] and said, 'I'm told down at the centre that the Friends are against relationships.' Again you see the negative approach, so I said, no, not at all. I say that you should strengthen your relationships. But strengthen them all. What we are against is just one particular kind of relationship, the very sort of indulgent sexo-romantic type of relationship which seems to hang people up so much. I said, strengthen your relationships with your parents, your friends, the people you work for, the people you work with, your colleagues; strengthen all these relationships, but don't just put everything into that one particular kind of relationship so that it becomes overloaded and therefore very difficult. There's bound to be trouble then. Strengthen all your relationships. It's much better to put things this way than just to be against relationships or one particular kind of relationship. Say strengthen them all. Have more, have a wide variety, have a rich variety, different kinds of relationships. But we seem to have narrowed it down in modern times. If you say, 'I'm having a relationship,' what do you mean? It's just one particular type. You don't mean that you are getting to know your boss or you are having rather a good relationship with somebody of the same sex; you mean the opposite-sex kind of relationship, and you are going through the usual agonies and misunderstandings and so on and so forth. But it's all so one-sided. Not that the thing itself is wrong, [but] this becomes too much the centre of things instead of being one among several different kinds of relationship. It's rather interesting that when Confucius enumerates the relationships of life, what does he enumerate? Ruler and ruled, parents and children, and friends. I don't think he mentions what we regard as the relationship at all.

Sulocana: It was taken for granted.

S: Well in a sense yes, because it was so neatly organized it was never [198] a source of trouble and that was that; nothing you need to really worry about very much. If we look back to other civilizations, other relationships had great importance. Under the feudal system your relationship with your feudal superior, your lord, your liege; that was the most important relationship of all, everything was subordinated to that. Or in India, your relationship with the teacher; or in China the relationship with the prince, or your relationship with your parents, that was the basic one.

The general principle which emerges from all this is that it's much better if we can talk in positive terms than talk in just negative terms. It does give such a

negative impression about Buddhism. Very often when the language of a text is negative grammatically in the original language it doesn't feel negative at all. So we must be very careful not to translate merely grammatically negative language into really negative language and to produce that psychologically and spiritually negative impression which is so undesirable.

Devamitra: So what more positive term would you use for non-attachment?

S: Attachment, attachment to the right things, desire for the right things. Say that Buddhism doesn't teach non-desire - it's a switching of your desire from the transitory things to the real things. Desire Nirvana, crave for Nirvana, why not?

Devamitra: So you just redirect?

S: Yes and when you redirect you gradually transform the quality of the desire itself. This friend of mine was very strong on this and he used to say, 'Whatever feeling you have, direct it towards the chosen ideal even if it's a very crude and gross feeling.' He used to express himself very bluntly on this topic sometimes, almost crudely, but it was very clear the principle involved.

Subhuti: It's really quite a solution to the whole psychological/spiritual question. If you redirect everything towards a spiritual ideal then conflicts will resolve themselves.

S: One spiritual teacher I knew used to say that if you feel angry, get angry with God: 'Why am I suffering like this? Why are you putting me [199] through this? I'm very annoyed with you.' If you really believe in God then you can use this sort of language, redirect it all there.

Devamitra: Is it the same thing as channelling energies and desires?

S: No it's not quite that. It's more than that. I think it's more effective.

Subhuti: So what would channelling be?

S: Channelling seems to leave out the object.

Subhuti: You mean like going out and playing a game of rugby?

S: Yes, it just seems to fritter it away more often than not.

Subhuti: Conscious substitution.

S: There are some schools of Indian thought, especially Hindu thought, that make very powerful use of this, and also in Vajrayana: direct it all towards the yidam, put it all there.

Mangala: It's really like arousing your desires, isn't it? It's like the Bodhicitta, finding that desire, getting in touch with it.

S: Yes. There's some quite attractive passages in Islamic literature, including Sufi literature, where the poet gets angry with God and expostulates with God and argues with him and takes him to task and wants to know why he's done this, that, and the other, which gives quite a different feel to the whole theistic

idea. God becomes more like a big brother than a father, and someone that you can really have it out with as it were, not like the theologian's idea of God at all.

Ratnapani: I've read somewhere that very often the sage comes out on top, a really wise sage, he wins.

Chintamani: There are various collections of Jewish stories which were eventually made into a musical and they were based on some little man's dialogues with God. [Fiddler on the Roof, tr.]

S: It really means, as far as I can see, that spiritually speaking the God image is in the process of reabsorption. That's what is beginning to happen. You're beginning to go beyond theism then, though you're still working within the theistic structure, but you're beginning to use it; it isn't using [200] you. It's a quite attractive way of putting things, especially when God ends up sort of really humiliated and not knowing what to answer, saying, 'Well yes that's true, I'll just have to do better next time.'

p.524: "To free ourselves from dependence upon externals is called, 'non-objectivity.' In as far as we are in position to do this, the path of the Dharma is free. That is why we make 'non-objectivity' our basis. To keep our mind free from defilement under all circumstances is called 'idea-lessness.' Our mind should always stand aloof and on no account should we allow circumstances to influence the functioning of the mind. It is a great mistake to suppress all thinking. Even if we succeed, and die immediately thereafter, still, there is reincarnation. Mark this, pilgrims of the Path! It is bad enough for a man to commit blunders by cherishing false ideas of the Dharma, how much worse to teach others." Another modern miccha-ditthi, that you mustn't be dependent, you've got to be independent, you mustn't depend on anybody, you must do it all yourself.

Devamitra: Well it's part of the psychological/spiritual battle, and that's the thing about 'be a lamp unto yourself.'

S: Yes. Some people sort of say, 'Well I know I shouldn't be dependent but ...' all sort of apologetic. Of course you're dependent. Life is just one big system of interdependencies. You are dependent on food, you are dependent on the light of the sun, you are dependent on water, you are dependent on the people who cook for you and the people who make your clothes and the people who give you jobs and so on. You are dependent and you must acknowledge it gratefully. It's the same way in the spiritual field. We are dependent. We didn't write the scriptures, we didn't realize the truth 2,500 years ago - it was the Buddha and we are benefiting from that, we are profiting from that, we are dependent on that. But we are dependent just like the child who eventually grows up and becomes independent. There's nothing shameful in being dependent so long as objectively you need to be dependent. You need to be helped, there's nothing wrong in that. But sort of premature and artificial independence doesn't help anyone. This seems to be another miccha-ditthi, another sort of false view.

Subhuti: I remember you made the distinction once between the father figure and the father substitute, and I think that the miccha-ditthi arises because father substitution is certainly something to be avoided.

S: I said to someone recently that people don't need father figures but they very often need a father, and this is a quite healthy objective useful thing, and quite a few people are just looking for a father because they never had one - I mean a father in a real sense, even in a sort of spiritual sense: someone who is a bit more experienced than you and genuinely cares that you shall develop and grow and says, well, look here this is how it's done, [201] that's what you ought to do. Just in that sort of friendly way; not the big heavy sort of father figure, nothing like that. But it seems to me that so many people need a father quite objectively. It's quite a healthy thing. I think mother is another kettle of fish. I'm not quite sure what to say about mother, but I'm quite sure about father.

Chintamani: Perhaps one of the reasons why people cultivate this so-called feeling of independence is that they don't want to get hurt again, 'I've been hurt too many times.'

S: But then again you must depend where you can depend. Don't lean on a broken reed. By dependence we don't mean exploitation. Sometimes people mean exploitation when they use the word depend, and sooner or later that sort of dependence is betrayed because you are depending on someone for something and it's all based on a big misunderstanding. But if you see that you need a certain thing, that you need to be helped in a certain way and that somebody is able to help you in that way, you can quite rightly and legitimately and quite honestly depend on that person until such time as you no longer need to depend.

Then again people say that you shouldn't have to depend on things like puja and depend on meditation: we ought to be able to just do it off our own bats not use all these props and crutches, and then they quote Zen and so forth, tearing up the sutras and all that. It's so ridiculous and so foolish. They're really little babies. They can't even walk and they are saying that they are going to fly. So I think there has to be a bit of revision and revaluation, be attached, depend, sure, but on the right things and in the right way. Suppose a child was brought up and as soon as the poor little thing could crawl it was told it had to be independent. Well that's what happens spiritually except that in this case as soon as the child is able to crawl it says, 'Look at me I'm able to crawl. I'm independent now.'

You see, the path is strewn with pitfalls. "Our mind should always stand aloof." This seems to countenance alienated awareness, so watch this word 'aloof'. "Our mind should always stand aloof": yes and no. In a non-alienated way. [202]

p.524: "Being deluded, he is blind himself, and in addition he misrepresents and puts to shame the Buddhist scriptures." We must be really scrupulous about presenting the Buddha's teaching. That means of course we have to know it, and we can't know it unless we study it, unless we think about it. So this is a very important point.

“To boast of attainment and to talk foolishly of merits and demerits is erroneous and defiling. For this reason we make ‘idea-lessness’ the object of our school.” Sometimes it is said that in Buddhism, in the Buddhist tradition, it is not good manners, spiritually speaking, to make any personal claim. Here Buddhism differs very sharply from Hinduism, certainly as practised. In India people always make claims either for themselves or on behalf of others: that he is this or that, or that he has reached such and such a stage, or he’s an incarnation of God or anything like that. They make these claims very easily and very freely, but in the Buddhist countries you’ll find, especially in the Theravada countries, that they are very reticent and cautious about making any sort of personal claim at all. They try to put it quite impersonally, and certainly no one would go around trying to sort of whip up a following on the basis of his own alleged personal attainment. This just isn’t done. The feeling is that if you really have got something it’ll percolate through. You won’t need to announce it or tell people about it or claim it or say that it’s higher than what somebody else has. People will come along; they will understand in due course. There is no need to claim anything. Any sort of claim is regarded very unfavourably, even a truthful claim, if that isn’t a contradiction in terms. This is very much the Buddhist drift. Buddhism in this respect is much more modest, I would say, than in say India. Hinduism is I’m afraid very immodest in its claims very often. India in fact practically swarms with incarnations of God. We’ve seen a few of them over here, the overflow.

pp.524-5: “(If ‘idea-lessness’ is not the cessation of all thought) what ideas should we get rid of, and on what ideas should we focus our mind? We should get rid of all ‘pairs of opposites’ of all conceptions of goodness and badness (that is, of all discriminative thinking). We should focus our mind on the true nature of reality. (The word used is ‘Tathata,’ which means, ‘True Nature,’ or Mind-essence, or Prajna, or ‘Oneness,’ or ‘Suchness,’ or anything else that is ultimate.) Tathata (considered as the ultimate ‘suchness’ of Mind-essence) is the quintessence of ‘idea’; ‘idea’ is the manifestation of Tathata. It is the function of Tathata to give rise to ‘ideas.’ It is not the sense-organs that do so. Tathata (considered as the Intellective Principle) reproduces its own attribute, therefore, it can give rise to ‘idea.’ Without Tathata, sense-organs and sense-objects would disappear immediately. Because it is an attribute of Tathata to give rise to ideas, our sense-organs, in spite of their functioning in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and knowing, are not tainted and defiled under all circumstances. (It is the cherishing of ‘attachments’ that defiles.) Our true-nature is ‘self-manifesting’ all the time. (The Path to self-realization of Mind-essence through Samadhi and Prajna is present to all, even though for some it may be blocked for a time by ‘attachments.’) Therefore, the Sutra says: ‘He who is an adept in appreciation of that which lies behind things and phenomena, is established upon the Ultimate Principle (Prajna).’”

The basic point here is, “We should get rid of all ‘pairs of opposites’ of all conceptions of goodness and badness (that is, of all discriminative thinking). We should focus our mind on the true nature of reality.” Well yes and no. We should

get rid of all pairs of opposites in the sense that we shouldn't regard them as ultimate, but the pairs of opposites do provide us for the time being with our provisional framework within which we function, even though eventually we go beyond that framework [203] to something which is non-dual. At present we have to think in terms of kusala and akusala, skilful and unskilful mental states. We have to think in terms of cultivating the one and rejecting the other. If we do this we eventually get beyond the pairs of opposites, and even when we are working within the framework of the pairs of opposites we have to keep our minds raised above the horizons of the opposites and see their non-dual suchness and tathata or sunyata or Buddha nature or One Mind or whatever.

p.525: "The Patriarch one day preached to an assembly as follows: In our system of Dhyana, we neither dwell upon our mind nor upon its purity; neither do we seek to suppress its activity. As to dwelling on the mind: the (functional) mind is primarily delusive and as we come to realize that it is only a phantasm we see that there is no reason for dwelling upon it. As to dwelling upon its purity: our nature is intrinsically pure, and just as far as we get rid of discriminative thinking, there will remain nothing but purity in our nature; it is these delusive ideas that obscure our realization of True reality (tathata). If we direct our mind to dwell upon purity, we are only creating another delusion: the delusion of purity. Since delusion has no abiding place, it is deluding to dwell upon it. Purity has neither shape nor form, but some people go so far as to invent the 'Form of Purity' and then treat it as a problem for solution.' Holding such an opinion, these people become purity-ridden and their Essence of Mind is thereby obscured. Those who are training themselves for serenity of mind, in their contact with the many types of men, should not notice the faults of others."

In a way, Buddhism appears negative because it's positive. Suppose, for instance, it says you are a Buddha, so all you have to do is to get rid of your ignorance that you are not. So if you leave aside, 'you are Buddha', well what are you left with? Just get rid of your ignorance, get rid of your defilements, but the implication is positive and that implication is always there in the East, in the Eastern tradition. But we seem to have just the negative reference without the overall positive result as it were, or the positive basis - not even result - but the basis is there all the time.

Chintamani: Also what masquerades as positive nowadays is in fact negative.

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: This passage about idea-less and the idea, could you say something about it?

S: Well it doesn't seem altogether clear, this is why I said that it was all summed up in those two sentences I repeated. This seems to be the gist of the whole thing, whereas it seems that what follows elaborates it. Perhaps the translation isn't all that clear. But that is the fundamental meaning: get rid of the pairs of opposites, focus your mind on the true nature of reality. This is in fact what the whole paragraph is saying.

Wolf: Though that isn't an easy sentence to understand; focus your mind on the nature of reality. It's much easier to understand not focusing on opposites to me.

S: I would say that it's all quite clear and quite easy to understand; it's the practice which is difficult. [204]

p.525: "Purity has neither shape nor form, but some people go so far as to invent the 'Form of Purity' and then treat it as a problem for solution." I don't know who these people were, but he probably had these difficult types to deal with just as we do. "Holding such an opinion these became purity-ridden and their Essence of Mind is thereby obscured." He might have had in mind the sort of early Buddhist equivalent of Mrs Mary Whitehouse [1910-2001, a self-appointed and much-mocked campaigner against what she considered indecency on British radio and television, tr.]. You're so obsessed with purity that you lose sight of the basic purity of your own mind, you get involved in a dualistic sort of purity. You've so concerned with making your mind pure that you just stir it up and make it more and more unclear and therefore more and more impure or sterile.

Devamitra: Could it not also refer to external piety?

S: It could do, but I think that the context suggests it's more with regards to the mind itself. You don't have to purify the mind; the mind is pure, just get rid of the impurities which are there covering up the fundamental purity. The mind is pure it doesn't have to be made pure, just get rid of your idea that it is impure. Again a negative method, but on the basis of a positive principle.

p.526: "They should be indifferent as to whether others are good or bad, or whether they deserve merit or demerit. To assume a discriminatory attitude toward others is to invite perturbation of mind." Here again this can be misunderstood. You shouldn't be indifferent in the sense of not caring whether they are going to perdition or not; you shouldn't let it upset or disturb you or your peace of mind, but you should certainly do what you can to help them and you'll see that some are in fact good and some are bad as far as you can see. You mustn't pretend that they are the same when your eyes tell you, or your senses tell you or your mind tells you, that they are different, but have the same good will towards all, the same love towards all. So again this word 'indifference' I think can be misunderstood.

"An unenlightened man may seem outwardly unperturbed, but as soon as he opens his mouth and criticises others and talks about their merit or demerit, their ability or weakness, their goodness or badness, he shows that he has deviated from the right course." Hui-neng is referring to unnecessary gossip about others whether they are this or that, good or bad and so forth, not to your own objective discernment of how they are and your willingness to help those who need to be helped.

Chintamani: Whenever I'm talking to somebody and I say 'objective', they say, 'ah yes, but objectivity is quite relative. You think that you're being objective, but that's subjective.' I get in a terrible tangle about that. [205]

S: Well how does one ascertain objectivity?

Subhuti: By deciding whether the basis of your vision is something that you aren't conscious of.

S: But how do you test that?

Voice: (unclear)

S; Agreement with what?

Buddhadasa: Other people whom you trust.

S: Yes, whom you trust, an important qualification. Also by putting it into practice and seeing what happens.

Buddhadasa: There is a saying of Confucius: Meditation is the noblest way, imitation is the easiest, and experience the hardest. [More usually quoted as 'By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.' tr.]

S: It seems to me that a lot of these terms - objective, subjective - are just bandied about and people don't really want to know. They don't really want to come to the truth. It's a sort of game; they're not honest.

Voice: (unclear)

S: Well when one says subjectively one means projected. For instance someone might say Chintamani is a really beautiful person, he couldn't possibly do this, he couldn't possibly do that, I just see him how he is, he couldn't do it. Then he goes and does it, so his action would disprove ... I was projecting. I was not seeing him objectively because if I had seen him objectively I would have known that he was quite capable of doing such a thing. It's in this sort of way that objectivity can be determined: by the test of action, at least in some cases.

Ratnapani: Perhaps one can only have true objectivity when prajna is operating, because then you are really seeing things as they are which is true objectively.

S: Yes. Again one also has to be very careful even in talking about objectivity. Objectivity isn't something cold and scientific that denies the emotion or feeling. Even, you can say, objectively the way you feel about something is quite important. You can't just arrive at objectivity by discounting all your feelings about things. They are part of the situation.

Gotami: If you act pretending that they are not then you are acting in a [206] completely false situation to start with.

S: Yes. You might be exhorted to be objective about this situation. But the fact is that you are not being objective about it. The fact that you are being intensely subjective is an objective fact to be taken into consideration and allowed for and accounted for, not something to be ruled out of court and you are made to confine yourself just to the objective. That isn't real objectivity. I originally

thought that just as we've got a term 'alienated awareness' we must have a term to cover this wrong sort of objectivity. There is a one-sided objectivity.

Chintamani: So you can alienate yourself by pseudo-objectivity.

S: Yes you can.

Sulocana: Like pretending to be a scientist.

S: Yes. You are adopting a pseudo-scientific attitude, as though you were in a laboratory instead of a human situation. You are a chemist instead of a psychologist.

Gotami: Can you give an example of the opposite situation?

S: Well in any given situation people have feelings about that situation. Maybe they shouldn't, in a way, but they do have feelings and the fact that they have feelings is a fact to be taken into consideration. You can't say that the situation should be looked at objectively in the sense that people's feelings about the situation - the people who are involved in that situation - can be disregarded or ignored. That is pseudo-objectivity, and that includes your own feelings.

Buddhadasa: People sometimes say let's put this in a human context, as if there was any other context.

S: Yes, right.

Subhuti: I remember reading about some experiments in particle physics. They were watching a certain particle and they couldn't get their observations to fit the theory. Eventually they realized that their own observations of the particle was affecting the behaviour of the particle. That seemed to bring home the whole message of objectivity. [207]

p.526: "Dhyana is the effort to be mentally free from any attachment to outer objects. Samadhi is the realization of that freedom in inward peace." This is a very important distinction within of course the framework of Hui-neng's own teaching or his presentation of the subject. This doesn't necessarily coincide with other definitions of dhyana and samadhi, but for him, "Dhyana is the effort to be mentally free from any attachment to outer objects. Samadhi is the realization of that freedom in inward peace." A quite important distinction, whatever the terms one may use.

"The reason we become perturbed," How often that happens! This is happening all the time, "is simply because we allow ourselves to be carried away by the circumstances we are under", instead of keeping our own true, pure, bright mind that we might have developed or at least uncovered in the course of our meditation. We just allow ourselves to be carried away by circumstances, even absorbed in them, overwhelmed by them. And this happens again and again in so many different ways.

"He who is able to keep his mind serene, irrespective of circumstances, has attained true Samadhi." This emphasizes something that has been said earlier

on about samadhi. It's that lofty mental, not quite spiritual state, but certainly mental state which remains the same under all circumstances. It's only when you have that sort of mind that prajna - I won't say will develop, but it will sort of manifest itself when that kind of mind is used or comes into operation.

"When we are able to hold the mind concentrated, and to rest in inner peace, then we have attained both Dhyana and Samadhi." Dhyana comes first. You can't develop samadhi unless you withdraw from external things. This is the significance of course of sitting and meditating - closing the eyes. It's not that this is the ultimate practice and you are going to stay like that all the time, but this is what you have to do in order to develop samadhi.

Buddhadasa: Could thoughts in a sense be classed as an external thing?

S: Yes.

Ratnapani: I feel that "hold the mind concentrated" is very much a misinterpretation. Better to just say concentrate the mind.

S: Be concentrated, allow yourself to be concentrated.

"Learned Audience: let us each realize this for himself from one momentary sensation to another. Let us practice it by ourselves, let us train ourselves, and thus by our own effort attain Buddhahood."

That's very simple and clear. It's probably much better for us to speak the language of change and transformation. Not that we are Buddha, but that we are human beings who if we make the right sort of [208] effort over a long enough period can evolve into something higher, even into a Buddha. It seems to be a plain and straightforward way of putting it and completely true. This seems to be the way that the Buddha himself put it according to the Pali scriptures. I think it's probably misleading to talk in terms of you are already that, or even that you are already pure, maybe judiciously to counteract people's feelings of guilt, but with caution.

This idea of positiveness seems to have come up quite a bit this morning, the positive rather than the negative approach.

Ratnapani: The Chinese Zen tradition seems to have taken all the secrecy out of the Mahayana sutras and presented the teaching in such clear language that anyone can read it and understand it in a certain way, whereas if it was tied in, in the way it usually is in the Mahayana sutras, you just won't get to it.

S: Yes. It's as though in the Mahayana sutras you're meant to be staggered, you're meant to be overwhelmed and meant to feel that you can't possibly grasp it. It's absolutely beyond you.

Subhuti: What's arisen out of this is that most of the stuff you've had to quite heavily qualify and yet it's supposed to be delivered to commoners and lay people. I find it difficult to imagine the context in which he spoke. It seems quite advanced.

Mangala: A lot of which you qualified I felt it was almost unnecessary to qualify because I felt obviously he doesn't mean that, it's just the way that he happened to express it.

S: But we must remember that this work is in wide circulation and no doubt there are quite a few misunderstandings current because of this, or in connection with it, so I'm underlining it perhaps rather heavily, perhaps even unnecessarily, because there is this very definite danger and I want everyone to be aware of that.

Wolf: Do you think that Hui-neng would have given the same sermon to a British audience, or of this nature? In China they have a different background [209] so that in the same way that you censored this for us he would have censored Buddhism in a way that they would easily have understood.

S: I think perhaps one can say that the fact that Confucianism was so strong provided a sort of restraining influence. Chinese society was fairly rigid. It was hierarchical and it was quite disciplined. There was an official Confucian ethic and much dignified behaviour and there wasn't much danger of things getting out of hand practically I think. Therefore you could perhaps feed the advanced spiritual ideas into that sort of situation very likely.

Ratnapani: I think that of all the miccha-ditthis this has been the grossest, the serving up of the ultimate.

S: I agree. Therefore I think that all these little books on Zen in English have done so much harm.

Subhuti: This is the one from which all the others seem to stem in fact.

S: You find that historically speaking the Buddha, as far as we know from the Pali scriptures, speaks very rarely and very little about Nirvana or anything ultimate, a lot about the path and actual practice. In the Pali scriptures the path, the end of the path, disappears into a beautiful bright mist in the far distance about which very little is said, and what you'll find when you get into that mist you're not told. You're left more or less to find out.

Ratnapani: Well you can't be told can you?

S: The Buddha didn't try. So again it comes back in a way to the path of irregular steps and the path of regular steps, except that sometimes those irregular steps aren't even steps. That's why I even wonder about recommending books. The books that are in circulation today are on tantra and whatnot mainly, but not much of basic stuff, practical stuff, which was one of the reasons why I was so pleased with 'The Door of Liberation' [by Geshe Wangyal, Wisdom Publications, tr.]. There are some quite sublime bits in that, but it's firmly anchored in actual practice in a very good sound honest way. [210]

Chapter 5: Discourse on the Three Bodies of Buddha

p.527: " 'Listen to me,' replied the Patriarch. It is possible for those who are

under delusion to realize their Buddha-nature, provided they acquaint themselves with the nature of ordinary sentient beings. Without such knowledge, to seek Buddhahood would be in vain, even if one spent aeons of time in doing so.” In a way we come back to the original almost humanistic emphasis of early Buddhism, of the Buddha’s own teaching, that it’s an ordinary human being who is going to become a Buddha, so it’s not so much concerning ourselves with the abstract idea or even ideal of Buddhahood, but just get down to considering ordinary human beings and what they are capable of, “whereas a Buddha sees no difference between himself and other beings.” That is, on the highest transcendental level. On the empirical level of course he sees a great deal of difference with regards to actual realization and that’s why he teaches.

“Seeing inequalities in Essence of Mind transforms a Buddha into an ordinary being. When one’s mind is crooked or depraved, then he is only an ordinary being with Buddha-nature latent within him.” Speaking of course of transforming a Buddha into an ordinary being is only a manner of speaking. Actually of course it never happens.

“On the other hand, if one concentrates his mind on equality and straightforwardness, even for one moment only, then he is a Buddha.” This is of course a bit hyperbolic because if he was even for that one moment actually fully a Buddha then he wouldn’t lapse from that, so one mustn’t take this statement too literally.

Devamitra: If a fully enlightened being teaches, does any fully Enlightened being have equal capacity as a teacher?

S: This raises the question of equipment. It also refers back to this distinction of punya and jnana. What we call a Samyaksambuddha, that is to say an Enlightened one who in a period of history where the teaching, the Dharma, is not known rediscovers it and proclaims it in a full systematic manner, he is endowed with the fullness of jnana and the fullness of punya. It’s on account of his punya that he is equipped not only to be Enlightened, or is not only Enlightened, but also equipped to manifest that Enlightenment. For instance, in a simple way, supposing he was physically crippled or even dumb as a result of punya in previous existences, he wouldn’t be able to manifest the teaching very well, at least not fully. But in the case of a Samyaksambuddha, his punya is also complete, his punya sambhara. So therefore the jnana sambhara, the accumulation of wisdom, is able to manifest fully and adequately and in a complete manner, but the possibility seems to be envisaged - though as far as I [211] recollect there isn’t any very specific teaching on this - that due to an attenuation of merits your jnana may not manifest itself very clearly or fully as it would have been had your punya been complete and had you been fully equipped.

Mangala: In that sense, are you equating jnana with Enlightenment itself?

S: In a sense. On this sort of level it’s very difficult to draw real distinctions. Again in another sense - Enlightenment in the full sense - Samyaksambuddhahood

is the unity or integration of full jnana and full punya. So in a sense - though only in a sense perhaps - punya is an element in the jnana itself. You're dealing with a level where it isn't easy to make cut and dried distinctions of this aspect and that aspect. It's as though, in the case of some people, there may be a very definite and clear spiritual illumination, even Enlightenment, but a certain deficiency in capacity to put that across in the actual, as it were, psychophysical or psychosomatic equipment.

Hridaya: Could it work to some degree the other way around?

S: Yes, great power of exposition and so on and so forth, but not much behind it. You see that too sometimes, yes. The power of exposition is a gift. You seem to be born with that, but you certainly don't have jnana as a gift. I know in my own case I was able to lecture from an early age, when I was 13 or 14, and I don't think I've improved much in the course of twenty years. It was something I was born with. It was there as punya. But I hope that the jnana behind it has increased, and I'm quite aware that in the early days there was probably minimal jnana. I hope that that has increased, but the equipment remains the same. I don't think that I'm a better writer or speaker than I was twenty or twenty-five years ago. The equipment, as far as I can see, remains the same. You brush it up a bit here and there, but your basic equipment through which you manifest is the same more or less through life. That seems to depend on what Buddhists call punya.

Chintamani: Could you call that technique?

S: It includes technique I think, but it's much more than technique.

Devamitra: From that, would you say it's futile to try to develop talents that you just may not have?

S: Yes, apart from, well they are not even talents, just ability to do [212] things. For instance, you can learn to give a lecture, you can learn to put together a talk neatly, but there's quite a difference between doing that quite well and having a natural talent for giving lectures. The same with poetry. With a bit of study and reading of poetry you can acquire the knack of putting together a respectable little poem, but that's quite a different thing from having a gift for poetry, not to speak of genius.

It's as though, I feel - I'm not being very definite here - that your talents are sort of equipment that you are born with. There's not much you can do about them. You either have them or you don't have them, though sometimes it happens that a talent remains latent, but what you can develop is the jnana, and that can manifest ever more and more powerfully through whatever equipment you have. But if you have good equipment, how much more effectively the jnana can manifest itself. This would seem to be the Indian attitude.

Devamitra: Sometimes it has been said to me that you need to develop that and you need to develop this and you must make an effort in certain directions, but I sometimes feel that I've made an effort but I don't somehow have the basic

talent to go beyond this. It's not through a lack of effort or being afraid, but simply that one is not equipped for that.

S: Well that would seem to be the position. What one can develop is jnana. Anyone can develop that. You can develop it to the limit, and then the better your equipment and punya, the more talented you are, the better that will be able to manifest. Again it's something we can't be too rigid about. A person with a lot of jnana and minimum punya, minimum equipment, will be much more effective than a person with very good equipment but minimal jnana, spiritually effective. For instance, Wong Mou Lam's translation of this very text. It was badly translated, in a sense, ungrammatical and so on, the original edition, but something came through that really attracted people, and sometimes more glossy and polished and correct translations just don't make any impact. One can only assume that in Wong Mou Lam's case there was some jnana behind it. He had a real feeling for the text, even an element of insight into it. He was a Ch'an Buddhist. He wasn't just a scholarly translator. [213]

Chintamani: That's why the great artists of whatever medium are always able to combine those two.

S: Though you feel, with some artists, if only they had better technique they could have done so much more. You can see them being hampered by their lack of technique. But of course, technique in a sense you can improve and work on. sometimes it's talent more than technique which is lacking. They are geniuses, yes, but unfortunately they haven't got much talent. But genius and talent combined is a wonderful combination. Sometimes there is a lot of talent, but no genius. There's so much of this around, especially now that we've got so many art colleges. There is a lot of talent, but very little genius.

Devamitra: J.B. Priestly explains this very well in talking about writers in terms of talent and genius. He divides writers into writers of talent, writers of genius, and writers of both. He gave as an example of a very good writer of talent, himself. He'd got lots of technique, but very little beyond that it seems. A writer with genius, but without talent, he said, was D.H. Lawrence, tremendous genius, but absolutely atrocious technique; and a writer with both talent and genius was Shakespeare.

S: I think I would also say Milton, Virgil, Dante.

Devamitra: Yes, but they are as rare as that.

S: So it's very interesting, this whole sort of teaching about punya. Another thing which is said is that it is a result of punya that you are born good-looking, according to Buddhism. Good looks are a karmic endowment and it's said that if you are of an attractive appearance your message goes down so much better! Yes, this is true! This is why a Samyaksambuddha is handsome and dignified and with an impressive bearing and physique and with a melodious voice, etc. For instance, in Ceylon I've been told by my monk friends that when they recruit young boys from the boys in the village, they always select among other things

the good-looking ones, because they always impress the laity more. I've seen this. The laity in Buddhist countries will flock around a good-looking monk who is at the same time a good preacher, etc. Some of our Buddhist friends - I won't mention any names - have almost made a career out of their good looks. I remember one Nepalese monk I knew who was so good-looking - even at the age of forty-five he looked about twenty - [214] that he could do almost anything. You really felt he was a sort of Buddha. He was so attractive in appearance and he was quite aware of this and he used it in a nice sort of way. He was a very decent sort of person. I knew a number of Burmese monks who were like that and it was well known in the Sangha as a whole that good-looking monks are really monks who can get things going and influence people. So if you've got that backed up by jnana then what an irresistible combination. This is what the Bodhisattva is like, the Bodhisattva of Indian tradition. In Mahayana Buddhism especially, but the whole Buddhist tradition, doesn't make light of good human endowment. Once you've developed the wisdom, the jnana, then what a good medium it then has to work through. Such a strong and healthy, handsome, well-built, well-spoken, intelligent, well-connected... And ?[once] you've got the jnana how much can you do. But of course all that's no substitute for the jnana itself.

Ratnapani: In fact without it it can be a pitfall.

S: I knew a Swiss monk in India who'd been a Jain for many years, then he became a Buddhist, and when he was a Jain he was called Yogi Sri George, and he was about six-foot-four tall. When I knew him he was about fifty and he had an absolutely dignified deportment. To see him walking along the road was a pleasure, he was so dignified. And he wore this beautiful white robe, and shaven-headed, and a very sort of dignified and powerful face. And people were really impressed, people would sort of look as he passed along. I was a little bit impressed for a few minutes but then I realized that this man was an absolute fool. It was really extraordinary. He was really a fool, there's no other word, but he had this extraordinary dignity and intrepidity, even his manner of speaking, his voice. And he could get so many things done, but he was such a fool. He had big photograph albums of pictures of himself, one with pictures of the places where he had stayed with maharajas and the other one was the great dignitaries of India that he had been photographed with, and he spent hours looking at these and showing them to people. He was a complete fool. You could pull his leg and he wouldn't realize it. But he was so impressive. So he had this punya but there wasn't any jnana. But when you get both together what a combination. So Buddhism attaches great importance to this in a way, punya and jnana, but the punya you are born with. It's the result of [215] good karma committed in previous lives.

p.527: "Within our mind there is Buddha, and that Buddha within is the real Buddha. If Buddha is not to be found within our mind, then where shall we seek for the real Buddha? Doubt not that Buddha is within your own mind, apart from which nothing can exist. Since all things and phenomena are the product

of mind, the Sutra says: ‘When mental activity rises, various things exist; when mental activity ceases, various things exist not.’” Though Hui-neng reverts in a way to this humanistic emphasis of Buddhism, especially early Buddhism, it’s much more than humanistic. There’s also a profound metaphysical background. He’s very much aware of the One Mind as it were shining in the background, and that sentient beings are sentient beings of, that is to say within, this One Mind. They are in a sense manifestations of that One Mind which is ultimately your mind. So he speaks not just of sentient beings but of sentient beings of your own mind. It’s as though there’s this one great cosmic universal mind in existence and you are that. Therefore everything that that manifests or in which that manifests is of you and is yours, is you even. Hui-neng has very much this sort of perspective, which is the perspective of the Lankavatara Sutra but isn’t a very easy sort of perspective to grasp and almost involves us in contradictory modes of expression.

p.528: “The Trikaya of Buddha is to be found within our Mind-essence which is the common possession of everybody. It is because the mind of an ordinary man labors under delusion that he does not know his own inner nature, the result is that he ignores the Trikaya that is within himself and seeks for it without. Please listen; I am going to show you that you can realize the Trikaya within yourself, which being a manifestation of Mind-essence cannot be found anywhere else.” The trikaya seems to be introduced rather suddenly. I’m not sure why. The Buddha of Buddha nature is said to be within our own mind. The Buddha has, as it were, three bodies, so therefore one can say the trikaya itself, or the three bodies of the Buddha, are to be found within our own minds; this is the common possession of everybody. The word kaya means body, but it also means manifestation, stage, aspect. There is the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya. This is very standard Mahayana teaching, especially Yogacara teaching. It’s very important because it becomes the basis of a lot of later thought and practice also. For instance, the Sambhogakaya, which I sometimes call the archetypal Buddha, has five principal aspects, each of the five so-called ‘Dhyani’ Buddhas, and they are correlated with the five jnanas, the five awarenesses, and all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so forth of the Vajrayana are classified into five families of which these five Buddhas are the head. In this you get a link-up with Buddhist spiritual practices, meditation, visualization, iconography. A very important teaching this.

The Dharmakaya is the Buddha [?in the] highest as it were, one with the ultimate, embodying the ultimate, the embodiment of the trikaya is more like the three embodiments rather than the three bodies; embodiments in the sense of manifestation.

Buddhadasa: Really nothing can be predicated about the Dharmakaya [216]

S: No. Sunyata, for instance, is more like the ultimate reality as it is in itself, whereas the Dharmakaya is that ultimate principle as realized by the Buddha and as constituting his ultimate essence inasmuch as he has realized it; so that the Buddha is the embodiment of the Dharma, so that aspect of the Buddha’s

nature, as it were, in which he is the embodiment of the Dharma, is called the Dharmakaya.

Chintamani: I always find it useful to see it in terms of a visualization. The first, if you like, manifestation of the absolute is the blue sky, and then a portion of the blue sky begins to coagulate and take on a form and colour and that is the first manifestation in which our senses can take part.

Buddhadasa: I would have thought in fact that the blue sky was the Sambhogakaya in this case.

S: Well there is the traditional comparison for the three kayas. In this comparison the Dharmakaya is the pure blue sky without cloud; then the Sambhogakaya is a cloud appearing in the midst of this surrounded with rainbows, and the Nirmanakaya is the rain that falls from that cloud. Again, in Buddhist art - this is Vajrayana art - you get the three kayas as Buddha figures one above another and the Dharmakaya is a completely naked Buddha figure, sometimes in yab-yum, sometimes single; and then the Sambhogakaya Buddha is a richly adorned and decorated Buddha figure in gorgeous embroidered robes and perhaps even a wonderful crown very prettily coloured and decorated, and the Nirmanakaya is our own familiar Buddha, Shakyamuni, with his shaven head and his staff and his tattered yellow robe; that's the historical manifestation.

Buddhadasa: Then what is the Adibuddha?

S: This is another aspect again. You can say this is another dimension, as it were, of the Dharmakaya. 'Adi' means primeval, or from the beginning or - in a sense - out of time, so the Adibuddha is Buddhahood in that aspect which has nothing to do with time. You maybe realize it in time, but when you realize it you also realize that it was there from the beginning. It was there all the time. It's timeless, not called into being. That aspect is called the Adibuddha. [217]

Mangala: I've also heard the Sambhogakaya described as archetypal.

S: Yes, archetypal in the sense of the sort of celestial pattern from which all individual Buddhas are derived. For instance you can put it this way. A historical Buddha isn't able to manifest all his perfections fully because of the limitations of the historical situation. If you can imagine a sort of universal situation where there are no limitations and endow the Buddha in that situation with all possible conceivable perfections and virtues and attributes, then that is the Sambhogakaya.

Ratnapani: Is that the four 'Dhyani' Buddhas and Vajrasattva.

S: In a way all the different forms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas belong to the Sambhogakaya. They are all aspects of that, apart from those who actually symbolize the Dharmakaya itself. Vajrasattva is technically the esoteric aspect of Akshobhya who is one of the five 'Dhyani' Buddhas. What should be emphasized is that the Sambhogakaya emphasizes the aspect of richness of endowment beyond the limitations of any actual historical situation. So in that sense the

archetypal Buddha - the Buddha beyond space, beyond time, beyond history but endowed with all the perfections of all the historical Buddhas and more. I'll put it in this way to make it clearer: suppose you want to draw a perfect human being, the most beautiful human being conceivable. Suppose you do that. It isn't any actual individual human being. You might have taken the eyes from here and the hair from there and the fingers from somebody else. So you could say that that was an archetypally perfect human being. So the archetypal Buddha, the Sambhogakaya Buddha, is a bit like that, but very, very much more. Therefore the Sambhogakaya Buddha - or the aspect of the Sambhogakaya Buddha - is represented as extremely beautiful and richly adorned and decorated, though it's said also that a Buddha achieves his Dharmakaya as a result of his jnana sambhara, his accumulation of jnana or wisdom. He achieves his Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya as a result of his accumulation of punya, so you get another connotation.

Subhuti: What's the word for accumulation?

S: Sambhara.

Mangala: You're using the word jnana; could you use prajna?

S: Prajna isn't used in this context; jnana is always used. [218]

Mangala: Is there a difference between jnana and prajna?

S: In a way there is; in a way there isn't. Sometimes jnana is used synonymously with prajna, sometimes not. When they are distinguished then prajna becomes in a way lower than jnana.

Chintamani: Could one call the Sambhogakaya the mythological Buddha?

S: In a sense, yes, provided you don't use the word mythological in a pejorative sense as just imaginary [and] mythical rather than mythological. You begin to get some idea of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya. Nirmanakaya is what we would call the historical Buddha. Sometimes the Sambhogakaya Buddha is called the Buddha of Glory or the Glorious Buddha or even Glorified Buddha.

Devamitra: Was the trikaya doctrine accepted by all the Mahayana schools?

S: As far as I recollect, yes, though it developed a little late. You find traces of it even in the Pali scriptures.

Buddhadasa: When an individual realizes [?for] himself the Sambhogakaya, can that be associated with the Bodhicitta in any way?

S: No. I don't think there is any direct correlation there. Hui-neng is saying of course - this is how the subject comes in - that if the Buddha is to be found in our own mind, then the trikaya is to be found within our own mind, which means it's germinally present even now. And therefore in the Vajrayana it's said that what in the Buddha is trikaya in us is body, speech, and mind. Guenther of course points out it isn't body as opposed to mind here, it's our sort of existential

presence in the world. That we are here, this is our Nirmanakaya; that we communicate, that we have a medium of communication, is our Sambhogakaya; and what we are in our inner essence, that is our Dharmakaya. So the germs, the seeds, of the three kayas are already there and when fully developed they become Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya.

Chintamani: What is a Manusi Buddha?

S: This is a theosophical term. It means a Nirmanakaya Buddha, a human Buddha, not a mythological Buddha.

Devamitra: What did you say was the seed of the Dharmakaya?

S: One's own mind. Mind is Dharmakaya; speech is Sambhogakaya. [219] Speech here is your whole faculty of communications and your talents through which you communicate.

Devamitra: Buddhadasa just mentioned a moment ago the Bodhicitta. It strikes me now that there has been no mention whatsoever so far of the Bodhicitta in this text. Does the whole idea of the Bodhicitta enter Chinese Buddhism at all?

S: Well, it does: the four bodhisattva vows are there. The four vows are the expressions of the Bodhicitta, although I agree it isn't emphasized very much or even the wish to deliver all beings, the beings of one's own mind; this is a form of Bodhicitta but it isn't very explicitly dealt with.

Ratnapani: He was having Taoists and laymen taking those vows, which is a bit premature really.

S: Well yes and no. One could say they ceased to be Taoists and laymen in a sense and became Buddhists.

Ratnapani: But the Bodhisattva Vow is surely a manifestation of the Bodhicitta on the highest level, isn't it?

S: Well we are not told very much about the audience, whether they were just there on that occasion, whether they were people coming regularly and were disciples over a long period. We're just not told that. Then again there is this whole question of the path of irregular steps and the path of regular steps. For instance, to draw a parallel, at the centre we have all sorts of people joining in the chanting of the refuges, but they aren't committing themselves, but we don't stop them joining in. You could say that they were on the path of irregular steps, but they were joining in, sure there's some sort of feeling of sincerity even though they aren't committing themselves in the sense that somebody who is ordained is committed. So in a way they are following the part of irregular steps.

Mangala: These three bodies, do they correlate with the om ah hum?

S: Yes.

Mangala: I thought that hum was the mantra associated with action and yet it would seem here that hum applies to the heart centre.

S: Well it differs with different correlations. It isn't always just one [220] way only. There's a lot of juggling around, and in this context it's this correlation and in another context that. It isn't sort of cut and dried always, which is rather disconcerting. It sort of shifts.

Chintamani: I suppose this is illustrated by the fact that you get the trikaya of Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, and Padmasambhava, and yet Amitabha is a Sambhogakaya Buddha but in this context he's Dharmakaya.

S: I was going to mention particular forms of the trikaya. This is the Nyingmapa trikaya. You've got Amitabha here representing the Dharmakaya and then the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokitesvara representing the Sambhogakaya and Padmasambhava as the Nirmanakaya. Then for instance with regards to Tara you've got the three kayas of Tara: Dharmakaya is Samantabhadri and Sambhogakaya is Tara herself and Nirmanakaya is Ekajati - this is, the wrathful form, the one eye, and the one tooth and the one tress all thrusting upwards, expressing (and this is quite significant) her single-mindedness and unification of everything, that she's completely single: one tooth, one eye, and one tress which is thrusting upwards, and she's black usually, and rather horrible.

Chintamani: So that you can take Amitabha out of the mandala of the five 'Dhyani' Buddhas, which is an embodiment of the Sambhogakaya, and transport him into the realm of Dharmakaya or give him that role.

S: Yes, but again, just to make it a little more complicated, when you have your five Buddha mandala, the central Buddha represents the Dharmakaya, usually it is Vairocana, in some mandalas it is Amitabha. You can take any of the five as being the central one for a particular purpose, because when you even, say, take the central or the Dharmakaya, you've got to give it some form, so any one of them can be placed in the centre. Usually it is either Vairocana or Amitabha or Akshobhya.

Gotami: Supposing you put Akshobhya in the centre, how do you rearrange the rest of them to have a mandala?

S: If you bring Akshobhya from the east to the centre, Vairocana goes to the east.

Gotami: They just change around.

S: Yes. [221]

Hridaya: Does the different central figure then take over the colour white?

S: Yes. Usually the colour white symbolizes the absolute and therefore the Dharmakaya, so the central figure, strictly speaking, should take over the colour white. For instance, this is what Avalokitesvara does. His actual colour is red, because he belongs to the red lotus family, but he's regarded as so important that he becomes a sort of inherently central figure and therefore retains the colour white. The same with the white Tara. Green, well, she's just one Bodhisattva

or another, but as white she's all in all - but this isn't very strictly adhered to. It's not a rigid system.

Ratnapani: In the Wheel of Becoming he takes on the appropriate colour, doesn't he?

S: Yes, these are colours of the regions, which are different from the colours of the Buddhas of the five directions.

Gotami: But you wouldn't have Vairocana becoming red would you?

S: I don't recollect any red Vairocana, but I wouldn't like to say, because the whole system is so rich and so complex and there are so many practices that I just wouldn't like to say that there wasn't a red Vairocana.

Hridaya: But there are other colours of Bodhisattva other than going to white. One picture that comes to mind is the red Manjusri.

S: Yes. Red Manjusri is quite important, but strictly speaking he belongs to Vairocana's family and should be white or golden, but there is a red Manjusri.

Hridaya: But it's not really something you can tie down is it?

S: No. Those are the general guidelines - guidelines and generally discernible patterns. It isn't anything rigidly worked out, because it's something that has grown. There is a basic scheme, as it were, but on the whole it's grown. Of course, Zen doesn't give much importance to this whole archetypal side as the Vajrayana does. This is perhaps a distinctive feature of Zen. It's rather austere, almost puritanical aesthetically speaking. It doesn't have this richer and this variety of form as the Vajrayana does.

Gotami: I thought there was quite a bit of Manjusri and Avalokiteshvara.

S: Yes, but you don't get, for instance, mandalas with hundreds, even [222] thousands of figures. There's just one, just like the one flower, not these great big bouquets and things that the Indians love. But the Chinese Mahayana art is very rich and exuberant, and some Japanese art, the modern Zen art, the Shingon and Shin art. Then of course the Pure Land idea represents the same sort of thing in different terms. There's an actual richness and exuberance and light and colour and glory, but this all ties up with the punya side of things, not with the jnana side, though it becomes a manifestation and a reflection and a means of showing forth the jnana. I sometimes compare the Sambhogakaya to a stained glass window with the sun streaming through it.

Hridaya: In the Hinayana how closely related are the Dharmakaya and the Nirmanakaya related.

S: In the Pali texts there is a distinction of what they call Rupakaya and Dhammakaya, Rupakaya meaning 'form body' and Dhammakaya meaning Dharmakaya, but the current Theravadin interpretation is usually very non-metaphysical. They say that the Dhammakaya of Buddha is simply his teaching. They even sometimes say it's a collection of literature. 'Kaya' means not only body, but collection,

like ‘corpus’. So it’s the corpus of the scriptures. This is the standard, modern Theravadin explanation, but they don’t like to go beyond that. But in the Pali texts there are references to a sort of glorious Buddha and disciples of the Buddha during his lifetimes seeming him in their meditation in a glorious form. There are quite a number of these examples given in the Pali texts themselves, in the scriptures. So this would be like the Sambhogakaya. And the Sambhogakaya cannot be seen, because in the case of the ordinary human being, you can meet someone and he looks just like an ordinary person. Well he is an ordinary person, you can see him, what he looks like, etc, that’s his Nirmanakaya, his body, not just his physical body but his existential presence here and now. But then that particular person, that apparent nondescript person, has all sorts of hidden talents, capacities. He may be a wonderful artist, painter, poet. That’s his Sambhogakaya. The there’s this inner essence beyond all that: that’s his Dharmakaya. When these are fully developed you get Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya of a Buddha. So the [223] Sambhogakaya of the Buddha is as it were all the Buddha’s invisible talents made visible and manifest on this higher archetypal plane, what the Buddha would have looked like or even been if he had only had the chance, as it were. He’s cramped by historical circumstances so you try to bring out the universality and the richness and the beauty with your bright and colourful Sambhogakaya forms. Instead of giving him a ragged little saffron robe you give him a sort of glorious and brocaded and embroidered robe studded with jewels etc.

Chintamani: Although in thangkas Shakyamuni’s tattered robe is quite richly embossed with gold.

S: Yes. Actually the thangkas, technically speaking, represent the Sambhogakaya. But strictly speaking, the yellow robe relates to the Nirmanakaya. But when you see this in a thangka it’s really the Sambhogakaya which is being represented, but in a way represented in a slightly improved version of the Nirmanakaya, because you have after all to retain the association of the Buddha. It shouldn’t be so glorious and so decked up that you can’t even recognize him. You must recognize the Buddha. So they still retain that robe, but they improve it; they make it rather neat and nice and new.

Voice: (unclear)

S: I used to notice this - it’s a sort of parallel - with Tibetans, especially Tibetan women. Tibetan women at home just don’t bother how they look, they’re absolute sluts, but when it comes to dressing up for a party they look absolutely gorgeous, their rainbow aprons and their massive jewellery and their hair all done up. It’s the same woman but she looks different, so it’s a bit like that.

But this whole question of the three kayas seems to run through so much of Mahayana Buddhism and Vajrayana and Tibetan Buddhism etc. and to express itself in so many different ways. It’s a very important teaching, doctrine. There’s not any one book on it in English unfortunately. It would be very good if someone got down to this with a little chapter here and a little chapter there.

Devamitra: I've been very confused about this doctrine before, but as you've explained it here it's very clear.

S: I don't think that this sort of explanation is in print, actually. [224]

Buddhadasa: Even Lama Govinda is a bit confusing.

S: I've not gone into it very fully even in my own writings. In the Survey, there's a summary of the historical development of the trikaya doctrine, and then in The Three Jewels there is a simple analogy, but even that isn't very full. It doesn't go very far. I haven't even given a full lecture on it.

Devamitra: This is the first time I've heard it explained in terms which are easy to refer to.

S: Well it seems very abstruse. Sometimes in books on Buddhism you get the bald statement 'the Buddha has three bodies: an absolute body, a glorified body, and a relative body', and that's that sort of thing, all tied up, but nothing said about it.

Devamitra: It seems that a lot of these things have been translated and expounded in a literal sort of way.

S: Well what I feel, and what I felt when I wrote the Survey even, is that people don't stop and think, 'What does it mean?' They just go on reproducing it, even explaining it, without having asked themselves, 'What does this really mean?' 'Why did the Buddha or whoever it was teach this and what was he getting at?' He wasn't just doing it for a joke or just for a bit of intellectual elaboration.

Voice: (unclear)

S: Well there are bits and pieces in the Lankavatara and there are other bits and pieces in other Mahayana sutras which are not translated. There's not very much material about it, even though there is a hint here and there, even in the Mahayana sutras. It's something that's just sort of grown up and been collated from various sources.

Buddhadasa: It's as though it's almost something that can't be written down.

S: In a way, yes, but you can see how much of the Vajrayana art, iconography, spiritual practice implies this. The trikaya doctrine is implicit in this though it isn't sort of brought out and expounded. For instance, I don't think that Gampopa says anything about the trikaya. The words may be there, but not much more, but I sometimes think it's the most important Mahayana doctrine. It's so sort of widespread, so much sort of taken for granted, that no one ever deals with it separately, just like the doctrine of karma to some extent, and [225] rebirth. It's so much taken for granted in the East, and so much pervades the teachings, that it isn't treated as a separate topic. You don't get in the East a book on karma and rebirth, because it pervades so much the entire teaching, and in a way it's like that with the trikaya doctrine, certainly for Tibetan Buddhism.

Buddhadasa: Are these, like most things in Buddhism, a happy blend - there's no fine distinction between each one?

S: Yes, it's not body one, body two, body three: it's one Buddha, these different levels on which that one Buddha manifests, just as you're one person. You can speak of your existential presence here and now, and then your abilities, and all your talents - that's you also - and then you as you are in your innermost depths, that you which maybe nobody ever sees, that's you too. You can see the analogy?

Chintamani: What is the Dharmadhatu?

S: 'Dhatu' is sphere or even world. Dharmadhatu corresponds to Dharmakaya in a way. Dharmadhatu is in cosmology what Dharmakaya is in Buddhology. It's the whole of existence as the field of operation of the Dharma, the spiritual law, the spiritual principle, Reality.

Buddhadasa: It's very confusing. I've only got one word, Buddhism's got dozens.

S: Sometimes they've got one word where we need two or three - like Dharma.

Chintamani: Dharmadhatu covers all three, in a sense.

S: In a sense. Dharmadhatu is the universe under its spiritual aspect. I think one could say that. The universe under its spiritual aspect or the universe as it is in reality without ceasing to be a universe. The Dharmakaya is the Buddha under his highest spiritual aspect.

Wolf: The Hindus start off with a sort of threefold teaching about the body and then go beyond that.

S: Body, speech, and mind is common to both Hindus and Buddhists.

Wolf: They call it physical, subtle, and causal and then they have the atman and paramatman to complement it.

S: Buddhism sticks to the original threefold subdivision, though of course there is another subdivision in the Yogacara with the seven vijñanas, the seven [226] consciousnesses - the five sense consciousnesses, the mind consciousness both outward looking and inward looking, then there is the soiled mind consciousness with the lower alaya and the higher alaya: lower store consciousness and higher store consciousness, relative store consciousness and absolute store consciousness. This is just in regard to the Yogacara school, but basically, Buddhism - especially Tantric Buddhism - works within the threefold classification: body, speech, and mind. Guenther is very good on this topic. He points out that there isn't body here as opposed to mind. Body means you as you are here and now, your phenomenal being or even your existential being or presence, and speech covers the whole aspect of communication, talent, and what is there but can't be seen as it were - it's more than potential. If I look at you I see you; what I see, looking at you, is your Nirmanakaya. The fact that you are an artist, which I can't see,

but which you are, that's your Sambhogakaya, or part of it, and what you are even behind that is your Dharmakaya, which nobody sees - not even you.

p.528: "Within our physical body we take refuge in the Pure Dharmakaya (Essence-body) of Buddha; Within our physical body we take refuge in the Perfect Sambhoga-kaya (the Empirical, or Bliss-body) of Buddha; Within our physical body we take refuge in the Myriad Nirmanakaya (Bodies of transformation, or of incarnations of Buddha."

This is quite interesting, because if you go for refuge to the Buddha and if the Buddha has these three kayas you also go for refuge to the three kayas, so this is what Hui-neng is saying now . . . and it's all within your own body, just within our physical body. I'm not quite happy with that. Luk also translates 'within our physical body'. His translation is as follows [p.54]:

"We surrender ourselves to (or we return to) and rely on the pure and clean Dharmakaya Buddha who is in our physical body; We surrender ourselves to (or we return to) and rely on the completely perfect Sambhogakaya Buddha who is in our physical body; We surrender ourselves to (or we return to) and rely on myriads of Nirmanakayas of the Buddha who is in our physical body."

Obviously one mustn't take this 'in the physical body' too literally. It's just in use you could say. Otherwise you come up against the Surangama Samadhi Sutra teaching: it's neither in the body nor out of the body nor in between nor both nor neither etc. You can't define its relationship with the body. Anyway, the basic point is that when you go for refuge to the Buddha, inasmuch as there are three kayas, you also go for refuge to the three [227] kayas. Then he goes on to explain what the three kayas are, but in his own way, which may not be all that clear, but let's see,

p.528: "What is the Pure Dharmakaya? Our Mind-essence is intrinsically pure, that is, all things are manifestations of mind. Good deeds and evil deeds are but the manifestation of good thoughts and evil thoughts respectively. Thus within Essence of Mind all things, like the azure of the sky and the radiance of the sun and moon which, when obscured by passing clouds, may appear as if their brightness had been dimmed, but as soon as the clouds are blown away, their brightness reappears and all objects are again fully illuminated." Here, the Dharmakaya is compared in part to the pure blue sky, as in the Tibetan tradition.

"Foolish thoughts may be likened to the clouds, while sagacity and Wisdom are the moon and the Sun. When we become attached to discriminated objects, our Mind-essence becomes clouded by drifting thoughts which prevent sagacity and Wisdom from sending forth their light. We were fortunate that we found learned and pious teachers to make known the orthodox Dharma to us so that we may, by our own effort do away with ignorance and delusion, and by so doing we will become enlightened both within and without, and our true nature within our Essence of Mind will manifest itself. This is precisely what happens with those who come face to face with their Essence of Mind. This is what is called

the Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha.” So there, Hui-neng identifies, as it were, the Dharmakaya with the Essence of Mind in its absolute aspect, the One Mind, if you like.

“To take refuge in the true Buddha,” True Buddha meaning, apparently, Dharmakaya Buddha.

pp.528-9 “To take refuge in the true Buddha is to take refuge in our own Essence of Mind, He who takes refuge within himself must first get rid of the evil-mind and the jealous-mind, the flattering and crooked-mind, deceit, and falsehood, and fallacious views, egotism, snobbishness, contemptuousness, arrogance, and all other evils that may arise at any time, To take refuge within ourselves is to be always on the alert to prevent our own mistakes and to refrain from criticism of other’s faults. He who is humble and patient on all occasions and is courteous to every one, has truly realized his Mind-essence, so truly in fact that his Path is free from further obstacles. This is the way to take refuge in (the Buddha of) oneself.”

It’s as though Hui-neng identifies the going for refuge, here to the Dharmakaya Buddha, with the whole spiritual mind in its more practical aspect. Your whole spiritual life is in fact your going for refuge to the Buddha. It’s not as though you go for refuge and then you get on with your spiritual life. It’s a way of looking at it, but Hui-neng says that when you are engaged in your spiritual life, as it were, certainly these particular aspects of it, that itself is your going for refuge.

“Humble and patient on all occasions and is courteous to everyone.” Do you think we should really be humble and patient on all occasions? In a sense yes, and in a sense no. What should the good Buddhist be like? What sort of impression would be create?

Ratnapani: Humble and patient to the point where that is not denied by straightforwardness. ‘Humble’ has got Uriah Heep [a character in Charles Dickens’ David Copperfield, tr.] connotations.

S: Yes. It’s more like gentleness or modesty.

Mangala: Open and receptive.

S: Yes, but direct too.

Gotami: It’s very difficult to do all those things. If someone gives you the impression that they are trying to be gentle, that isn’t the impression that one wants to go along with.

S: If one isn’t gentle and one feels that one should be gentle or even recognizes one should be, then how does one become gentle without trying to be gentle? If you should be humble, how do you try to be humble?

Gotami: By discerning anything which is there, like say your [228] talents, not just trying to take something onto something else.

S: So how are you humble then?

Wolf: Could you say ‘humble but fearless’, to take away the Uriah Heep connotation?

S: You could, but humble really means just seeing yourself as you are, not as necessarily higher or lower, but just as you are. You may be bigger than you think you are, on the other hand you may be smaller.

Wolf: And you must just accept what you see.

S: Provisionally, as your working basis, humbleness means just being objective about yourself, not in the sense of denying your feelings, but just accepting yourself as you are in relation to others. So being humble may mean recognizing that you are a bit better than other people; but being humble doesn’t mean, ‘Oh no I couldn’t possibly be better than them, I’ve got to act as though I’m not and pretend that I look up to them.’ Being genuinely humble means, ‘Well no, I know I’m more experienced than them and I know I’m more developed than them,’ in a way, and just accepting that. That would be being humble. So you can practise trying to be humble only by just trying to see yourself as you are and acting also, in relation to others, according to what you see you are. Being humble doesn’t mean sort of curbing your natural gifts, or not allow your light to shine forth because it might be a bit pretentious. If you have a light you can hardly stop it shining forth. People usually think that being humble means sort of going through a big act of labelling yourself as inferior in relation to other people and that this is somehow good, but this isn’t very Buddhistic anyway.

Ratnapani: I feel that that’s what the Chinese don’t quite do when they are talking about themselves as dishonourable and unworthy, because the way it’s put over they don’t mean it somehow. In that way it’s as if it’s a balancing thing.

Wolf: Do they still speak like that?

S: They used to, though it sounded I’m sure quite different in Chinese, from what it sounds like in English translation. For instance if you translated ‘How do you do’ from English into Chinese it might sound very odd. They might translate it into a Chinese which had a suggestion of ‘I beg to enquire how you may be getting on today’ or something like that. It may sound terribly stilted [229] and artificial and I’d think, ‘Do English people really say this every time they meet? How comic.’

p.529: “What is the Perfect Sambhogakaya? Let us take the illustration of a lamp. Since the light of a lamp can dissipate darkness that has been there for a thousand years, so a ray of Wisdom can do away with ignorance that has lasted for ages. We need not bother about the past, for the past is gone and is irrecoverable. What demands our attention is the present and future, so let our thoughts, from one momentary sensation to another, be clear and pure and let us see face to face our Mind-essence. Goodness and evil are opposite to each other, but in essence they cannot be dualistic. This non-dualistic nature is called

‘true nature,’ it can neither be contaminated by evil, nor affected by goodness. This is what is called the Sambhogakaya of Buddha.”

Hui-neng is giving very much his own interpretation of Sambhogakaya according to his particular outlook, and especially in this particular sentence: “This non-dualistic nature is called ‘true nature’, it can be neither contaminated by evil nor affected by goodness. This is what is called the Sambhogakaya of Buddha.” He seems to be thinking of the Sambhogakaya as something in between, as it were, our speech - that is the Sambhogakaya of the ordinary person - and the Sambhogakaya of the Buddha in the full Mahayanistic sense, as I explained it a little while ago.

“One single evil thought clouding our Essence of Mind will undo the good merit accumulated in aeons of time; while a good thought can expiate all our sins though they be as many as the sands of the river Ganges.” This is not to be taken literally, It’s true that, say, one flash of insight can undo the evil of untold ages, and the characteristic of the effect of insight is it’s permanent, it cannot be undone. If it is just a meditative attainment, it can be undone, but not insight; that is irreversible. That produces a permanent effect for the better on your whole character and being - the flash of insight into the truth and into reality. It permanently modifies that even though it may be very slightly, permanently transformed. So that cannot be undone. But Hui-neng’s language certainly suggests that it can be undone, as if you could be a Buddha one minute and a non-Buddha the next, but actually according to Buddhist teaching that is quite impossible. Once a Buddha always a Buddha, otherwise no Enlightenment, no salvation, no getting out of the samsara. I think Hui-neng can be misunderstood. Again it seems to me that the straightforward Theravadin language is much more appropriate and in a sense much more true. You don’t go into the ultimate first origin of how you ‘became unenlightened’. You are unenlightened, full stop. But you can become Enlightened, so you can speak in terms of ‘you are potentially Enlightened’, and as you become more Enlightened and your insight develops, that is an irreversible process and you can end up by being Enlightened. Whereas when you adopt the wrong metaphysical language: ‘You’re unenlightened because you fell in some way from that state of Enlightenment,’ this is the Hindu way of looking at it. Buddhism never actually says that; certainly the Buddha doesn’t. So you’ve got to get back to the state from which you fell. If you fell from it once, why shouldn’t you fall from it [230] again? What’s the guarantee? So Buddhism very wisely doesn’t speak in terms of an original fall. The Buddha says you can trace back this karma, back and back and back; you’ll never find the first point of origin of it all. But you can see the end of it all.

Subhuti: Isn’t there quite a bit in the ‘Survey’ about the beings of light who descend from devolution?

S: Yes, but they are not in the Nirvana worlds as it were, they are in the highest level of the mundane (unclear) and you don’t see the beginning of that. In fact, if pressed, Buddhism would say the human mind is not constructed so that it can see an origin. It can think in terms of going back and back and back, but

you can't connect a first point with the Absolute and say there was a devolution from the Absolute, the Absolute became the relative, Nirvana became samsara. Buddhism never does that. There is no doctrine of a Creation or of an ultimate origin. Buddhism says that all the human mind can see is the mundane going back and back in time indefinitely. And it can go back indefinitely; it never finds a first beginning where the whole thing is anchored in the Absolute and the Absolute comes down, [that] there's a fall. Buddhism says the mind just goes back and back and you can go back and back without ever stopping. You never come to a first point of origin, but you can come to the point of stopping it all. Because otherwise, if you say, as Hinduism says, that Brahma emanated the world from himself and the religious life consists in getting back, well how stupid, in a way. You are created, you come out of it, there is a fall, and then you have to go back. What's the guarantee that you won't fall again or that there will not be a fall again?

Gotami: Because it would be conscious surely.

S: But if you were originally conscious, how could you have fallen?

Gotami: Well you suddenly find yourself in this world and that you are experiencing things and then gradually you become conscious that it is not as it might be and then eventually you get the awareness of how it really goes and, terrified of suffering, you don't do that again and so you don't go back there, no matter what stage you become conscious of being involved in all that and how that arose. [231]

S: That's OK, but in Hindu teaching you start off with that consciousness but then you fall. If your perfect Brahma falls then there is nothing else and nobody else to fall. The perfect being falls or, in Buddhist terms, the Buddha becomes ignorant? The Buddha, say? No, that's impossible. That's a completely illogical way of speaking. You just see ignorance going back and back and back, [but] you never see Enlightenment becoming ignorant. So you start off, as it were, dualistically. All you can imagine is ignorance going back and back and back, craving going back and back and back, karma going back and back and back, and over all that time there's Nirvana, there's Enlightenment, but you never get to the point where the one comes down and becomes the other.

Buddhadasa: But surely this is implied in the scriptures. I think I recall Ananda saying to his father, 'I no longer belong to you, I belong to a higher lineage.'

S: Yes, the lineage of the Buddhas, well that goes back and back. The lineage of the Buddhas also goes back and back because it's also a lineage of human beings in previous world systems. Not back to an Absolute, back to an Enlightened human being.

Wolf: There is the first Buddha who is mentioned, isn't there? Dipankara.

S: That's the first who is mentioned, but there are Buddhas in different universes and there are universes after universe going back and back and back.

Buddhadasa: Then the lineage of the Buddha is only applicable on the historical level, on the Nirmanakaya level?

S: Yes.

Subhuti: That way of thinking of coming from, as it were, an original purity and trying to regain it is a source of another wrong view.

S: But this is not the Buddhist view, though I must admit that some Mahayana literature, even sutras, and even Hui-neng, use that sort of language and it's most misleading. It's not really strictly Buddhist language, and Zen uses 'get back to your original nature', but not a nature from which anybody ever fell. It's very misleading language. It's Vedantic language, not really Buddhist language. This is a very miccha-ditthi this from a Buddhist point of view. [232]

Devamitra: It's very clearly dealt with in Von Glasenapp's book, 'Buddhism, a Non-Theistic Religion'.

S: Yes, he's very good on this. The Theravada on the whole is very clear on this. The Mahayana, I must say, philosophically has confused the issue a bit with its very loose language sometimes.

Subhuti: People seem to seize on this, thinking of the spiritual life as a regressive phenomenon.

Gotami: It's not creating something which was not existing before.

S: You are creating something which was not there before so far as you are personally concerned, but you can speak in terms of breaking through into a metaphysical principle which is there all the time, outside time. You can speak in those terms.

Mangala: When you talk in terms of 'you are originally pure and you've got to get back to that' it's as if there is no work to be done, which as far as actual practice and work goes is futile. You've just got to accept that you are impure.

S: Well it's difficult enough even if you base yourself on a potentiality and you've got to work for it, but you make it almost impossible if you say 'Well you are already that' and go about telling people that sort of thing, but in a way I would say that the Theravadin way of expressing it, which seems to be the Buddha's original way, is much safer and sounder, and I think we have to be very cautious about the Mahayanistic sort of more metaphysical and flowery ways of putting it. At best they are hyperbolic; if they are taken literally they can be disastrous. Again this is what people go for.

Chintamani: I think that for instance every time I have checked someone for saying, 'I'm really striving and trying for this,' it's because I feel a little guilty for not getting down to it myself and so it's very easy to say, 'Ah, yes, but it's all there.'

S: 'Why all this struggle, why all this effort. Just stop, just let it flow, just see that it's there, it's all beautiful man.'

Subhuti: It's a reflection of a feeling of a psychological pressure, of rebellion in a way. I can see that in my case. You feel something is being imposed on you so [233] you reject it, any sort of striving, any sort of effort.

pp.529-30 "Now, what is the Myriad Nirmanakaya? When we subject ourselves to the least differentiation or particularization, transformation takes place: otherwise all things would be as void as space, as they inherently are. By letting our minds dwell on evil things, hell arises. By letting our minds dwell upon good acts, paradise is manifested. Dragons and snakes are the transformations of venomous hatred; while Bodhisattvas are compassionate thoughts made manifest. The various heavens are the projection of Prajna; while underworlds are the transformations of ignorance and infatuation. Un-numbered, indeed, are the transformations of Mind-essence." So here one finds Hui-neng giving his own rather individual interpretation of what is meant on Nirmanakaya.

Buddhadasa: It's almost as though he's upgraded each kaya. It seems to me that the description of the Nirmanakaya is almost applicable to the Sambhogakaya.

S: In a sense, yes, though you could hardly upgrade the Dharmakaya. I don't think even Hui-neng could do that.

Ratnapani: I thought he was saying the same thing about the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya.

S: Well that would be almost inevitable if you don't explain it in the more traditional way. Also his explanation of Nirmanakaya is very closely connected with the Lankavatara 'Mind Only' school of thought.

p.530: This in a way is quite important: "The Dharmakaya is intrinsically self-sufficient," which really means there's nothing that can be said about that. The Dharmakaya is Dharmakaya. "To see our own Essence of Mind clearly and without interruption, is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha." This connects a little bit with the literal meaning of the word 'Sambhogakaya' which is enjoyment. It's 'enjoyment together'. Sometimes it's translated 'mutual enjoyment' or 'reciprocal enjoyment'. So you get here a duality. On the level of the Dharmakaya, there is no duality. We are not saying it's one, but it isn't two, so nothing can be said. It's intrinsically self-sufficient. But on the level of the Sambhogakaya there is distinction: "To see our own Essence of Mind clearly and without interruption." If you speak in terms of seeing there is what is seen, and there is the seer; what is enjoyed and who or what enjoys it; so the Sambhogakaya is the body, you can say, of mutual delight, the seeing and the delighting in the seeing, and the usual explanation is that it's the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas seeing one another, especially the Bodhisattva seeing the Buddha. But mutual enjoyment. So therefore Hui-neng says, "To see our own Essence of Mind clearly and without interruption is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha." That's his way of putting it. The more usual Mahayana way would be, 'when the Buddhas see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas see the Bodhisattvas'. That's mutual [234] enjoyment and delight which springs up. This is the Sambhogakaya, or the Sambhogakaya level. But Hui-neng says, no, when you see your own Essence of Mind clearly without

interruption, that is the Sambhogakaya. It's his, as it were, more psychological way of looking at it, not mystical, not mythic, not archetypal, not symbolical, and then, "To let our mind dwell on the Sambhogakaya, so that prajna radiates forth in manifestation is Nirmanakaya." So when you are in the Sambhogakaya state and you allow your mind to dwell on the Sambhogakaya, well something springs up, something is produced, something is given birth to: that's the Nirmanakaya. This is Hui-neng's own very individual interpretation. I must emphasize this is individual it is not the standard Mahayana teaching, but it's quite interesting and helpful nevertheless.

"To attain Enlightenment by one's own effort and to practise by one's self the goodness that is inherent in our Essence of Mind, is a genuine case of 'taking refuge.' Our physical body consisting of flesh and skin, etc., is nothing more than a tenement or an inn; it is no place of refuge. Let us realize the Trikaya of our own Mind-essence, then we shall know the Buddha of our own nature." This is a sort of conclusion in a way. It's a summary of what's been said: "Let us realize the trikaya of our own Mind-Essence, then we shall know the Buddha of our own nature."

The stanza: "Those who understand the Mahayana teaching And are thus able to realize Mind-essence Should reverently and fervently seek for a realization of Dharmakaya. The Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, the Nirmanakaya— These three Bodies emanate from Oneness. He who is able to realize this fact intuitively Has sown the seed and will reap the fruit of Enlightenment. It is from Nirmanakaya that our 'pure nature' emerges; Within the former the latter is always to be found. Guided by its 'pure nature' Nirmanakaya follows the right path, And will some day culminate In a Body of Bliss, perfect and infinite. Pure Nature is hidden by our sensual instincts; By getting rid of sensuality, we realize Pure Dharmakaya. When our temperament is such that we are no longer the slave of the five sense-objects, And when we have realized Mind-essence, even for one moment, then Tathata is known to us. Those who are so fortunate as to be followers of the Sudden School Shall suddenly, in this life, see the Blessed One in their own Mind-essence. He who has not realized Essence of Mind and seeks for Buddha without, Is on a wrong path and is acting foolishly. He who seeks Buddha by practising certain doctrines Knows not the place where the real Buddha is to be found. He who is seeking to realize Buddha within his own mind, He only is sowing the seed of Buddhahood."

There are several interesting points here: "Those who understand . . . realization of Dharmakaya." These words 'reverently' and 'fervently'. In a way they are very characteristic of Chinese Buddhism and Chinese Buddhists. There's reverence and there is fervour, and it also suggests that without reverence and fervour it's hopeless trying to seek a realization of the Dharmakaya, the Buddha within oneself in the ultimate sense. So reverence and fervour are very necessary. Then speaking of the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya: "These three Bodies emanate from Oneness." One mustn't take this literally, not that first of all there is oneness and then out come the three bodies. It suggests, as it were, that the

three bodies are not just three bodies; the oneness is to counteract the three. Not that threeness is false and oneness is true; it's threeness and oneness. It's one Buddha, three bodies. There's a bit of this sort of controversy in another sort of context entirely in the Trinitarian theology, the three persons and the one God etc. Luckily, Buddhists haven't got into all that sort of thing, but one mustn't think of the three bodies as one, two, three bodies. So that is why oneness is introduced here. But again one mustn't think of, oh, first of all oneness and then out comes the Dharmakaya and then out comes [235] the Sambhogakaya, out comes the Nirmanakaya - it's not like that.

What about this term 'tathata', suchness. Why this strange term, this curious term? What's it a term for?

Mangala: It's a term for everything. It's a word which doesn't discriminate. It doesn't label things, on the other hand it doesn't deny them. It affirms things without labelling them.

S: That's true. It seems to have started off as a term for Nirvana or Buddhahood, but what is Nirvana? You can't really say. What is it? 'As it is'. Tathata is just like that the thatness, suchness, as it is. It's the 'as-it-is-ness' of things, especially Nirvana. Then it was extended to everything else. You can't really say what they are. You can't label them. They are as they are, that indefinable 'is-ness' of things, that's tathata. It's not a sort of principle called suchness, a sort of monistic principle, it's not that. It's a quality. It's the indefinableness of things, perhaps you could say, that they've got their unique, indefinable essence and you express that as tathata. But tathata is not a thing apart from things. It's not an actual existing principle as it were, so there is no monism there, everything is tathata, yes. But there is no tathata as a separate principle from them.

Devamitra: In what way is it different from sunyata?

S: Not really at all. It's a different aspect. In a way it's more positive. Sunyata, in a way, you can say, is sort of negative. It's empty. But tathata is sort of positive, it's quite suggestive and it's very popular in Mahayana Buddhism, especially in Chinese Buddhism I feel. The Tibetans seem not to use it. The Chinese seem rather to have liked this term. A bit Taositic slightly. Maybe it wasn't logical enough for the Tibetans; they prefer Sunyata or even Dharmakaya, they don't seem to use tathata at all. But the Chinese use it extensively. The suchness of things or the thatness of things.

Chintamani: It's another case of the sum of the parts being less than the whole.

Ratnapani: I think it's a very useful word inasmuch as sometimes in one's own experience slightly, especially in art, the thatness of something is captured and somehow brought out.

S: Its indefinable quality. Like sometimes in the Chinese paintings of [236] tigers. They really bring out the tigerness of the tiger, though it may not be all that accurate anatomically, but you can really feel what a tiger's like. I saw a

wonderful painting, not long ago, of a cat. It was the sort of catness of all cats in that painting. It was a real mog. It was the essence of all possible mogs.

Mangala: Was the mog Japanese.

S: Chinese I think. The expression in its eyes and the way it was lying there, so heavenly. You get this in D.H. Lawrence's animal poems: the bat, the snake, and the tortoise. It really does convey the quality of the animal. You get this in scenes and atmospheres, paintings and certain poems convey this indefinable sort of atmosphere and (?)place.

I think you can only protract it to the nth degree. Take, for instance, the pussiness of the puss in that painting and just imagine seeing everything with that same intensity incredibly increased and heightened and magnified. Then you'd be seeing tathata or the tathatanness of things, the suchness of things, and you would see that they were empty in the sense that you couldn't describe it, you couldn't categorize it or label it, it's just as it was, just like that.

To come back to Buddhist art and what we were discussing yesterday, a really successful Buddha picture should express the Buddhanness of the Buddha, so think of that. It's difficult enough to express the pussiness of the puss, even that is a great achievement, but to think of expressing the Buddhanness of the Buddha.

Buddhadasa: So really the only person who's qualified to paint a Buddha is a Buddha.

S: In a way, yes. That's why some great portrait painters really express the humanness of the human being. I sometimes think myself that portrait painting is one of the highest forms of art. I was looking through a book the other day, 'Art Treasures of (?)Spain' and there is a portrait by a relatively unknown artist of Mary Tudor, Bloody Mary that is, and there is a little note: 'You can see her whole history in that face. You can see how her father treated her.' Yes and you can, the bitterness and the hurt and the tightness. It's all there, painted when she was about in her late thirties. It's quite incredible. How that painter must have seen her. It isn't a very flattering portrait. It isn't at all [237] flattering, but he saw everything. And Raphaels' famous portrait of Julius the Second. What they saw! And there are quite a number of others; with what intensity they saw him as that particular human being.

Mangala: When you say 'see' though, presumably he may not have actually understood that sort of psychologically or even perceived it in psychological terms. It would just be sheer quality of vision so far as anatomy and physiology goes.

S: I don't think so, because a photograph wouldn't show it. I don't personally feel that they just sort of see externally and just register what's there. I think it's interpretive all the time, but it may not be the interpretation of the conscious mind, but they are interpretive all the same. In a sense, they know, but if you asked them about it psychologically they wouldn't be able to put it across in

those terms. It's not their language. They've told you in their own way. That's their language.

Chintamani: I've read somewhere that when the artist is really into what he's doing that is simply the object he is drawing expressing itself via his eye and his hand.

S: It's interesting to see that possible source of misunderstanding about the Dharma go quite far back and have their roots even in some of the scriptures.

Subhuti: It seems that, with any sutra, if the context is not understood then they are bound to be misleading.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: It's as if you have to take the whole corpus of scriptures, like you were saying Nietzsche's aphoristic approach: different aphorisms for different occasions.

S: Yes. Nietzsche also said something like 'to systematize is to falsify'.

Ratnapani: Which is true in a sense, as we've said so often. It's true, but because the truth and the false isn't absolute truth and false. We do need system. In a sense, Buddhism doesn't exist, because it can't be a system with the Void. The Void nullifies system which is towards the Void, but we are Buddhists and we are studying Buddhism and practising. [238]

S: Well Buddhism is an open-ended system, not a closed system.

Chintamani: Often when talking with people who have never come into contact with Buddhism in a practical way I feel that their view is that I've very much narrowed my life down, but in fact I've found the opposite.

S: They think of Buddhism as one subject among many and you've limited yourself to one particular subject. I think that so far on the seminar we've clarified at least two very important doctrinal themes, one of course being the question of sila, samadhi, prajna, and how prajna develops or arises according to the Theravada and according to Hui-neng; and today the trikaya. This is very basic material, much more basic than the Sutra of Hui-neng itself.

Buddhadasa: Is it stretching it a bit to say that there is a correlation between the two.

S: No, because sila is external observance, in a way, and the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha is as he actually appears in this world. And on the level of samadhi there are all sorts of visionary archetypal experiences, and you see the Bodhisattvas when you visualize, on that level, eventually. These are all aspects or fragments of the Sambhogakaya, and when you fully realize prajna or Enlightenment, that's the Dharmakaya. So there is a correlation, yes.

In Luk's translation there is a part of a stanza which corresponds roughly to the stanza at the end of Dwight Goddard. There are about eight lines first

and then he says [p.99]: “The three kayas of Dharma, Sambhoga, and Nirmana / Are the three bodies which in reality are one,’ which seems to correspond to Dwight Goddard’s”The Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, the Nirmanakaya - these three bodies emanate from Oneness.” [p.530] Luk goes on “If this / In the self-nature can be perceived, it will bring / Bodhi that (e’re) leads to Buddhahood’s attainment.” Dwight Goddard says, “He who is able to realize this fact intuitively / Has sown the seed and will reap the fruit of Enlightenment.” Luk says, “From Nirmanakaya pure nature is produced,/ For that pure nature is immanent therein,” and Goddard says, “It is from Nirmanakaya that our ‘pure nature’ emerges; Within the former the latter is always to be found.” Luk goes on:

“(If) the (self-) nature leads the Nirmanakaya down The right Path, real infinite perfection follows. Lewdness in itself of pure nature is the cause, When lewdness is destroyed that nature pure substance becomes. If the five desires within (self-) nature are eliminated, The self-nature that in a moment is perceived will real be. If in this life one enters this instantaneous Dharma door Suddenly one finds self-nature and perceives the Bhagavat. He who when practising the Dharma seeks outside For Buddha will know not where to find the real one. If one can perceive the real in one’s mind, the real found Therein will be the cause of Buddhahood’s attainment. He who perceives not his self-nature, but will seek elsewhere For Buddha, with such thoughts in mind is most stupid man.”

Then it seems to peter out [with] something which doesn’t correspond very well. So it seems this is the chapter on “His last instruction”. There is a rough correspondence [239] it seems, but only in part. It’s probably quite a job to work it all out but it underlines what Yampolsky said about the first two big discourses being the sort of original nucleus. It seems to me that in some cases short passages have been taken from these two big ones and sort of built up into separate discourses and provided with their own sort of introduction about where that particular sermon was delivered. This raises all sorts of textual problems that we can’t hope to sort out.

Chapter 6: Dialogues suggested by various temperaments and circumstances.

p.531: "Upon the Patriarch’s return to the village of Tso-hau in Shiu-chow from Wong-mui, where the Dharma had been transmitted to him, he was an unknown man. At that time, it was a Confucian scholar, named Liu Chi-luk, who first gave him a warm welcome and appreciation. It came about in this manner. Chi-luk had an aunt, named Wu Chun-chong who was a Buddhist nun, who was in the habit of reciting the Maha Parinirvana Sutra. One day the Patriarch heard her reciting it, and after listening for only a short time, grasped the profound meaning of the Sutra, and began to explain it to her, whereupon she brought the book and asked him the meaning of certain passages.

"I am not very well educated,’ he replied, ‘but if you wish to understand the purport of the book, I will do the best I can.’ ‘How can you understand the meaning of the text,’ she rejoined, ‘if you do not know the words?’ To this he

replied: 'The profound teaching of the various Buddhas, has nothing to do with the written language.'

"This answer surprised her very much, and recognising that he was no ordinary man, she spoke of him freely to the pious elders of the village, saying: 'He is a sage. We should get his permission to supply him with food and lodgings, and urge him to remain with us. Whereupon a descendant of Marquis Wu of the Ai Dynasty, named, Tso Shuk-leung, came one afternoon with other villagers to offer homage to the Patriarch. At that time the historic Po-lam Monastery, which had been devastated by war at the end of the Chu Dynasty, was reduced to a heap of ruins. The villagers rebuilt it on the old site, and asked the Patriarch to make it his home. Afterwards it became a very famous temple."

The Confucian scholar having a Buddhist aunt is very typical of the religious situation in China during the Tang dynasty, and also this sentence: "The profound teaching of the various Buddhas has nothing to do with the written language." It's very important to understand in what sense this is true and in what sense it isn't true, how it is to be taken, how it is to be understood.

Ratnapani: The profound teaching is not dependent on the written language. It is there, but that is not to say that the written language has nothing to do with it, because it's the writing of the Dharma.

S: Right, yes. So this could be misunderstood. You could say, 'Well, do away with writings on Buddhism altogether. Don't have any scriptures. Don't read anything, don't study anything.' This could be a misunderstanding of this sort. So, "has nothing to do with" is a bit ambiguous really or a bit misleading. 'Is not to be identified with' would be better for this: the profound teaching of the various Buddhas is not to be identified with verbal formulations - this is what it really means.

Buddhadasa: I'm struck by the way the population considers the teaching so important. They really know what they are after ... tremendous appreciation of the teaching.

Ratnapani: And the teacher. [240]

S: Yes. "We should get his permission to supply him with food and lodgings and urge him to remain with us." And then they set to work to build or rebuild the ruined temple. No doubt it's in a way fairly easy. You can see this even in Sikkim and in India, here and there, even to this day. There's plenty of timber around and people know how to build houses and even temples. They're not all that different, so they can set to and do it themselves. With us it's rather different. I don't think there is a bricklayer among use. They'd have land; as I say, you can see it even now. In India if some teacher, some wandering monk, comes around and they like him, they want him to stay, and then someone comes forward and says, well, there is that piece of land just outside the village belonging to me, I'll give that. And then others come forward and offer timber, and others offer their labour, and they have a talk about it and they get together, and in a few

months they've built it and that's that. But for us it isn't so easy unfortunately. Afterwards it became a very famous temple. Happy ending.

Perhaps this is too much of a generalization. I was going to say that there isn't that general appreciation of the importance of spiritual things. Or perhaps it's not just that but even when people do feel the importance of them, they are not so clear or so sure of what to do about that or how to give it an effective form, just because one has become so complicated.

Ratnapani: If there's life and then there's meditation and the spiritual path, until they become identified one doesn't know quite what to do because there is always a bit of you holding back. You can't give all your money or all your time or whatever you've got.

S: Yes, you've got to keep something back for you, but if you just give yourself and everything you've got with it then there is no problem.

Ratnapani: You haven't lost a thing . . . it's all gone with you.

Buddhadasa: I think we don't yet see the spiritual life as being a social force, and I think that in India, and these places where there is a tremendous historical tradition, it very much is a social force. It's the top of the society, if you like. In our society it's not; it's very ineffectual and weak. I think that the spiritual life should be a spiritual force.

S: I think you see it in Scotland a bit, but unfortunately it's become [241] rather negative and not really spiritual.

Hridaya: With the poor people of Italy you see it a lot, it permeates through all that they do. Even though they are poor they still do give a lot to the Church.

S: Well perhaps the Irish too, but unfortunately the social force that the religion represents is not a completely positive one. I think that I can say that if you look at the Buddhist countries of the East, especially South-east Asia, Burma, and Thailand, the social influence of religion is a completely helpful and positive one. I wouldn't like to say that about India, because of the caste system complicating things. Religion usually means caste and Brahmanism. I remember visiting Assam where you've got a lot of (unclear) Buddhists, that is, Buddhists who've emigrated originally from Thailand and many of whom unfortunately became Hinduized, but some remained Buddhists and the Buddhist villages in Assam are absolutely idyllic and really very beautiful to see. I went there about 1952. Assam is very lush and very rich compared with other parts of India. It's rather warm and [with] heavy rainfall. You see lots of teak and (?)peach and bamboo. There are lots of animals and it's not very thickly populated. It's an extremely Eastern part of India, bordering along Burma eventually, part of it. And you have these little Buddhist villages situated in the midst of the jungle. A space has been cleared for the village itself and the rice fields, and all around them is this very lush heavy jungle. And all the houses are built of wood with thatch, but strongly built and many storeys and a bit Burmese or Thai-like, and there are plenty of rivers and plenty of fish. They weren't vegetarian and every village had

two or three viharas and at least one or two monks, and sometimes the monks would spend half the year in one end of the village at one vihara and half the year at the other end of the village in the other. People were strong and healthy and happy and quite prosperous in the sense that there was plenty to eat and plenty to drink and adequate shelter. There was very little money, sometimes it was very difficult to get any cash, but there was plenty of grain, plenty of vegetables, plenty of timber, plenty of water, and you get a quite different impression. And the people were happy and hearty and stout and strong and the womenfolk quite [242] different from other Indian women, well they are more mongoloid actually. They were very robust and they dressed in black and white. They all had black silk skirts and white blouses Thai-style, and their hair was dressed in the Thai style and they wore flowers in it, but they were very sturdy and I remember when I visited one particular village they sent a bullock cart out to meet me - that was the chief means of transport in that area, two very sleek fat white bullocks as per the (White) Lotus Sutra, not quite as sleek as the wind, but they did a good steady four to five miles an hour, but anyway, for some reasons or other in one particular spot the bullocks couldn't manage it, so about twenty of these girls pulled this great heavy cart along with us in it and did it so sort of cheerfully and happily and sort of singing at the same time. It was really a very jolly affair indeed, and in that way sort of drew us in triumph to the village, but it was completely idyllic and I didn't see anything like that anywhere [else] in India. Buddhism was this great social force and they all gathered at the vihara and they all took the precepts, precepts were very serious.

I spoke to some Hindus in the locality later on and they told me that the Buddhists had a very good reputation in that area, that they never told a lie and they always kept their word. But I'm sorry to say that Hindus are terrible liars usually, but these Buddhists had a reputation of always speaking the truth. You could always trust them, always believe them. They took their five precepts very, very seriously, and I was told that sexual misconduct in the village was practically unknown. The only case they had was when some young man came from outside and settled there and led one of the local girls astray. But there their women had such freedom that there was no sexual misconduct, no promiscuity, nothing of that sort. You could see that they weren't repressed or anything of that sort at all, and they took their refuges and their precepts very seriously, and daily they would go over to the vihara in the evening and join in the puja and the chanting and they had one or two monks living there quietly, giving them their precepts and preaching to them occasionally. There wasn't much of, in a way, religious activity, but certainly you could feel that Buddhism was a social force very strongly, and a very happy positive social force, and from what I have gathered the whole of Thailand and the whole of Burma are still very much like this, apart [243] from the big cities - quite different from India. And Ceylon is pretty much like this. So you get something like this in ancient China in the Tang dynasty and probably right down until recent times.

Devamitra: What tradition were they following in Assam?

S: It was Theravadin. In a way quite a strict one, but not puritanical. I think this is something which is very difficult for us to realize in the West. You can be strict and even ascetic without being puritanical. I get the impression that in some parts of America you get these sort of idyllic settlements, or at least you did until very recently, as you could perhaps have in some other parts of the world; even now you could find somewhere comparatively unspoilt, not very highly populated.

p.532: “The monk Fat-hoi, a native of Hook-kong in Shu-chow, in his first interview with the Patriarch, asked the meaning of the well-known saying, ‘The spontaneous realization of Mind-essence is the state of attaining Buddhahood.’” It’s interesting that this should be a well-known saying. One gets the impression of a lot of discussion going on in the background, as it were, in these various Buddhist circles and perhaps even among the Confucian scholars and so on: “The spontaneous realization of Mind-Essence is the state of attaining Buddhahood.” So there was this well-known saying and obviously people wanted to know what it really meant, and that is what Fat-Hoi asks the Patriarch, and the Patriarch replies: “When one has attained to the state of mind in which there are no rising thoughts, simultaneously he has realized his Essence of Mind and attained Buddhahood.” Any possibility of misunderstanding here?

Ratnapani: Yes, to be in a state of not thinking is not to be in a state of Buddhahood.

S: Yes, so “no rising thought”, well you get that in the second dhyana, no discursive mental activity, so if one just takes this at its face value, then this is just wildly erroneous. So what could it mean do you think if we are going to get any acceptable meaning out of it?

Chintamani: What you said the other day, no sticking to the rising thoughts.

S: Well it doesn’t say that. It says, “in which there are no rising thoughts”. Again, other passages say that just thoughts don’t get in the way of Enlightenment, but it seems to say here that they do.

Devamitra: Thoughts which are a judgement on experience and situations.

S: It could be, but then what gives a different meaning to thoughts? Let’s see what Luk’s translation has to say. I may have to disagree with the Sixth [244] Patriarch to find a more acceptable meaning. We can’t accept it as it stands. This is even basic Buddhism. Luk p.59: “When the preceding thought is not born, it is mind (and) when the following thought does not end, it is Buddha.” There is a somewhat different idea in this translation.

Ratnapani: Does Luk’s suggest the end of conditioned thinking?

S: Yes it suggests the cessation of all conditioned mental activity, not thoughts in the ordinary sense.

Sulocana: The difference between creative and reactive.

S: Well you could say that the complete cessation of all reactive thinking or reactive mental functioning was synonymous with Buddhahood. You could say that, but to say that when there are no rising thoughts just doesn't convey that meaning. What then is the difference between, say, the non-thought of the second dhyana and the complete cessation of all conditioned thinking? What's the difference between the two?

Mangala: One is temporary.

S: Yes, quite. When you are in the second dhyana, there are no thoughts, there's no mental activity, but you can come out of the second dhyana quite easily and slip down, back into ordinary states of consciousness. But the complete and final cessation of all conditioned mental activity, that is a quite different thing. It's only that which is more or less synonymous with Enlightenment or Buddhahood, not just a temporary cessation of discursive mental activity. And also when the conditioned mental activity ceases and you are Enlightened, you can still have mental activity, discursive mental activity in the ordinary sense, just as a functioning or as a means or an instrument, but not conditioned. I think here it's the translation which is somewhat at fault, though it seems, judging by Luk, that even the original isn't completely clear here. As regards the well-known saying, which Dwight Goddard renders as "the spontaneous realization of Mind-Essence is that state of attaining Buddhahood", Luk translates "Mind is Buddha", which is a very big difference indeed.

Luk p.59, footnote 1: "The first half of the Patriarch's reply: 'When the preceding thought is not born, it is mind' meant the same thing that he said before to Ch'en Hui Ming: 'Do not think of either good or evil,' i.e. when no thought stirs the mind, or when all thoughts have been banished, look into the mind." In other words when all conditioned mental activity has ceased. Not just when there's no thought as in the second dhyana, but when all [245] conditioned mental activity has finally ceased, look into the mind.

Luk p.59, footnote 2: "The second half of the Patriarch's reply: 'When the following thought does not end, it is Buddha,' meant the same thing that he said before to Ch'en Hui Ming: 'At this very moment (of thoughtlessness) what is the venerable Hui Ming's fundamental face?' This is the moment when one should look into one's self-natured Buddha. The whole reply means that the self-nature is beyond birth and death." It's as though Hui-neng is saying that you come to a point when all conditioned mental activity finally stops. This is like samadhi, samadhi in Hui-neng's sense and in the highest sense. All conditioned mental activity finally stops and you look into your own mind - your own Essence of Mind - and what do you see there? You see your own Buddha nature, and you don't stop seeing that; that goes on functioning indefinitely and the conditioned mental activity never arises again. But it seems a little obscure and a little open to misunderstanding put in this sort of way. No doubt this particular Fa Hai [i.e. Fat-hoi, tr.], who was a native of Ch'u Chiang [i.e. Hook-kong, tr.] town, was Enlightened, but it doesn't follow that anybody else hearing this particular incident will become Enlightened likewise. Maybe if one is (unclear) and if one is

in the same sort of mental state or at the same perhaps psychological crossroads as Fa Hai. This also raises the point in connection with all such incidents and stories and very relevant in the whole context of Zen. We've got many of these stories in the Pali scriptures too. You read various accounts. Some of them are a whole lengthy sermon, some of these just a few verses. And a monk gains Enlightenment - or whoever it is gains Enlightenment - on the spot and we read the same discourse or verse and we don't get Enlightenment on the spot. Why is this? It's not the same situation. In a way, it's not the same teaching. The words are the same, but that is all, so in a way it's not the same teaching. What is being said to us via the printed page is not what was being said to that particular person when he got it direct, when he encountered the Buddha or Hui-neng or somebody else. So to get the real essence of the matter we may have to absolutely recast it to make it applicable to ourselves and acceptable to ourselves. Not just acceptable to our conditioned way of thinking, but acceptable in a sense of really pertinent to where we are at and able really to help us and move us and change us. Otherwise we can go on reading volumes of Zen anecdotes and episodes from the scriptures and nothing happens. We need it put across directly for our benefit.

Chintamani: Like the medicine is only effective for that particular patient, and you shouldn't try to give it to another patient.

S: So we have to - in a sense - use all this material with caution. Try [246] to distil the general principles that are involved and then apply those general principles to our own situation.

Ratnapani: And Enlightenment too is an insight isn't it, usually? I mean in this case: "I shall practise to set myself free from all conflicting forms." He didn't gain Enlightenment. He had an insight.

S: Yes. He finally saw where it was and now he's got to follow.

Subhuti: I felt that when I read that, for instance, 'Buddha is mind', we may not understand it in a full sense, but it's not strange for us, it's not particularly a problem for us, and the context in which that question is asked is one in which it's that more kind of psychological individualistic idea which in approach is quite foreign. There is a more rigid framework or something within which they function.

Wolf: Their conditioning must have made them ready for this sort of answer to that sort of problem, and you said just now not to do with their conditioning.

S: Well there is a sort of positive conditioning as they call it which makes you receptive to the next step which is a complete deconditioning. For instance you could even say, in a way, that puja and meditation, that all these were positive conditionings just to make you receptive to the ultimate non-conditioning, but you have to go through that positive conditioning [to] get yourself into that receptive state.

p.534: "Your name is Fat-tat. Diligently and faithfully you recite the Sutra.

Lip-repetition of the text ends with its pronunciation, But he whose mind is enlightened, by grasping its meaning, becomes a Bodhisattva. On account of conditions of affinity which may be traced to our past lives, Let me explain this to you. If you can only understand that Buddha speaks no words, Then the Lotus will blossom from your mouth. (Truth is inscrutable and ineffable; words fail, But the Lotus blossoms and radiates its perfume.)”

S: I suspect that the last two lines were put in by the editor.

p.533: “The monk Fat-tat, a native of Hung-chow, who joined the order at the early age of seven.” That is the monastic order as a *sramanera*, a novice monk. In other words you can join when you are seven reckoning from your conception, not from your birth. Buddhist teaching is that you count age from your conception, not from your birth. For instance you can’t be ordained as a *bhikkhu* before you are twenty years of age, twenty full years, but that’s reckoned from conception, so you are regarded as starting to exist as regards this incarnation from the time of your conception, not from the time of your birth. Anyway, Fat-tat was ordained as a *sramanera* when he was seven and he used to recite the Lotus of the Good Law Sutra. “When he came to offer homage to the Patriarch, he failed in offering due respect to him, for which the Patriarch reproved him, saying, If you object to offer due respect, would it not be better to omit the salutation entirely?” This is rather interesting. You can see [247] Fat-tat’s situation. He came to see the Patriarch and he was supposed to pay homage, that is, proper full salutation, maybe a threefold prostration, but he didn’t feel happy about it so he just did a sort of abbreviated one. In Zen terms, he wobbled. He didn’t really want to pay his respects to the Patriarch, but he didn’t have the courage of his convictions either. He just sort of stood there without paying any respect. He sort of just did something in a perfunctory fashion so therefore the patriarch reproved him, saying, “If you object to offer due respect, would it not be better to omit the salutation entirely? There must be something in your mind that makes you feel that way. Please tell me what you do in your daily religious practice.” He could see the man’s attitude puffed up. Well he’s a monk so he must be doing something religious; it must be his practice which is puffing him up. To the Sixth Patriarch it was all pretty obvious, so he asked, all right, what is your daily religious exercise?

“I recite the Lotus of the Good Law (*Saddharma Pundarika*) Sutra,” replied Fat-tat; I have read the whole text three thousand times.”

“If you had fully understood the meaning of the Sutra,” remarked the Patriarch, “you would not have assumed such a lofty bearing, even if you had read it ten thousand times. When you understand it, you will be following the same Path with me. But now, all that you have accomplished is to make yourself conceited. Moreover, you do not seem to realize that you are in the wrong. Listen to this stanza: ‘Since the object of ceremony is to curb arrogance, / Why did you fail to offer due respect?’”

Hui-neng is touching on something very fundamental. He’s pointing out the

importance of ceremony, or perhaps as we would say etiquette, though in English the word etiquette has got a rather trivial meaning, it's more a matter of knowing which fork to use and things like that, but again we must bear in mind the Chinese background, and the Chinese attach great importance to etiquette or, as it is translated here, ceremony, or if you like ceremoniousness, a certain formality in one's behaviour. Again, formality is a rather bad word with us, especially with young 'liberated' people, and informal is a good word, a positive word. But the Chinese word for what we call etiquette or ceremony was *li*, and *li* was regarded as almost a sort of cosmic principle. It's the principle or order almost, in human affairs, in social life, what makes everything smooth and harmonious, and the Chinese regarded etiquette or ceremony in this sort of way, against this sort of background, and they were very particular about it, and Buddhists too to a great extent. Sila, as I've pointed out before, includes manners, as Guenther translates it. The theory of ethics and manners, it's behaviours and good behaviour, even formalized behaviour, even ceremonial behaviour or ceremonious behaviour. I think this is one of the modern - I won't say *miccha-ditthis*, this is perhaps too strong a word, but almost sort of weaknesses. We tend to think that informality is better than formality, [248] that if you're informal and free and easy and not standing on ceremony, that's good. Suppose Hui-neng had lived now and some young hippie had gone over to see him, the young hippie would think - he would have read all the Zen books of course - he wouldn't think of paying the ceremonial three prostrations. If he was all free and easy he would probably treat the Sixth Patriarch just as if he was also a patriarch himself, he'd think that was the right thing to do.

There is this sort of different emphasis now, and I found with my Tibetan friends. Tibetan people, I found - I don't know about now, but when they came all fresh and really Tibetan from Tibet - were very ceremonious. They attached great importance to ceremony, and they sometimes couldn't understand the behaviour of Europeans who were not like that. For instance, Europeans would often want to take a snapshot of Tibetans. So as soon as you mention to a Tibetan, 'I'm going to take your photograph,' he goes and puts on all his best clothes in honour of the occasion and then the Western photographer says, 'No, no. I want you just as you are. I want an informal picture.' They want an informal picture of the Dalai Lama. They don't want the Dalai Lama in his robes and sitting on his throne as the Dalai Lama, they'd much rather see him lounging in an armchair, smoking a cigarette maybe and reading a copy of *Time* magazine or something like that: the Dalai Lama at home, an informal picture. This is the sort of tendency. I'm not even saying that it's bad at this stage. I'm only saying that it's conditioned and that we don't realize that this is just the sort of way we've got into. We think automatically that it is right. It's comparatively recent, but we haven't actually examined the matter. It may turn out that that's correct. All I'm saying is that we haven't really examined the matter. I used to find this when I was at Hampstead in my very early days in England. People would say let's have an informal discussion, let's do it informally, as if to say that that was somehow better or at least they were more comfortable with that. And if you

sort of sat up on chairs or maybe round a table with your notebook in front of you they didn't like that, but if you were all sort of sprawled all over the place, someone with his legs up on the mantelpiece and so on, well that was fine, that was informal. And there was a sort of underlying assumption that when people are formal they are not being themselves, and when they are being informal in a very studious and calculated way they are being more themselves. [249] So you see people sort of saying, 'oh I'm going to be all informal,' and sort of draping themselves on the mantelpiece and sticking their legs up in the air in a very self-conscious way, being all informal. So why is this? Why have ceremony and formality become so devalued by some people?

Chintamani: It's a reaction against Victorian society.

S: They haven't lived in Victorian society.

Chintamani: But their parents or maybe their grandparents have and a reaction like that could take two generations to clear itself.

S: But why the reaction - we say Victorian, but what actually is that? What are they reacting against?

Sulocana: The manners without the feeling behind it.

S: Then why not put the feeling there? But is there no feeling there always? There can be feeling. For instance, if you go to somebody's house, if they treat you formally they may say, 'Oh it's nice to see you. Come in. Will you have a cup of tea?' A sort of formality. And they go and put the teacups on a tray and put a little cloth on the tray and bring it in all nice. But informality is, 'Oh, hello, yes, well come in, sit down' and sooner or later they get around to making the tea, or ask you to make it, slop it down in front of you. There would seem to be no feeling there I would say, very often.

Ratnapani: In my own experience, I've found that I've used formality. I was an incredibly polite child. Adults loved me, but it was just a way of covering up inhibitions. I was very inhibited underneath it all so these formal good manners which I'd learned were a way of operating with that inhibition, which in a way was quite useful. There was some feeling, but it was quite tight. That was my own experience. I don't know how general that has been, and now I enjoy going to someone's house where I'm let loose in the kitchen, where I can make the tea, because there's an intimacy there. I don't regard it as a neglect of me, I regard it as a real intimacy, and I feel at home and very happy, even if I'm told to put the kettle on as I come in, as long as it's someone that I know.

Sulocana: There can be a mindful informality can't there?

S: Oh, sure. Yes indeed. Well the Tibetans can also be informal, but their sort of front is informal when they meet you for the first time. I think that [250] it's here that formality is useful, because certain guidelines are made known, otherwise nobody knows how to behave and there is a general feeling of awkwardness. So I think that even accepting that a lot of formal social behaviour was a bit empty,

it did perform a useful function and sometimes we were throwing the baby away with the bath water and perhaps in the end in no better position ourselves and ending up with a rather empty informality. How do people feel themselves in this respect in their own behaviour and so on and the behaviour of their friends?

Mangala: Formality I'm equating more and more with being mindful and just 'with' that person if I'm there and paying attention.

S: I feel in a way that the portmanteau condemnation of empty formality is a bit like meaningless ritual, it's just a sort of cliché. You've taken it for granted that ritual is meaningless and formality is empty, but it very often isn't.

Mangala: I think that formality is coming more to mean deliberate. You do things with deliberation rather than wobbling.

S: It means you know what to do.

Mangala: Yes, you say 'Would you like a cup of tea?' You don't sort of hum and hah. It's very definite. You make a commitment.

S: I must say that on those occasions when I've been to visit people who are, as one might say, more formal, that there also seems to be more warmth there than when I've been to see people who are informal. I would say this quite definitely.

Wolf: In some cases the formality can be a sort of mask that's worn until one gets to know the person and then gradually you show them a little more of your true self.

S: But it's as though almost we - perhaps not consciously - it's as though we expect complete informality and therefore complete openness from the beginning, which would seem to be unreasonable.

Buddhadasa: It's really the start of all relationships. It's not just on the social level, it's on every level. All relationships start off with the usual formalism. It may be animalistic.

S: Ritualizing, yes. It is animalistic, yes. [251]

Buddhadasa: But we can humanize it by being mindful in the situation.

S: You can feel it sometimes developing gradually. For instance in my experience of getting to know Tibetan Buddhist monks, some of my friends in England thought that this was really weird. What used to happen was this: I'd go to see some Tibetan monk. So the Tibetan monks - who'd read about Theravadins, because don't forget that I looked like a Theravadin - they'd take me as a Theravadin to begin with because I wore a yellow robe and so on. So a Tibetan monk had read about the Theravadins, but had never actually met one in the flesh. He doesn't know what he's got in common with them or what he hasn't got in common; how different they are, how similar; whether they are going to be friendly or whether they are not going to be friendly etc. The average Tibetan monk might be a little on his guard at first and wonder why you've come at all.

Firstly he thinks you might be a *śrāvaka* and not sympathetic to the Bodhisattva ideal, so what used to happen was this, I would have primed myself beforehand, so I'd go along and I'd take a ceremonial scarf - that always went down well: that you were familiar with their tradition, it went down very well, it really smoothed the way if you took along a ceremonial scarf and you offered it in the way that they do. This would, in a way - I won't say break the ice, it would melt it very slightly. Then you'd be invited to be seated and then tea would be brought down and serviced in a very formal, not to say ritualized, manner and then polite discussion would begin, and the discussion always started off on the Vinaya. This was always the opening gambit. First of all, what exactly you are, so you say, 'Well, I'm a *bhikkhu*.' 'Oh yes. How many rules do you observe?' And then you have a very interesting comparative chat about the different rules and the different versions of rules, and then after that it would come on to something a bit *Abhidharma*-like, some doctrinal topic, and then about meditation practice, what meditation you do, and then it would come to more personal things, and then depending on the nature of the person you've come to see, it would become really friendly and even a bit warm and you'd end up having a real communication. But it went in a very slow steady way, and I noticed that on all my visits to Tibetan monks in my early days when I was getting to know them the discussion always followed this pattern. With some it never went much [252] beyond that, but with others, in the course of years, I got to know them very well and they became really good friends, but they never completely forgot ceremony. There were certain occasions when I had to go and see a particular lama two or three times during the course of the day when we were doing something together, or there was some urgent situation, and I'd always be greeted in the same way and offered tea in the same way, however many times I went, and even if it was a very urgent matter we'd always have tea first in the proper formal manner before we started talking, even though it was something quite urgent, and this is very characteristic of the Tibetans.

Hui-neng says, and we mustn't forget this, that "the object of ceremony is to curb arrogance". Why do you have the ceremony? Of course in Chinese ceremony there is a lot of bowing, and apparently this is just what Fat-tat didn't do. He should have bowed properly, maybe make his three prostrations, and why did he not? It was arrogance, it was conceit, as the Patriarch saw. So he reminds him that the whole purpose of any kind of ceremony or etiquette is to curb arrogance. This is of course from the traditional Chinese point of view. This may not apply to our manners and customs, but there is a sort of analogy.

Sulocana: It would seem rather strange in England if one bowed, even if one wanted to.

S: All right, then what is analogous? The English have this reputation abroad, or they had it, of being a very arrogant and conceited lot of people. It really shows respect for the other person whether you consider them equal or superior.

Wolf: When men wore hats in this country they used to raise hats.

S: I've also heard it said by some women that when they go out with a man who is attentive in the traditional way, it makes them feel really good, but they don't get that sort of feeling if they go out with their ordinary casual boyfriends they said. Whether they ought to feel good because of that, well that's another matter, but I just quote it to show how effective these things are. These things have a certain power, a certain influence, as it were. I think perhaps we've gone to the extreme of neglecting them too much.

Devamitra: It seems now though that there's just no framework in which you can just slip into this kind of respect. I sometimes feel completely lost and just [253] don't know what would be the most appropriate way of expressing respect.

S: I came up against this in a way when I came back to England, when especially - don't forget that I was going to the Buddhist Society where people were a bit middle class and still had old fashioned manners many of them - and sometimes there was almost a conflict between the Indian Buddhist etiquette, which I was accustomed to in India, and English etiquette. I'm not speaking now of the conflict of a complete lack of etiquette, but two different kinds of etiquette. But I was very aware of this and I sometimes quite consciously switched from one to the other.

For instance, take this question of behaviour with women: in India, and in the Buddhist East also, there is a very definite etiquette of the way in which a monk should behave with a woman and vice versa. For instance, that she shouldn't come too near, that she shouldn't touch him, that he shouldn't touch her, and so on. Now when you come to the West ladies often want to shake your hand. This is never done in the East, it's absolutely unthinkable, so there's a clear conflict of etiquette, and other Buddhist monks have come up against this and have had to take some sort of decision. Some monks unfortunately sort of instinctively retreat and that does shock. If a woman is going to touch them they draw back and sometimes she feels quite upset. So I sort of consciously decided on a certain occasion that [either] I was going to follow the Buddhist etiquette or I was not, but I was quite clear in my own mind which I was going to follow and why on that particular occasion, but it isn't always as clear cut as that.

In our movement, what have we got? We've got three things. We've got some Buddhist etiquette. We bow in front of the shrine, at least that. And we no doubt have heard of other little Buddhist manners and customs which aren't always the same even - maybe Indian, maybe Japanese, Burmese, Thai, Tibetan, and so on. So we've got some vestige of Eastern Buddhist etiquette. We've also got the remnants of English etiquette, virtually remnants, and we've got quite a lot of modern reaction to any sort of formality, and pseudo-free-and-easiness and pseudo-informality, maybe just a little real informality. This is what we've actually got and obviously it's a mess, and sooner or later we've got to do something about this, tidy up a bit and even create our own forms and [254] formalities and etiquettes and so on in accordance with our own situation, but at least know what we are doing.

Buddhadasa: This should start with the Order I think. It can't start anywhere else.

S: Yes. For instance, it starts with things like how you treat images. Images are always treated respectfully in the East. You don't just sort of plonk them down anywhere or knock them over or stand them upside down. I've seen people doing all these things, just catch hold of them by the head and just swing them as you walk along with them. Of course, maybe there is a time in your spiritual career where you might decide to do that just to break up a religious conditioning, but we are just not anywhere near that. We just haven't got any religious conditioning anyway, or if there is any religious conditioning to be broken up it's Christian, not Buddhist. Maybe you should go and shout in church or something like that; that's the equivalent.

Chintamani: If I've ever been in the shrine room with my shoes on, I think, 'the rupa's watching me, bad boy'. It's not because I feel that I want to take my shoes off out of respect, but because I'm feeling a little bit guilty. I must do the right thing because that's the right thing to do.

S: But then you should want to do the right thing. For instance if you go into a church, even though you are not a Christian, it's only correct, it's only right, to behave as those people behave, because you don't want to upset them or hurt their feelings, and if you feel very strongly that you don't want to behave as they do then don't go at all. What point have you to visit there? So if you go into a church and you are wearing a hat then take your hat off. In the same way, if you go into a Buddhist temple and you know it's their custom to take off their shoes, take off your shoes, not because you are showing reverence, but because you just want to go along with their custom. If you think it's wrong then don't go there.

Chintamani: I've noticed that whenever I enter a church or any other temple I almost instinctively become subdued in my behaviour.

S: Presuming that to be the right behaviour.

Chintamani: Yes. [255]

S: Because many religious people are not subdued in their behaviour in religious buildings, far from it. At the same time they are very religious and very devout.

Chintamani: But it's this whole thing of when one starts developing a personal relationship with something, love and hate come in.

S: In a way, the way you behave, say, in a shrine where there are other congregations, it's not a personal thing. That's not the function of it. If it's going to be personal you just stay home with your own individual shrine and so on and so forth. But when it's a shrine in the ordinary sense then it is a community thing and you are there as a community, and therefore you can't have everyone behaving in his own way. That negates the very purpose of your being together. I think that we don't have much difficulty when it comes to behaviour in the shrine room and so it's more sort of personal behaviour among people, the question of

formality or informality there. Certain things go a little more smoothly when there is a mindful formality.

Chintamani: Although if one is really cultivating a basic caring then one's actions will be in accordance with that, and it seems that rather than cultivate the outward trappings, the thing is to go right to the root of the thing.

S: But trappings, that's a very pejorative term.

Chintamani: I say trappings because quite often to cultivate that serves as a substitute to cultivating the real feeling behind it.

S: But the same applies to informality. I personally had had the impression, quite often, that when people are being so-called informal, it's just an excuse for being rather unpleasant.

Ratnapani: I don't think that you've got a particular difficulty here. If you care you will be as formal as makes the person comfortable; at the same time the formality when you are not quite sure invokes the consideration. OK, so there is rule number one: 'Would you like a cup of tea?' The very act of making somebody something, unless you are really annoyed about the whole situation, involves the feeling as you offer them . . . and it invokes the good will.

Buddhadasa: Also I think it should be remembered that when you are formal you are also efficient. Informality is inefficiency in a sense, when [256] you've got a job to do which is to get to know somebody, do it in the most efficient way possible, and that is to go through the steady procedure of maybe making a cup of tea, polite introductions, etc.

S: For instance, this whole question of introductions. Very often you are left in the dark as to who someone is. You are not properly introduced, so you sort of hesitate and you think, well, maybe that person doesn't want me to know that other person, or is it maybe they've just left us to get to know each other, but you don't know, so that sort of inhibits you in a way, or most people feel inhibited then.

Ratnapani: The ritual now, or the formality now, seems to be jokes. There's not much left. People sit together and make little jokes so there is a sort of togetherness in doing that. I think I'd rather discuss the weather actually, because the jokes are inevitably bad and you both know it. That seems to be where people operate a great deal.

Chintamani: My mother was brought up in a very formal family and she had etiquette rammed down her throat, and there were occasions when things were very kind of formal, and I just sensed that there was a tension in the air and I just sort of bungled around and made people laugh and smashed it in a sense, and that's what was needed.

S: Yes, but it was not the formality that was wrong but the constraint, and formality usually eases constraint because you know what is expected of you, you know what to do, and everything goes smoothly and easily, and if you felt

any uneasiness on account of meeting that person the formality helps you to come to terms with that, and then you can start being yourself more. Often when you see people sitting around all constrained it's because they haven't any formality to fall back on.

Mangala: Formality often acts as a medium, doesn't it? Like a currency that you can pass around or that you can exchange.

S: Yes. Also there is an aesthetic side. It can be even slightly creative. For instance, inviting somebody formally round for a meal. It becomes more of an event as it were and something that you think about and plan and to which you put something of yourself.

Ratnapani: I think that the question doesn't really arise in an individual [257] if he's behaving in a way that's going to make the other person most comfortable. That presumes a certain degree of sensitivity of course. If you are considerate and the person needs formality in that situation, you will be it. If they need a little less you will be that.

S: But that means you are a master of the formality as well as of the informality, but what I am in fact saying is that people are no longer masters of the formality. They are not really masters of the informality either. My impression usually is of people who are informal that they are almost being unpleasant to you. It's their way of getting at you almost and they don't want to relate except in that sort of way.

Wolf: It seems that in the case of Fat-tat he learned a lot by being informal on this occasion.

S: Yes he did, but that's also a bit dangerous because you could say that you learn a lot from this text, therefore you can go on making mistakes so that you can learn a lot.

Sulocana: He learned a lot from his master, not from his mistakes.

S: He's been committing mistakes all his life it seems and he hasn't learned very much. He only learned when he met Hui-neng.

Mangala: I don't think he was being informal, he was being rude.

S: Yes. I think that a lot of informality is rudeness. It's rudeness that you are up against, not just informality. Also there is this whole question of showing respect. Some people seem to think that to show respect is wrong and apparently - I don't know about this now, but a couple of years ago I was reading in the papers that whenever some distinguished speaker, say, arrived at Oxford University by invitation to speak, undergraduates were making a point to be rude to him and treating him rudely. This became a great sort of thing, not respected, regardless of who it was, and this seems another modern miccha-ditthi, pseudo-equalitarianism - that you show that you are equal by being rude.

Devamitra: I came across a very extreme example of this recently in a class that

I was taking where someone who's been coming along for quite some time to the beginner's class sat right in front of the class, and at the end of the meditation, when I was making a few announcements, sprawled out full length across [258] the shrine room floor, and when we came downstairs for the discussion he proceeded to answer all the questions before I had a chance to open my mouth, in a very forceful and crude way.

S: I've had people doing this sort of thing a little bit and being sort of rude in discussions, so my own sort of practice is that I let people get away with it a little, but not too much. If it starts disrupting the proceedings or I feel that they ought to be taught a lesson I've no hesitation in really slapping them down if necessary, but then of course you've got to be able to do this, even being rude to them, and if it comes to the point then I can be ruder than him. But you are not just up against the person, you are up against the whole surrounding miccha-ditthi really. A lot of modern so-called informality, and even rudeness I think, can be traced back to this not wanting to show respect, and it again shows itself in this whole attitude of people towards hierarchy. When we brought out our little sheet about the Friends originally and about spiritual brotherhood and hierarchy, it really upset some people, including, for instance, Ananda. About five years ago Ananda got really upset about that and we had to have many sessions, and it took about two years to clear this up. He felt very unhappy about the whole idea of hierarchy. And you could see why it was, and he could see why it was, but he wasn't emotionally able to come to terms with that. Basically it's not wanting to recognize that there may be people in a sense superior to you, more evolved than you. It's a sort of pseudo-egalitarianism, and this is why some people feel very strongly about Order members wearing their kesas and looking all superior, and they almost hate you for it. It's not that you feel superior, you may not even feel better, you may feel very much at one with others. But they don't take it like that, they can't happily accept the situation where they are with someone more experienced than themselves, so they want to get even with you, as it were, bring you down, as it were, off your perch by being rude. This is what is happening.

Buddhadasa: This is not only a Western attitude.

S: I'm not saying that it is, I'm only referring now to the context of the Friends, and we are influenced by what is going on outside too and it sort of seeps into us. It's more a question of how we deal with what [259] our stand is.

Ratnapani: When I've seen you operate with someone who's coming on a bit heavy you are able to undermine them. You don't have to push them over. You just take away their base because you know more about what they are talking about than they do. But when someone is being rude they are trying to bring you down. I suppose they are trying to bring you down from what they'd call an artificial high. But they are trying to bring you down, so they can obviously see you are up there.

S: Actually I think that in many cases what happens is that in their heart of

hearts they know that you're - well to use a word - better than they are. It isn't a very pleasant word, but in their heart of hearts they not only feel this, but they know it and they deeply resent it, that you are making them feel inferior. They are inferior. A psychologist once said that the trouble with most people who have inferiority complexes is that they are inferior. There's no point of having a complex about it; if you're inferior then you are inferior and accept it. Someone else is better than you and feel heartily glad that there are in the universe people who are better than you. It's not all the same dead level of mediocrity like you. It's true that there are more gifted people, it's true that there are more clever people, more creative people. That's fine. There's hope for the human race, they are not all just like me. At the same time you are not downing yourself. You think, 'Well I'm not so bad as some other people. I'm more intelligent than some, I'm more creative than some, but I can become more so. Let me associate with people who are better than me. I can become like that. After all, this is what the Movement is all about. But there are some people who seem to come along, and at the mere suggestion that anyone might be a bit further on than they are and they resent it bitterly. It really is a question of accepting who you are. Of course it may be, human nature being what it is, we have to admit at least among ourselves that maybe Order members occasionally give themselves little airs and graces without actually intending to. But they must watch that. That's another aspect of the question. I would say, by and large, one would expect the average Order member would be a little more experienced, a little more informed, than the odd person who came along, on the whole, and if they find that and see that, then why not [260] accept it? Basically it's the inability to accept that there is a whole series of development, and some go beyond you and maybe some haven't caught up with you. Sometimes there are little inconsistencies. It may even be that occasionally someone comes along who we've never seen before who is actually more advanced than any existing Order member, but then if he sees that he's not going to cut up rough and be rude. That sort of person will function in a different kind of way. But we have ourselves to be careful that we don't make people feel inferior in an uncomfortable negative way. Make it easy for them to accept that people who are taking classes and leading pujas are a bit more into things than they are. Make it easy for them to accept that and accept it happily. The child doesn't resent father being stronger and more knowledgeable. It's good for the child, and the happy healthy child is quite pleased about that. There's a lot of misunderstanding in this particular area. I think the karate people offer quite a good example here. There is a sort of deference within the dojo and real friendliness outside, and this is quite good.

Ratnapani: George himself operates very carefully in the dojo as one thing and one thing only. In the puja anything goes and he's not on his high horse in any way whatever.

S: Though again it's a little different from that, because basically you are the same person in the dojo and out of it and it's not just a question really of being better at karate than others so that when you are out of that situation you are all the same. Here's it's a question of overall, to use the words 'better' or 'not

better', and even if you don't insist on it yourself or even are aware of it, it's there whether you are in the dojo or in the pub or anywhere else. I once said to Terry Dukes, if you are a real sensei you must be a sensei even in bed. He really liked this. It really appealed to him.

Ratnapani: That could cause a lot of people a lot of discomfort, him being a sensei all the time.

S: When I said sensei I meant not acting sensei when you really weren't, but being sensei. That was the emphasis, being sensei. If you've got anything real, if there is anything real in your senseiship, it will be with you all the time and wherever you are. It's not a question of pulling rank or anything [261] like that. It's not something you can forget or put aside or leave aside. In a sense, of course, you put it aside all the time, but you don't produce it on some occasions and not others. It's just you. How can you put it aside? So it's taking sensei in that sense, technical expertise. Well, sure, you put it aside. It's relevant in one context and not in another.

In our own movement I feel that a slight movement in the direction of formality is indicated, but of course a mindful move, especially in our dealings with new people. And when we go out and about in the world in other groups and other contexts don't let people feel that the Friends are just a lot of louts, because sometimes I've seen people behave very loutish - there's no other word for it - and we should do better than that.

p.534: "Your name is Fat-tat. Diligently and faithfully you recite the Sutra. Lip-repetition of the text ends with its pronunciation, But he whose mind is enlightened, by grasping its meaning, becomes a Bodhisattva. On account of conditions of affinity which may be traced to our past lives, Let me explain this to you. If you can only understand that Buddha speaks no words, Then the Lotus will blossom from your mouth. (Truth is inscrutable and ineffable; words fail, But the Lotus blossoms and radiates its perfume.)"

Hui-neng is contrasting the recitation of the words of the sutra without understanding the meaning with just keeping quiet and letting the meaning of the sutra sort of from your own realization of that meaning just emanating and just pervading and influencing. These are the two extremes. Of course you can recite the sutra having heard [it]. It's as though the Patriarch was saying, well, better than reciting the words without understanding the meaning would be understanding the meaning and keeping completely quiet, because then there would be a certain influence, something would be coming forth. You would be really reciting, really preaching. People would feel something even though you weren't saying a word. "Hereafter I will be humble and polite on all occasions". It's repentance and reform you see. He's going to change for the future, humble and polite on all occasions. I don't think people in the Friends altogether like the idea of being humble and polite do they? It has quite the wrong sort of ring, as though you are all being good little boys, but it's because we have had this sort of different conception of etiquette and all that from what the Chinese and

Indians have. “It is true I do not quite understand.” It seems to be rather an understatement: He didn’t understand it at all. He still has a little lingering conceit.

“Since I am so dull and stupid,” now he’s really wallowing in it, “all I know is to recite it word by word.” Perhaps he comes really down to the point now. “All I know is to recite it word by word.” That’s the truth of the matter. He’s merely learned it by ear, therefore he doesn’t really know the sutra [262] in the least. He’s probably still quite young. He may still be in his teens if he joined the sangha when he was seven. We’re not told how old he is; he may just be a bright boy wanting to please the other monks and learned the sutra by heart and used to just parade around and recite it and ‘oh isn’t he clever’ and so on and so forth. He may not be more than eighteen or nineteen for all we know, so perhaps it’s forgivable.

“When he came to the section entitled parable.” You know there are lots of parables in the (White) Lotus Sutra: the burning house, the return journey, rain cloud, good physician. So many of them.

“The theme of this Sutra is to set forth the aim and object of a Buddha’s incarnation into this world.” There is room for misunderstanding here. ‘Incarnation’ isn’t usually used in Buddhism. In the Pali it often speaks of a Buddha’s arising in the world, but it doesn’t mean it in the sense of someone coming from outside like an incarnation of God, but of a human being becoming a Buddha. A Buddha arises in the world.

Subhuti: Except that there is this Mahayana teaching that the Buddha was always Enlightened. It does have that kind of flavour to it.

S: Yes, that’s quite a big subject, but it doesn’t really mean that at all, but it does have that ring, at least in the West. I think that until we have established Buddhism more firmly as a tradition here, it’s best to stick to the more basic formulations, in a sense almost more Theravada-like formulation and the Higher Evolution.

“Though parables and illustrations are numerous in it, none of them go beyond this pivotal point.” Whether that is so or not we won’t examine now. “Now what is that aim? and what is that object? The Sutra says, ‘It is for a sole object, it is for a sole aim, but truly a lofty object and a lofty aim, that a Buddha appears in this world.’ Now that sole object, that sole aim, that is so exalted, is the realization of Buddha-knowledge.” That seems to be fairly clear and simple and obvious. All that a Buddha is really concerned about is Enlightenment, and if you can speak of his coming into the world at all, that’s why he comes into it, to gain Enlightenment. That’s the whole sort of purpose and meaning of a Buddha’s existence: Enlightenment, and therefore the whole purpose and meaning of Buddhism itself, Enlightenment, Higher Evolution, spiritual life, spiritual path, call it what you like.

Mangala: A Buddha comes into this world to gain Enlightenment, but he’s not

already Enlightened.

S: If you take this literally it's self contradictory, because if he's Enlightened [263] already then he doesn't need to gain Enlightenment, so perhaps we should be a bit more careful in our sort of wording. A gifted human being - as the Buddha was - has as his sole purpose the attainment of a higher state of consciousness that we call Enlightenment.

Mangala: Here he is already referring to him as a Buddha.

S: Yes, sort of retrospectively. But we do the same thing when we say, 'the Buddha was born in ...' but he wasn't. He's retrospectively referred to as the Buddha. Some purists will not do that. Some Theravadins are very scrupulous. They say 'the Buddha-to-be was born' and that is quite accurate.

p.535: "Common people attach themselves to external objects, thinking them to be real, and within, they fall into the wrong idea that external things come to an end." I'm not quite sure what he means by common people. I suspect it's not common people in the sociopolitical sense. It very likely represents the Pali (unclear) usually translated 'worldling', that is to say the non-Aryan, those who have not entered the stream yet, all those who cannot be classified as Aryas.

Hridaya: The same people whom before he called ordinary men?

S: I think so, yes.

Subhuti: I'm not quite sure what he means by, "the wrong idea that external things come to an end".

S: Well external things do come to an end. We'll see what he says later, but I think that what he probably means [is] that there are real objective (unclear) that there is a real thing to come to an end, but actually it's only a manifestation of mind, and the mind which is its essence doesn't come to an end, even though the form changes. This is again perilously verging on the Vedanta, the Vedantic way of looking at things.

"When they are able to free themselves from attachment to objects when in contact with objects, and to free themselves from the fallacious view that 'Emptiness' means annihilation, then they are free from illusions without and delusions within." Coming to an end means the real annihilation of a real object and not the cessation of something which only seems to be there. It's the getting rid of a wrong idea, not the actual cessation of an actual object.

"Act voluntarily as slaves to their own desires". That's quite a sort of impressive way of putting it.

pp.535-6 "Being infatuated with sense-objects and thereby shutting themselves from their own light, all sentient beings, tormented by outer circumstances and inner vexations, act voluntarily as slaves to their own desires. Seeing this, our Lord Buddha took the trouble of rising from his Samadhi in order to exhort them by earnest preaching of various kinds to suppress their desires and to

refrain from seeking happiness from without, so that they may enter into their rights of Buddhahood. For this reason the Sutra says, ‘To open the eyes for Buddha-knowledge etc.’ I advise people to thus constantly open their eyes for the Buddha-knowledge within their own minds. But in their perversity they commit sins under delusion and ignorance; they are kind in words but wicked in mind; they are greedy, malignant, jealous, crooked, flattering, egoistic, offensive to men and destructive to inanimate objects. Thus they open their eyes to ‘common-people-knowledge’ instead. Should they rectify their heart so that wisdom rises spontaneously, the mind is under introspection and the practice of doing good takes the place of evil. Thus they would initiate themselves into Buddha-knowledge.” That seems very clear. In fact its a good summary. [264]

Mangala: It’s also quite a good way of stating the difference between samadhi and prajna, the Buddha arising from his samadhi to go out and ...

S: Yes. He doesn’t arise from, but his arising, you could say, is the prajna issuing from the samadhi or the karuna, the compassion also. We mustn’t take too literally the expression ‘took the trouble of rising from his Samadhi’.

p.536: “You should, therefore, from one momentary sensation to another, open your eyes, not for ‘common-people-knowledge,’ which is worldly, but for the Buddha-knowledge that is supra-mundane. On the other hand, if you stick to the arbitrary concept that mere recitation as a daily exercise is good enough, then you are infatuated, like the yak by its own tail.” In an Indian proverb the yak is supposed to be infatuated by its own tail. They have a big bushy beautiful tail. It’s supposed to be inordinately proud of it.

p.536: The stanza: “When we are ignorant of the true meaning of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, our mind is being turned by the Sutra. When we realize the true meaning of the Sutra, our mind turns the sutra.”

This applies not only to the sutra, but to any teaching [or] practice. If we allow ourselves to be used by it, that is to say if we use it or treat it as an end in itself, then we don’t get anywhere. But if it is we who are turning the truth, we who are using it as a means to an end, then we do make progress. This applies to every aspect of the Dharma, whether theoretical or practical.

p.537: “The Patriarch replied: ‘The Sutra is quite plain on this point; it is you who fail to understand it. The reason why disciples, Arahats and Bodhisattvas fail to comprehend Buddha-knowledge is because they speculate about it (with their thinking mind which is limited and polluted); they may combine their efforts, but the more they speculate the farther they are from Truth. (Buddha-knowledge is to be realized within, not thought about as though it was something external.) It was not to Buddhas but to ordinary men that Buddha Gautama preached this Sutra. You do not seem to appreciate that since we are already riding in the White Bullock cart of the Buddhas, that there is no necessity for us to look for other vehicles. Moreover, the Sutra plainly teaches that there is only the one Buddha vehicle; that there are no others, no second, no third. It is because there is only one vehicle that Buddha had to preach to us with innumerable skillful

means such as various reasons and argument, various parables and illustrations, etc. Do you not understand that the other three vehicles are makeshifts, useful for the past only; while the sole vehicle, the Buddha vehicle, is for the present because it is ultimate?"

In other words, what the Patriarch really is saying is that there is just one Dharma. Don't bother about these different yanas, don't bother about these different schools even. There is just one Dharma, which is the Buddha Dharma, or as we would say, Buddhism. This is what he's really getting at.

Whether "disciples, Arahats, and Bodhisattvas fail to comprehend Buddha-knowledge" just because they speculate about it, that's another matter. It may be more complex than that, "You do not seem to appreciate that since we are already riding in the White Bullock cart of the Buddhas, that there is no necessity for us to look for other vehicles." You are a Buddhist, you are following the Dharma then why bother whether you're a Hinayanist, a Mahayanist, or you're a Zenist or a Theravadin, just be content with the Buddha-Dharma. This seems to be what Hui-neng is saying. I think that we are still in a way up against this. Even among the ex-untouchables, when they were all converted to Buddhism - that is those who were converted, about three million - in several cases some of them came to me quite confused and they said, oh, some of these brahmins have been asking us whether we've become Hinayanists or Mahayanists. This is the brahmins stirring up confusion again, so I said, you haven't become either, you've just become Buddhists and you tell them that. You are neither Hinayanists nor Mahayanists, you've become Buddhists [265] you just follow the Dharma. Even in this country sometimes people want to know whether we are Hinayanists or Mahayanists. I think that we should say that we are just Buddhists and that we draw inspiration from all the different yanas, all the different schools, to the extent that we can, but we are just followers of the Dharma. If, say, the Theravada means something more narrow, ascetic, and puritanical, then we are not Theravadins. If being a Zenist means insisting on black cushions and so on and so forth then we are not Zenists. If being a Mahayanist means trying to help others before you help yourself then we are not Mahayanists either. If being a Vajrayanist means just going in for colourful ceremonies without bothering about the practice and just sort of resorting to the Kama Sutra [which is of course not a Vajrayana text, tr.] and thinking that you are a good Vajrayanists then we are not Vajrayanists. So in that sense we are not anything. We are just Buddhists, we just follow the Dharma, that's quite sufficient. It's a pity we haven't got an expression like Dharma-ist, or Dharma-ism - although I'm not very happy about the -ism, something that doesn't quite put it in the same class, so that you haven't got Marxism, Hinduism, Judaism and then Communism and Buddhism and so forth, patriotism, vegetarianism.

Ratnapani: Christianity as a word rises out of that lot.

S: Only in English. In French for instance it's Christianity. I have a French friend who always says this even when speaking English. I think that followers of the Dharma would be better, instead of Buddhists, even Dharmatism would

be better. Dharma-boys and Dharma-girls. Christians were originally called the people of the way. That's how Christianity was coined. 'Followers of the Dharma' seems about the best, though a little clumsy. If you say followers of the Dharma do this, or do that, rather than Buddhists.

Sulocana: What about 'wayfarers'?

S: Mrs Rhys Davids uses that as her version of Tathagata and we are not all Tathagatas, though you can have a wayfarer with a small w I suppose and Wayfarer with a big one. Until we think of something better, probably 'followers of the Dharma' we should use.

Devamitra: Isn't Dharma used in the Hindu tradition though?

S: Well actually the Hindus don't use it in that way. Hindus use it in a rather different way relating to the caste. They haven't got the Dharma, but the [266] Dharma of the brahmin, the Dharma of the Kshatriya and so on, but not the Dharma which they can all follow. This is one of the great differences between Buddhism and Brahmanism. For instance the Dharma of the brahmin is to teach and to study the scriptures. The Dharma of the shudra is to serve. If a shudra - that is, a shudra by birth - tries to teach the scriptures, he is not following Dharma, that is, his own Dharma, he's following a Dharma. He's going against Dharma. So the Hindus don't have the idea of one universal Dharma which is to be followed by all according to their ability. You get it here and there in some of the devotional schools, but the predominant meaning is the Dharma of the particular caste or community or occupation and that you must follow that.

For instance, to practise non-violence is the Dharma of the brahmin, not the Dharma of the Kshatriya. The Kshatriya should not practise non-violence. This is the orthodox Hindu view. The Buddhist will say that ahimsa is the Dharma for all. It is to be practised by all to the best of their ability even though some may practise it more successfully than others, but that is the principle for all. This is why the Buddha was criticized by orthodox Hindus, because being himself a Kshatriya by birth, he dared to teach, and a very orthodox Hindu writer [Kumarila Bhatta, tr.] says [in his *Slokavartika*, tr.] that the Buddha's teaching is not to be accepted even though it's true. Being a Kshatriya he preached and taught, which is the Dharma of the brahmin, so even though what he taught was true it's unacceptable, just like milk when you are offered it in the skin of a dog becomes unacceptable. Milk is milk. There is nothing wrong with milk, but if you are offered milk in the skin of a dog, which is unclean and untouchable, then you can't have anything to do with the milk. In the same when you are offered a teaching by the Buddha who is going against his own 'Dharma' by teaching, even though the teaching is true it shouldn't be accepted because it comes in an unacceptable container, being taught by the Buddha who is going against his own Dharma by teaching. Even though the teaching is true it shouldn't be accepted because it comes in an unacceptable container being taught by a non-brahmin. You've no idea how rigorous the orthodox brahmin is. From a distance you can see Hinduism as a bit starry eyed. It's rather similar

to Buddhism. In a way it is, but it doesn't work out in practice like that and this orthodox Hindu spirit is still around. There are political parties in India of orthodox Hindus who believe in the enforcement of orthodox Hinduism in society. And when I went to Nepal, orthodox Hinduism was [267] established by law and untouchability was established by law and the police could arrest you for breaking caste rules and prosecute you and imprison you, and they did. There are quite a few anecdotes about this in the concluding chapters of my memoirs [i.e. the first volume, tr.]. This is orthodox Hinduism, a very harsh system indeed, that is, harsh with regards to the lower castes. It's all right for the upper castes.

p.537: "The Sutra teaches to dispense with the makeshifts and depend on the ultimate" Yes, we could say, dispense with the schools and the sects and the isms and just depend on the Dharma. "Having resorted to the ultimate, you will find that even the very name 'ultimate' disappears." Yes, having resorted to Buddhism you'll find that even Buddhism disappears. That's very good. Having resorted to the Dharma you'll find that even Dharma disappears. "You should appreciate that you are the sole owner of these treasures and that they are entirely subject to your disposal." As we saw in discussing refuge in oneself and refuge in the Dharma, ultimately they become the same, that you are the Dharma, and there is no need to talk about the Dharma, you are just yourself, your own Enlightened self.

pp.537-8: "But moreover, it is not until you are able to free yourself from the arbitrary conceptions that there are any treasures belonging to the Father or to the son, or subject to so and so's disposal, that you really know the right way to recite the Sutra. When you so understand it, the Sutra will be in your hand from eternity to eternity, and from morning to midnight you will be reciting the Sutra all the time." Because you will be one with the sutra, you will be the sutra, the sutra will be you, so whatever you do, whatever you say, will be the recitation of the sutra, the promulgation of the sutra. It's rather like what the Tantric Buddhists say about the mantra, that when you are Enlightened you see everything as the Pure Land, and everything you say will be the mantra, everything you hear will be the mantra. It's a little like that because you are completely at one with it.

p.538: Being thus awakened, Fat-tat praised the Patriarch in a transport of joy with the following stanza: 'The delusion that I had attained great merit by reciting the Sutra three thousand times Is all dispelled by a single utterance of the Master of Tso-kai. He who has not yet understood the object of the Buddha's incarnation Is unable to suppress the wild passions accumulated in many lives. The three vehicles are makeshifts only; And the three stages in which the scholars expound the Dharma are ingeniously spoken, indeed; But how few appreciate that it is within the burning house itself That the Truth of Dharma is to be found.'

S: So what's the burning house?

Buddhadasa: The first parable in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra.

S: Yes. It's the samsara itself. It's the world itself. The truth of the Dharma is to be found here in the world itself. So you see there is nothing here about Zen. It all revolves around the (White) Lotus Sutra, and the Patriarch refers to the teaching, expounds the teaching, gives the real meaning of the teaching, and in the end the monk grasps the profound meaning of Buddhism, of the Dharma - the original text must surely say Dharma - and continues to recite the sutra. There's nothing about Ch'an, nothing about Zen, nothing about meditation, it's just all about Buddhism and the Buddhist scriptures, especially the (White) Lotus Sutra. So this also is quite significant. [268]

Buddhadasa: It's quite significant that he just carries on doing what he was doing before.

S: Yes. The Patriarch says there is nothing wrong with reciting the sutra. In fact he even mentions earlier on that 'I don't think you should stop reciting it, just do it properly in the real way, understanding its real meaning.'

Mangala: Could you explain, [p.533] "Samadhi functions, but inherently it is not."

S: Well it is not a sort of thing existing 'out there'. It's you in a way when you reach that stage. It seems as though the background of Hui-neng's thought or even realization all the time is the mind in a more Lankavatara sense. Everything is a transformation of mind. There is no 'thing' out there. It's the mind transformed. He seems to want to check you as it were again and again from thinking in terms of things 'out there', something with an objective existence or objective reality apart from that 'One Mind'.

Devamitra: Isn't there a sort of parallel there also though: of looking for it all inside?

S: Yes.

Devamitra: Because that doesn't seem to be brought up at all in any of this. It's almost as if he is pointing them all in one direction.

S: Yes, but later on when he gives some instruction to his disciples he says speak to people in terms of the opposite. When they ask about Nirvana, reply about samsara. If they ask about unity reply about difference. So the principle is clear. One can only assume that the Confucianists and the Taoists and others that he was talking to tend to look for the Buddha outside, whatever that may mean. I mean I can't quite imagine it, and didn't look within, didn't meditate or didn't reflect, so therefore he was always emphasizing the Buddha within. But if people were very subjective you might even have to emphasize 'the Buddha is out there. It's an objective existing reality. Forget all about yourself. Don't introspect. Look out there. See the Buddha.' You might well have to speak in this way.

Devamitra: It seems to me that this is the general direction for the Movement at the moment.

S: Looking out? I agree, yes. It does seem like that, very much so, [269] and we seem to have a lot of pseudo introspection as a sort of leftover from psychology or misunderstanding of psychology. You've just been sort of scratching your own sort of mental state, making it a bit sore and sensitive. I think we should be more preoccupied with external things in a way. It's the Buddha. If you think the Buddha is out there, no harm at all. I'm sure it will be helpful.

Wolf: How would you associate reciting the sutra all the time with, say, chores of life like someone getting the lunch ready?

S: Well maybe he could do it. He knew it by heart apparently, so maybe he could do it.

Wolf: Is there no other sense in which you would take this?

S: Well he is clearly referring here to the actual literal reciting. He continued to recite the sutra as before. But presumably he wasn't doing it before absolutely all the time, but maybe frequently. But perhaps he would recite it now and then all the time, now that he understood the meaning, and he'd be able to recite the sutra and understand the meaning and do whatever else had to be done. Just like reciting a mantra it becomes sort of spontaneous, not something you have to attend to and while you are attending to it you can't attend to other things, not like that. Perhaps that's rather a tall order, to recite the sutra while doing other things, but to recite a mantra or to have a mantra going on while you are doing other things, this shouldn't be at all difficult. This should come after a few months of practice.

Wolf: I wonder, though, if he meant more than that.

S: He might have done.

Wolf: Sort of here and now, this is reality.

S: But he made it clear, even before, that there is nothing wrong with reciting the sutra. In fact Fat-tat said, 'All right I'll stop reciting the sutra. I won't recite it any more,' and Hui-neng said, 'No, there's no reason why you should stop. There is nothing wrong with reciting the sutra.' And here it says, "He continued to recite the sutra as before." Also other people might hear it and might be helped by hearing it. But it was clearly a different kind of reciting.

Anything more about this question of the Dharma versus the schools of [270] Buddhism? What we must be careful of is that when we say 'Dharma' we don't in fact mean one particular school. This is what the Theravadins very often do. They say the Dharma, or the Dhamma, when they mean the Theravada interpretation, so we mustn't fall into that mistake. Sometimes they say the Pure Dhamma.

Chintamani: Something that I feel quite strongly about is this whole business of vogues.

S: Perhaps the word vogue is unfortunate, but I think that the fact is there

that a lot of people go through the same thing at the same time because they really need to. It may be that quite a number of Order members need to be more Theravadin than they've been in the past, more Theravadin minded. That doesn't mean that they object to studying the Vajrayana or Ch'an or what not, but it means that they are making up for their own past neglect of the Theravada, because they've now reached a stage in their individual development where the Theravada approach can be really useful and helpful, so they incorporate it. This is not the Theravada just having a vogue. What is dangerous is that people who are on the fringes of the Friends join in for the sake of joining in - they don't want to be left out - even though the Theravada may not be relevant to their actual spiritual needs at the moment at all. Then it's a vogue for them. This is where the vogue aspect comes in: on the fringes, not with regard to the really serious people. They are just trying to achieve a better balance.

Much of what Hui-neng says is just Dharma, it's just Buddhism, and that's very interesting. We haven't come across much that is distinctively Ch'an or Zen. He seems to have been a Dharma teacher.

Subhuti: I think that there is something which is quite distinctively Zen, which is this emphasis on looking within, and what seems to me obvious, particularly from these questions and answers, is that specific attitude for a specific cultural context.

S: Because he's reflecting some Mahayana sutras; that's why I say it's not specifically Zen. But even so some of the Mahayana sutras reflect particular needs at particular times.

Subhuti: Well it does seem to have even more of an emphasis than the general [271] feeling that I get from most of the Mahayana.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Particularly the 'Mind only' teaching. He doesn't seem to have anything else to say in a way.

S: Yes, and it doesn't seem very useful to us at the moment.

Ratnapani: The four types of Enlightenment, as it were, that he puts down are "opening the eyes to the sight of Enlightenment". Well that's stage one of your practice and then stage four is becoming firmly established in Enlightenment-knowledge. That's it. That's his fourfold path in a way. This is what I take to be Zen.

S: Well opening your eyes to the sight of Enlightenment is your path of vision really, and establishment is the completion of the path of transformation. So in a way you've not gone beyond the Theravada.

Mangala: I think that it's not the teaching that is Zen, it's just that the way of expressing it is different. The Theravada seems much more understandable and applicable.

Subhuti: It's the contact of the Enlightened mind with a particular situation and context and so it would be appropriate in different contexts.

S: What we call Zen is just what one particular master happened to say to his disciple in a very special sort of context, in a rather special way perhaps. Whether that suits us is quite another matter. Whether we can get anything from it...

Ratnapani: Do you think that Zen sectarianism is something which has evolved from a cultural temperament?

S: Well there are really two kinds of Zen, Soto and Rinzai, and it's interesting that Rinzai is often called by the Japanese themselves 'Warrior's Zen' and Soto is called 'Farmer's Zen'. Rinzai is supposed to be more direct, militant, dynamic, stressing the Zen Mind in the midst of battle, connection with the martial arts and so on. Soto is supposed to be just sitting, even a sort of gentle study of the scriptures, just seeing the Buddha within and things of that kind, but especially the just sitting and not so much koan, though again some dispute that. At the Buddhist Society emphasis has always been on Suzuki's works and therefore Rinzai, because he reflects the Rinzai emphasis, and [272] Jiyu of course is Soto and Zengo is Soto. In fact I think that everyone else is Soto - those [I've] come across. Irmgard Schloegl is Rinzai. Sochu Suzuki is Soto.

Ratnapani: So that most of the popular literature is Rinzai.

S: Rinzai. For instance, much of the popular literature is a sort of rehash of Suzuki who is extremely good, but it's sort of Rinzai oriented.

Ratnapani: Then a lot of people get a shock when they come up against Soto and they have to sit still for all those hours.

S: So the distinction is apparently that Rinzai is that kind of Zen which is more adapted to the violent life of the warrior and a life full of dangers and risks. Soto is that kind of Zen more adapted to the peaceful life of the farmer.

Also it's been emphasized that Dogen, who introduced Zen into Japan, didn't speak in terms of Zen or Ch'an, but only of Dharma and Buddhism, and this is very much like Hui-neng.

Again when we speak of the Theravada and the Theravada being useful, it's a Theravada-type approach, the down-to-earthness, the practicalness, the freedom from metaphysical speculation, the emphasis on the importance of behaviour and moral principles and regular life and even discipline; it's this. But sectarian Theravada can be quite unpleasant sometimes and that's quite another matter.

Subhuti: In a way it's not Theravada but the original teaching as it were, the Pali.

S: Yes. You can find more of this kind of material from the Pali canon and 'Some Sayings of the Buddha' [a small Pali canon anthology, trans. F.L. Woodward, much used in the early days of the FWBO, tr.] will give you a very good idea

and feeling about the spirit of the whole thing, that whole approach. It's very earnest, very sincere, very striking and scrupulous and non-philosophical in a way, not interested in metaphysical speculation, practical, down to earth.

Ratnapani: I think that with the introduction, hopefully, of this foundation, this way of working then, and only then can we be more attractive to the trade union movements or the karate fellows.

S: Yes. We ourselves have to be more direct and straightforward, it's not even a more direct and straightforward teaching. I've known Theravadins who are [273] anything but straightforward and direct in their dealings, but if you yourself are straightforward and you've got that sort of Theravadin feel about you, down to earth and practical, then you are going to appeal and what you have to say is going to appeal, but if you sound all sort of airy fairy then they are not going to take you very seriously.

Devamitra: I went to see some friends who are Maoists a little while ago and they talked very much in terms of development and consciousness - political consciousness. I don't know whether it was Marx or Mao that they quoted to me, but one of the sayings was, 'You start the revolution yourself. Kill the bourgeois and then propagandize the masses.'

S: I think that Mao personally seems to have been very conscious of how easy it was to let [in] the bourgeois spirit even within the Communist party itself. He seems to have been very conscious of that, just as we are very often aware of Christian attitudes surviving within our own movement in individual people. So there is a sort of parallel: the conditioned mind surviving even in the midst of your spiritual mind. It's clearly happened in Russia. He's dead right there, the bureaucracy has taken over and all the rest of it. A good community party functionary is a very conventional person.

It's what I call the gravitational pull, and this is a very powerful thing, especially in England, that any successful revolutionary movement will get co-opted by the reactionaries, to use somewhat Marxist terminology, and this happens all the time. It happened with Buddhism in India in some ways. You start any sort of revolutionary movement, anything sort of anti-establishment, you successfully ... the establishment offers you an honour or you start being accepted, start being invited, and in the end you are part of the establishment. We don't want that to happen with us, that we don't become part of a little Buddhist society, which we are not at present. We have to be very careful. Have contact with them, that is individuals, certainly, influence them, spread our own ideas, but not be absorbed and not join the Buddhist establishment again, as it were.

p.538: "The three vehicles are makeshifts only; And the three stages in which the scholars expound the Dharma are ingeniously spoken, indeed; But how few appreciate that it is within the burning house itself That the Truth of Dharma is to be found."

It's very easy to be a scholar in Buddhism. You have a nice quiet little retreat

[274] and you browse over your sutras making a few notes and writing a little commentary and it's all nice, burning a stick of incense and a nice quiet cup of tea in the afternoon, but Hui-neng is saying don't forget that "it is within the burning house itself", in the midst of the samsara, all the painful and difficult experiences, "that the truth of the Dharma is to be found".

"The monk, Chi-tong, a native of Shau-chow of An-fung, had read over the Lankavatara Sutra nearly a thousand times, but could not understand the meaning of the Trikaya nor the four Prajnas. One day he called upon the Patriarch for an explanation of them."

S: In other words the trikaya and the four prajnas. In the text of course it's the four jnanas, not the four prajnas, in the Sanskrit text of the Lankavatara, and it's the four that we speak of in connection with the five 'Dhyani' Buddhas, as far as I recollect, minus the Wisdom of the Dharmadhatu which is in fact the union of the four. It's the mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, the all-performing wisdom, and discriminative wisdom. So these topics are mentioned in the Lankavatara: the three kayas, though in rather unsystematized form. The language of the Lankavatara is very rich and it has a number of different terms for especially the Nirmanakaya. It refers to it as (?)Shandakaya for instance and there is some discussion as to whether that is the same as Nirmanakaya or somewhat different.

pp.538-9 "As to the 'three bodies'," etc. I think that we have to understand here that when the Sixth Patriarch gives his own as it were interpretations of these teachings he does so against the background of actual knowledge of those teachings, because presumably the monk to whom he was speaking had read over the Lankavatara Sutra a thousand times, had a general idea of what the trikaya meant and what the four wisdoms were according to standard Mahayana teaching. It's a very standard doctrine, but he apparently still wasn't satisfied, and the Sixth Patriarch in his reply seems to take all that standard doctrinal teaching for granted and then to give it just a little twist of his own and relate it especially to the Essence of Mind. So therefore, when reading this, we should be careful not to think that the explanations that Hui-neng gives are, as it were, the explanations. They just represent a little twist. The doctrine itself and the teaching itself, which is very vast and very complex, is sort of taken for granted. It's presumably taken for granted that the monk knows that the Sambhogakaya is this aspect of richness and archetypal form and all that kind of thing. Maybe the monk lives in a monastery with all these glorious [275] paintings on the walls and he's very familiar with all that sort of thing, but then the Sixth Patriarch gives a little twist to it all and relates it to the Essence of Mind and gives it, you can say, a practical bearing and that is what constitutes the value of his remark for that particular monk. "The Pure Dharmakaya is your nature," it's not just some metaphysical object out there. The Dharmakaya is what you yourself are in the depths of your being; that you are the Buddha, you are the Dharmakaya, that is your true nature and "the Perfect Sambhogakaya is your wisdom". We can take the word 'wisdom' here as meaning all the sort of manifestations of that

nature, even on the lower levels, as they work themselves out. “And the Myriad Nirmanakayas are your actions.” When you are an Enlightened being, what you actually do is then the Nirmanakaya of a Buddha. So your true nature is the Dharmakaya, your wisdom, which exists, as it were, just like the talents I spoke of which are not manifest when you see someone, but your wisdom is there in the background and your actions are the Nirmanakaya actually revealing that wisdom or a part of it. So he gives it this sort of orientation.

“If you deal with these three bodies apart from your Mind-essence, they would be bodies without wisdom. If you realize that these three: self-nature, self-wisdom and self-action, have no substance of their own (being only manifestations of Mind-essence) then you have attained the enlightenment of the four Prajnas.”

S: It's as though Hui-neng is thinking of the ‘three bodies’ more as it were in terms of body, speech, and mind. Remember that the three kayas are, after all, as it were, the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha. The Dharmakaya is his mind. The Sambhogakaya is his speech, his communication on a universal level, and the Nirmanakaya is his actual action in space and time, in history, the historical Buddha. So Hui-neng is sort of reducing it all to psychological, even in the sense objective, terms and saying, well, there is your self-nature, your own real true nature, that's your Dharmakaya. Then there is your self wisdom which is your true nature in the fullness of its manifestations beyond the historical context, that's your Sambhogakaya; and then how you actually operate in daily life, that's your Nirmanakaya. It's as though he's explaining it in this sort of way in a rather concrete and down to earth fashion. But all these, he's insisting, are manifestations of your One Mind, and if you don't realize your One Mind, your true Buddha-nature, then there is no question of the three kayas. The three kayas are the three kayas of a Buddha. The three kayas only spring from your realization of your own true nature, your own Essence of Mind. It seems as though - we don't know much about this monk [276] except where he came from and that he'd read the Lankavatara Sutra a thousand times - he's directing the monk back to his own mind and his own being, his own experience. Perhaps he was a rather metaphysically-minded monk, because after all he had read the Lankavatara Sutra a thousand times, so perhaps Hui-neng was just directing him back to his own mind, to his own inner realization, and saying that when you've realized your own Essence of Mind then you will have these three kayas and then you will know all about them. You'll have the four wisdoms and then all your questions will be answered. He seems to be saying something like this.

Ratnapani: Does this sort of attitude appear anywhere else in the Mahayana sutras: this teaching reminding a person is Buddha in reality and almost presuming it in the way it teaches?

S: In some Mahayana sutras, yes, sort of. The Lankavatara does stress what is called (unclear) which means the direct realization oneself. It doesn't so much say that you are that. It doesn't say you are Buddha, the Lankavatara, but it does direct your attention to your own actual personal experience of that, especially of the One Mind; but it does not, to the best of my recollection, ever

say that you are that. But there are some Mahayana works, for instance there is the Ratnagotravibhaga which is quoted in Conze's 'Buddhist Texts Through the Ages' [pp.182-3, tr.], where it is clearly said that just as an image of the Buddha can be wrapped in a dirty cloth or even covered with mud, in the same way, Buddha nature, Buddhahood, is inherent in the ordinary human being, it is only obscured. That is the Ratnagotravibhaga. A few other Mahayana sutras - I think the Mahaparinirvana - have this particular emphasis. So it is there in some at least of the Mahayana sutras, especially what one sometimes calls the later ones, which were being translated into Chinese at about this time. So it isn't altogether Hui-neng's own emphasis. It is the emphasis of some Mahayana sutras, but they do seem, one must admit, to depart somewhat from the original modest emphasis, or at least the original Buddhist angle of approach, and some scholars, frankly, see an Upanishadic-Vedantic influence at work here. It may or may not be so, but certainly the Vedanta speaks this ontological language: that you are Brahma, you are God, it's simply that you've got [277] to wake up to the fact and realize that you are that.

Some forms of Mahayana, or at least some Mahayana sutras, also have the same sort of language, or what seems to be the same sort of language, if you don't look into it carefully, as when Hui-neng says 'Mind is Buddha', which is practically saying you are Buddha and it's something to be uncovered and realized rather than something to be achieved and created. It seems to me - and this seems to be the upshot of some of our discussions this week - that to speak in terms of achieving and realizing and creating and bringing into existence, as in fact the historical Buddha did, Gautama the Buddha did, so far as we know from the Pali texts: this is much closer to our actual experience. We therefore credit it as much more true, and it seems to cut through a lot of misunderstanding and misrepresentation to put things in this way. Otherwise if you go around telling people that they are Buddha, they don't take that to mean in their ultimate metaphysical depths, but they themselves, just as they are, with their ordinary selves and ego, are Buddha. You are just attaching a very beautiful label to their ego rather than enabling them to transcend their ego and realize it's illusory. So one can say that, in a modern context, certainly with most of the people that we come to deal with, to say that you are Buddha is so misleading, so unhelpful, as to be actually untrue. It's as though this sort of statement is only useful in the case of someone who hasn't encountered it intellectually before just as an idea, whose spent years and years in hard practice and meditation and striving, and one day his teacher says to him, well you've gone through all that, you've achieved, you've realized, but there's just one thing: you are Buddha. And that's quite a different thing, quite a different experience. It comes to him in a quite different way with quite a different effect. This is what you see in the Upanishads when certain disciples come to a teacher and they are given a little object lesson and then sent away for ten years to meditate on it, and after ten years they come back for another object lesson and then go away for another ten years, and it's forty or fifty years I think it takes, and then the teacher says, 'You are that. You yourself are the object of your quest. You are that. You are Brahma.'

Then it has a real meaning and a real effect. But if you tell it to someone who is already self-indulgent and self-centred and weak and ego-ridden and you say, ‘Oh yes, you are Buddha,’ he says, ‘Oh fine, [278] another little feather in my cap. I’m a Buddha too, wonderful, great, I don’t have to do anything, it’s all there, I’ve got it already.’ He cannot but misunderstand it. So these things are not really to be bandied about. Especially what Hui-neng says to this monk Chi-tong apparently in the privacy of his own chapel and having been written down now made accessible to everybody, inevitably he seems to sow the seeds of misunderstanding. We have to approach these things and handle them very carefully.

p.539: “The Three-bodies are inherent in our Essence of Mind, By the radiation of which the four Prajnas are manifested. Thus, without closing your eyes and your ears to shut out the external world, You may reach Buddhahood directly. Now that I have made this plain to you, If you believe it implicitly, you will be forever free from delusion. Follow not those who seek for ‘enlightenment’ from without: Such people talk about Bodhi all the time, but do it vainly.”

There are one or two important things here. “Thus, without closing your eyes and your ears to shut out the external world, You may reach Buddhahood directly.”

You have to close your eyes and your ears and shut out the external world to practise meditation, at least in the earlier stages, to develop your samatha, but not to develop vipassana. Vipassana means opening your eyes and looking and seeing, but with insight. So whereas in the case of samatha a shutting out of external things is necessary, at least at first, this is not the case with regards to vipassana or wisdom. So withdrawal from the world, getting away from sense objects etc, is only provisional and preliminary, though that may take a long time, but when the vipassana, the wisdom or insight, arises this is certainly not withdrawal, in fact the world is its raw material. The world is what the flash of insight lights up and you see it as it really is. It’s seeing things as they really are, just opening your eyes to their truth as it were, not seeing them as they appear to be or as you would like them to be. Especially in the Theravada in the Buddha’s own teaching, seeing the truth of the world, and that means looking at the world, looking at conditioned things and seeing through them: that is insight. You can develop samatha by shutting off external things, but you can’t develop vipassana by shutting out external things, otherwise you’ve as it were no raw material to work with.

“Those who seek Enlightenment from without.” I wonder what is meant by that. There must have been a lot of people in those days who thought that Enlightenment was somehow ‘out there’, but I don’t know exactly what that implies or how they went about realizing it ‘out there’.

Subhuti: Perhaps it was just a particular sort of behaviour or something like that. [279]

S: It could be that.

Subhuti: Like those people with alienated awareness.

S: But it isn't made very clear.

Chintamani: People who go from movement to movement and teacher to teacher, hoping they've got the answer.

Devamitra: They want to be given Enlightenment.

S: On a plate, yes. Well there are some people who claim to be able to give it if you will only go to them. It's more like projecting your own potentiality instead of realizing it within yourself.

Devamitra: I think I've heard you say with regard to Ramana Maharshi that by just taking his darshan you could experience a tremendous expansion of consciousness, and that it seemed to be something that he was able to effect in individuals, rather than the individual opening himself up to it. [The Rainbow Road, p.335, tr.]

S: This is true. I can only say, because it's very difficult to be absolutely certain, that those who went and sat there were very receptive in varying degrees, and I can also say from my own observation at the time that when people sat in that way, yes, they had darshan literally at first by just looking at him, but as far as I recollect - what I heard from people and what I read about people's experience there - it's just as though after a while they felt something operating within. It wasn't just that they were sort of gazing at him starry eyed but when they sat down in that place, most of them actually closing their eyes, many of them would feel after a while something at work within. It seems to have been a phenomenal experience here. But, if it was him actually functioning or working, he seems to have had quite definitely this rather strange capacity, which is quite unusual and rare even in India. It happened with so many people it's not possible to deny that it did actually happen, even though it may be difficult to evaluate or to explain. He was definitely able to spark off something or, rather, something very frequently got sparked off there is his presence in the case of those who were, as far as we can see, very receptive. There was a very definite general influence in that darshan hall, there's no doubt about that, and apparently due to him.

Devamitra: Are there any similar experiences in the Buddha's life? [280]

S: I don't recollect. Well there is one, to draw a parallel: for instance there are many examples of the Buddha giving a certain teaching and producing an immediate effect, so it could be not only the fact that the person was prepared and ready, but that along with that there was something more than what was actually said, more than the actual words. But apart from that there were quite a number of instances in the Pali scriptures where the monk, in the absence of the Buddha, had a sort of visionary experience of him in a sort of glorified form, and he is even told or taught something and is wonderfully inspired and enthused and even transformed by that. This is in the Pali scriptures, not to speak of the Mahayana scriptures. It's as though there is another influence working on another level, either along with the spoken word or quite independent of it. Of

course this is what is supposed to happen in Zen, though frankly one doesn't see much evidence of it in modern times. It seems to have become just a stereotype, as it were; but you also get it in the Tantric tradition, in the Vajrayana, this sort of mind to mind transmission.

Ratnapani: There seemed to be something about people sitting with Zengo. [Zengo was a Japanese monk who 'taught' just sitting meditation in the FWBO for a couple of years in the early seventies. Bhante withdrew Zengo's support after he unexpectedly declared himself to be the Buddha Maitreya whilst leading a sesshin. tr.] People felt that they were turned on by him even to the extent that people sitting in the front would feel it more strongly than people sitting behind. On one occasion he seemed to go into a very high state and the kinhin [walking meditation, tr.] didn't happen. We just stood. He said afterwards that he couldn't speak or move, he just stood, and people were falling over, and all sorts of strange things were happening which seemed to be directly related to the state he was in.

S: Well this may be because if someone is sending something out which is strong or even powerful, whether positive or negative or mixed, and if others are in a receptive state, whether they are actually physically near or physically not near, all sorts of things definitely do happen. The only question is, what is the nature of the force and the desirability of the effect. But certainly these things do happen, there's no doubt about that. I think that one should be a little cautious. What you say is interesting, those who sat nearest as it were being affected most. To my mind this is a little bit odd if not suspicious, because a purely spiritual force doesn't depend on physical proximity. It could act on the spot with someone who is face to face and also someone the other side of the [281] world.

Ratnapani: This wasn't my own experience - proximity - that was somebody else's. It might have been that one day they were near him and receptive and another day at the back and not receptive.

S: Yes. One has to take so many factors into consideration. It's very difficult to arrive at a generalized conclusion.

Chintamani: If somebody associates a certain figure, a person, with a very deep mental thing in themselves then the presence of that person acts as a trigger mechanism for that thing within themselves.

S: Yes, so that one has to take into account what I can only call this projective element. Maybe you could even say that those who were sitting nearer were those who wanted to sit nearer and had a certain definite almost emotional reason to wanting to sit nearer, and that this also played its part, not the actual nearness, but the fact that they wanted to be near. Why did they want to be physically near? Why did they not sit quietly at the back? You notice this when you take a class, that some people habitually sit at the front, near, and others habitually at the back, and others sometimes here and sometimes there. Some

seem not to mind very much, others seem very particular that they have their seat and always have it in the same place.

Chintamani: If I sit at the front there is a definite feeling of all those people behind me and at the back there is just much more space.

S: When you have all those other people behind you do you feel backed up by them or that they are all on your back, as it were?

Chintamani: Both. It depends on the circumstances I suppose.

Wolf: With the darshan of Ramana Maharshi, if this is the way that he gives himself, people in the presence could completely forget themselves, the physical side of themselves, so that there is something purer in them tuning in to something very pure in front of them.

S: Certainly some people sitting there did forget themselves as it were. One could see that happening or one could feel it.

Devamitra: Forget themselves in a positive sense?

S: Yes. Something else which is quite important - it's not very directly [282] related here although it could arise out of what we've been talking about - a sort of possible danger, connected possibly even with an ingrown miccha-ditthi, that is, a sort of craving for tangible experience, any experience almost, rather than no experience at all, and to go where experience seems to be forthcoming. I was reminded of this when Zengo's name was mentioned. It seems to me that quite a few people who are into this are after this, that if there is any chance of something happening, some tangible experience, this is what they want almost regardless of what kind of experience it is. One can understand it in a way, because if we read the scriptures we read about all sorts of higher meditation experiences and the experience of Enlightenment, and as Buddhists we are supposed to be aiming at [that] experience, but I begin to think that this sort of way of thinking, though valid, also has its dangers, and also with various drug experiences around, people almost start thinking experience is the thing, experience is where it's at in the sense of some wonderful and extraordinary experience, and they start sort of hungering and hankering after this and sort of wanting it and tend to neglect at least sometimes the building up of the foundations on the basis alone a really valid and worthwhile and lasting experience can come. They develop a sort of greed for experience. Spiritual materialism is a good term for this, to borrow a phrase from Trungpa.

Wolf: On the other hand an experience does give one a fresh impetus, a fresh drive as it were, instead of coming to a grinding halt. Every so often I think it is very necessary.

S: Yes, but the thing is that people will, if we are not careful, tend not to think, 'If I get on with my practice I shall have an experience.' They tend to think, 'Oh, if I could only have an experience then I could get on with my practice,' and this becomes a bit unhealthy. Sometimes you have to stick with emptiness and the

boredom and the dryness. There are some Christian mystics who deal with this very well, of course this in a theistic sort of framework, but apart from that what they have to say about it is very psychologically sound, that you must accept these periods of dryness and stiffness, and they point out that the pleasurable sensation is OK if it comes - that happy, mystical, bubbly, ecstatic feeling. But this is not it, because it comes and goes. The real thing is something higher [283] than that. Something more akin to acceptance even of the dry periods and the painful periods and the sort of Valley of the Shadow of Death experiences: accept it. That is much more akin to the ultimate experience than the bubbly high that one is hankering after.

Devamitra: I find that most of my meditation practice, which is just sitting and watching the breath, is just an experience of boredom, and sometimes, particularly in the morning, complete alienation.

S: It's interesting what you say about early in the morning, because it may be this, it does happen, that you get very much into the dream state and you are not properly back.

Devamitra: I have no recollection of my dreams.

S: That doesn't matter. That's partly why, you see. It's so separate. There's not much connection between that level and the conscious mind. In a way you are still there even after you've been as it were woken up and opened your eyes. You are still at the dream level in a sense and therefore you find it difficult to get into meditation. Your energies are all on the dream level though you are not conscious of that. There's a lot going on all the time in everybody which is not on the conscious level, and often your energies are busy there and not on the conscious level.

Devamitra: So does one just wait for this to resolve itself in the course of practice? In my own case it's been going on for rather a long time.

S: Well the fact that you say you don't remember your dreams is interesting. It suggests a sort of - maybe alienation is too strong a word - but there is not enough contact between that level of yourself and the conscious mind. It seems to me that so much energy is in these other levels that you haven't enough for the meditation, as it were, so you are left dry and empty and bored. It would seem to be that you have got to establish contact with these other levels, start wanting to know what you dream. This would help and loosen you up a bit.

Mangala: Do you think that dreams are worth taking notes of and paying attention to?

S: Yes I do, but again it mustn't be made too much of. It may be that [284] you could well do this for a time, especially if, say, your meditation or your general feeling is dry and a bit arid and lacking in richness. I think it would be good to pay attention to one's dreams. The chances are that a lot of energy is going there and you have to establish contact with those levels where the energy is going.

Ratnapani: It's not just a question of understanding the dreams so much as remembering them.

S: Don't bother about understanding and interpreting them. That doesn't matter at all. Sometimes you may feel there is some meaning there, but don't bother about what the dreams mean. If you just remember it, dwell upon it, and turn it over in your mind, enjoy it. That's what is wanted, revel in it a bit, savour it. Don't bother your head over what it means. It means what it says.

Devamitra: I've tried to do this but I can't.

S: Well you will eventually. I've met several people like this who said that to begin with they didn't dream, and sometimes it took even a year or two to recollect even a bit of their dreams. If you want to establish contact with those levels then you will, but you must want to remember your dreams. I suggest that when you wake up in the morning you just [lie there] a bit, just lie there quietly and not just try to remember your dreams but give them a chance to come up, and you will get a sort of feeling and sometimes you can sort of feel your way back into the dream. For instance when you wake up ask yourself, 'How do I feel? What am I feeling now? What do my general feelings tell me? And dwell on that and try to experience it more and think what experience, what incident, would be appropriate to this feeling, and just sort of hold yourself a bit receptive and see if any sort of image sort of flashes up. Sometimes it does, or you get a vague recollection, 'oh, it must have been something to do with adventure, trees, the sea,' you know, something like that. Or, 'I get a feeling of being shut up or confined.' Now what was that? What could have given rise to that? Try to work your way back very gently and subtly in this kind of way, not making a great big effort to remember - that doesn't help at all, but eventually you will establish contact with those levels. But this craving for experience ..(break in recording).. [285]

..as long as something is happening and people are going through experiences and shrieking and tearing their hair and dancing, well, OK it's all tangible, you are getting results, you are achieving something, you are getting somewhere.

Wolf: But there must be a different case from the hysterical experience, a truer spiritual experience.

S: Sure, yes, but you have to be able to discriminate, and there are all sorts of intermediate shades, and if you are not careful and if you are especially feeling rather dry and empty in yourself and you don't particularly want to work for anything valid, you just go after what can give you a quick cheap thrill almost. In the same sort of way some people depend on sex. Life is a bit dull and a bit dry so, 'What's there to do this evening?' and you can always fall back on that bit of a thrill, as it were, it helps to cheer up the evening and pass the time. This is how some people take it, isn't it?

Wolf: Or they get drunk.

Chintamani: Is there a valuable constructive use one can make of the boredom state or does one just ride it through?

S: Well one makes a valuable and constructive use of it by not trying to use it. If you are trying to use it you are trying to escape from the boredom. The best thing to do is to just stay with the boredom, accept the boredom, but not try to think, oh well, if I stick with this boredom for an hour or two this will be really great in the long run. This will be really useful. It'll help me get another high later on. Don't think like that, just stick with the boredom. The boredom itself is OK. The trouble with the good Buddhist is he feels that if he isn't getting high and ecstatic and having wonderful experiences, he isn't making good progress, he isn't making any progress at all, but that's nonsense, though I'm afraid traditionally Buddhism doesn't handle this quite so well, as it were, psychologically, as sometimes the Christian mystics handle this sort of phase of spiritual life. They are rather good at this, especially the seventeenth century ones. What they have to say about dryness and boredom and aridity, it's very helpful. It's something that you should just accept and stay with. They say that the real spiritual life is not an abundance of solace, as they put it. [286] It's not that God is always giving you sweeties because you are being a good boy. He sort of tests you sometimes and takes away the sweeties just to see whether you are after spiritual sweeties or you are after him. If you've got a theistic framework it's a bit more difficult to put, but one can say, well, you mustn't hanker after the pleasant experiences that come in meditation. If they come, fine, enjoy them, but don't become attached, be just as ready to accept unpleasant experiences that come. Accept them with equanimity, even phases of boredom. It's all part of the process, all part of the path. Accept it all. You are not just after some egoistic satisfaction.

Chintamani: I've noticed that this lack of a complete view of the situation shows itself when people who are going through a good phase tend to be slightly contemptuous of those people who aren't, and people who are in a downer hate the people who are up there.

S: I'm afraid sometimes that when people are on a high, whether it's Buddhist people who are high through meditation or people who are high through drugs or just naturally high because things seem to be going well, they tend as it were to take it out on others who are not so high and in a subtle sort of way to sort of - not exactly lay it on them but - make them rather aware how they are in comparison with you. It's almost like asserting a superiority. You see this quite clearly, and obviously those who aren't high will feel that and will just feel resentful. It's as though you go around hitting people on the head with your high: 'Look how high I am.' It's done in a very subtle sort of way, but it's very noticeable and I've seen quite a bit of this around. Sometimes it is almost cruel the way it is done, almost sadistic, I've seen it go as far as that.

Ratnapani: People talk of an in-crowd in the Friends and I think that if anything constitutes the in-crowd, it's the people who are high. Visiting other places, other sort of spiritual movements, I've often felt this core of people because they

are usually the highest in the building and the others are always looking up.

S: Yes. I think we have to estimate people not so much by their highs. I'm not sure whether within the Friends or within the Order there is an in-group of [287] people who are high. I don't see many people like that actually, maybe I just don't get letters from them. I think that if anything the in-group people, at least some of them, are those who are really going through it rather than those who are high.

Ratnapani: I think that an outsider's impression is the people who are high at any given moment are behaving as the in-crowd. It could be different people the next day.

S: Well I can think of at least one person whose highs are positively painful because of the way in which that person behaves with others. You get it quite outside the spiritual movements, in just ordinary life. Someone's feeling really good, but he's not content with feeling really good, he wants to take it out on you and underline the fact that he's feeling good and you aren't, and it can be quite cruel.

Chintamani: The people who feel good take it out on the people who feel bad, and the people who feel bad take it out on those who feel good.

S: There's less excuse for those who are high. You can say that sometimes, if you are feeling a bit down, you can't help taking it a bit out on other people if you are really suffering, but there is not excuse if you are feeling good. There seems to be an ingrained cruelty, almost, of a most unpleasant kind. Off you go flashing your high around as it were. This is what sometimes happens. Be a bit modest about it, a bit sober, and just sort of keep yourself quietly cheerful and quietly friendly.

Mangala: I think people display it so much because they equate being high with being spiritually advanced, or that's what you should be because it's the way we are all trying to be.

S: There just has to be the development of a greater equanimity with regards to experience and to see that overall progress is what is important, not temporary highs or temporary lows, temporary ups and temporary downs. Someone who is displaying his high is just being a bit immature and a bit junior as it were. But for heaven's sake don't go to the other extreme and try self-consciously to hide the fact that you are high and pretend that you are not as it were.

Devamitra: With regard to Christian mystics, is there anyone that you could [288] recommend for reading?

S: St John of the Cross is very good: the Dark Night of the Soul, [and] The Dark Night of Sense.

Wolf: What about The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis?

S: I can't say that I'm altogether happy about that because it's very specifically

Christian. But in the case of St John of the Cross it's been said that his Christianity is just like water in a sponge: you can squeeze it out.

Sulocana: The Cloud of Unknowing.

S: Yes that's very good. It's a robust English work of course. On the whole the Christian mystics are very good at this because they say, as it were, everything comes from God, and this is their way of looking at it, and so if you accept happiness from God then you must accept unhappiness, because it's God that you are basically concerned about, not happiness or unhappiness. But when you are not a theist it's rather difficult to find a concrete way of putting things. So we can say that you should have an attitude of equanimity towards all experiences that come, not be carried away by the highs of meditation, not become intoxicated by them, just keep a bit sober and certainly not use them to assert superiority over others and not look down on the poor person who is struggling with his meditation and not having any highs. He may be much better than you in other respects. He may be better at the precepts or he may have a clearer understanding of the Dharma, but for some reason or other he's not into the highs of meditation.

Chintamani: Just a general point, and that is about anyone striving after anything, it all seems to come back to this basic fact of filling up the space.

S: Yes and looking for something outside. It's a sort of alienation from your own experience. If you are bored it's your very own experience, so sort of cherish it in a way as your experience. Don't try to get away with it: 'Well if I'm bored, well, this is me. Fine.' Not try to sort of fill it in or cover it up. Stay with it until it goes naturally and changes into something else which is 'me': 'This is my experience. I'm just going to be true to that. If I'm bored then I'm bored.' I remember some time ago shortly before I started my retreat I was with a friend of mine, a certain lady, and I was telling her [289] how I'd spent the previous evening. I said that I went to see some people and it was a terrible evening, I felt so bored. 'Oh no, Bhante, you couldn't have felt bored could you?' And she wanted me to say that I wasn't in fact bored, but I said, 'No I'm sorry to say, maybe I shouldn't have been, but I was bored, and that's the truth of the matter.' So you've got to stick with your own experience. Sometimes you try to cheat yourself out of your own experience and sometimes other people try to cheat you out of it. This particular woman had an idea of me of her own, and her idea was that Bhante could never possibly become bored: it's impossible for you to bore Bhante. Maybe she liked to think that for her own sake, as it were, that I could never be bored, and she didn't like to think that I could be bored and actually say so. But I refused to have this because I knew quite well I had been bored that previous evening. So I say stick with one's own experience, be true to that.

Chintamani: I think that there is a possible misunderstanding of when we talk about positive emotions: 'Oh he's a good person, he's so positive.' This may be true, but I think what results is that people who are not feeling positive feel

even worse because positive is where it's at and negative isn't.

S: Positive has a suggestion of nice and sweet and agreeable to other people, easy to get on with, whereas negative has the impression of rather spoiling things, not being all nice and happy and gay and carefree and making things difficult for other people and spoiling a nice party-like atmosphere. In other words, positive is what makes other people feel good, and negative is what makes other people feel uneasy.

Subhuti: They've become synonyms for good and bad.

Mangala: Positive may have come to mean just pleasant or not necessarily good in a deeper sort of sense.

S: Yes, acceptable to other people and not making them feel uncomfortable.

Devamitra: If one begins to discover the darker side of oneself, how does one incorporate this into one's behaviour?

S: You can't bother about behaviour for a while; you have to allow yourself to experience that. Whether you give expression to it - maybe it's an unpleasant [290] side or even basically unacceptable side - that's another matter. You can experience it and contain it without sort of letting it out. What is important is that you should experience it, not that you should express it. There is another great big miccha-ditthi here of course: that whatever you experience you should express, you should let hang out, otherwise you are not being honest, you are not really communicating.

Ratnapani: A few months ago there was a very strong experience which stimulated rape in me, the rapist in me if you like. It was a good job that I wasn't into that expressing what you experience trip. It kept coming up, this strong feeling.

S: This is left over from the puberty stage. This is what actually happens. You can try to experience it, but it doesn't mean that you are going to act upon it (unclear)..

Ratnapani: There's a tremendous energy from it in meditation. For instance, it would come up and if I didn't just sit on it, but almost enjoyed it, it really released a mass of energy into the general being.

S: This is what is to be done.

Devamitra: Is this what you would call an integration?

S: This is what makes integration possible.

Devamitra: By containing it?

S: Yes. I don't say that it must always be not expressed. There might be certain emotions even of a darker nature which could be skilfully expressed even, but they don't have to be expressed. They have to be experienced.

Chintamani: It can produce great art, for instance.

S: Yes, some artists integrate at the time of expressing in art. They don't even know that the feeling is there or might never know. They might think, 'Oh well I'm just painting a picture of a battle.' They don't think, 'Oh here I am giving expression to my aggressive instincts and integrating them.' The artist doesn't think that; he just paints a picture of a battle with all the dead and wounded and blood and he gets a kick out of it and it's a good picture, but he doesn't know in psychological terms what has been happening, but he as it were gets it out of his system, he's a good artist, he's integrated that bit [291] of himself back into his conscious mind, but he doesn't think of it in those terms.

Buddhadasa: The better the artist, the more effective the integration, or can we all have a go at, say, expressing in drawing?

S: Well what is the artist? The term artist suggests a certain amount of technical skill, but for the ordinary person this is where fantasy comes in. There's probably an element of fantasy in your experience. You sort of pictured yourself going through all that or engaging in all that. It's not just an abstract idea, you almost feel yourself doing that. So fantasy in that way, not just fantasy like watching a film, but like actually going through it and experiencing it mindfully.

Chintamani: With all the emotions involved.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: But isn't that in a sense acting it out and giving it expression in the mind?

S: Yes it is.

Devamitra: So where lies the difference?

S: Well it isn't harming any other living beings.

Devamitra: Yes, but apart from that.

S: Well that is the great crux of the difference. That's the important point. If it's a so-called negative feeling like you want to rape or murder, you are not actually doing harm to others and your overall intent is to contribute to your own development. You aren't doing it in a self-indulgent way. You must watch that; that you don't get such a kick out of it that you want to do it the next day, even if you are not actually feeling like that you try to work up the feeling. You must be careful of that.

Devamitra: So you can use fantasy as a skilful device?

S: Yes, you can even fantasize about this sort of negative thing, but what you must watch is that it doesn't become a habitual indulgence.

Wolf: It must be terribly difficult to stand aside and not become involved in the fantasy.

S: You are involved. That is what is necessary [292]

Wolf: But when you are completely involved your thought is very much into the action, except that you are not harming anyone else.

S: It is, yes, but what is your overall motivation in this case? It is not to indulge but to integrate. Your overall objective is that you may develop.

Ratnapani: If you don't go through this you are left with it inside. Having gone through it ...

S: Let me put it in this way, it's a very difficult point: it's the circle and the spiral. It's as though you have to go once round that circle and generate a bit of energy - that is the fantasy, or the experience of that feeling - then you have to take it up the spiral. What you mustn't do is to go round and round in the circle in the sense of over and over again, though again I'm not laying down a hard and fast rule: every fantasy only once. Going once around means fully experiencing it, which may mean one fantasy, it may mean two or three, it may mean several months of fantasies, but when you fully experience it, OK, that's as far as you go with that energy.

Wolf: But once you become completely involved, where is the mindfulness?

S: I think it's an artificial distinction really (unclear) because when you are mindful you are not fully with (?)it. You don't have alienated awareness sort of standing apart from it and looking at it. Of course there is danger that you may become unmindful in all this, as in any spiritual activity even, but again you have to watch that all the time.

Mangala: But what about fantasies about killing people? I'm afraid that if you really get into these things you might really encourage the feelings.

S; No. I think it's much less likely. If you've got a real urge to kill people and you never admit it to yourself and never experience it, you are much more likely to fly off the handle under real extreme provocation and actually do something bad. That's much more likely. I remember that one of our friends several years ago eventually came around to confessing that he had an habitual fantasy that he was most ashamed of and felt extremely guilty about. He used to have this fantasy repeatedly that he'd go systematically down the street from house to house raping and murdering every woman in every house, and he was quite [293] a respectable member of the Friends. He felt terrible about this and he was quite convinced that if I got to know about this fantasy I would banish him, excommunicate him, send him away. When he at last got around to mentioning this and that didn't happen, he said he experienced tremendous release that, in a sense it didn't matter, and eventually he came to terms with it and the fantasy ceased, so he accepted that part of himself. He'd been troubled by it for years he said, and he felt terrible shame and guilt.

Chintamani: I find that if I fantasize beating people up, smashing their heads in with hammers and things, if ever you can do that and experience the feeling of

disgust at what you've done, you look at what you've done, look at the body and then you feel what you feel.

S: Well in a way it's this counteracting an unskilful thought by not just reflecting on the consequences, but almost experiencing the consequences, you remember, in right effort. One of the forms of right effort is the effort to maintain, to cultivate, to increase and so on, and counteract. And you counteract the unskilful thoughts, among other things, by reflecting on contemplating the consequences of those unskilful actions: what would actually happen if you committed those unskilful actions.

Buddhadasa: In other words take the fantasy right through to the end.

S: Right, yes. What does it really mean? What does it really involve? What am I really getting into? How will it end if I follow this through? What am I really into? Not just the beginning, but the end. Of course, unfortunately, if you get hold of the wrong end of the stick as regards Buddhism: 'Oh Buddhists mustn't have these thoughts,' or 'Buddhists are all kind,' and 'Buddhists are full of loving kindness and compassion. Oh dear I mustn't have those kind of thoughts and feelings,' and you just push them down and that doesn't help. And of course, another thing, in Tantric visualizations, the visualization of the wrathful deities enables you to bring out a lot of your more fiery, even aggressive, warlike feelings, because you've got them. Man is a very aggressive animal and you have to experience your aggression and all that sort of thing, using the word aggression in a quite positive neutral sense, before you can put it to good use. [294]

Devamitra: I suppose that in a sense the visualization is a similar kind of practice, except on a much higher meditational level.

S: Yes.

Chintamani: I think that every feeling has an image. If you get a feeling then an image comes with it.

S: Yes. That's why if you want to remember your dreams just keep with your feelings when you wake up and work back to the image or let the image come up, because of the intensity of the experience of the feeling. The fantasy, like the dream, is like a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. How do you feel about all this? Because I rather feel that this is more pertinent to masculine psychology than to feminine psychology.

Sulocana: I'm trying to relate to it. I can't quite get the hang of it.

S: Yes, well maybe it's just quite irrelevant for you.

Sulocana: But fantasy is not unfamiliar. I can tell stories and things like that and probably they must come from some experience.

S: My own feeling is - though I don't know; I hope that this isn't just another illusion going to be shattered - I don't think that women have the sort of sadistic

fantasies that men very often do, or aggressive fantasies.

Sulocana: I don't think so, but maybe they have it about a house or something like that, keeping it in order or something, because women can feel so terrible when it's all in disorder.

S: This is what the psychologists tell us, that women feel strongly about the house. Men don't seem to bother. According to one book I read a man - an average normal man that is - couldn't care less whether there were curtains over the window or not, but a woman - and I think this means a Western woman - feels really uncomfortable and exposed if there are no curtains over the windows. And this is almost the first thing a woman does, it is said, when women move into a house: to put up curtains, whereas a man can live without them for years and never think about it.

You said that you found it very difficult to connect with this discussion, but apart from the thing about feeling aggressive about the house, it may well be that much of what we have been talking about is just more applicable to the male psyche than the female [295]

Sulocana: Women might have fantasies about certain people perhaps or people that they think about a lot.

S: Well we are told again by the psychologists - I don't know how true this is - that in romantic terms, women dwell much more in the world of fantasy - young women - than a man does. But I don't know about that, and whether that is a healthy thing that is another matter. It may be just going round and round in romantic fantasizing cycles and perhaps that isn't very healthy.

This brings me to the question of a letter which I've just received from Dhammadinna about the proposed discussion at the next Order meeting about problem people at the centre, and especially problem women. Dhammadinna had made the point that she felt there were quite a few women with a lot of aggression and anger which they couldn't express. We'll take up this question of expression and the need to express in a minute. Whereas she said that men had all sorts of natural outlets like mutual horseplay and backslapping and talking loudly in confident positive tones for which women didn't have the outlet. But I rather wondered about this. I even wondered whether, to begin with, women even felt this aggressiveness and anger in the same way that men did, or whether we are just reading female psychology in terms of masculine psychology, when perhaps there is a different psychology. It seems to me from the little I've seen of women that they tend to get more angry and aggressive when their more basic needs are not satisfied, especially as regards family and husband and so on and so forth. It's more just this area. If that is sort of happy and satisfied women seem not to have aggressive feelings in the way that men do, whereas men seem to be more aggressive and even angry in a more happy positive way,

p.539: "For the second time, Chi-tong asked, 'May I know something about the four Prajnas?' 'If you understand the Three-Bodies,' replied the Patriarch, 'you

should know the four Prajnas as well; your question is quite unnecessary. If you deal with the four Prajnas apart from the Three-Bodies, there would be Prajnas without bodies; in such a case, they would not be Prajnas. (Prajna is the Ultimate Principle of the Three-Bodies, which is Ultimate Reality.)”

It seems fairly clear what the Sixth Patriarch is getting at. When he’s asked about the three kayas he talks about the One Mind, the Essence of Mind, and when he’s asked about the four prajnas he talks about the three kayas. It’s as though first of all you develop Enlightenment through realization of your Essence of Mind, and then of course automatically, being a Buddha, you have the three bodies of Buddha, and if you’ve got the three bodies of a Buddha you automatically have the four wisdoms. [296] So first of all, this monk Chi-tong worries about the three bodies before he’s got the Essence of Mind, he worries about the four wisdoms before he’s got the three bodies, so Hui-neng is just saying, well, start at the beginning. If you have Enlightenment, if you realize the Essence of Mind, well there’s your three bodies, and if you’ve got the three bodies then you’ll have the four wisdoms. So he’s directing his attention back to the one fundamental thing asking him not to worry about the four wisdoms and trying to understand what they are intellectually. The main thing is to realize Enlightenment and then you have all these other things within your own experience, you know them through your own experience. But of course you say this to someone who’s done a lot of intellectual study. This might not be quite applicable to people nowadays if you don’t even know what the four wisdoms are to begin with.

pp.539-40: Mirror-like Wisdom is pure by nature; Wisdom that comprehends all things equally, frees the mind from all impediments; All-discerning Wisdom sees things intuitively; All-performing Wisdom, like Mirror-Wisdom, is free from prejudice. Perception-consciousness of the five-sense-vijnanas, And the Universal Consciousness of the Alaya-vijnana, Are not ‘transmuted’ to Prajna, until the Buddha-stage; While the intellective-consciousness of the Manas, And the discriminative-consciousness of the Manovijnana, Are ‘transmitted’ in the Bodhisattva-stage. When you are able to free yourself entirely from attachments to sense-objects as these ‘transmutations’ take place, Then you will forever abide in the never-ceasing Naga Samadhi.

S: This isn’t very Zen-like. This is short little verses like expositions of Mahayana philosophy especially of the Yogacara school. You encounter a bit of this in the lecture on the depth psychology of the Yogacara. There are four wisdoms which are mentioned here. The fifth one, which is a synthesis of the four, isn’t mentioned. First of all, mirror-like wisdom. This simply reflects, doesn’t distort, just reflects, just sees things as they are.

Chintamani: Which ‘Dhyani’ Buddha is that?

S: Well it varies a little. It’s not always the same set of correlations. Then the wisdom that comprehends all things equally, this is samatha jnana, the wisdom of equality. This means seeing everything as equally void. If all things are void then

they are all equally void, they are all the same. All things are the One Mind: well they are the same. Here you see the element of sameness in everything. They are all sunyata, all the One Mind. So that's the wisdom of sameness. But then there is the all-discerning wisdom or distinguishing wisdom. That's the wisdom which sees things in their unique particularity and individuality.

Subhuti: Tathata?

S: Yes, you could say, but in contradistinction to the previous wisdom it's what sees that which makes things different, hence the uniqueness of things. In other words it's not a question of one-sided monastic [297] vision wiping out all the differences in a featureless unity. The Enlightened mind in all its different aspects sees the unity of things. It also sees the difference. It sees things as one, it sees things as many at the same time. In other words, oneness is not the ultimate category, nor is it manifoldness. Everything is one, everything is many. You see things in their unity, you see them in their particularity, you see them as the same, you see them all as absolutely unique: this twofold vision represented by these two wisdoms.

Then the all-performing wisdom, action at the Enlightenment level. So according to the Yogacara teachings how does one arrive at or develop these four wisdoms? By transforming the consciousness system, the seven consciousness or eight consciousness system of the Yogacara school. So when the five sense vijñanas, consciousness, are transmuted, are transformed, they are transformed into the all-discerning wisdom. The defiled mind consciousness is transformed into the all-discerning wisdom. The relative alaya is transformed into the mirror-like wisdom, and the mano vijñana is transformed into the wisdom of sameness. The absolute alaya is not transformed; it corresponds to the fifth wisdom, it remains the same.

Hui-neng says - and here is an addition of his own which I don't recall finding in the Yogacara itself - that the "All-performing Wisdom, like Mirror-Wisdom, is free from prejudice. Perception-consciousness of the five-sense-vijñanas, And the Universal Consciousness of the Alaya-vijñana, Are not 'transmuted' to Prajna, until the Buddha-stage; While the intellectual-consciousness of the Manas, And the discriminative-consciousness of the Manovijñana, Are 'transmitted' in the Bodhisattva-stage." That's quite interesting. So there is a twofold transformation, one occurring in the Bodhisattva stage, one occurring in the Buddha stage. The terminology is a little different here due to the translation. "Intellectual-consciousness" seems to be the manas and the "discriminative-consciousness" seems to be the klisto-mano vijñana. These are transmuted in the Bodhisattva stage. The "Universal Consciousness" would seem to be the relative alaya or the mirror-like wisdom, and then the sense vijñanas are not transmuted until the Buddha stage. This seems to be Hui-neng's own contribution. In other words you've got eight vijñanas: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, the mano, klisto-mano, and alaya vijñanas. The five sense consciousnesses are transmuted into the all-performing wisdom, but according to Hui-neng this doesn't happen until one reaches the Buddha stage; then the sixth, the mano vijñana, is transmuted into

the wisdom of equality in the Bodhisattva [298] stage; klisto-mano vijnana which is transmuted into the discriminative wisdom is also transmuted in Bodhisattva stage, and then the eighth, the alaya, that is the relative alaya, is transmuted into the mirror-like wisdom in the Buddha stage. This seems to be what he is saying.

Chintamani: If one's activity is only transformed at the Buddha stage then the process of sorting out that activity could be the path of transformation.

S: It could be, yes, at that level as it were. Luk's translation is quite different (p.65):

"The great mirror wisdom is pure and clean by nature, The wisdom of equality frees the mind from ills, The profound observing wisdom is not discriminating, The perfecting wisdom matches that of the great mirror. The fifth, eighth, sixth and seventh, effects and causes turn, But only names are used which have no nature. If, as they turn, you do not feel attachment to them, The myriad (thoughts) that rise in Naga-samadhi dwell."

Footnote: "Naga-samadhi: dragon's samadhi; dragons are noted for their samadhi or stillness of mind."

"The following note is inserted in the text: The above is the transmutation of consciousness into (the four) wisdoms. The sutra says: 'The first five consciousnesses are transmuted into the perfecting wisdom,' - that is, the all-performing - "the sixth consciousness into the profound observing wisdom, the seventh consciousness wisdom of equality and the eighth consciousness into the great mirror wisdom.' In spite of the transmutation of the sixth and seventh consciousnesses as causes, and of the first five consciousnesses and the eighth consciousnesses as effects, there is only a change of terms and no change in substance."

S: There seems to be distinction between cause transmutation and effect transmutation, a bit like the distinction between path of vision and path of transformation. The sixth and seventh consciousnesses are transmuted as causes - that is, mind and soiled mind, and the first five and eighth as effects, that is, the transformation of mind, and soiled-mind consciousness corresponds we may say roughly to the path of vision and the transformation of the five sense consciousnesses, and the alaya corresponds to the path of transformation or completion of the path of transformation. So when both are complete then full Enlightenment, or wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, the fifth jnana or fifth wisdom, has been attained.

So at the same time the note says, "there is only a change in terms and no change in substance." [299] There are the five sense consciousness: these are transmuted into the all-performing wisdom. Their transformation is of the nature of an effect, that is, correspond to the path of transformation, and they are transmuted at the Bodhisattva stage. Then there is the mano vijnana, the mind consciousness, which is transmuted into the discriminating wisdom. The transmutation is of the nature of a cause and it takes place at the Bodhisattva stage and it corresponds to the path of vision. Then there is the soiled consciousness, that is the seventh

consciousness which is transmuted into the wisdom of equality. The transmutation is of the nature of a cause and it takes place in the Bodhisattva stage. Then the alaya vijnana, the store consciousness, the eighth consciousness, is transmuted into the great mirror wisdom, or mirror-like wisdom. It's transmuted in the Buddha stage. It's of the nature of an effect and it corresponds to the path of transformation.

This is quite obscure probably, though in a way it's quite simple. Look back at the wheel of life; it ties up with that in a way. The outermost rim of the wheel of life contains the twelve nidanas. You can subdivide the twelve nidanas in two different ways: the three lives and the two processes, the cause process and the effect process. You can also have the same thing on the spiritual path as it were. You can also classify the four truths in this way. The first truth which is suffering is an effect. The second, which is the cause of suffering, that is *trsna*, is a cause. So effect, cause. The third truth is the cessation of suffering, which is effect, and the fourth is cause, which is the way leading to the cessation. So you've got two effects and two causes. Then if you go back to the path of vision and the path of transformation, the path of vision is like cause and the path of transformation is like effect. In other words in the spiritual life itself and spiritual process you've got the sort of volitional side, the cause, and this is the path of vision, and then you've got its repercussions throughout your personalities represented by the path of transformation, which is the sort of effect process corresponding to the cause process of the path of vision. The path of vision sets in motion: the path of transformation represents the working out of that impetus, as it were. So it's as though Hui-neng applies this to this particular context of the four wisdoms, the eight consciousnesses, and also it's [300] as though the Bodhisattva represents the cause and the Buddha stage represents the fruit of the effect. And this is a commonplace of Chinese Buddhism: this cause process and effect or fruit process as applied to Bodhisattva path represents the causative aspect of our spiritual life, and Buddhahood is the fruit.

Chintamani: So the Bodhisattva stage could be said to be analogous to the path of vision?

S: Yes, but again, analogous, not a point by point parallelism. So if you then (unclear) Hui-neng applies that to the jnanas. There are two jnanas which are developed by the Bodhisattva and therefore are of the nature of a cause, which are dynamic, as it were, and two which are of the nature of an effect and therefore relating more to the process of transformation and the Buddha stage. This is what he is saying. It seems a little complex, but when you get into it, it is quite clear. So that's the reason why he said it isn't all that clear, though it seems to have made sense to this particular monk. It seems to have been highly relevant to his particular need. It just seems a rather neat piece of scholasticism in a way. He was just tidying up all the little doctrinal ends quite neatly. I haven't encountered this elsewhere, by the way, this classification of the four jnanas in this way: two of the nature of cause and two of the nature of effect. But in a way it is quite credible. There is actually a sort of point by point parallelism.

The senses are part of the effect process in the wheel of life - the fact that you've got certain senses - so therefore the wisdom which the senses are transformed into is a sort of effect wisdom rather than a cause. It's a manifestation, it's a light rather than the lamp. Or you could even say, if you want to press the analogy further, that samadhi is more like the cause and prajna more like the effect, except that they are side by side, not one after the other.

It's as though Dwight Goddard's translation [actually Wong Mow Lam's translation, tr.] incorporates the explanation given in the note that Luk quotes.

p.540: "Intrinsically, the Three-Bodies are within our Essence of Mind. When our mind is enlightened, the four Prajnas will appear. When 'Bodies' and Prajna appear as one identity, Then are we able to respond to the appeal of all beings. no matter what form they take. To make an effort to find the Trikaya and the four Prajnas is to take an entirely wrong course; To try to 'discriminate' and 'grasp' them is to misunderstand their intrinsic nature. Through you, Sir, I am now able to realize the profundity of their meaning; Henceforth, I may discard for ever their false and arbitrary names."

S: In a sense, this discriminating and grasping is what the Yogacara tradition does, or even the sutra, in a sense. It's as though Hui-neng is directing the monks' attention away from all [301] that's saying don't try to discriminate the three of this and the four of that, but get back to your own Essence of Mind and realize that, and then you'll be Enlightened as regards the three bodies and the five wisdoms, because they will be the way in which you will be functioning then, and you will know them just as you know your own arm and your own leg, they'll just be part of you, the way in which you function. So since this particular monk has read the Lankavatara Sutra nearly a thousand times, we may take it that he was a rather intellectual person immersed in the philosophy of the Yogacara school and trying to understand it all intellectually and discriminate this body from that and this wisdom from that without any actual spiritual practice. But as the actual teaching of the three bodies and the four wisdoms appears in a sutra, you can't dismiss it entirely, but no doubt the monk had been trying to understand it all intellectually rather than as it were by the Essence of Mind and it is therefore [to] the Essence of Mind that Hui-neng is directing his attention.

Another little point while we are on this: it appeared in a number of Mr Chen's booklets: methods based on the position of cause and methods based on the position of consequence. According to him it is a well-known distinction in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. There are about sixty of these booklets now, mostly in rather poor English, but a lot of very valuable information. According to him, Chinese Buddhism distinguishes very much between spiritual methods based on the position of cause and spiritual methods based on the position of consequence. The easiest way of approach is via the second first. What is a method based on the position of consequence? The position of consequence is the Buddha stage, because that's the effect, the consequence, the fruit. A method based on this stage is saying: you are Buddha, realize that. In other words you start off with the fruit, the consequence, that is, Buddhahood, and you are

asked to take that as your starting point, that you are Buddha, you know, in the Soto Zen way: you are Buddha, realize that. This is a method based on the position of consequence, because you take the effect as your beginning, as your starting point, your standpoint, what you take your stand on. So this is a method which proceeds on the assumption that you are Buddha. The other methods are those which urge you to cultivate and [302] develop and to achieve and attain. These are the methods based on the position of cause and effect and these of course correspond to the Bodhisattva stage. Mr Chen in his booklets has made quite a lot of this and refers to it many times - these two different kinds of methods, and this is in fact what it means. In other words, you could say, the evolutionary approach and the absolute approach, the approach based on that you can become and the approach based on this is what you are and you must realize it and wake up to it. For us in the West, it would seem that the methods based upon the position of cause are more useful, not methods based on the position of consequence, not methods which start off with you being Buddha.

What Chi-tong says in response to the Patriarch is quite clear.

Luk's translation p.66, Chi-tong's stanza [rendered Chih-T'ung in Luk, tr.]:

"The trikaya are immanent in my own body, The four wisdoms are only of my own enlightened mind. Bodies and wisdoms blend into one without obstruction, in response To appeals by living beings they take on various forms. To practise them is wrong, to cling To them is misplaced zeal. Thanks to my master I now understand their meaning Forgetful of impurities which are only words."

S: Luk appends two notes, he says, "The trikaya and four wisdoms cannot be attained by practice and should not be clung to." You can't attain them directly. You've got to attain them via the Essence of Mind. Become a Buddha, and the three bodies and the four wisdoms will look after themselves. The second note says "The self-nature is fundamentally pure and clean and does not rely on practice to get rid of impurities which are non-existent." This is obviously the method in the position of consequence: that you are this, you are already pure, already clean. Just realize it, just wake up to that fact. No practice is necessary. Nothing to do. Which is true, but it is very difficult not to do anything. So much of Ch'an is a method based on the position of consequence rather than based on the position of cause. So far as we are concerned it probably seems to pertain more to Mahayana philosophy - as such this is quite good - than to Ch'an as such, or even to one's own spiritual practice or experience very much. It's certainly useful to know from a general Mahayana Buddhist point of view. It seems that embedded in the sutra, this particular sutra, there are even little nuggets of Mahayana scholasticism one could say, which is in a way quite interesting. The Sixth Patriarch seems to have known about these things. He seems to have made quite a good study of Mahayana, one could say, even the intricacies of the Yogacara school.

pp.540-1: "The monk, Chi-sheung, a native of Kwai-kai of Shun-chow, joined the order in his childhood and was very zealous in his efforts to realize Mind-essence.

One day he came to pay homage to the Patriarch and was asked by the latter whence and for what he came. Chi-sheung replied: 'I have recently been at the White Cliff Monastery in Hung-chow, to study with the Master Ta-tung who was good enough to teach me how to realize Mind-essence and thereby to gain Buddhahood, but as I still have some doubts, I have travelled far to come here to pay my respects to you. Will you kindly clear away my doubts, Sir?' The Patriarch asked, 'What instruction did he give you? Will you please repeat it.' Chi-sheung replied: 'After staying there three months without receiving any instruction, and being zealous for the Dharma, I went alone one night to his chamber and asked him, what my essence of mind was. He asked me, 'Do you see the illimitable void?' 'Yes, I do,' I replied. Then he asked me whether the void had any particular form, and on replying that the void must be formless and therefore can not have any particular form, he said: 'Your Essence of Mind is exactly like the void. To realize that there is nothing to be seen, is Right View. To realize that nothing is knowable, is True Knowledge. To realize that it is neither green nor yellow, neither long nor short; that it is pure by nature; that its quintessence is perfect and clear; is to realize Essence of Mind and thereby to attain Buddhahood. This is also called, Buddha-knowledge.' As I do not quite understand this teaching, will you please enlighten me, Sir?' 'His teaching indicates,' said the Patriarch, 'that he still retains the arbitrary concepts of 'Views' and 'Knowledge'; that explains why he failed to make it clear to you. Listen to this stanza: 'To realize that nothing can be seen, but to retain the concept of 'invisibility' Is somewhat like passing clouds obscuring the face of the sun. To realize that nothing is knowable, but to retain the concept of 'unknowability' May be likened to the clear sky disfigured by a flash of lightning. To let these arbitrary concepts rise spontaneously in the mind Indicates that you have not yet realized Essence of Mind, And that you have not yet found the skillful means to realize it. If you realize for one moment that these arbitrary concepts are wrong, Then your own spiritual light will shine forth unhindered.'"

S: It seems very much a question of the means and the end, that if one takes the concept of [303] invisibility and unknowability and so on and so forth as just means to an end, then fair enough (unclear).

pp.541-2 " 'To allow the concepts of 'invisibility' and 'unknowability' to rise spontaneously in the mind Is to seek Bodhi without freeing oneself from the arbitrary concepts of phenomena. p. 290 He who is puffed-up by the slightest impression, 'I am now enlightened' Is no farther advanced than one under delusion. Had I not put myself at the feet of Your Eminence, I would have remained bewildered, ignorant of the right way to go.'"

S: It's almost as if you put it on an ethical level. Maybe it will become clearer here. It's like being very humble, but sort of having the concept of humility and thinking of yourself as practising humility, well to that extent you are not perfectly humble. Or if you are very kind and affectionate, but you think of yourself and practising kindness and affection, then that is a flaw in your kindness and affection, and in the same way with knowledge. When you know, you know,

but to think that you have knowledge is a flaw in your knowledge. In the same way with Enlightenment. When you are Enlightened, you are Enlightened, but to make a concept of it and to think of yourself and being Enlightened shows that you are not Enlightened. So it's a sort of subtle bondage that Hui-neng has freed this monk from. The previous teacher had taken him so far, but he'd left him with that subtle bondage, apparently because he wasn't free from it himself. He was certainly heading in the right direction, but there was just a sort of last little subtle fetter to be removed.

Mangala: If you are being truly humble then you are being everything else as well.

S: You could say that, yes.

p.542: "One day Chi-sheung asked the Patriarch, 'Buddha preached the doctrine of 'Three Vehicles' and also that of the 'Supreme Vehicle.' I do not understand them; will you please explain them to me?' These are vehicles referred to in various Mahayana sutras. The three vehicles are the Sravakayana, the Pratyekabuddhayana and the Bodhisattvayana or the Buddhayana. The sravaka is the hearer, the disciple, and in the Mahayana is one who has a teacher, that is, a Buddha; he follows an established Dharma, follows the teaching of the Buddha or a Buddha and by his own efforts realizes the truth. The Pratyekabuddha is one who doesn't have a teacher and also doesn't have disciples, but realizes the truth. A Bodhisattva is one who has a teacher and also has disciples. The sravaka: it's not that he doesn't teach, but he doesn't have that fullness of punya which enables him to be a fully effective teacher like a Samyaksambuddha. But putting it very roughly it is said the sravaka has a teacher but no disciple; the Pratyekabuddha neither teacher nor disciple; the Bodhisattva or the Buddha, both teacher and disciples. And these are the three yanas. These are mentioned in the (White) Lotus [304] Sutra symbolized by the goat cart, the deer cart, and the bullock cart. Also, some sutras refer to the supreme vehicle or (?)Agrayana, and the monk says, well, what is all this about?

"The Patriarch replied, '(In trying to understand these) you should introspect your own mind and ignore outward things and phenomena. The distinction of these four vehicles does not exist in the Dharma itself, but in the differentiations of people's minds."

S: This is the important point: "The distinction of these four vehicles does not exist in the Dharma itself." The Dharma is just the Dharma. Sometimes it's referred to as Ekayana, and even the (White) Lotus Sutra says that the three yanas eventually become one yana which is Ekayana, which is Buddhayana. So these distinctions of yanas are not in the Dharma itself; there is just one Dharma and the differentiations are in people's minds, people's approaches, temperaments. Then he goes on to give his own very individual interpretation. Hui-neng refuses to see the three vehicles are representing different forms or schools of Buddhism. He treats them in his own very individual way as simply different stages of progress within the one Dharma. There is just one Dharma. But if you're just

at the level of hearing the sutras and reading them - a purely formal, external, intellectual approach - you are following the Hinayana, even if you are following it reading the Mahayana sutras, in a way you are still a Hinayanist, still a sravaka. If you understand the Dharma, understand the meaning of the Dharma, then you are following the middle vehicle, Pratyekabuddhayana, and if you actually practise the Dharma, that's the great vehicle, the Mahayana. If you "understand all Dharmas (intuitively), become part of them, free from all attachments, to be independent of things and phenomena", and if you possess nothing, that's the Supreme Vehicle. So he's saying as though there's no different schools of Buddhism labelled by these different yanas, they are different stages of progress. I could say I've certainly seen this in my own experience. You can have someone who's technically a Mahayanist but his attitude is Hinayanist, and you can have someone who is technically a Theravadin or a Hinayanist and his basic attitude is very Mahayanistic, so you can't really distinguish the three yanas as sort of schools with everybody belonging to this or everybody belonging to that. They very often are sort of stages of development in the individual himself. So probably it is a mistake to say that everybody in China, all the Buddhists in China, follow the Mahayana. Well in a sense they do: they read the Mahayana scriptures, engage in Mahayana practices, but [305] you may have some of them with a very Hinayanistic approach. I met at least one Tibetan lama whose approach was thoroughly Hinayanistic, and it seemed rather strange: there he was in his red robes, he was very strict, very ascetic, didn't like the Mahayana sutras much. He was always reading the Vinaya and the rules, very austere, very ascetic, and had no time for the Tantra. He was a Tibetan Buddhist and he'd had no contact with Theravada Buddhism outside Tibet, he was entirely within Tibetan Buddhism, he was an entirely native product, but this was his attitude. In the same way I've met Theravada bhikkhus brought up in Ceylon on Abhidharma and Vinaya and all that who had a very Bodhisattva-like attitude - really caring for other people, concerned and really wanting to spread the Dharma and help others, but technically they were sravakas and following the Arahant ideal, but [their] whole attitude was Bodhisattva-like. So it's very difficult to lump everybody together. You have to see each one individually.

Mangala: The way that that Tibetan lama taught didn't have very much to do with the actual doctrine he'd learned, but it was more what he was.

S: Yes. Of course he might even on occasion have taught a Mahayana text, but if he did he would probably teach it in a rather cold individualistic way, and in the same way I know some Theravada bhikkhus may teach something which on paper looks very dry and they put a lot of their own warmth into it and it feels quite different.

Ratnapani: In a sense you have to start in the Hinayana anyway.

S: Yes. You start by reading and reciting the sutras, then you understand, then you practise, if you follow the path of regular steps, that is.

Chintamani: How would you characterize somebody on the Pratyekabuddhayana?

S: Well I've given the traditional explanation. It's quite a mysterious thing what this Pratyekabuddha is, and whether there actually were any. Pratyekabuddhas are known by name, some of them, but they always are referred to in the legendary past. You never hear of anyone actually seeing a Pratyekabuddha in historical times, whereas you certainly get people who follow the Arahat ideal and people who follow the Bodhisattva ideal, but I certainly never encountered anyone who followed the Pratyekabuddha ideal. It's an odd thing. It might even be based on a misunderstanding, I don't know. [306]

Ratnapani: It's a contradiction in terms really to say that you are doing that because the concept has been taken from the Dharma.

S: Yes, so in a way it is in the framework of Buddhism.

Devamitra: Could it be a means of acknowledging other highly developed and inspired spiritual teachers outside the Buddhist tradition?

S: It could possibly have been originally, because it sometimes seems as though the Pratyekabuddhas are a bit like the Upanishadic rishis just living on their own in the forest or the jungle. Pratyekabuddhas are rather ascetic and uncommunicative. If you look at it from a historical point of view, the idea of the Pratyekabuddha could have resulted from attempts to do justice to or find some place within Buddhism for these people. The Theosophists have their own interpretation which is quite interesting and which they thought out on their own without any help from the Buddhist scriptures. They say that the Pratyekabuddhas are on the administrative ray - they've got seven rays - and they say that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are on the teaching ray, but Pratyekabuddhas don't teach because they are inwardly occupied with the sort of spiritual administration of the universe, and they account for this in that way, which is quite interesting but not supported by the Buddhist scriptures, though the Buddhist scriptures don't say anything to contradict that. But one can say that the whole idea of Pratyekabuddhahood is of purely literary interest; it doesn't play any effective part in the spiritual life of any Buddhist community anywhere. He remains a rather mysterious figure. He's neither a Hinayanist nor a Mahayanist, in a way.

I should perhaps mention that this particular monk is the one who is believed to have been associated with the compilation of the sutra after Hui-neng's death and to have convened that meeting where he vigorously denounced the Gradual school. It's the monk who takes place in this particular dialogue.

"Essence of Mind is always a state of tranquillity. Since the word 'vehicle' means 'motion', discussion is out of place. All depends on intuitive self-practice. Do not ask any more questions." One could of course object that to claim the Essence of Mind is tranquil as opposed to in motion is a one-sided view. You could object like that. No doubt the Sixth Patriarch would have an answer ready, but on the face of it it looks like that. But anyway, what he wants to do is to get the monk back to practice and to cut short any further [307] questions, and that he does. "All depends on intuitive self-practice. Do not ask any more questions."

You've been allowed to ask two and that's all, so now he's got to get on with his practice.

One gets the impression from these few exchanges that the Sixth Patriarch was quite familiar with the Mahayana sutras and with standard Buddhist doctrine, Mahayana doctrine, and that he was often dealing with people who'd studied these things quite thoroughly but perhaps got a bit stuck in them, and he felt the need to get them back to the realization of their own Essence of Mind and actual practice, hence this rather ruthless subjective emphasis. He strongly discouraged the more intellectual approach, when it was an approach for its own sake.

Wolf: It seems strange to me that monks presumably living in monastic quarters would probably have a routine of meditating daily to be told time and again to go back to their - I assume - meditation practice, and all will be revealed. One assumes they are doing this all the time anyway.

S: I think there are two points which I have mentioned here, that I'm quite sure that a lot of monks weren't. In many parts of the Buddhist world the practice is much more the observance of the Vinaya and the study of texts. For instance, in Ceylon meditation isn't a part of the routines of the monasteries at all. The monks just meditate individually if they feel like it and most don't. They know the texts and they observe the rules, but meditation is comparatively rare. In China they had what they call Vinaya monasteries, the main function of which was to observe the Vinaya and meditation was not practised. Again you had monasteries where the sutras were studied and very often meditation was not practised, so therefore later on in the history of what we call Ch'an, special monasteries sprang up for meditation. Though again it must be said that in quite a few monasteries meditation was a part of the daily routine. So no doubt some at least of the monks who came to Hui-neng were people who had never actually practised any meditation. Again, another point which is important: even if you have practised meditation in the ordinary manner, so what? The Essence of Mind is within, but within is not within as opposed to without. This is very clear from the Surangama Samadhi Sutra, that the Essence of Mind is in a way beyond subject and object, we can say. So when you are asked to look within it's not exactly within as [308] opposed to without, so it is not sort of psychological introspection, but it's looking up, you can say, if you want to use an expression, not out, not in the subjective psychological sense, but up into that other dimension which is no more in than it is out. So it's that other dimension, which he calls the Essence of Mind. It's impossible to express it in spatial terms. When one spatial term becomes stale you start using another. Within is no closer to the truth than without; they are both spatial. Is the truth really within? Is the mind within? This is what the Buddha was getting at in the Surangama Samadhi Sutra. He said that if your mind was really inside your body and you are looking out, how come you don't sort of look through a glass which you hold in front of your eyes?

Wolf: Yes, you think of getting some reflection from the mirror-like wisdom, as a case of what it's like.

S: Yes, but don't think of the mind as literally within. What do you mean by within? It's no more within than without. So then of course Ananda says in the dialogue, rather hopefully, well it must be in between, but the Buddha wouldn't let him get away with that either. And then it comes to: well it isn't anywhere - it isn't inside and it isn't outside, it isn't in between, where is it? And then of course he eventually experiences a sort of awakening. It's another dimension. So when people are looking for it outside as if it's out there, then the Patriarch says, 'No, it's not it's in here.' So then they start getting all psychologically introspective and he says, 'Up there, beyond!' using another term. But it isn't anywhere. So what are you going to do?

Chintamani: But I sometimes equate meditative introspection with looking in.

S: You even get some people looking in squinting down their noses trying to literally look in as though it's somewhere near your liver. But Hui-neng is clearly dealing with people very much as they come, without preconceived ideas, but we have to be very careful not to take these little exchanges as a sort of text or scripture, but try to bear in mind that they were very individual exchanges and what he said was relating very much to the individual needs of that person. [309]

p.542-3 "The monk, Chi-Wang, a follower of the Dhyana school, had a consultation with the Fifth Patriarch and afterward considered himself to have attained Samadhi. For twenty years he confined himself to a small temple and all the time kept the Dhyana posture. Un-chak, a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch, on a pilgrimage to the northern bank of the Hoang-ho, heard about him and called at his temple. 'What are you doing here?' enquired Un-chak. 'I am abiding in Samadhi,' replied Chi-wang. 'Abiding in Samadhi, did you say?' Observed Un-chak. 'I wish to enquire whether you are doing it consciously or unconsciously? If you are doing it unconsciously, it would mean that it is possible for all inanimate objects, such as earthen ware, stones, trees and weeds, to attain Samadhi. On the other hand, if you do it consciously, then any animate object or sentient being might abide in Samadhi, also.' Chi-wang then said, 'When I am in Samadhi, I know neither consciousness nor unconsciousness.' 'In that case,' observed Un-chak, 'it is a perpetual quietude, in which there is neither abiding nor leaving. A state of samadhi in which you can abide or come out of at will, can not be a perfect Samadhi.' Chi-wang was nonplused. After a long time, he asked, 'May I know who is your teacher?' 'My teacher is the Sixth Patriarch, of Tso-kai,' replied Un-chak. 'How does he define Dhyana and Samadhi?' enquired Chi-Wang."

S: Where did Chi-Wang go wrong? Or what was the point of Un-chak's remark?

Mangala: He was living in a state of quietude. It wasn't real samadhi. He wasn't functioning in the world, as it were, as a human being.

S: So where he caught him was Chi-Wang said, "I am abiding in Samadhi" and then he says later on, "I know neither consciousness nor unconsciousness" so he's suggesting, or implying, he's beyond the opposites, but Un-chak points out that the mere fact that he is abiding in samadhi, and sitting in that same posture for

twenty years and all that, shows quite clearly that he hasn't gone beyond the opposites, and that whatever state of mind he's in is not a state of mind which is absolutely beyond the opposites - that's just words - and then when he points out this then Chi-Wang realizes that and then he becomes nonplussed, and after a long time he asks, "May I know who is your teacher?" In other words, 'You've got something from somewhere,' so he puts this question: "How does he define Dhyana and Samadhi?"

"According to his teaching," replied Un-chak, 'the Dharmakaya is perfect and serene and unchanging; its quintessence and its function are in a state of 'Suchness.' The five aggregates are intrinsically void and the six sense-objects are non-existent. There is neither abiding nor leaving in Samadhi; there is neither quietude nor perturbation. The nature of Dhyana is non-abiding, so we should seek to transcend the state of 'abiding in the calmness of Dhyana.' The nature of Dhyana is uncreative, so we should transcend the notion of 'creating a state of Dhyana.' Essence of Mind is like space without the limitations of space."

S: When it says here "The nature of Dhyana is uncreative" I suspect that what the translator means was 'uncreated', I think. It's quite clear that Chi-Wang was abiding in just a one-sided quiescent state which wasn't the real meditation, the real samadhi, from the standpoint of Hui-neng. It was all right as far as it went, it was a genuine state, it was a genuine experience, nothing wrong with it, but it wasn't the ultimate samadhi. He hadn't transcended the opposites, he hadn't been able to sort of keep that state and function in the world with it. He was abiding in a one-sided mental state of calmness and quiescence. So Un-chak exposed that, and being a sincere person Chi-wang realized he had come up against something now more and he had an open mind about it.

"The Patriarch said, 'What Un-chak said is quite right. Let your mind be in a state like the illimitable void, but do not think of it as 'vacuity' ". This is what we saw with somebody else: invisibility is all right, but no concept of invisibility.

Mangala: It's like taking sunyata literally.

S: Yes and using it as a sort of concept.

pp.543-4 "Let the mind function freely, but whether it is in activity or at rest, let it abide nowhere. Forget all discriminations: see no distinction between a sage and an ordinary man; ignore the distinction between subject and object; let Essence of Mind and all phenomena and objects be alike in a state of 'Suchness.' Then you will truly be in Samadhi all the time." This is the key to it: "Then you will truly be in Samadhi all the time." Chi-Wang originally thought that being in samadhi all [310] the time meant stopping doing other things and concentrating all the time on the samadhi. And he even went so far as to remain in the same posture all the time, but the Sixth Patriarch is pointing out that it's a mental state beyond the opposites and says that you must have whether you are actually sitting or walking, keeping silent or speaking or whatever you may be doing or not doing. So the perpetual samadhi is that not just cutting out our other activities and confining yourself to meditation. There's also another point: that

Chi-Wang was a disciple of the Fifth Patriarch and he had a consultation with him and surely the Fifth Patriarch didn't teach him wrong, but he got hold of the wrong end of the stick somehow, and it needed the Sixth Patriarch, after twenty years had elapsed, to put him on the right path, or rather to take him a stage further, take him on to the end, and that's quite interesting. So even if you get a Patriarch you can still make mistakes because you misunderstand.

"Chi-wang was thereby fully enlightened. What he had considered for the past twenty years as an attainment, now all vanished. He remained with the Patriarch for a time and then returned to Ho-Pei where he taught many people, monks as well as laymen." Previously he'd just been sitting there in samadhi, but now he taught many people, monks as well as laymen.

Hridaya: You talked about the transmission of the essence of a sutra, or the understanding of it, as being a confirmation, and it seems that that was just what Chi-Wang didn't have. He considered himself in samadhi: he'd had no confirmation.

S: Yes, not even from the Fifth Patriarch, and it needed the disciple of the Sixth Patriarch to go along there and question the validity of his attainment before he could get any further. This is also one of the dangers of living alone. There is no one to question your attainment, as it were. You could have easily settled down with a limited attainment and thinking that this is it. But we can see at the same time that Chi-Wang must have been quite a sincere person and his mistake was a genuine mistake, because it was pointed out to him by the disciple of the Sixth Patriarch he didn't argue or try to defend himself. There was just this long pause when he must have really been thinking it over and going through quite a lot of inner turmoil, and yet we are not told about that, though it must have been something of that kind. And then he says to Un-chak, "who is your teacher": you've got something or you've seen something that I haven't; where did you get it from? Who is your teacher. I was a disciple of the Fifth Patriarch and I thought I'd really got there, but apparently it isn't so. You've got a further insight. [311] Who is your teacher? Then he said, well, "my teacher is the Sixth Patriarch," not that the Sixth Patriarch was better than the Fifth Patriarch, but that Chi-Wang had just been not ready and he stayed on his own with no one to correct him. But his fundamental sincerity was there, and as soon as he came up against a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch who was Enlightened then the limitations of his own achievement became obvious and he saw he'd have to start looking further, so he went to see the Sixth Patriarch and then he got a real confirmation. And you can see it isn't a small thing, after twenty years, to realize that you aren't where you thought you were and have sufficient openness of mind to be able to go on from there even after all that time. So it says quite a lot for Chi-wang that he was able to adopt that sort of attitude, and, "What he had considered for the past twenty years was an attainment, now all vanished." Not that he said, 'Oh it wasn't so much after all.' It just vanished. It was no longer there.

p.544: "What obscurity is there in that?" the Patriarch says. Well it seems

pretty clear and obvious to me. Where is the obscurity?

“All beings have two bodies: the physical body and an essence body.” Like Rupakaya and Dharmakaya.

“Chi-tao replied, ‘All beings have two bodies: the physical body and an essence body. The former is impermanent - it exists and it deceases. The latter is permanent, but it knows not and feels not. Now the Sutra says, ‘When both Becoming and Cessation cease to operate, the bliss of Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change arises.’ I can not understand which body ceases to exist, and which body enjoys the bliss. It cannot be the physical body that enjoys, because when it dies, the material elements disintegrate and disintegration is suffering, the very opposite of bliss. If it is the essence body that ceases to exist, it would be in the same ‘unfeeling’ state as inanimate objects, such as the grass, trees and stones. Who, then, will be the enjoyer?’” I don’t know where he gets this idea that the essence body is ‘unfeeling’, it seems to me like some obscure reference to Chinese thought or Chinese philosophy. It certainly isn’t a Buddhistic idea.

pp.544-5 “Moreover, essence-nature is the quintessence of ‘Becoming and Cessation’ whose manifestation is the union of the five ‘aggregates’ (body, sensation, perception, consciousness and intellection). That is to say, from one essence, five functions arise. This process of Becoming and Cessation is everlasting. When function and operation ‘arise’ from the quintessence, it becomes; when operation and function are ‘absorbed’ back into the quintessence, it ceases to exist. If reincarnation is admitted, there will be no Cessation of Changes, as in the case of sentient beings. If reincarnation is out of the question, then things will remain forever in a state of lifeless quintessence, like the case of inanimate objects. When this is the case, under the limitations and restrictions of Nirvana, even existence would be impossible to all things, much less enjoyment.”

S: It seems to me that this particular monk has got rather tied up with Chinese speculations about body and essence and so on and so forth.

“‘You are a bhikkhu,’ said the Patriarch, ‘how can you adopt the fallacious views of Eternalism and Annihilationism that are held by heretics, and venture to criticise the teaching of the Supreme Vehicle? Your argument implies that apart from the physical body, there is an essence body; and that Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change may be sought apart from ‘Becoming and Cessation.’ Further, from the statement, ‘Nirvana is everlasting rest,’ you infer that there must be somebody to play the part of enjoyer.”

S: What is the Sixth Patriarch doing? What is his basic procedure here in dealing with these questions and difficulties? He’s doing the same thing three times, but what is that?

Chintamani: He’s saying that what you believe is not in line with the commitment you’ve made.

S: Yes, he says that to begin with, which is very challenging, but how does he deal with the actual arguments and difficulties?

Subhuti: He breaks the arguments down by getting down to the fundamental [312] presuppositions on which they are based.

S: Right. He's getting down to presuppositions. He's questioning the assumptions in each case. "Your argument implies that apart from the physical body there is an essence body." That's one fundamental assumption, which I think probably comes in Chinese thought. Then he assumed that "Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change may be sought apart from 'Becoming and Cessation'," that you can seek Nirvana apart from samsara: that's assumption number two, and then, "From the statement 'Nirvana is everlasting rest', you infer that there must be somebody to play the part of the enjoyer." You say that Nirvana is a state of bliss, therefore there must be someone enjoying that state of bliss: that's your third assumption. So first of all he is pointing out that the monk is falling into heretical extremes, and then he says that everyone of his arguments or difficulties is based upon certain assumptions which are highly questionable. So he really sort of undermines him. He's not trying to deal with the arguments on their own level, that would be pretty futile, but he's questioning the very assumptions on which all of them rest, that all those assumptions are inconsistent with Buddhist thought, Buddhist spiritual insight.

"It is exactly these fallacious views that makes people crave for sentient existence and worldly pleasure." So what are these fallacious views? First of all that there is an essence body apart from the physical body, that Nirvana is to be sought apart from samsara, and that an experience implies an unchanging subject of the experience, that enjoyment implies an enjoyer, and he says that "It is exactly these fallacious views that makes people crave for sentient existence and worldly pleasure." In other words, wrong views are the basis of your wrong worldly living.

"These people are the victims of ignorance; they identify the union of the five aggregates as the 'self' and regard all other things as 'not-self'; they crave for individual existence and have an aversion to death; they are drifting about from one momentary sensation to another in the whirlpool of life and death without realizing the emptiness of mundane existence which is only a dream and an illusion; they commit themselves to unnecessary suffering by binding themselves to rebirth; they mistake the state of everlasting joy of Nirvana to be a mode of suffering; they are always seeking after sensual pleasures. It was for these people, victims of ignorance, that the compassionate Buddha preached the real bliss of Nirvana."

S: He's really letting him have it, and he says that it is on account of fallacious views of this sort that people get themselves into such a mess and run after worldly pleasures and suffer, etc, "it was for the sake of these miserable deluded beings that the Buddha taught out of compassion about Nirvana, which was the true and lasting bliss."

"'Never for a moment was Nirvana either the phenomena of Becoming and Cessation, or the ceasing of Becoming and Cessation. It is the perfect manifestation

of Rest and Cessation of Change, and at the 'time' of manifestation, there is no such thing as manifestation. It is called 'everlasting' joy because it has neither enjoyer nor non-enjoyer."

S: He's simply saying, 'Well for heaven's sake make use of the Buddhist terms if you like, but don't be misled [313] by them, don't take them literally, don't make philosophical arguments and objections on the basis of taking them literally. All these things are to just lead you in the right direction. "It is called 'everlasting' joy because it has neither enjoyer nor non-enjoyer."

p.546: "The Supreme Maha Parinirvana Is perfect, permanent, calm. radiantly illuminative. Common and ignorant people miscall it death. While heretics arbitrarily declare it to be annihilation. Those who belong to the Small Vehicle and to the Middle Vehicle Regard Nirvana as 'non-action.' All these are merely intellectual speculations, And they form the basis of the sixty-two fallacious views. Since they are merely names, invented for the occasion, They have nothing to do with Absolute Truth. Only those of super-eminent mind Can understand thoroughly what Nirvana is, And take an attitude toward it of neither attachment nor indifference. They know that the five aggregates, And the so-called 'self' arising from the aggregates, Together with all external forms and objects, And the various phenomena of words and voice, Are all equally unreal, like a dream or an illusion. They make no discrimination between a sage and an ordinary man, Nor do they have any arbitrary Concept of Nirvana. They are above 'affirmation' and 'negation'; They break the barriers between the past, the present .and the future. Thy use their sense organs when occasion requires, But the concept of 'using' does not arise. They may particularise on all sorts of things. But the concept of 'particularization' arises not. Even during the cataclysmic fire at the end of a kalpa. When ocean beds are burnt dry; Or during the blowing of catastrophic winds, when mountains topple; The everlasting bliss of Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change that is Nirvana Remains the same and changes not."

S: This is probably one of the most important passages with regards teaching in the entire text of Hui-neng. The Sixth Patriarch's meaning comes out very strongly and clearly, and this is of course basic Mahayana teaching.

"The Supreme Maha Parinirvana is perfect, permanent, calm. radiantly illuminative. Common and ignorant people miscall it death." Because it is the death of the ego.

"Those who belong to the Small Vehicle and to the Middle Vehicle regard Nirvana as non-action," that is to say, those who follow the sravaka path and the Pratyekabuddha, they, it is alleged, have a one-sided view of Nirvana. They regard it as non-action as opposed to action, as a state of calmness and quiescence rather like that monk's view of samadhi in the previous dialogue. He thought that samadhi was a state of just sitting still and not even changing your posture for twenty years. In the same way, those who are called, in the Mahayana, sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, or those who are following that particular ideal, have a one-sided view of Nirvana. It's a state of rest away from the world, a

state of peace away from it all, outside the samsara, and so on and so forth. This is quite all right to begin with, this provisional view, but it isn't ultimate. Then Hui-neng says, "All these are merely intellectual speculations," that is to say they are rationalizations of one-sided, limited imperfect experience, "and they form the basis of the sixty-two fallacious views".

There is a very important sutta in the Pali canon called the Brahmajala Sutta, which is the first of the thirty-two dialogues in the Digha Nikaya. This is sometimes considered very significant, because usually, in the Tipitaka, the Sutta Pitaka is enumerated first. In the Sutta Pitaka the Digha Nikaya comes first, and in the Digha Nikaya the Brahmajala Sutta comes first. So it is said that the compilers surely did not put it there by accident. And the Brahmajala Sutta deals with the sixty-two false views. It just sweeps all those out of the way before you get started on the Buddha's actual teaching. And the sixty-two wrong views are all variations of the two basic wrong views: eternalism and annihilationism. And these [314] have got various permutations, but basically eternalism is the belief that there is an ego, which is real, and that the ego goes on after death unchanging. Annihilationism is that there is an ego and it's real, but when you die it's just annihilated: that's that, that's the end of you. Then this is of course transposed to the religious context. If for instance you believe that you have now a real existent self and that when you gain Nirvana, that self which you experience now will cease to exist, that's annihilationism, but if you believe that this self which you now experience will continue to exist when you are in Nirvana, the only difference being that the self, instead of experiencing the samsara as it does now, will then be experiencing Nirvana, that's eternalism. There are altogether sixty-two variations of this basic dual miccha-ditthi, but it is important to get the two basic forms straight. One is that there is a real self which goes on and which is not annihilated ever, and the other view is that there is a real self which can at some time or other be annihilated. So it is basically this that the Sixth Patriarch is getting at, having perceived quite clearly and quite quickly that this particular monk was making these basic assumptions, because the monk says, "All things are impermanent and so they belong to the Dharma of Becoming and Cessation. When both Becoming and Cessation cease to operate, Cessation of Change with its bliss of Perfect Rest (Nirvana) arise." And then the Sixth Patriarch says, "What obscurity is there in that?" So then Chi-tao says, (p.544) "All beings have two bodies: the physical body and an essence body. The former is impermanent - it exists and it deceases. The latter is permanent, but it knows not and feels not." So he's got himself sort of muddled up with this eternalism and annihilationism. He sort of arbitrarily separates the form body from the essence body and regards them as characterizing these different ways in the light of eternalism and annihilationism, and in this way he really gets himself tangled up. But the Patriarch says that the whole basis of the delusion is just these two things.

Chintamani: The thing that keeps most people craving after Nirvana is eternalism.

S: Yes, but you see, as the Patriarch says, “I am trying to describe to you something that intrinsically is ineffable.” So you can describe the experience only in two ways. You can describe it in terms of annihilationism, you can describe it in terms of eternalism, but you mustn’t take either literally. For instance, if [315] you say that when you gain Nirvana the ego disappears, the ego is swallowed up, the dew drop slips into the shining sea [quoting *The Light of Asia*, tr.], you are no longer there. This is annihilationism if you take these expressions literally. But if you say, for instance, ‘Well when I gain Nirvana, then I shall be looking around seeing all these wonderful things, revelling in all that bliss, I shall be at the centre of it all.’ If you take that literally, that is eternalism. But language doesn’t offer you any other possibilities, so you can’t help trying to describe things in this way, or thinking of these things in this way. Even the Sixth Patriarch has to use language, when he opens his mouth, anyway. So therefore he says, “I am trying to describe to you something that intrinsically is ineffable, in order to help you to get rid of fallacious views. If you do not interpret my words too literally you may perhaps know a wee bit of Nirvana.” (p.547) So on the whole I would say that the Theravada uses the more as it were annihilationist expressions and therefore, when the Theravada takes itself literally it becomes annihilationist. Modern exponents often fall into this, or at least seem to, or give this impression. The Mahayana on the other hand tends to go to the other extreme and to present things in terms of eternalism, especially popular Mahayana. But both are to be avoided. The basic fallacy is that there is an actually existing real I or me - well, that’s what we experience - and then we either go on to think of it as either persisting indefinitely or as being cut off, but neither is really true. The same difficulty applies, or arises, in the context of rebirth: is it the same or is it another? Here again, two extremes: one is that when you die, that’s it, and that the being that arises subsequently is quite distinct. The other is that is the same old you carrying on just as a new body. That’s a Hindu view, but the Buddhist view is different: in dependence on this, that arises, but neither absolute continuity and identity, nor complete difference: conditionality, not a cause and effect in the sense of cause and effect either different or the same - conditionality, neither the same nor different. This is also the middle way.

Chintamani: Is this the point over which the Arahats walked out from the Buddha in the (White) Lotus Sutra? [This is a misunderstanding that was current in the FWBO at the time. The Lotus Sutra states (chapter 2) only that five thousand of the assembly (which included monks and lay people) walked out, tr.]

S: No. That was just a further truth, not this particular point. They grasped all that, but there was something still more. And Arahats are fools only in relation to Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, not in relation to [316] ordinary people. So what all this really means is, taking our present experience, our present mode of awareness, as ultimate. This is the basic miccha-ditthi, if you like, and then thinking of it as either continuing or as being cut off. In this way you get your two basic fallacious views. Then again, there are various other sort of

applications: ‘Well how did I begin to exist? Was I existing before I was born or was I not? Did I actually really come into existence or was I there all the time?’ Again, the two extreme views. So therefore the Sixth Patriarch says, “Those who belong to the Small Vehicle and to the Middle Vehicle regard Nirvana as non-action”, or they regard it as a sort of cutting off, an annihilation of the self - that there is a real self, first of all, and then that real self is annihilated and that is Nirvana, or there is action beforehand on the part of that real self, and when that self is annihilated then, of course, how can it act? There is no self, that Nirvana is non-action. “All these are merely intellectual speculations and they form the basis of the sixty-two fallacious views.” It just occurs to me that sometimes we should have a seminar on the Brahmajala Sutta and just go through all these fallacious views. Some of them are very weird and wonderful. In some cases the phraseology of the Pali is so obscure that we are not even sure which particular wrong view is being pointed out. There is a whole sort of group of views, or of people holding views, that are described as eel-wrigglers, because they wriggle like eels with their false views and they are very slippery and difficult to catch hold of and change their position, but the Buddha firmly grasps them, as it were, by the tail and won’t let them get away. Brahmajala means the great net, so this is the Buddha’s great net in which he catches all these views and hauls them to shore and disposes of them.

“Since they are merely names, invented for the occasion,” - that is, the sixty-two fallacious views - “They have nothing to do with Absolute Truth. Only those of super-eminent mind can understand thoroughly what Nirvana is, and take an attitude toward it of neither attachment nor indifference. They know that the five aggregates, and the so-called ‘self’ arising from the aggregates, together with all external forms and objects, and the various phenomena of words and voice, are all equally unreal, like a dream or an illusion.” There is a certain point in the comparison. You can talk of a thing continuing to exist or being annihilated only if you think of that thing as real or really real. But Hui-neng says it’s like a dream. Can you really talk about the death of a man in a dream? Has the dream man really died? No, because it is only a dream. So in the same way with regards to all worldly things including ourselves. You [317] can’t really speak in terms of our continuing to exist or being annihilated any more than you can of someone in a dream. So this is just an illustration. Again, it is not to be taken literally, not to be made the basis of a philosophy - that the world is a dream - a metaphysical interpretation: not like that. He’s just giving you a hint.

Wolf: He says the “so-called” self.

S: Yes.

“They make no discrimination between a sage and an ordinary man, nor do they have any arbitrary Concept of Nirvana. They are above ‘affirmation’ and ‘negation’; they break the barriers between the past, the present and the future. They use their sense organs when occasion requires, but the concept of ‘using’ does not arise. They may particularise on all sorts of things. But the concept of ‘particularization’ arises not. Even during the cataclysmic fire at the end of

a kalpa. When ocean beds are burnt dry; or during the blowing of catastrophic winds, when mountains topple; the everlasting bliss of Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change that is Nirvana remains the same and changes not.”

S: So this is very powerful and very affirmative. By the way, at the end of a kalpa, according to Buddhist tradition, the world or the universe can be destroyed in three different ways, or any one of three different ways: by fire, by water, and by air - air meaning some terrific explosion. So he’s referring to that though he only mentions two: the fire and the wind or air. The Patriarch then says to Chi-tao, “I am trying to describe to you something that intrinsically is ineffable, in order to help you to get rid of fallacious views. If you do not interpret my words too literally you may perhaps know a wee bit of Nirvana.”

“Chi-tao became highly enlightened and in a rapturous mood he made obeisance and departed.” He got a real high: one suspects he wasn’t Enlightened in the real Samyaksambuddha sense, but it was enough for the time being anyway. At least, he got rid of all of his intellectual confusion and he departed rapturously happy. Again we see the Sixth Patriarch coming back to plain straightforward Mahayana Buddhism, or even basic Buddhism, when he talks about the sixty-two fallacious views; these run through the whole of the Dharma, all the different schools. There is nothing particularly Zen-like here.

Devamitra: The Patriarch refers to Mahaparinirvana right at the beginning as opposed to just Nirvana. Why is that?

S: There are two things here, but first of all a few words about the word itself. According to some scholars, in Pali the word ‘nibbana’ was not originally a noun. You get the verb ‘nibbuta’ which is usually translated as ‘extinguished’, and of course this has given rise to all sort of misunderstandings and misinterpretations, that Nirvana is a state of annihilation. For instance, you can interpret it (and in some contexts it is quite correct, from a literal point of view) that the monk became extinct, became nibbuta, if you translate it into extinction of the passions, extinction of the three fires of craving, aversion, and ignorance. But sometimes the language of the text is such [318] that if you are not careful it suggests an absolute annihilation, which of course the Buddha specifically denies, but the point I’m making is that originally it was a verb, not a noun, and it occurs like that in the Dhammapada, and I’ve translated that rather clumsily, but I’ve been determined to sort of keep the verbal form as ‘Nirvanize’. [Bhante is referring to Dhammapada verse 89. During the editing process he changed this expression to ‘become cool’, tr.] He becomes ‘Nirvanized’, not that he attains a thing called Nirvana, but that he is ‘Nirvanized’, transformed into a new mode of being as it were. So the concept of Nirvana represents a sort of hypothesis of the verb, not really that there is a thing called Nirvana. But anyway eventually the noun came into general use and Nirvana is then synonymous with Enlightenment. But Nirvana usually has a negative ring about it and is nearly always defined as the complete cessation of the three fires: the cessation of craving, hatred, and ignorance. But the implication is there is something more, which in the Theravada is not expressed, because the Theravada on the whole doesn’t express

itself in very positive terms. It says what is not there, and what is there it leaves to be felt or experienced. So usually, Nirvana, we can say, is the sort of negative aspect of Enlightenment. It is that aspect of Enlightenment which consists in its complete transcendence of those three fires, or the complete extinction of those three fires: this is Nirvana and it is something to be gained during one's life itself. Now also in Pali you have not just Nibbana but Parinibbana, and especially Parinibbana is used in connection with the Buddha and in connection with the Buddha's death, as we would say. That's referred to as his Parinibbana or sometimes even Mahaparinibbana, 'pari' meaning supreme, 'maha' meaning great. But it's made very clear in the Theravada teaching that, as regards the content of the experience itself, there is no difference: Nibbana and Parinibbana, or Nirvana and Parinirvana, are the same; the difference is an external one. In the case of Nibbana, the Nibbana experience is there associated with the five skandhas that make up the psychophysical personality. In the case of Parinibbana the psychophysical personality drops off; all that is left is the Nirvanic experience itself: this is called Parinibbana. So therefore sometimes you get the expressions Anupadisesa Nibbana and Saupadisesa Nibbana, which means Nibbana with an adjunct and Nibbana without an adjunct, the adjunct being the psychophysical organism.

So this, in the Theravada [319] and in the Hinayana generally, is the distinction of Nibbana and Parinibbana, or Nirvana and Parinirvana. It doesn't go beyond this. Later on the Mahayanists took up or they adopted this term Nirvana, and Parinirvana; sometimes they used these terms in the Hinayanistic sense or senses, but also, gradually, the Mahayanists came to feel that the Hinayana conception of Nirvana was one-sided: that it was cessation as opposed to non-cessation, it was inaction as opposed to action, etc. Well it may have been that some Hinayanists fell into this sort of trap or it may be that the Mahayanists were just defining a certain possibility of mistake and they described it as the Hinayana attitude, though that may not have actually coincided with any school. But anyway, the Mahayanists eventually developed their own conception of Nirvana - which they regarded as more correct - on the basis of the Mahayana sutras, and very often they referred to that conception of theirs as Parinirvana, distinguishing it from the Nirvana or even Parinirvana of the Hinayanists. But usage is by no means consistent. In the Lankavatara Sutra you've got the four Nirvanas, one being the Nirvana according to the heretics, a Nirvana according to the Hinayanists, and Nirvana according to the Mahayanists. Sometimes they use the word Nirvana for their own conception of Nirvana - just Nirvana - and sometimes they call their own conception Parinirvana or Mahaparinirvana to distinguish it from the Hinayanistic Nirvana. But terminology is by no means consistent, so it's quite easy to get confused.

So here the Sixth Patriarch is clearly talking about the Mahayanistic conception of Nirvana, and he calls that "Supreme Mahaparinirvana".

Wolf: If we compare this to the wheel of life - the three fires, when in these cases there will no longer be a body, the skandhas will go, and you said there would

be just the experience. Doesn't this presuppose an experience?

S: Well Hui-neng says not. He says that is a fallacious view.

Wolf: That this is what is so difficult to get beyond?

S: Right, because our whole structure of experience, all our speech, is based upon this assumption. So we have to distort and sort of do violence to our ordinary language to convey this little hint, as Hui-neng says. The whole structure of language is subject-object, subject-predicate. According to [320] Buddhism, this distorts reality. So when we talk about someone achieving Nirvana we've got to separate the subject achieving from what he's attained, but this is just because of language, but we mustn't be misled by that language. This is why in the Pali scriptures the Buddha said the Tathagata uses the same terms as other people, but he is not misled by them. It's so easy to be misled by language and raise artificial difficulties based on a literal understanding of language, and this is what this man was doing in this dialogue, in this exchange, and this is what Hui-neng was trying to cure him of and begging him not to do, and he's even more aware that his own exposition may be misunderstood if it's taken literally. This seems to be a very real sort of passage, as though you've got back to the real Hui-neng and it's really Hui-neng speaking again.

Wolf: What is the word in Sanskrit and Pali for awareness?

S: There are several words. There is *sati* or *smṛti*. *Sati* is Pali, *smṛti* is Sanskrit, literally it means memory, recollection, awareness, and then there is *apamāda* or *apramāda*, which means non-heedlessness - that's very often used; and then (?) *saṃtāpajātā* which means being very awake, that's quite often used especially in Pali [*sambujjati*?, tr.].

Then again we get this same sort of difficulty with regards to the Buddha: whether he exists or does not exist after death. Apparently in the Buddha's day people were really fascinated by this question. They wanted to know whether the Buddha would continue to exist after death or not, but he said you can't say. If you say he will not exist after death, that's annihilationism; but you also cannot say he both exists and will not exist; language fails.

Mangala: Could you say the same about an ordinary human being?

S: Oh yes, apropos rebirth. Will you continue to exist after death in a new body or not? Yes and no. Not some unchanging entity, but not anything annihilated either.

Wolf: When you say will 'you' continue to exist, you could also say that 'you' was never born anyway.

S: Then there is no problem. You see the difficulties that arise when [321] you use such words as 'will you continue to exist after death?' You've already prejudiced the issue. You've already predetermined it. You force the other person to reply in a particular way, to share your assumption, and of course what the Buddha and the Sixth Patriarch are saying is that it's a wrong assumption. So the essential

thing is to try to realize or try to see that our present mode of awareness and our splitting things into subject and object or subject and predicate is a distortion of reality. It's just one way of experiencing and not the ultimate one and our language and our thinking is all based on this. This is also one of the values, for some people at least, for some kind of drug experience. At least it breaks up the usual ego experience, even though it is fairly shattering and you don't want to do with it again afterwards, but at last they get some insight, not just words or idea, but some insight into the relativity of our present mode of awareness. At least you see this, and this is the most important thing.

Wolf: Does it break down the time factor too?

S: Yes and space and self. Unless people can begin to see, ah yes, there are other modes of awareness, other modes of consciousness, otherwise you just can't unless you've had a deep meditation experience, and not many people have that even after a long meditation. So this is basically the sort of thing that the Sixth Patriarch is getting at.

This is why you hear people say, 'When you gain Nirvana, there must be somebody who gains Nirvana', as though it's a sort of clever point, whereas it's just taking language literally.

Chapter 7: Sudden Enlightenment and Gradual Attainment.

p.547: "Contemporaneous with the Patriarch when he was living at Po-lam Monastery was Grand Master Shin-shau who was preaching in Yuk-chuen Monastery of King-nam. At that time the two schools of Hui-neng in the South and of Shin-shau in the North were both flourishing." According to some scholars this represents a situation that actually developed later on after Hui-neng's death, but we won't bother too much about that.

p.548: "'So far as the Dharma is concerned, there can be only one school. If a distinction is made, it exists in the fact that the founder of one school was a Northern man, and the founder of the other was a Southern man. While there is only one system of Dharma, some disciples realize it quicker than others but the reason why the names, 'Sudden' and 'Gradual,' are given is because some disciples are superior to others in their mental dispositions. So far as the Dharma is concerned, the distinction of Sudden and Gradual does not exist." Well this is quite plain, no explanation needed.

"(Between the two leaders there was mutual respect but) the followers of Shin-shau often criticized the Patriarch." In India they've got a popular saying, you know, there are two great gods: Vishnu who is the preserver [322] and Shiva who is the destroyer. So Vishnu in his incarnation as Rama had millions of monkeys as his followers, because Rama won the friendship of Hanuman the King of the Monkeys and they helped him rescue Sita. So Vishnu, of whom Rama was the incarnation, is associated with millions of monkey followers. And then Shiva, who is the great ascetic and lives in the graveyards, is associated with millions of ghosts and spirits. It is sometimes said (and these are called bhut - ghosts

- bhut has got a very humorous sound in Hindi, it's a bit sort of comic) that Shiva and Vishnu are good friends, but Vishnu monkeys and Shiva bhuts are always fighting. So it's a bit like that here, "between the two leaders", Shin-Shau and Hui-neng, "there was mutual respect but the followers of Shin-shau often criticized the Patriarch."

"They discredited him by saying that he was illiterate and could not distinguish himself in any respect. Shin-shau, on the other hand, admitted that he was inferior to the Patriarch in one respect, namely, that Hui-neng thoroughly understood the teachings of the Mahayana, even if he had attained that wisdom without the aid of a teacher. 'Moreover,' he added, 'my Master, the Fifth Patriarch, would not have personally transmitted the robe and bowl to him without good cause: I regret that, owing to the patronage of the Court, which I by no means deserve, I am unable to travel far to receive instruction from him personally. You should go to Tso-kai to consult him. Do not tarry.'" It seems according to this Shin-shau's own attitude was very correct.

"One day, Shin-shau said to his disciple, Chi-shing, 'You are clever and witty; I wish you would go to Tso-kai and attend the lectures there. Try your best to keep in mind what you hear, so that on your return you may repeat it to me.' Acting on his teacher's instruction, Chi-shing arrived at Tso-kai. Without saying anything about where he came from, he joined the company attending the Patriarch's lectures." This is rather interesting. The Patriarch is always giving lectures - very un-Zen like - there is not a word about meditation of sesshin or anything like that. He's just giving lectures.

p.549: "He often tells them to concentrate their minds in a meditation on 'purity'; to keep up the dhyana position constantly, and not to lie down." This seems to have been the misunderstanding of that other monk who practised meditation for twenty years.

"A living man sits and does not lie down; But a dead man lies down and does not sit. On this physical body of ours, why should we impose the task of sitting crosslegged?"

S: This is very interesting in the light of modern Zen practice.

Buddhadasa: But there is a practice of not lying down isn't there? I think I read about this in the Visuddhimagga. [Visuddhimagga ii.73, tr.]

S: Yes, well it is said that there are three ways of practising; one is by sitting cross-legged, one is by lying down in the Buddha's parinirvana posture, and the other is by walking up and down. You can practise meditation and mindfulness in any of these three postures. I think the Zen people seem to attach more importance to the cross-legged posture, or even Buddhism generally we may say, because the Buddha gained Enlightenment, it is said, in that cross-legged posture, but you can see there is no justification in the Platform Scripture for the modern Zen insistence on sitting cross-legged. You can see that quite easily. "On this [323] physical body of ours, why should we impose the task of sitting

cross-legged?” That’s quite unambiguous, isn’t it? I don’t know what modern Zen masters would say to this if you pointed it out to them. I wonder if they still study the Platform Scripture. It might be interesting to find out.

“Making obeisance a second time, Chi-shing remarked, ‘Though I have studied Buddhism for nine years under Grand Master Shin-shau, my mind was not awakened for enlightenment, but as soon as you speak to me, my mind is enlightened. As the question of continuous re-birth is an important one, I wish you would take pity on me and give me instruction as to that question.’ The Patriarch said, ‘I understand that your Master gives his disciples instruction as to ‘disciplinary rules’ (sila), meditation (dhyana), and Wisdom (Prajna). Will you please, tell me how he defines these terms.”

S: This is quite interesting; the Patriarch says, “I understand that your Master gives his disciples instruction as to disciplinary rules (sila).” Maybe precepts would have been a better translation, "meditation (dhyana), and Wisdom (Prajna). In other words the three great subdivisions of the path, about which Hui-neng himself spoke right at the beginning, in his very first discourse, that is following upon his biography.

"According to his teaching,’ replied Chi-shing, ‘to refrain from all evil action, is Sila; to practise whatever is good, is Prajna; and to purify one’s mind, is Dhyana. This is the way he teaches us. May I ask what your system is?” There’s a sort of reference here to this famous Buddhist verse: ‘Cease to do evil, learn to good, purify the mind. This is the teaching of the Buddha.’ [Dhammapada 183, tr.] Usually it’s explained as abstention from evil is sila, the development of good is samadhi or dhyana because you are developing kusala or skilful states of mind when you meditate, and purification of the mind is wisdom because you purify from ignorance. Here the second two are reversed, but the general idea is the same. It’s standard Buddhist teaching. There’s absolutely nothing wrong here, but what does the Patriarch say?

“If I should tell you that I had a system of Dhyana to transmit to others, I would be deceiving you. What I try to do to my disciples, is to liberate them from their own bondage, by such device as each case requires. To use a name, which after all is nothing but a makeshift, it may be called ‘Samadhi.’ The way your Master teaches Sila, Dhyana, Prajna, is wonderful; but my way is different.” You see he is not quarrelling with those three progressive steps; he says, “The way your Master teaches Sila, Dhyana, Prajna is wonderful, but my way is different.” So what do you think the difference consists in.

Mangala: He doesn’t have a system.

S: He doesn’t have a system, he just uses these things and he doesn’t sort of follow them slavishly, doesn’t take them literally.

p.550: “‘The teaching of your master,’ replied the Patriarch, ‘is for the guidance of the general followers of the Mahayana; my teaching is for the more advanced followers. It is because some realize the Dharma quicker and deeper than others,

that there is a difference of interpretation. Listen while I explain and see if you think my instruction is the same as his.” This is interesting that before we were raising the point [on] previous days as to who the teaching was intended for and pointing out all the great possibilities of misunderstanding, so it would seem from that that Hui-neng was giving his teaching to those who would not be likely to misunderstand, as the modern reader of this sutra [324] might well do. And here he is saying this quite explicitly: “The teaching of your master is for the guidance of the general followers of the Mahayana; my teaching is for the more advanced followers.” So it is very important that we are really honest with ourselves and don’t assume that we are among the more advanced disciples.

"It is because some realize the Dharma quicker and deeper than others, that there is a difference of interpretation. Listen while I explain and see if you think my instruction is the same as his. In expounding the Dharma, I do not deviate from the authority of my intuitive mind. To do otherwise would indicate that the expositor’s Mind-essence was obscured, and that he was competent to teach only the phenomenal side of the Dharma (but not its essence). The true teaching of Sila, Dhyana and Prajna, should be based on the principle that the function of all things derives its virtue from its essence. Listen to this stanza: ‘To free the mind from all improprieties is the Sila of Mind-essence; To free the mind from all perturbations is the Dhyana of Mind-essence. That which neither increases nor decreases is the ‘diamond’ of Mind-essence. ‘Going’ and ‘coming’ are only phases of Samadhi.’

“Having heard this instruction, Chi-shing felt humiliated and thanked the Patriarch for the instruction.” There are several little points here, especially this first one: “the Teaching of your Master is for the guidance of the general followers of the Mahayana.” So you could say that most people we are likely to come into contact with just fall into that category - general followers of Buddhism. We are not likely to have very many really advanced people, so one might as well, in that sense, forget all about Ch’an or Zen and stick to basic Buddhism with some elements of the Mahayana as regards teaching what was actually useful was concerned.

“In expounding the Dharma, I do not deviate from the authority of my intuitive mind.” In other words, he has become the Dharma through his own inner realization. He doesn’t have to refer to the scriptures or follow the traditional schemes. Whatever he speaks out is the Dharma and he speaks out according to the needs of the individuals that come to him; especially he is speaking to more advanced individuals.

There’s one interesting point in the verse: “To free the mind from all improprieties is the Sila of Mind-essence.” He brings it right back to the mind, to the Essence. That seems to be quite characteristic of Hui-neng. “To free the mind from all perturbation . . . diamond of Mind-Essence.” That word diamond is interesting because it comes in the Vajrayana. Diamond, or even vajra-citta, the diamond mind, represents something which is absolutely flawless and pure even in the midst of all impurity. It doesn’t change whether it is covered with mud or

something else.

“That which neither increases nor decreases is the ‘diamond’ of Mind-essence. ‘Going’ and ‘coming’ are only phases of Samadhi.” Samadhi is not to be identified with either going or coming, either sitting still or walking about. They are only phases of Samadhi. The Samadhi is independent and separate, the diamond as it were, not affected. Luk (p.80) translates this as, “That which neither grows nor shrinks is the self-diamond”, and then there is a note which says that: “Self-diamond: the self-nature as indestructible as a diamond.” There’s [325] a tiny touch of the Vajrayana here - though the word ‘vajra’ does occur in the Mahayana too, vajra-citta or vajra-kaya - you get these expressions. Or vajra-samadhi, the diamond-like samadhi; this is a quite common expression in Mahayana sutras.

So here Hui-neng is making a very definite claim that his teaching, or Ch’an if you like, is suited to or intended for the more advanced sort of disciple, not even the ordinary Mahayana follower, so that’s quite an important point and perhaps it ought to be kept for that class of person, but the difficulty is that so many people think that they are qualified for the most important or highest. I remember in this case a little incident when I was at Hampstead. There was one woman who was coming along who was always pestering me to teach her sunyata-type meditation. She’d heard me mention this in a lecture, and she’d just started a little bit of mindfulness of breathing and a bit of metta bhavana, and then after a few weeks she asked me to teach her the sunyata meditation. So I said frankly, but as gently as I could, ‘You’re not quite ready yet. Do a bit more and then we will see.’ She was very very upset, very annoyed, very indignant and quite hurt. Some weeks later, in the course of a meeting, she got up and she said, ‘Oh Bhante, I’ve been to see Trungpa and he thinks I’m quite suited for the sunyata meditation. I’m very ready, he said, and he has taught me.’ This was her sort of attitude. But I remember how sort of hurt she was when I said no. But this is what people usually feel about themselves, that they are ready for the best and highest. So if they see an esoteric teaching, or if they see a book, ‘this is something which is only taught to a few,’ they’ll at once go for that, and this is a great mistake. So much of Ch’an is, as Hui-neng sort of plainly says, intended for the more advanced disciple. If we don’t come into that category we should just leave it alone for the present and stick to our standard Hinayana-cum-Mahayana and so on.

Buddhadasa: I think it is significant too that the disciples he has talked to had come through a Mahayana school.

S: Yes and they’d had experience of twenty years sitting in meditation and many years studying the sutras, twelve years studying a particular text. There’s quite a strong background you can see, and it’s as though it was [326] no simple task to deal with some of these very sincere and experienced people, but who had just missed the ultimate point and just to sort of break through their very subtle delusion and attachment; but he certainly doesn’t seem to have been dealing with beginners in any sense.

Subhuti: They haven't bothered to record the ones who he told to go back to the mindfulness of breathing.

S: Well perhaps everyone had done their mindfulness of breathing in those days.

Hridaya: It seems good in some ways that Shin-shau was still around.

S: Yes, and his own attitude seems to have been perfectly correct.

pp.550-1 "The Patriarch continued: 'The teaching of your Master on Sila, Dhyana and Prajna, is fitted for minds of wise men, it is true, but my teaching is intended for minds of a more advanced type. He who has realized Mind-essence, himself, may dispense with such doctrines as Bodhi, Nirvana, and Knowledge of Emancipation. It is only those who do not possess a single system of Dhyana, who can formulate all systems of Dhyana; these who understand what this means, may rightly use such terms as Buddhakaya, Bodhi, Nirvana, Knowledge of Emancipation. To those who have realized Mind-essence, it makes no difference whether they formulate all systems of Dhyana, or dispense with all of them. (Because of this non-attachment) they are at liberty to come or to go; they are free from all obstacles and impediments. As circumstances arise, they take appropriate action; they give suitable answers according to the varying temperament of their questioner. They see with a comprehensive glance that all 'Bodies of Transformation' are inseparable from Essence of Mind. They attain liberation, psychic powers, and Samadhi, which enables them to perform the arduous task of universal salvation as easily as if they were only playing. Such are the men who have realized Mind-essence.'

S: There are some quite important things here: "It is only those who do not possess a single system of Dhyana, who can formulate all systems of Dhyana." If you are limited to a single system and identify with that and are rigid about that, then that just limits you and you are not able to make use of other systems, and Hui-neng is suggesting that he is in a position of not possessing a single system of Dhyana, so he can formulate all because he just depends on his own intuition and his own realization, his own experience. So, "to those who have realized Mind-essence, it makes no difference whether they formulate all systems of Dhyana or dispense with all of them." In the case of Shin-shau, you can say he could make use of his system of sila, samadhi, and prajna, he could teach people through that and help them etc. But suppose you deprived him of that and didn't allow him to speak in terms of sila, samadhi, and prajna, or if the person to whom he was speaking didn't know anything about those things, [or] they didn't want to know. How would Shin-shau then instruct him? You could say, well, he wouldn't be able; he wouldn't know how. But not Hui-neng, because Hui-neng could use that system if it was appropriate and useful or he could do without it if for some reason it wasn't appropriate and just speak out of his own realization, his own experience, his own insight into the situation. So we can see the same sort of thing operating in a small way in our own experience, that if you've got all the Buddhist teachings and doctrines at your fingertips, you can give a good talk and convey something and communicate something and

help people, but suppose you meet someone who doesn't [327] know anything about Buddhism. How are you going to deal with that person? assuming that you are not able to suggest that he comes along to classes and so on. How are you going to deal with him just on his own ground? You can't do that unless you've got some experience to fall back on and unless you can dispense with your own system. Well, that is quite difficult and you may not be able to do that for quite a long time. Sometimes you can see what is the situation, see what is wrong, but you've no means of putting it across to that person. That's a much more difficult thing, but if you've got a framework you can, if the person is receptive to that framework and he is prepared to learn it and come within it. So it is quite easy to be a Shin-shau, but very difficult to be a Hui-neng. ..(unclear).. That is the Buddha's teaching. It's a good standard teaching, it's going to help vast numbers of people, but Hui-neng has the last word. He goes even further. When by following that system, really developing, it may be that because you've taken it a bit literally you are just a little bit stuck. You are right on the threshold of Enlightenment as it were. It's there that Hui-neng helps. But most people are not stuck on the threshold of Nirvana, they are stuck in samsara and Shin-shau's teaching is more helpful to them.

Then another important point: "They attain liberation, psychic powers, and Samadhi, which enables them to perform the arduous task of universal salvation as easily as if they were only playing." This is greatly emphasized in Mahayana sutras as regards the Bodhisattva, and Suzuki's got a whole lengthy chapter in his *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*, on the Bodhisattva's anubhogacarya, his spontaneous life, that his activities are spontaneous and are therefore playful, and this is why the Buddha's biography - or one of the Buddha's biographies - in Sanskrit is called the *Lalitavistara*. *Lalita* means playful; *Lalitavistara* means that extended account of the playful activities of the Buddha. So when he was doing this, that, and the other, gaining Enlightenment and preaching, he was as it were playing. And you find quite a bit of this in the Mahayana - this conception of playfulness, the spontaneous sort of bubbling up of your inner realization. In Hinduism they elaborate this very much - the *lila* or the play or the dance of Krishna, especially with the *gopis* [milkmaids, tr.], though that becomes quickly misunderstood. The Mahayana [328] doesn't go as far as that.

Buddhadasa: There doesn't seem to be much playfulness in the Friends.

S: You are either over-serious or under-serious, not just playful, playful in the sense of spontaneity, not just silly playful or childish playful or unmindful playful. You can see that at retreats sometimes, when people's energies get liberated, but mindfulness sort of sags. They are quite playful and skittish but really unmindful - but the Bodhisattva is playful and mindful with it all. His activities are no effort, it's sort of spontaneous and natural and easy. That is what should be aimed at, but not aimed at in a self-conscious deliberate way. This is what has to happen sooner or later, really enjoy your work, enjoy your Bodhisattva activities, your lectures and classes and meditation and so on. It's all just a play and a game in a very nice sort of way. But it doesn't come all at once; there has

to be quite a bit of slog first, but sooner or later you start enjoying it all.

Ratnapani: Is that why it is talked about that Zen teaching has stagnated into a technique? People have sort of formalized this play into a technique.

S: Yes, even the dialogue and the koan. It's become very heavily formalized. My friend Mr Chen used to make fun of this. He used to tell me (I don't know whether this is true or only making fun) that in Chinese there is a book which gives you all the koans and the answers: there are about three thousand koans with all the answers [cf. 'The Sound of the Hand: 281 Zen Koans with Answers', but Yoel Hoffmann, 1975, tr.]. Well there could well be, even if they aren't literal. This is sort of how it's developing or tending to develop.

Wolf: It's strange that that has developed from Hui-neng's teaching, because he wasn't as obscure as the present day Zenists.

S: I feel that Hui-neng's whole attitude and teaching is plain straightforward Dharma, certainly more Mahayanistic, but very basic and fundamental and dealing with sort of central issues and central doctrines and scriptures and none of the later Zen frippery. This is the impression you get. ..(unclear).. You feel that Shin-shau is a bit serious and strained, very conscientious and earnest, a bit of effort there all the time, and maybe [329] quite rightly at that sort of level or that kind of Buddhism. It would be terrible if people said, oh the Buddhists say that the Bodhisattva plays, and started sort of being deliberately skittish around the Centre. That would be really painful. We have a bit of it occasionally with some people, but it sort of stands out as really artificial.

Ratnapani: I think it's not so much we take our work over-seriously, but we take ourselves over-seriously.

p.551: "By what principle are we guided in dispensing with all systems of Dhyana?" was Chi-shing's next question. The Patriarch replied: 'When our Mind-essence is free from improprieties, infatuations and perturbations; when we look inward from each momentary sensation to another, with Prajna; and when we no longer cherish attachment to objects, or to words, or to ideas; then are we forever emancipated. Why should we formulate any system of Dhyana when our goal may be reached no matter whether we turn to the right or to the left? Since it is by our own effort that we realize Mind-essence, and since the realization and practise of Dhyana are both spontaneous and instantaneous, the formulation of any system of Dhyana is unnecessary. All Dharmas are intrinsically Nirvanic, how can there be gradation in them?' Chi-shing made obeisance and volunteered to be an attendant of the Patriarch, in which capacity he served faithfully."

S: So you see the Patriarch has talked about dispensing with all systems of Dhyana, so Chi-shing's next question is, 'Well what principle is to guide you in dispensing with them?' He still thinks of dispensing with systems of dhyana as a sort of activity, something you have to do deliberately, so he wants to know how you should be guided, how you should go about it; almost he wants to bring that also within the system. But the Patriarch says that is unnecessary.

When you've realized your Essence of Mind, you function spontaneously, you don't need anything to guide you, any principle to guide you. Whatever you do, that's it, that's right. You function spontaneously; you respond to the needs of other beings. So there is no principle needed here to guide you dispensing it all, dhyanas and systems. That would be a contradiction in terms.

Mangala: That would be just another step in the same system.

S: Yes, right, a rather advanced step maybe, but it's still a step within that system. For instance, it's like sometimes people ask a question such as, 'When I become Enlightened should I do this or should I do that?' Well how ridiculous. If you become Enlightened you will know. You will do it spontaneously, but they want you to sort it out beforehand so that when they are Enlightened they won't make a mistake. It's just like that. "By what principle are we to be guided in dispensing with all systems of Dhyana?" Well when you've dispensed with them you've dispensed with those principles too, so the Sixth Patriarch puts him right by saying, "All Dharmas are intrinsically Nirvanic, how can there be a gradation in them?" That's true from the ultimate point of view, but most people aren't concerned with that. You have to grade them: practise this, then that, then something else. So most people would not be concerned with [330] that teaching.

p.551: "Since the two Dhyana Schools, that of Hui-neng in the South and Shin-shau in the North, were flourishing at the same time, in spite of the tolerant spirit shown by both Masters who hardly knew what egotism was, there naturally developed a strong sectarian feeling among the disciples. Calling their own Master, Shin-shau, the Sixth Patriarch on no better authority than their own wishes, the followers of the Northern School were jealous of the rightful owner of that title whose claim was supported by the possession of the insignia, the robe etc., and was generally acknowledged. (In order to get rid of the rightful Patriarch) they sent a lay member of the order whose secular name was Chang Hang-chong, a native of Kiang-si, and who as a young man had been fond of adventure, to get rid of him."

S: So look at the extent to which things can develop. Even though they are supposed to be Buddhists, monks, and devout followers of Shin-shau. But in the end they become so jealous of the Sixth Patriarch and so upset about him that they even sent someone quietly to bump him off. [It's] more like the Mafia than the Northern school.

p.552: "A straight sword is not crooked." I wonder what that means. It seems to me that he might be referring to the man himself, or to himself also: he is the straight sword, a crooked sword is not straight - that's the murderous monk, "I owe you money only, but life I do not own you."

Devamitra: Why does he owe him money?

Subhuti: It could be the execution fee.

S: Yes it could be that, because he kept the ten tales to one side. It's a bit like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: the beheading game of Irish mythology. [Gawain and the Green Knight take turns trying to behead each other, tr.] Of course, according to some scholars this is not an actual historical episode. This episode was introduced later when rivalry between the Northern school and the Southern school had developed. It was sort of antedated. It may be that it even reflects a quite widespread mythological motif - this beheading game. It seems to have been quite widespread.

Wolf: Can you compare it to the thirty pieces of silver that Christ gives Judas?

S: I don't know, well the thirty pieces weren't given by Christ to Judas! Also it's a sort of magical thing. You try three times and you don't succeed. With the Green Knight of course, he cuts his [own] head off, but he just picks it up and puts it back again, which is the same thing.

Ratnapani: Is it anywhere claimed that you can't chop a Buddha's head off?

Subhuti: Yes. You can't kill a Buddha.

Ratnapani: Ah, but that's more a metaphysical point than physical isn't it?

S: I think in Pali it is intended literally. That's why the Buddha sends away all the monks when they want to guard him from Devadatta's attack: 'The [331] Tathagatha needs no protection.' That's why some Buddhists are very dubious about Christ.

Chapter 8: Royal patronage

p.553: "In the forest." That's a sort of euphemism: in retirement, that is to say, seclusion, in the country, living a quiet life away from the capital.

"It is impossible for anyone to obtain liberation without going through this meditation exercise." This is exactly what the Zen masters say nowadays.

"As the flame of one lamp may kindle hundreds of thousands of others, the ignorant will be enlightened and light will produce light without end." This is an allusion to the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra. Perhaps Sit Kan is sort of intimating that he also knows a little bit about the Buddhist scriptures. He'd also read a thing or two. [This is] the sort of elegant literary allusion that the Chinese are very fond of.

"The Norm implies neither light nor darkness," replied the Patriarch. 'Light and darkness signify the idea of alternation. (It is not correct to say) 'light will produce light without end'; since light and darkness are a pair of opposites, there must be an end as well as a beginning. The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra says, 'The Norm has no analogy; it is not a relative term.'

S: Hui-neng's caught him out. He knows he's sort of referring to the Vimalakirti, so therefore he quotes from the Vimalakirti, and Vimalakirti says don't take illustrations literally: "The norm has no analogy; it is not a relative term." So yes it's true that the Vimalakirti Sūtra does contain this comparison of one

lamp being lighted by another, but don't take it too literally, don't be too clever. "Light and darkness signify the idea of alternation. (It is not correct to say) light will produce light without end." Light is a relative thing, "since light and darkness are a pair of opposites, there must be an end as well as a beginning." If you've got light you will have darkness. You won't have light producing light without end, only just very analogically, just give you an idea a sort of glimpse. Don't take it literally. "The Norm" - the Dharma - "has no analogy; it is not a relative term," like light. You can't really compare the Dharma to light.

p.554: "Light signifies wisdom, and darkness signifies defilement. If a pilgrim of the Path does not get rid of defilement by wisdom, how is he going to free himself from the 'wheel of birth and death,' which is beginningless?" This is the eunuch coming back as it were and arguing the point, in a way, quite rightly, quite legitimately. He says, "Light signifies wisdom, and darkness signifies defilement. If a pilgrim of the Path does not get rid of defilement by wisdom, how is he going to free himself from the 'wheel of birth and death,' which is beginninglessness." Yes. The [332] beginner does need the dualistic framework. This is what he's really getting at.

"The Patriarch continued, 'Defilement (klesa) is wisdom (bodhi); The two are the same and are not different from each other.'

S: He's speaking from the highest point of view.

"'From the point of ordinary men,' replied the Patriarch, 'enlightenment and ignorance are two separate things. Wise men who thoroughly realize Mind-essence, know that they are of the same nature. This sameness of nature, that is, this non-duality of nature, is what is called 'true nature'; it neither decreases in the case of an ordinary man and ignorant person, nor increases in the case of an enlightened sage; it is undisturbed in an annoying situation, and is calm in Samadhi. It is neither eternal, nor not-eternal; it neither goes, nor comes, it is to be found neither in the interior, nor in exterior, nor in the space intervening between. It is beyond existence and nonexistence; its nature and its phenomena are always in a state of 'tathata'; it is both permanent and immutable. Such is the Norm.'

S: I don't know why this word 'Norm' is introduced suddenly. Before, Dharma has been used, but suddenly 'Norm' is introduced. I suspect it's a bit of editing either by this editor or by the original editor of the Buddhist Society edition. Mrs Rhys Davids uses the word 'Norm' for Dharma, but it's mainly her usage.

So here we come to the point: "From the point of ordinary men, enlightenment and ignorance are two separate things. Wise men who thoroughly realize Mind-essence, know that they are of the same nature." As long as you are an ordinary man, you can't help thinking in terms of Enlightenment symbolized by light - unenlightenment, defilement, ignorance symbolized by darkness - and you must think of your spiritual life as going from one to the other, but as you become more advanced then you can adopt the attitude that both are fundamentally the same.

“In the teaching of the heretics, non-existence means the ‘end’ of existence, while existence is used in contrast with non-existence. What they mean by ‘non-existence’ is not actual annihilation, and what they mean by ‘existence’ really does not exist. What I mean by ‘beyond existence and non-existence’ is this: intrinsically it exists not, and at the present moment it is not annihilated. Such is the difference between my teaching and the teaching of the heretics.” I’m not quite sure who these heretics are. They might possibly have been some kind of Taoists. It’s a though the Sixth Patriarch comes back a bit: “If you wish to know the essentials of my teaching, you should free yourself from all thought - good ones as well as bad ones - then your mind will be in a state of purity, ever calm and serene.” In a way that’s very one-sided. In a way it contradicts some of the things he’s said before. He even says thoughtlessness. Get rid of thoughts he says now.

Subhuti: I think he says you should free yourself of all thoughts, which doesn’t necessarily mean that you should get rid of them.

S: I’m not sure whether we should insist too much on the word ‘free’ as it appears in the translation. What I think is this: Hui-neng is distinguishing first of all between the, as it were, more provisional teaching for the ordinary people, and the higher teaching which is meant for the more advanced. He recognizes that Sit Kan is one of the ordinary people, so before Sit Kan can understand the higher teaching he’s got to practise on the basis of the lower teaching. And therefore he concludes by giving him a practical teaching, based on the lower point of view, because otherwise he will not be able to get through eventually to the higher teaching.

Buddhadasa: Was the fact that he was a eunuch also to do with the fact he was an ordinary person? For instance in the Survey you’ve mentioned - I can’t [333] actually remember the wording, but the implication is I think that sexual abstinence is necessary for Enlightenment. [p.xx and p.386 in the ninth edition, tr.] Could this be something to do with retention of the semen?

S: There is something like that because according to the Vinaya a eunuch cannot be ordained as a monk. The word for eunuch is ‘napunsaka’. ‘Punsaka’ is a male Indian being; napunsaka is one who is not a male human being or what we would call a eunuch, one who lacks the masculine capacity as it were, and [he] can’t be ordained as a monk. The reason which is given is that in his case the observance of the precept regarding celibacy becomes as it were non-effective. He’s not able to practise it he’s not able to abstain, therefore the observance of that precept has no significance for him. Or you could say that the energy is not there, the energy is not at his disposal, and so therefore there is not much point in his becoming a monk or any point in him having a spiritual life.

Chintamani: Does that mean a eunuch can’t gain Enlightenment?

S: It means something like that. It’s as though [if] that energy is sort of blocked then Enlightenment isn’t possible. I don’t know whether this reflects primitive

ideas about physiology and psychology and so on or whether there is a real basis in this.

Devamitra: Is there any other indication about any other deformity that might hinder one's practice?

S: Yes. People who are deformed are not ordained into the Sangha as monks, but the reason is that the Sangha should not become a refuge for those who want merely a livelihood, because in the East, in India, if you couldn't work - maybe you were a cripple or you didn't have any legs - you could beg, but apparently in the early days of Buddhism quite a few people tried to get ordination who were deformed and merely wanted a means of livelihood, so therefore a rule was made: deformed people who merely wanted to be ordained should not be ordained into the Sangha.

Buddhadasa: The next line of the text is: "This preaching of the Patriarch, awoke Sit Kan to full enlightenment."

S: That's very interesting.

Chintamani: Well eunuchs in China were a special class of court citizen. [334] Of course many were quite definitely eunuchs, but it also appears that some, before they were castrated or supposed to be, bribed the executioner or the man who was supposed to do it, and I did read somewhere that in many cases the operation was imperfectly performed or was not even performed at all, but the person was technically a eunuch, that is to say they had that particular rank at court.

Chintamani: Why did they have eunuchs in the first place?

S: To look after the harems. The two most common examples in history are the Chinese court and the court of the Sultan of Turkey, and when you've got 3,000 women obviously you are not going to allow any interlopers, so that whole portion of the palace was administered by eunuchs. But in the course of time a eunuch is not just guard, he becomes a quite important functionary, and eunuchs ended up by becoming prime ministers. And apparently, within the Chinese imperial court, within the inner palace, there was only the Emperor, the women, and the eunuchs. So the eunuchs gradually monopolized all the more confidential and important court functions. This happened also in the case of the Turkish sultan. So you can see how it all develops; first of all you start off with a large army of women - seraglio, harem - so to safeguard that you need guards, but there is a difficulty there so you have eunuchs. So that means you can't have ordinary men, you have eunuchs with their particular temperament, which was apparently well known - that they tended to be a bit bitchy and a bit difficult in various ways, and since you don't have any other men around the emperor naturally the eunuchs tend to monopolize the court posts and power. This creates its own political problem even, so you see the whole thing snowballing.

But with regards to this question of the connection between the castrated state and your spiritual attainment or the possibilities of your making an effort, this

is quite interesting, because we know the effect on castrated animals, they lose their fieriness, they become placid and docile and they put on weight. As far as I know - I've never actually known anybody in my life who was a eunuch, but you can imagine that - someone who was a eunuch in that sort of way and who lost his temper and fire couldn't make any spiritual progress. But on the other hand I remember reading in Turkish history about eunuchs who were [335] commanders-in-chief and very successful generals and so on. So maybe this isn't a sort of hard and fast rule. But apparently a castrated animal loses a certain vigour, not only sexual, but even sort of general psychological vigour and impetus and aggressiveness, so perhaps a human being of that kind would lack a certain impetus. But we are told quite definitely here that Sit Kan awoke to full enlightenment, so whether he was just technically a eunuch without actually being one or whatever it is very difficult to say.

p.555: "This preaching of the Patriarch, awoke Sit Kan to full enlightenment. He made obeisance to the Patriarch and bade him, adieu. Upon his return to the Palace, he reported to Their Majesties, what the Patriarch had said. In that same year on the 3d day of the 9th Moon, an Edict was issued commending the Patriarch in the following terms:

“‘On the ground of old age and poor health, the Patriarch declined our invitation to the Capital. Devoting his life, as he does, to the practice of Buddhism for the benefit of us all, he is, indeed, 'a field of merit' for the nation. Following the example of Vimalakirti who recuperated in Vaisali, he widely spreads the Mahayana-teaching, transmitting the doctrines of the Dhyana School, expounding especially the 'non-dual' Dharma. Through the medium of Sit Kan to whom the Patriarch imparted the 'Buddha-knowledge,' we are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to understand clearly his teachings of Higher Buddhism. This must be due to the accumulated merit and our 'root of goodness' planted in past lives, otherwise we would not be contemporaries of His Eminence. 'In appreciation of the graciousness of the Patriarch, we find ourselves hardly able to express our gratitude. (As a token of our great regard for him) we present him herewith a Korean Mo-la robe and a crystal bowl. The Prefect of Shiu-chow is hereby ordered to renovate his monastery, and to convert his old residence into a temple which is to be named, Kwok-yen. By royal favour, etc, etc.”

According to some authorities this chapter is a bit of a concoction and they are very doubtful about it on various grounds. Apparently there is no independent record of this edict. The Chinese used to compile parliamentary edicts and collect them in great volumes and this one can't be traced, and they are very doubtful and they think that it might have been incorporated it in the whole text and obviously it makes Hui-neng seem quite respectable: now he's really arrived, he's got royal patronage and so on. But maybe we shouldn't pay too much attention to that. The actual teaching which is given to Sit Kan is quite clearly the Patriarch's teaching.

Chintamani: I've noticed that when a questioner uses certain terms, Hui-neng invariably uses the same words.

S: And in this chapter the Vimalakirti comes up quite a lot doesn't it? That was a very popular sutra in Chinese Buddhism. It was frequently illustrated and many great frescoes illustrate the confrontation between Vimalakirti and Manjusri, and there is a whole chapter called 'the Non-dual Dharma', and Hui-neng's teaching is a non-dual teaching. But as far as I can recollect it's only in this particular section that there is any reference to the Vimalakirti, and there is an allusion to it in Sit Kan's discussion, and the Sixth Patriarch explicitly refers to it. And then again it's mentioned directly in the royal edict: three references in quite a short chapter. Several Mahayana sutras have made their appearance in the whole work: the first one to be mentioned was the Lankavatara, then the Vajracchedika was mentioned, then we had the Saddharma Pundarika, the Parinirvana and now the Vimalakirti. [These] are all prominent Mahayana sutras, [336] mentioned by name, and their teaching is referred to in the course of this particular work, and scholars tell us that there are sort of indirect references to the teaching of various sutras in this work, and so Hui-neng was quite familiar with them and with their phraseology.

Mangala: It must have been quite a thing to have had royal patronage.

S: Especially in ancient China.

Buddhadasa: I should imagine there is quite a danger in that though. You could become subservient. It's interesting he didn't go. He snubbed them in a way.

S: Whether or not the actual incident occurred, it's certainly the sort of thing that used to occur and it is certainly known that for instance Shin-shan, who is a Northern teacher, did go to the capital. This is known from other sources and is referred to in historical works. He stayed there for some time and enjoyed the patronage of the court. This is historically known and it was very much the sort of thing that used to be done.

Wolf: It happened with the Church of England, didn't it?

S: Yes, but here it's more a question of the patronage of an individual teacher, though of course the Sangha and Buddhism itself were frequently patronized too, but the individual teacher used to be invited and patronized, and sometimes in rather an odd way: you'd get a monk become very holy and famous, a good teacher, living - away in the provinces - a very simple and ascetic life, and in appreciation for that the emperor would invite him to the palace, and appoint him a beautiful apartment in the palace, and give him a lot of money and a gorgeous robe in appreciation of his life of asceticism. It needed a rather strong-minded monk to resist all that. It's a very difficult position, in a way, to be in, because if you are the emperor's guest or the king's guest, well you are a guest you have to behave politely. You might appear to connive with certain things that were going on. I used to go and stay sometimes with the Maharaja of Sikkim, and I knew him fairly well - I used to give lectures there - and the Maharaja used to come and hold court and so on. It was a very tiny sort of affair because there are only 200,000 people in the whole of Sikkim, but in a way it's the same kind of thing. And then when I used to get back to Kalimpong one

of my European friends used to say, 'Why didn't you get on to the Maharaja when you are up there? He's [337] really leading a terrible life. He's got that woman there that he visits. It's really immoral and disgraceful. And why don't you sort of take him to task and tell him that a good Buddhist ought not to behave like that.' So people sometimes used to get at me in this sort of way and try to say what I ought to tell the Maharaja and so on. Well sometimes I did, but things that I myself felt not very happy about, not just reflecting other people's opinions. But I could see, just from that very limited contact on that very small scale, that it could be a very difficult position. For instance the ruler that you were involved with was a really powerful ruler with a strong personality and maybe a hot temper, you had to tread very carefully. I could see that quite easily. This particular Maharaja was quite easy to get on with and on the whole quite sincere and genuine, but suppose you had a ruler of another type: you might be a favourite one year and lose your head the next. It's not impossible.

There was a very famous case where the Empress Wu [625-705 CE, tr.], who usurped power and murdered various members of her family and was a very warlike and capable empress, started favouring a particular Buddhist monk and invited him to stay at the palace. And he assisted her and advised her and then all sorts of rumours started going round, as you can imagine, and then the monk discovered a wonderful ancient prophecy - he dug it out of some tomb - and apparently the Empress was an incarnation of the Buddha Maitreya, and this was announced. She was rather pleased to be told this, but it went on until there was a revolution.

Chintamani: It sounds rather like Rasputin.

S: It does a bit. So royal patronage is a rather dangerous thing, or to put it in more modern terms, what would be a corresponding patronage? Not of the royal family, but of the media; that's the dangerous thing now. Not much harm would be done if members of the Order were invited to Buckingham Palace and had tea with the Queen or something like that - it might do a bit of good - but if you're patronized by the media, well again you need to watch out if the media takes you up. I must say that historically in Buddhism there has been quite a tradition of monks gaining the patronage of powerful kings and the government and trying to sort of spread Buddhism in this way, converting the people at the top. It's often been done, sometimes with great success, but sometimes with disastrous results. I must also say that many monks from South-East Asia, [338] when they come to the West, they think very much in terms of contacting the wealthy and the powerful and trying to influence them. They still think in these terms, which accounts for some of their ways of doing things, but that's not a way that can succeed in modern times.

So at least twice we've seen the Sixth Patriarch saying it doesn't matter how you sit. He seems to depreciate the cross-legged posture quite strongly. This is quite interesting. This isn't, by the way, a traditional posture for the Chinese; they either sit on a chair or, I think, kneel like the Japanese do, sit back on their heels.

Mangala: I wonder if much meditation went on in the Buddha's time - actual seated meditation.

S: Well there are accounts of the monks all sitting round the Buddha and meditating, especially on the full moon nights.

Mangala: I mean as a regular system practised as it is now.

S: I don't think so, but of course their way of life was a bit different and they used to just lodge here or there as they could, and go for alms and spend much of the day quietly in the forest at the foot of a tree: what we would call meditating, but it doesn't seem to have been formalized into classes and sesshins and things like that. It seemed to happen naturally. If you were on your own and there wasn't anything to do and you were just sitting under a tree, of course you'd sort of meditate.

Chapter 9: Final words and death of the Patriarch.

pp.555-6 "On the first day of the 7th Moon, the Patriarch assembled his disciples and addressed them as follows: 'I am going to leave this world by the 8th Moon. Should any of you have doubts about the teaching, please ask me soon, so that I may clear them away before I go. You may not find any one to teach you after I am gone.' (The sad news moved many of them to tears. The Patriarch spoke to them at some length) and then added: 'Under all circumstances you should free yourselves from attachment to objects; toward them your attitude should be neutral and indifferent. Let neither success nor failure, neither profit nor loss, worry you. Be ever calm and serene, modest and helpful, simple and dispassionate. The Dharma is non-dual as is the mind also. The Path is pure and above all 'form.' You are especially warned not to let the exercise for concentration of mind, fall into mere quiet thinking or into an effort to keep the mind in a blank state. The mind is by nature pure, there is nothing for us to crave or give up."

S: The Patriarch says, "Under all circumstances you should free yourselves from attachment to objects; toward them your attitude should be neutral and indifferent. Let neither success nor failure, neither profit nor loss, worry you. Be ever calm and serene, modest and helpful, simple and dispassionate." This is all good straightforward Buddhist teaching. You find it in the Theravada and you find it in the Mahayana, but then he adds, "The Dharma is non-dual as is the mind also." Why do you think he says that, having said what he said before?

Ratnapani: To put the whole thing into perspective.

S: Yes, there was a danger of falling into a one-sided view with regard to what he'd just said: being calm and quiet in the sense of just sitting still, [339] not hurrying, not moving and so on; being calm and quiet in that sort of one-sided quiescent fashion. So he reminded them that the true quietness, the true stillness and activity, is the same, samsara and nirvana are the same as it were. So this is the true stillness: not a one-sided stillness, not a stillness as opposed to movement, but a stillness with a capital S as it were, beyond stillness and

movement both. So therefore he says, “The Dharma is non-dual as is the mind also. The Path is pure and above all ‘form.’” Then he makes it absolutely clear by saying “You are especially warned not to let the exercise for concentration of mind, fall into mere quiet thinking or into an effort to keep the mind in a blank slate.” He’s very much aware of the danger that they may slip into a one-sided sort of meditation. So, “The mind is by nature pure, there is nothing for us to crave or give up.” This is of course an example of the teaching which is addressed to a really advanced disciple, not to the beginner. It seems throughout that Hui-neng was concerned very much with correcting one-sidedness, especially one-sided meditation or a one-sided view of meditation.

Wolf: How is it that these Enlightened people always know when they were going to die?

S: I don’t know. Sometimes even the unenlightened know, sometimes even a dog knows that he’s going to die or that its master’s going to die. It would seem to be not a particularly spiritual thing, but a sort of physical thing. It’s only a spiritual thing, as it were, when you decide you are going to die, but I’m sure many people know that they are going to die, or when they are going to die, without being as it were spiritual in the full sense, spiritual in the sense of Enlightened; they just know. It’s a sort of intuitive - almost primitive - instinct, and many primitive people seem to have this. But inasmuch as the spiritual path opens up all sorts of, as it were, supernormal faculties, in the case of spirituality and evolved people, they do often know. I won’t say they always know, but they often know. And in the case of the Buddha himself he clearly stated when he was going to pass away, apparently about eight or nine months before it actually happened. The same with Milarepa. And you find this with Hui-neng.

Chintamani: Why is it that psychical phenomena and general psychic attainments are confused with spirituality?

S: They are not confused in the East. I think they are confused in the [340] West. I think this whole question of miracle has befogged the issue. In the Christian conception of miracle, it’s some intervention by God himself which disrupts the actual order of nature as when Christ brought back from the dead. So this is considered to be possible only by the direct action or intervention of God. There’s no sort of idea of a human being developing that sort of power; it’s God, or God responding to the prayer of a very holy man, the holy man’s request that he should work a miracle, but God works the miracle. I was reading a life of Saint Bernard the great 11th and 12th century saint, and it’s very interesting from various points of view, and one of the interesting things is that Saint Bernard often used to work miracles, or miracles used to happen, and he couldn’t understand it. It seems to have been quite an honest thing on his [part] because a lot of literary work by him survives including lots and lots of letters and accounts by his friends, and he just couldn’t understand it, that these miracles used to happen all around him, and apparently they are very well attested, because he was a great public figure and much written about, especially things like healing miracles. And with his own particular view of miracles he

just couldn't understand it. He said quite frankly, 'Well I don't feel that I'm working a miracle.' Though apparently when he prayed the men healed, but he says, 'I don't know how it happens.' He even suspects in one or two of his letters to his friends that it may have something to do with the faith of the people round about, the whole sort of mass thing. He even suspects this, but he's quite clearly at a loss to explain it and he recognizes that these things are going on, but 'I'm not doing them' in the sense that summoning any consciousness that I should do this or do that, but the miracles happen. I also read something else, even more amusing, about the life of Muhammad. According to Muslim records Muhammad couldn't understand why he couldn't work miracles. He was convinced that he was the prophet of God and he knew that previous prophets and even Christ had worked miracles, and Muhammad was supposed to be going beyond them all, but he seemed unable to work any miracles, and he seemed to genuinely puzzle over this and he came to the conclusion that he'd worked actually the biggest miracle of all and that was to produce the Koran. So this is why Muslims refer even today to the Koran as Muhammad's great miracle, far surpassing the miracles of all the previous [341] prophets, the fact that he heard and delivered the Koran, but it looks to me ..(unclear).. But the case of St Bernard is very very interesting, and it shows a basically sincere, spiritually minded person who is trying to be completely honest, or is completely honest, even though limited by his orthodox beliefs. But it seems to me that it's only in the West that we've confused this issue of spiritual gifts, as it were, and psychical powers. In the East these are not confused whether by Hindus or Buddhists. Of course, ordinary people in the masses are much impressed by anything supernormal or supernatural and tend to credit anyone who is a little miracle worker with spiritual gifts, but the more informed people see very clearly that that isn't the case.

p.556: "Realizing that the Patriarch would pass away in the near future, Elder Fat-hoi after prostrating himself twice asked, 'Sir, upon your entering into Parinirvana, who will be the inheritor of the robe and the (secret) Dharma?' '(As for the Dharma) all my sermons from the time I preached in the Tai-fan Monastery up to now, may be copied out for circulation. You should take good care of it and hand it down from generation to generation for the salvation of all sentient beings. He who preaches in accordance with its teaching preaches the Orthodox Dharma. I have already made known to you, all the Dharma I know."

S: This is rather interesting, and according to researches an initiate of this tradition, which afterwards became a Ch'an school, received a copy of the Platform Scripture as a sort of testimony that the true Dharma had in fact been transmitted to him, and this seems to have been their way of linking themselves up with the orthodox Buddhist tradition.

Devamitra: The monk prostrates twice. I thought it was usual to prostrate three times.

S: That's true. I don't know whether there is any meaning in that. Luk's translation says, "Fa Hai bowed again and asked him" (p.94). This version says

bowed twice or prostrated twice. There seems an ambiguity in Luk's translation: whether bowed again and again or just bowed again - as it were he'd already prostrated himself, whether once or twice or three times with everybody else, but before putting his personal question, he prostrated again; perhaps it was once, perhaps it was twice, perhaps it was three times, but not just made two prostrations. That seems not to be the meaning.

"As to the transmission of the robe, this practice is to be discontinued. Why? Because you all have implicit faith in my teaching, you are all free from doubts, therefore, you are all able to carry out the lofty object of our school. It is in accordance with the meaning of the stanza, handed down by Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, that the robe be no longer handed down to posterity."

S: It's as though the robe was an outward and visible sign, but they don't really need that any longer, and so that is to be discontinued. There's a bit of ambiguity because then the text becomes the outward and visible sign, but according to some scholars this wasn't actually instituted by Hui-neng himself - that became the practice later on, but probably by this time it was quite impossible to sort out what actually happened. [342]

"The object of my coming to China, Was to transmit the Dharma of deliverance to all under delusion. In five petals, the flower will be complete; Thereafter, fruit will come to maturity naturally."

S: The five petals are supposed to be the five Patriarchs after the first Patriarch, and after that, "Fruit will come to maturity naturally." There's no need for the robe to be handed down.

This just about sums it up in a way. "With those who are sympathetic you may have discussion about Buddhism." It's very difficult, if not impossible, to talk about Buddhism, about the Dharma, about the spiritual life, if the person to whom you are speaking is totally unsympathetic. There must be some sort of sympathy, some sort of common ground, for you to take your stand on or for you to work from. Someone who only wants to argue or isn't at all receptive or sympathetic - you are wasting your time with that person. "As to those whose point of view differs from ours, treat them politely and try to make them happy." Be polite, be courteous, and do what you can for them in other ways, make them happy. "Disputes are alien to our school." This doesn't mean you shouldn't have a tough even argument, provided the other person is really sincere. If he's as it were willing to change or you feel that you can convince him, you can get through. OK, have a tough argument, but if someone is just deliberately closing his mind and you can see that he's only arguing for the sake of arguing, or even discussing for the sake of discussing, he doesn't really want to get to the gist of the matter, he doesn't really care about the matter, he's just talking, then you don't have anything to do with him or you won't get anywhere. You'll just wear yourself out. "To be bigoted and to argue with others in disregard of this rule is to subject one's Mind-Essence to the bitterness of this mundane existence." You'll only suffer yourself. Do you find that you get any people like this in

classes?

Ratnapani: The most energy-sapping experience is talking with people who insist on bending Buddhism round to their beliefs.

S: Sometimes there is a genuine feeling that there is something similar, but only too often it seems like a manoeuvre. They can't ignore what you have to say, but they want to counteract it or undermine it and this is their way of doing this. They can't bring out open hostility or opposition, but they don't want to go along with Buddhism, they haven't got the courage to challenge it, so they want to say that it's the same as whatever they happen to believe. Of course I came up against this in India repeatedly, you know, this school of thought [343] which says, well, it's all the same: Buddhism teaches anatma, Hinduism teaches atma, but of course it's all the same. In Hinduism it's Brahma, in Buddhism it's Nirvana, it's all the same, your meditation is the same as ours, your mantras mean the same as ours, and it's all the same. Well if that's the case, why do you bother to come along and take any interest at all - just carry on with your own thing.

My own feeling is that people that want to assert that what you say is the same as what they believe are very afraid. They don't want to take any risk. They want to exclude the very possibility of being wrong, because if there are two different points of view, and if, for the sake of argument, one is true and the other is false, then you've got to really think about it and make up your mind and commit yourself. But suppose you make a mistake, suppose there isn't any difference and they are both true, they are both right: then it doesn't matter. So any point of view which is different from yours represents a challenge. If you don't want to face the possibility of your being wrong, you don't feel able to argue it out, you can say, 'Well it's all the same. It doesn't matter. What you believe is the same as what I believe.' So you are left comfortable and secure and free from doubt. This is the basic position.

We shouldn't be in a hurry to agree. We shouldn't hesitate to disagree. We don't want to go to the extremes of Christians who assume you are wrong before they have heard what you have to say, but we shouldn't be afraid to disagree and to say, 'Well you may believe that but our point of view is different and we believe that this is correct. This is right.' But some people are afraid of disagreeing. They can't stand up for what they think or what they believe. They don't want to take a risk of there being a right or a wrong, so they say it's all the same, it doesn't matter, which leaves them exactly where they were, all safe and secure and free from challenge, free from doubt, so they have to smother any sort of questioning or difference.

Ratnapani: I find it personally difficult when talking to people to put myself behind the 'Buddhist point of view' because I suppose I feel limited by it.

S: I think sometimes people, perhaps among the Friends, want to appear all very broad and universal, because that is the sort of image that they like to possess, that's the 'in thing' to be, sort of thing, all very broad and universal. [344] You

don't want to be labelled as narrow-minded or dogmatic or anything like that, so you fight shy of giving that sort of impression.

Devamitra: Someone once came up to me after a [meditation] class and said, 'I really like what you're doing, man, but why Buddhist? Why Buddhism? The only way I could answer was saying that at least Buddhism gave you a framework of reference within which to work. You have to work within some system, so why not Buddhism?'

S: Well Gotami was telling me that when she gave a talk in Edinburgh to 150 yoga class pupils, it was a very practical down to earth sort of meeting, and she gave quite a good talk, and there were lots of questions, and she seems to have dealt with them very competently, and she enjoyed them, but she said that at the end one woman say, 'Well we absolutely accept everything you say and we agree with it. Why do you have to call it Buddhism?' I think first of all you have to examine the whole situation. First of all Buddhism is a very vast thing. What, for instance, Gotami was able to tell them was just a few points, what you are able to bring out during the course of your class is only a tiny corner. So though they accept and like it, it must be made quite clear that this is not the whole of Buddhism. There may be other things that you find very difficult to accept, but which are part and parcel of Buddhism and which Buddhists accept. So don't think that you've got Buddhism just in these few items which perhaps you've understood in a very limited sort of way. Don't think you know Buddhism, because this is what it really amounts to: that people feel that they know what Buddhism is just from the few things they happen to like and agree with, and that, well, why call it Buddhism? They must be made to feel that Buddhism is something much vaster and deeper and more complex. Maybe what they've understood is OK, but there are depths within depths, and for them to say that they either agree with it or disagree with it as a whole - the whole tradition or teaching - is rather premature. In a way their attitude is lacking in modesty. OK, they may find those few things you've said acceptable and agreeable, but those things aren't Buddhism; it's just a tiny corner. I think that this is the thing to be brought home to them first of all.

Of course you must also point out that the person may have completely misunderstood what you had to say and that he hadn't really grasped Buddhism, but [345] was just sort of having his own ideas reflected back. You could even sort of raise that: 'Well are you sure you've really understood what I've been saying?' quite apart from the whole of Buddhism that is behind you, as it were, that you haven't been talking about. He may simply have misunderstood or understood in a very superficial sort of way. For instance, you might have been talking about freedom in Buddhism - *vimukti* - in the full Buddhist sense and then he might think, freedom! Oh I really dig that! I like the idea of freedom. I agree with Buddhism. Yes I can go along with that. But why call it Buddhism? But he's got this superficial idea of freedom, not corresponding to the Buddhist one at all.

Chintamani: I'm personally reluctant to put across any 'Buddhist view' of which

I have had no experience myself.

S: But it's not just a question of experience, but of evaluation of experience and even reason. And you can accept certain things because they seem reasonable without even having had any actual experience of them. You might even say that there are some things that you can't experience, but about which you can have reasoned convictions. You've considered the evidence. We've had no experience of what the other side of the moon is like, but we accept the results of scientific investigation, including other people who've experienced this. It's a bit analogous to that. But I think one has to be a bit careful about limiting oneself to actual personal experience and refuse to go beyond that.

For instance, [take] things like supernormal powers, you might say, 'Well I've had no experience of those myself so I can't say anything about them, but I think there's enough evidence around quite possibly to accept, if one goes through the evidence.' So it means also a bit of intellectual hard work, a bit of thinking. You also have to think, 'I don't think it's enough just to go by experience,' and just have experience and only base yourself on that. I think there are quite a few things that you need to think out and come to a reasoned conclusion and be able to communicate that to other people: 'Well this is why I believe this, for such and such reasons, in view of such and such facts.' It doesn't have to be all your own experience, because suppose another person's experience contradicts yours, or suppose he doesn't believe you, then what will you do? Suppose you say, 'Well I believe this because I've experienced it,' and he says, 'You liar, no you [346] haven't, I don't believe you.' If you are trying to communicate to another, the assertion of personal experience is not enough.

Chintamani: Well, for instance, discussions about previous lives. I've got into quite a few of these and we've talked about it and I've reasoned it out and I've put forward the views that I've read and that it is quite scientific and so on, and at the end I've thought, 'This is ridiculous. Castles in the air!'

S: All right, but suppose you actually remembered a previous life, that could be completely convincing to you, but how could you convince another person apart from arguing about it on general grounds?

Chintamani: At least as far as I was concerned I would be consistent.

S: But you would probably doubt your own experience, because you would have no corroboration from other aspects of yourself. You could say, 'Well maybe it was a complete delusion, like a dream. I feel that that was me, etc, but how do I know? I may be kidding myself.' So it's as though you need a general framework, a general philosophy that you need to be acquainted with, and that you have to be able to present to someone else quite logically and convincingly. But just to assert that you experienced something isn't enough.

Wolf: Like Hui-neng says earlier on, talking about food doesn't appease somebody else's hunger.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: It's another miccha-ditthi. I've come up against it in the course that I'm taking: 'you mustn't actually talk about anything you haven't experienced' and most of what I'm talking about I haven't experienced.

Buddhadasa: But I feel that you have. If I'm talking about the six perfections, I've read them in the Survey and I've had experience of them. You've had an intellectual experience.

S: Maybe one shouldn't limit one's context of experience. You could say you'd had a germinal experience of the things themselves. At least you've had some impulse of generosity, however embryonic, or some impulse of purity of actions and behaviour. So you've had some context, some experience, and from that you can imagine somebody else, or even yourself, in the future, practising on an infinitely greater scale and infinitely greater degree, and you can respond [347] when you read about the Buddha's practice of them. You can feel the reality of it even though you yourself are not experiencing in a sense.

Wolf: We live in the days of instant coffee, instant mash potatoes, instant everything. People want their experience and their information at one meeting.

S: Yes I think you are right. I've had this dreadful experience even in India of having lunch with somebody and just tucking into my lunch and trying to enjoy it and then just as I've got my mouth full someone sitting next to me says, 'What is this Buddhist Nirvana all about? Can you tell me?' They clearly expect between mouthfuls to be told all about Buddhist Nirvana. It's absolutely ridiculous. This is the sort of thing we get. I think one has to recognize when one is in a situation where instant information is being sought and people are not prepared to approach it slowly and patiently. Maybe we ourselves get impatient: 'If only we had the experience, wham! we could give it like that,' but not necessarily so, not if they themselves are not in that receptive mood or that sort of level. Even if you were a Buddha you would have to argue with them and talk them into it as it were.

Chintamani: But I just get an incredible feeling of futility when I get into things like this.

S: Well I know exactly what you mean, because I used to feel like this in my own younger days as a young enthusiastic bhikkhu trying to convince everybody. But you can't and you just have to accept your own limitations and just make sure that you don't talk and you don't discuss unless you and the person you are talking to are in the right sort of mood.

Wolf: Do you think there is anything wrong in a discussion group in admitting that you haven't experienced this yet?

Buddhadasa: Usually the first question is, 'Are you Enlightened?'

S: Well it's not a question that you are, it's not a question that you are not. You can't say that you are. That would be wrong - I assume it would be wrong - but you can't say that you are not, really, you've got some glimmering. It's not a

question of either being fully Enlightened or in utter darkness. And when people ask, ‘Are you Enlightened?’ what are they asking? What is their attitude? It’s very interesting to see this. It’s that that you have to deal with, rather than [348] the question. There are lots of ways in which they can ask: are they just challenging you? Are they just trying to knock you off your perch? Are they asserting basic equality? Or do they really want to know? Are they just curious or is it something of great spiritual importance that they should know? Is it idle curiosity? Do they really know what they are asking? What do they mean by Enlightenment? Have they ever met anyone who is Enlightened before, or that they thought was Enlightened? Could they recognize him by comparison if they saw him? Why do they want to make you say either that you are Enlightened or not? What’s behind it?

Chintamani: My experience is they just want an open confrontation eight times out of ten, and this is why I just get this total sense of futility and I’d rather just not bother, because there is going to be no exchange.

S: Well this is exactly what Hui-neng says:

“With those who are sympathetic You may have discussion about Buddhism. As to those whose whole point of view differs from ours, Treat them politely and try to make them happy.”

Chintamani: When a person does want to know, this sparks off something in me.

S: That’s true, I know exactly what you mean. This is quite true, but also sometimes it happens that if you’d be a bit patient and you bear with all the futile silly discussion and arguments, you will get through to that after a while. And you have to be able to recognize this too: whether if you put up with this for half an hour you will get through that sort of thorny thicket and be able to have a real exchange with that person or not. Sometimes it does happen that if you put up with this for half an hour - it’s mostly defensive on the other person’s part - you will get through to a position where you can really say something, where you really feel communication taking place. But of course it may be that that person is of such a nature he’s just going to go on and on arguing and you never get through, so you may be left feeling very sort of futile and a waste of time, but you shouldn’t because at least you did your part.

But going back to this question of experience, I remember, in my young days as an enthusiastic bhikkhu, sometimes I spent two or three hours talking to someone - usually some recalcitrant Hindu - and he’d be totally unconvinced at the [349] end and I used to feel very frustrated and I used to ask myself, ‘Why do I feel so frustrated?’ It was just because I did really want to convince him and I was attached to that sort of desire, if you like, that sort of need to convince, and I felt quite sort of frustrated and, well futile is the word. But after a few years of this sort of thing, and realizing what has happening, sometimes if I didn’t succeed at all and the whole discussion went very badly I’d shrug my shoulders after two or three hours of it and just forget about it. It didn’t matter, I’d done my best. But of course now I usually see pretty quickly whether someone is

going to be worthwhile or not and whether it's worth bearing with the half an hour or one hour of apparently futile discussion to clear the ground and let that person get over his defensiveness and then come to the real thing, or whether it's just going to be complete waste of time anyway, in which case I won't even get into it. So I had to learn to distinguish and that only comes with practice. So you may have quite a few unrewarding and barren and futile discussions; it's part of the occupational risk as it were. You just have to put up with it. It's an exercise in ksanti.

Mangala: I think that sometimes you feel sort of obliged to come up with the goods, sort of thing.

S: You have to give the answer, but you can't always do that.

Chintamani: Could one say that faith, then, was acknowledging that something was possible rather than it was certain?

S: Both: possible in time, but it is so out of time. I don't think that you can acknowledge something as possible without acknowledging that it is also actually existing somewhere, some place, somehow. It is not a completely abstract possibility. If one has the faith that it is possible for one to gain Enlightenment, that's faith obviously. Because you haven't gained it now, you've faith that it is possible, but that faith is also grounded in the fact that others have attained - or that even now here and there in the world there are others who have attained - or that there have been previous ages of history where others have attained - and what is possible for one human being in principle is possible for another.

I think also that one must accept the fact that human beings are [350] autonomous, even though reactively autonomous, and that they have the right to their own opinion, even their own wrong opinion, and if they want to go on being in the wrong to sort of spite you, as it were, or spite themselves, then that's their affair, let them get on with it; not allow yourself to be troubled by it, because then you are drawn into it. But there are some people, sometimes, who for deeply personal reasons, of which they may not be conscious, just want to go on disagreeing with you and finding fault and objecting and not accepting; that's their little game as it were. So [you] let them do it and then you get upset; they are not asking to be convinced to find out the truth, they want an opportunity of playing that little game, that's all.

But I've many times in the past had the experience when I really thought I'd wasted my time and been a bit annoyed about it, but it afterwards turned out it hadn't been time wasted at all, that the other person or the other people had got something out of it even though I'd felt rather annoyed about having to sort of waste my time in that sort of way. It's happened quite a few times that other people who were involved in that - or maybe just one other person - did get quite a bit out of it when I'd perhaps thought that they weren't or that I was wasting my time. You just don't know always.

Again you might feel that you've really convinced someone and be very pleased

with yourself. You might never see them again. You just don't know. So never be despondent and never be too optimistic. I've had this experience several times. I've really thought that I've convinced someone, I'd really sort of got to them, that they'd really taken to Buddhism and were really convinced, really sort of worked hard on them. But you hear that the next day, maybe, they've gone and joined the Mormons. And you were so sure of them, and so pleased also of course with yourself having put it across so well and had it accepted. Then some other cantankerous person who sort of argues with you and really annoys you with stupid questions and silly objections, after a while you find he's becoming a Buddhist. Somehow you've managed to convince him apparently, and then you might have been rather fed up with him and the whole business of discussion with him, but that's how it turns out. You just don't know, so you just have to do your best and leave it at that.

Chintamani: But I've had such negative experience of various preachers of [351] different religions kind of getting on their soapbox. I just don't want to be like that. It just puts people's backs up so much.

S: Well why not try the soapbox? Are you actually put off by people standing up on soapboxes? What do you actually mean by that. Did you literally experience this or is it a way of putting things? And if so what are you putting in this particular way?

Chintamani: The way that a Jehovah's Witness will knock at your door and come in and say 'Do you believe in God? I've got a few things to talk to you about God!'

S: There's no remote possibility of your putting it across like that and producing that sort of impression is there, surely?

Chintamani: Well I don't anyway.

S: Then why do you have such a fear that people should take it in this way and see you in that kind of manner? Or would you like to have that sort of confidence?

p.555: "On the 8th day of the 7th Moon, the Patriarch suddenly gave an order to his disciples to get a boat ready for his return to Sun-chow, (his native place). They entreated him earnestly to remain where he was, but in vain. 'It is only natural,' said the Patriarch, 'death is the inevitable outcome of birth. Even the Buddhas as they appear in this world must manifest an earthly death before they enter Parinirvana. There will be no exception with me; my physical body must be laid down somewhere. Fallen leaves go back to the place where the root is.'"

S: "Even the Buddhas as they appear in this world must manifest an earthly death before they enter Parinirvana." This isn't really quite correct according to Buddhist doctrines: the two are the same thing, your earthly death and your Parinirvana they are two sides of the same process. Not that you die and then you enter Parinirvana - that's too sort of literalistic. "Fallen leaves go back to

the place where the root is.” It seems to be a sort of proverb this, though why he should return to his native place to die, this doesn’t seem very clear. It’s not a general practice I would have thought. The Buddha certainly didn’t do it. Whether it’s a Chinese custom I don’t know, but anyway that’s what he did.

p.558: “In the eleventh moon of that year, the question of the Patriarch’s resting place gave rise to a dispute among the government officials of Kwong-chow, Shiu-chow and Sun-chow, each arty being anxious to have the remains of the Patriarch removed to his own district.” Much as after the Buddha’s own death.

“As the smoke turned directly to Tso-kai, the sacred shrine together with the inherited robe and bowl were accordingly removed back there on the 13th day of the eleventh moon.” There are some things that can’t be resolved by discussion. It’s best to leave them to chance and that’s why in many primitive communities, even spiritual bodies, this in fact is done. Sometimes it’s called guidance from God or the omen and so forth, but in a sense it’s chance or the irrational. So when you can’t decide things, you [352] don’t know which way to turn, you weigh up pros and cons, well then let the decision be in the light of some irrational factor, as it were. And this is what happened here: so many Enlightened disciples, bhikkhus, and laymen, but they couldn’t come to a decision as to where to inter the Patriarch’s remains. It seems rather extraordinary, but at least they had enough sense to decide it wasn’t something that could be settled by purely rational means. They sort of invoked the supernatural. In a way it’s a bit ridiculous, but it works. “They burnt incense and prayed to the Patriarch to indicate by the drift of the smoke the place he himself would like to rest.” Just imagine, the Patriarch who is in Parinirvana, sort of guiding the smoke this way or that way where he’d like to rest, as it were. It’s ridiculous. Probably he couldn’t have been less interested. But anyway, it satisfied the disciples. The smoke luckily did blow a particular way and so they took it, well, that’s the way, and everybody was quite happy, whereas they might have had really terrible arguments about it before.

“The Patriarch inherited the robe when he was 24,” that is, he became Patriarch “he was ordained at 39”, that’s rather interesting: fifteen years later.

Luk’s translation p.90: "One day, the Patriarch summoned his disciples, Fa Hai, Chih Ch’eng, Fa Ta, Shen Hui, Chih Chang, Chih T’ung, Chih Ch’e, Chih Tao, Fa Chen, and Fa Ju, and said to them: 'You are men above the average. After my death, each of you should be the master of a region. I will now teach you how to expound the Dharma in order not to stray from our sect.

"Let us begin with the three categories of Dharma doors (to enlightenment) followed by the application of thirty-six pairs of opposites, with avoidance of the two extremes while moving hither and thither and without deviation from the self-nature while expounding all Dharmas.

“If someone suddenly asks you about the Dharma, your answer should be based on a pair of extremes depending upon each other for their existence, until both are wiped out, leaving nothing behind.”

This is the basic principle: if someone asks you a question try to find out, or to feel, from what one-sided position he's asking the question, try to see the assumption and then correct that. Put the counter-position as it were, then try to work your way round to the common position reconciling the two extremes. If someone adopts an extreme position as a starting point you've got, as it were, from this point of view no alternative but to adopt the other extreme position. That may make him think. And the other extreme position may be Buddhism appearing as an extreme position in relation to his extreme position.

For instance, he may argue that there is a God, so you take the position that there is no God and you argue about it. That may be completely futile, but as a result both of you - himself unconsciously but you quite consciously and knowingly - may be able to come round to a position of 'Well what do we mean by God, what do we mean by no God?' and then get down to something more serious, as a result of which you may be able to bring him round to [353] your point of view, which is not the point of view you originally opposed to him, but something representing, as it were, a higher third. Sometimes in discussion you may have to allow yourself to be put quite knowingly into a false position. It isn't simply that Buddhism says there is no God in a very dogmatic way; it's not as simple as that. But you may have to adopt that position for the time being. That person has strongly asserted the existence of God: well, you respond or retaliate by strongly asserting that God doesn't exist, that there is no God, no personal God. So as a result of that tussle you sort of get to know the measure of one another. He might start think a bit, or you may be able - when you feel him sort of weakening or his mood changing - to say, 'Well what do you mean by God anyway?' and the whole sort of atmosphere of the discussion may then change.

Wolf: And then go beyond both concepts.

S: Yes, but you are doing it knowingly, because you knew all the time that Buddhism's non-theism is not a sort of dogmatic denial of God, and that it accepts and incorporates in a way some of the things indicated by the word God. It's not a question of a hard and fast distinction, or that they are mutually exclusive. Maybe he wasn't using the word God very literally, but that eventually comes out in the course of the discussion. But first of all you may have to go through at least the motions, and with some real vigour and conviction too, perhaps, of the opposite point of view, but not try to be completely universal and put things exactly as you feel them right from the beginning. Sometimes his attitude will preclude you from doing that, so you have to fight it out a bit on his own level and accept that.

Ratnapani: It's a bit like bargaining for a price: he starts at one end, you start from the other and work towards the middle, or in this case, somewhere else.

S: And in this case you know, or should know, what you are doing, but he doesn't.

Chintamani: There seem to be two psychological barriers, that is if one or the

other person wants the agreement of the other person, or the other extreme wants to annihilate the other person.

S: Well if the other person wants to annihilate you let him try. He may [354] annihilate you, but then that's good for you. If he can't annihilate you he'll probably get really furious, but then you have to handle the situation as best you can, but sometimes it's a good start.

I remember once I was staying with a friend of mine in Poona who had his own religious movement and was a well-known religious teacher down in Bombay. And a Jehovah's Witness and his wife came to see this friend of mine and convert him, along with his Bible. The wife was English and the husband was an Indian convert - they had all the enthusiasm and the confidence - and I remember how he was talking and discussing with my friend who was very patient and quite willing to argue. He didn't mind in the least. And they'd been going on for two or three hours, and the Jehovah's Witness, that is the Indian, was getting more and more frustrated and angry and he kept saying to my friend, 'Well look the Bible says so. Can't you see? Can't you read? Look it says so!' and his wife was sort of plucking at his jacket and saying, 'Dear, the gentleman doesn't believe in the Bible.' But he kept on saying, 'Look, it's there!' pointing it out with his fingers, holding it close to my friend's nose, 'Can't you see it? Can't you read? Look it's written there.' But the wife, though she was a Jehovah's Witness, she could at least see what was happening and she said, 'Dear, the gentleman doesn't believe in the Bible,' and he couldn't see that, he was so blinded by his own feelings and frustration and rage, and in the end he just left in a temper and his wife sort of waited behind a bit apologetic and said that he was very much into this and he really believes in God and he's really carried away by these 'divine' feelings.

So if suddenly someone asks you about the Dharma, sort of takes you unawares, as it were, pops up with a question, your answer should be based on a pair of extremes depending upon each other for their existence, until both are wiped out leaving nothing behind.

"The three categories of Dharma doors are: skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas." This is simple very basic Buddhism going right back to the Pali canon, just important sets of doctrinal terms. "There are five skandhas which are form (rupa), reception (vedana)" - it really means feeling - "conception (samjna), mental activities (samskara)" - really volitional activities - "and consciousness (vijnana)."

"There are twelve entrances (ayatana), which are divided into six external sense-data, such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and idea, and six internal gates (sense-organs), such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. There are eighteen realms of sense (dhatu) which comprise the six sense-data, six gates, and six consciousnesses." It's all standard sort [355] of analytical Theravada material.

Luk p.91: "External inanimate things consist of five pairs of opposites." Here we seem to come into Chinese thought. Some scholars are very dubious about this

section. They can't quite understand it or how it was put together.

"The aspects of things consist of twelve pairs of opposites: speech and dharma, existence and non-existence, form and the formless, the material and the immaterial, the stream of birth and death and 'beyond the stream of birth and death', matter and the void, motion and stillness, purity and impurity, the worldly and the saintly, the sangha and the laity, old and young, and big and small."

S: It seems to me that all this is just an amplification of that previous remark about using the pairs of extremes or pairs of opposites. He's just giving various different examples from Indian Buddhist thought and from Chinese thought, examples of these different pairs of opposites that you must use in answering questions.

"Those who cling to the void, vilify the sutras by saying that they do not use written words (Scriptures)." This is what the Zen people tended to say later on.

Luk pp.91-2: "(If they were correct in) saying that written words should not be used, it would not be right even to speak because the spoken is also an aspect of the written word. They also say: 'The direct way establishes not written words' (but they forget that) the two words 'establishes not' are also words. As soon as they see someone expounding (the Dharma), they immediately criticize him on the ground that he clings to written words. You should know that it is already bad enough for them to delude themselves but in addition they vilify the Buddha's sutras." If the Sixth Patriarch really did say this it's remarkable, because he's really criticizing what later came to be called Zen.

p.92: "Those clinging to externals while performing ceremonies in their quest of the truth." Possibly he had in mind the Chinese tantric Buddhists, especially as he uses the word Bodhimandala. He's saying, as it were, it's all right to perform the ceremonies, to perform the rites, as an aid to your quest, but if you cling to externals, if you take it all literally, then it's only an obstacle and you never see your own true nature.

"If someone puts a question to you and asks you about the existing, mention the non-existent in your answer." He comes back to what he says at the beginning.

"If you are asked about the non-existent, mention the existing in your answer. If you are asked about the worldly, mention the saintly in your answer. If you are asked about the saintly, mention the worldly in your answer. (Thus) the mutual dependence of the two extremes will bring to light the significance of the 'mean'. If all questions are answered in this manner, you will not err from the principle.

"Suppose someone asks you: What is darkness? you should reply: Light is the primary and darkness the secondary cause. When light disappears, darkness appears. Light reveals darkness and darkness reveals light. The significance of the mean arises from the mutual dependence of light and darkness.

"All other questions should be answered in the same manner. In future, in your transmission of Dharma (to your disciples), you should comply with and hand

down this teaching in order not to err from the aim of our sect.”

This seems quite straightforward and clear. As I say, the scholars have got their doubts about these lists. It may well be that the Patriarch just indicated the general principle, and the various lists of various pairs of opposites which it might be useful to remember were just drawn up and inserted.

Wolf: Do you think there was a school where they were vilifying the sutras and so on?

S: It's quite possible, or it might have been just individuals doing it.

Mangala: Zengo used to openly denounce the scriptures.

Ratnapani: And he definitely clung to the void too.

Chintamani: He said everything else was ego: dreams were ego, scriptures [356] were ego, talking was ego.

S: And not talking is ego, so what are you to do? I think you've hit the nail on the head. He was clinging to the void.

Chintamani: Eternalism.

S: In a way, yes. It's also interesting that several of the Friends, including Order members, have got to a point where they can see this. Perhaps they couldn't have seen it a couple of years ago, but they can see it now and understand what's happening.

Wolf: What is meant by clinging to the void?

S: “When the self-nature is applied to your talks to others, outwardly you should discard all phenomena while facing phenomena, and inwardly you should discard the void while facing the void.” (p.91) It's as though in our experience there is an external and an internal. Outwardly we see all the myriad phenomena, so we are aware of them - the whole world, the whole samsara, we discard while facing them. We don't refuse to face; we're in contact, yes, but we are not attached, we don't cling. In the same way, inside there is this tremendous experience of the void, in a sense the opposite extreme. There's the Absolute, there's Nirvana, there's Enlightenment, so we face that in the sense that we look in the direction of this experience, even we have this experience; but we don't cling to it. So while facing phenomena we continue to face, we don't cling; while experiencing the void we continue to experience the void, we don't cling. So there is a common attitude of non-clinging, non-attachment, whether it's outside, whether it's inside, whether it's samsara, whether it's Nirvana. In that way, we reach this higher third - something we can hardly talk about - which includes samsara and nirvana, inner and outer, and so on. But also we can say that maybe you have to cling to the void for a while, in a sense, in a manner of speaking, to sort of deepen your experience of it. But you must be very careful and know what you are doing and not erect a false view on the basis of that. That's just your provisional sort of stage of practice.

Buddhadasa: In the Buddhist Society edition it says, "From the correlation, interdependence of the two, the doctrine of mean arises."

S: Right, yes. It's very interesting what he says about "those who cling [357] to the void, vilify the sutras by saying that they do not use written words (Scriptures)". It's a symptom. You over-value your own experience, but your own experience is limited and you discard the scriptures for that reason, but, "(If they were correct in) saying that written words should not be used, it would not be right even to speak." Logically you shouldn't even say that you are Buddha, "because the spoken is also an aspect of the written word". Or, rather, it's the same: words are words written down or just spoken aloud. "As soon as they see someone expounding (the Dharma), they immediately criticize him on the ground that he clings to written words." Some Zen people do this nowadays unfortunately. That doesn't seem to be Hui-neng's message.

Buddhadasa: The next line in the Buddhist Society edition is even more a condemnation against Zen: 'He who is ..(unclear).. to argue that in the direct method (literally straight path) literature is discarded, but does he appreciate that the two words 'is discarded' are also literature?'

[general discussion not transcribed]

Devamitra: In Yampolsky's introduction he said that the sutra could be divided into two portions: the first part being the sermon at the Ta-Fan temple, including the biography, and that seems to me to be just about the meat of the whole thing, and the rest is just tit-bits.

S: Yes, though there are one or two substantial tit-bits. But you certainly get a much more direct impact from that initial discourse: the autobiography followed by the discourse on prajna.

Ratnapani: Is what we've got here what was handed down?

S: Yes. It seems as though it gathered accretions on the way. That's my impression.

Ratnapani: So what they got was very slim?

S: Yes, but no doubt the essence. Also don't forget this was given in addition to whatever else they had from the general Buddhist tradition: they had the Lankavatara Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, Saddharma Pundarika. Many of them were studying these things as well, practising meditation, listening to lectures, but in addition they had this sort of special emphasis, as embodied [358] in this particular text, transmitted to them. It wasn't that they were just doing with this or just making do with this. It seems that in the course of time the Platform Scripture became comparatively neglected, especially by Zen Buddhists in Japan.

Mangala: Do you mean all sutras?

S: No, I'm especially meaning this sutra, but maybe sutras in general too, because

I feel if they'd really read this sutra and taken some of its teachings seriously, Zen could never have developed in Japan in the way it did and have developed in the way that we see it even now: for instance this whole question of the emphasis on sitting cross-legged which Hui-neng almost ridicules. And there are quite a few things like that - and not neglecting the scriptures.

Subhuti: Do you feel that this is how it has been taken in Japan, or is it simply Western people's impression of Zen?

S: I feel it's the way it's been taken in Japan too, at least in some quarters.

Mangala: Of course this is 500AD in China, and Buddhism didn't go to Japan for about another 500 years after that.

S: Yes, and it's had a long history in Japan, so it's not surprising, but still one is surprised. The Zen masters that one reads about in comparatively recent times don't seem at all like Hui-neng; not that masters can't differ from one another, but the essence of the thing doesn't seem to be there. They seem to have got it wrong somehow.

Wolf: The Fifth Patriarch sealed the mind of Hui-neng with the Diamond Sutra, I should think all the sutras were made a lot of.

S: Yes. Well that's very clear from the text. It seems to me that, in a word, modern Zen - modern meaning, in the last few hundred years - on the whole is much too regimented. There is far too strong a corporate spirit.

Ratnapani: It seems that Zen does depend on having an Enlightened teacher for the techniques which are used, which are useless otherwise, and failing that the only thing to do is to make an institution of them.

S: If you haven't got the scriptures and the traditional teachings to fall back on, there seem to have been really great people in the Zen tradition in Japan from time to time, like Hakuin, but you get the impression, well not only [359] impressions, it seems quite clear, that institutionalized Zen in Japan is as remote from the spirit of Hui-neng as, say, institutionalized Theravada is remote, in some parts of the Buddhist world, from the spirit of the Pali scriptures, and this becomes all the more important inasmuch as Zen almost claims a monopoly of the spirit. In a way, that might have been true in Hui-neng's day, but it isn't true any longer. They've institutionalized their sort of monopoly of the spirit, and it reminds me of what Nagarjuna said: that the teaching of the void is the antidote for all poisons ['Likewise Kasyapa, Sunyata is the antidote for all dogmatic views; but him I declare incurable who misapprehends Sunyata itself as theory.' Kasyapa-Parivarta p.97, sec.65, as quoted in T. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism. A Study of the Madhyamika System*, London 1972, p.164.] - that is, of wrong views - but, he said, when you misunderstand the teaching of the void, where is the antidote for that poison? And it's a bit like that with Zen. Too regimented, institutionalized, and rigid, all in the name of the spirit, and you're supposed to be the (?)corrective (?)catalytic sort of (?)agency of Mahayana Buddhism, but you end up even more rigid than the

Theravada. This is my personal impression. Theravada people on the whole are more (unclear) than the Zenists, judging by my personal contacts with them.

Mangala: But the way that Zen is practised in the West is mostly in monasteries, at least largely.

S: But look at Hui-neng's Zen. The principal activity seemed to be going to lectures after you'd read lots of sutras. There are references to meditation, but mostly by way of warning against doing it wrong or criticisms of doing it wrong.

Buddhadasa: So what is going on in Balmore Street [an early FWBO centre, tr.] is Zen with a capital Z, and what is going on in Japan is not.

S: Yes. What I feel is often very objectionable is the way in which Zen is distinguished from Buddhism, made into something superior, and from your sort of superior heights of Zen you look down on ordinary Buddhists. And this is absolutely terrible - you almost look down on the Buddha.

Devamitra: Before I became involved with Buddhism I'd heard of Zen but never Zen Buddhism, and it was as if Zen was something which was very austere and somehow connected with Buddhism, but not Buddhism.

S: Maybe, in a way, the way it has become, it isn't much connected with Buddhism. Maybe it's sort of sunk below the Buddhist level, much of it. But it's interesting to hear when people enumerate the different mysticisms they say, well, there is Hinduism and there's Vedanta and Sufism and Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, [360] and Zen; Zen is enumerated separately.

Mangala: I think that maybe five years or so back it was just a sort of intellectual plaything, but certainly the people that I come across now are much more involved with the practice at least.

S: In other words they meditate, but they didn't before. For instance the Zen class they've had at the Buddhist Society for the last forty years is a case in point: they never meditate, it's just discussion - though there is a separate Zen meditation group apparently now.

Mangala: Zen does, after all, emphasize the meditation side and perhaps through that very practice they will realize the limitations of that.

S: The difficulty seems to be the sort of Zen ideas and concepts in circulation on the purely intellectual level, grasped and misunderstood in such a way as to inhibit all practice because you were assured you had it all already.

Buddhadasa: One of the greatest misconceptions is this attitude of anything goes. It's all all right. If you kill a mate, it's all Zen, all the martial sport connotations.

S: Well you have Christmas Humphreys using Zen to justify sentencing people to death.

Devamitra: There's no mention in the sutra of the meditation techniques employed.

S: Presumably they employed standard Buddhist concentration techniques: the mindfulness of breathing and so on, maybe even metta bhavana.

Subhuti: Something that we've been saying throughout the week has been, 'That's Zen', but what is it that we are getting at when we say this?

S: Something with a paradoxical twist. If you take Hui-neng's teachings, regardless of what they are labelled as, then what he says and what we say and what we do in the FWBO seem very similar, very closely akin. But if I look again at some of the Zen literature I've read - some put out by Westerners, some put out by Easterners - and if I recall my own occasional contacts with Zen people in the West and Zen groups, they don't seem at all in accordance with Hui-neng. Not one little bit. So in that sense, if you then label Hui-neng as Zen then down at the Centre we are Zen and they are not. [361]

Subhuti: I think that if people ask us if we teach Zen, first of all there is the point that Zen just means meditation, and secondly the point that Zen is a particular phenomena of Buddhism and we don't exclude any school.

S: In other words it's nearer to the truth to say yes than to say no.

Buddhadasa: But there has been this misconception even among the Order that true Zen is a phenomena of spontaneity; sort of irrational action.

S: Of course Suzuki was responsible for this misunderstanding, not intentionally, and he later on apparently recognized this. He'd emphasized spontaneity, but it was taken in the West in a completely wrong way.

Ratnapani: In books I've read they talk about judging someone's knowledge of Zen: Zen is equivalent to truth or reality.

S: Well it's as though we started to use FWBO to mean the truth: 'Oh that's very FWBO. Oh they haven't any insight into FWBO. Have you understood FWBO?' That's exactly what the Zen people are doing: 'Have you understood Zen, the spirit of Zen?' and so on.

Chintamani: Here's a quote from Dogen from a Zen book: 'Whosoever speaks of Zen as it if were a sect or a school is a devil.' [untraced, tr.]

S: Yes, right. So the emphasis is on sect, not Buddhist or not Buddhist sect, but Buddhist sect: 'He who speaks about Zen as though it was a school or sect is a devil.' But they take it: 'He who speaks about Zen as though it was a Buddhist sect,' because Dogen spoke of Buddhism all the time. It's the sect he's against, not the Buddhism. It's not just a sect, it's Buddhism, it's the truth, it's the Dharma that he's concerned with.

Chintamani: In the context here it says, 'What is referred to in this book as Zen is certainly not something exotically oriental, certainly not a (unclear) and not even a Buddhist sect.'

S: Yes and it's very sort of vague and miccha-ditthi-like. Christmas Humphreys has popularized this sort of attitude. He said to me once, and I believe he's written it, that Alice in Wonderland is pure Zen. How stupid! How ridiculous! It's a bit quirky and a bit paradoxical. So you go along to the houses of some friends, and I found this when I went to Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, there are two or three copies of Alice in Wonderland in the library that someone had presented. They all [362] (unclear) twee in the end and very faddy and just making a fashion of it.

Ratnapani: It seems to be a great excuse not to think.

S: That's a great modern heresy.

Ratnapani: The people who seem to us very strongly into Zen and nothing else tend to be among the thickos among us, and it's almost a justification for their own lack of grey matter power, instead of just making the effort to get into something.

S: Or too much. I think it would be a good idea if people knew their Hui-neng rather well and could quote it and refer to it when discussing Zen, especially with Zen Buddhists or Zenists. If they start running down the scriptures say, 'Well Hui-neng says,' and turn to it. If they insist on a cross-legged posture then say, 'Well look what Hui-neng says.'

Ratnapani: 'It's just words, man. It's a scripture, man.'

S: Then what does he say about words, your source, your authority? He thought of all that. "Why do you speak?" Also I don't think it can be said that it is just a Western misunderstanding. I'm afraid the misunderstanding started in the East, and the English in particular don't tend to be sort of pseudo-mystical, they tend to be not mystical at all. If anything they are rather too down to earth and practical. So I think it's a question of sort of taking the essentials, what is really the Dharma, what is really the Buddha's teaching or Hui-neng's teaching, and not be misled by purely Oriental, exotic, and mystical things. They don't really belong to the Dharma. The Buddha's own teaching is very sort of plain and clear and down to earth and practical, unambiguous and moderately intellectual, but it's reasonable.

Dr Conze has an interesting theory which he put forward some years ago: that the further away you went from the geographical centre of Buddhism, the more liable you became to distortions of the doctrine, and he mentioned Zen especially in this connection, that Japan is pretty far from India, whereas Tibet is comparatively near, and they've stuck in Tibet pretty close to the teachings of Indian Buddhism. In Japan they've got rather far away from it.

Ratnapani: We must be very careful then. [363]

S: Mustn't we. Though of course travel conditions have changed now.

(end of seminar)

[corrected, annotated, and study text added, Shantavira September 2004]