

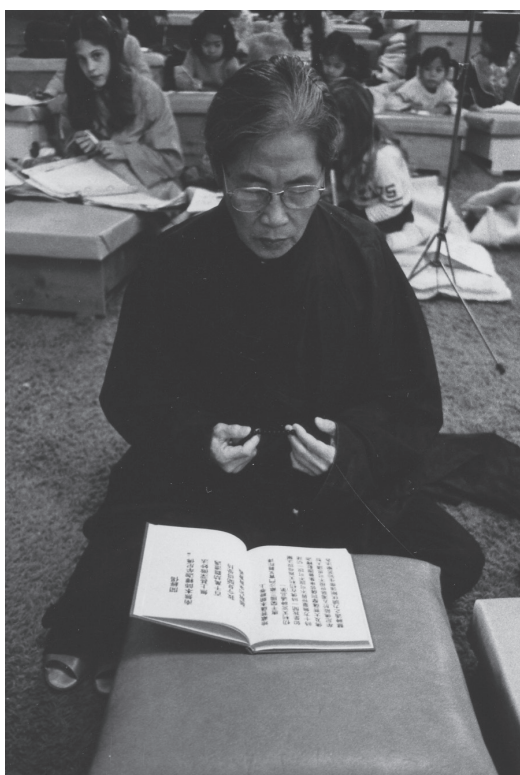
The Intrinsic Teacher Within Us

—Reflections on the Platform Sutra (continued)

自性中本有的導師——讀《壇經》之省（續）

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These words indicate his caring intention to teach others to realize their nature. This is “true intention” and it is also what is passed along privately from the master to master. This passing of lineage is probably the ultimate embodiment of having the same background (因) or the same intention for both the teacher and student.

In fact, if the intention of the teacher’s school of teaching and the student’s goal differ, then the student will not be receptive towards that school of teaching. In this vein, the Sixth Patriarch explains why his teaching does not work for certain people:

“This teaching is the Supreme Vehicle, expounded for people of great

wisdom and superior faculties. When people of limited faculties and wisdom hear it, they doubt and disbelieve. Why? By analogy, it is like the rain that magical dragons shower on Jambudvīpa that washes away all the cities, towns, and villages as if they were mere leaves and straw. But rain falling on the ocean causes the ocean neither to increase nor decrease. Similarly, when people of the Great Vehicle, the Supreme Vehicle, hear The *Diamond Sutra* explained, their minds are receptive; they awaken and understand.”

The direct teaching of the Supreme Vehicle would hence make certain people unwilling to believe it and generate doubts. And that is because, unlike people of the Great or Supreme Vehicle, they do not have superior faculties, which means their intentions are scattered and not unified in a single intent to see their own nature, therefore their minds are not receptive.

The Fifth Patriarch’s disciple, Shenxiu, is a good example of such scatterness. During

這偈頌流露出了五祖的慈悲用意，教導人們領悟自性。這個「真因」，也就是祖師們代代密付之意。佛法的一脈相傳，應該可以視為師徒同因最究竟的表現。

事實上，如果師父宗派的「因」與弟子的意願不同，那麼弟子將無法領受師傳之法。對此，六祖大師解釋了為什麼他的法不是所有人都可以受用的：

「此法門是最上乘，為大智人說，為上根人說。小根小智人聞，心生不信。何以故？譬如大龍下雨於閻浮提，城邑聚落，悉皆漂流如漂蕞葉。若雨大海，不增不減。若大乘人，若最上乘人，聞說《金剛經》，心開悟解。」

有一些人對上乘頓教「不願」去相信，並且生出疑惑。這是因為這些人沒有上乘的根器，也就是說他們的意向散亂，不能專心一意的修行見性，因此他們的心無法去接納領受上乘頓法。

五祖大師的另一名徒弟神秀，便是這樣的一個例子。在遴選下一位祖師的偈頌選拔中，他的意志混淆——雖有求法的善意，但也有對祖位的不善冀望。然而最明顯地，就是他思惟著「若不

the verse contest to decide the next patriarch, he displays very mixed intentions—the good intention of seeking dharma, the bad intention of coveting the title of Patriarch. However, most revealingly, he thought “if I don’t submit a verse, I will never get the Dharma” which showed that he was focused outwards to somehow “get the Dharma” from his teacher. The Fifth Patriarch exhorted him to directly see his own nature, but Shenxiu was unable to awaken to it. The effect was that “his mind was in a daze, his spirit disturbed, and his mood anxious, as if he were in a dream.”

Following the same principle, if a person who is receptive to the Supreme Vehicle were taught a lesser teaching, then the medicine would not cure the illness either. Take Bhikshu Zhichang for example: “[He] left home to become a monk when he was a child and was intent on discovering his own nature.” Such unwavering determination to see his own nature is a reflection of his superior faculty being receptive to the direct teaching. However, when he went to see High Master Datong, he received a teaching that did not match his faculty. This teaching could not lead him to seeing the nature and therefore resulted in his “lingering doubts.” These doubts however are another indicator of his strong affinity with the direct teaching because he did not merely settle for the explanation of true seeing given by that teacher. It wasn’t until he travelled all the way to learn from the Sixth Patriarch that his “heart and mind” finally penetrated through his confusion.

A good teacher can only attend to and instruct to the level of the student’s interest and aspiration. Therefore, if we want to pursue the direct teaching, the first thing to do is to examine our true intention. Only after unifying the intention to a single goal of seeing one’s own nature, can a person go ahead to look for a teacher whose only intent is to “lead all to their own awakening and their own liberation.”

Having the Affinity (yuán 緣). The first layer of having the affinity means the ability to establish a deep connection. A connection that is often based on a shared noble background – realizing one’s true nature. This connection enables the teacher and student to relate on an authentic level that cuts through all falsehood, allowing them to truly understand one another and allowing the teaching to impact the student’s deepest core existence. Sometimes, however, when an affinity is lacking between the teacher and the student actions can be taken to create such affinity. The most extreme case might be when the assassin Xingchang came to kill the Sixth Patriarch.

Xingchang was shocked by the Master’s special quality, that he could not be injured by weapons. Such ability is often associated with virtuousness. Upon recognizing this, the assassin was transformed from a killer to a remorseful person begging for forgiveness. The person who was the most hostile experienced total reformation – he wanted to leave home and learn from the Sixth Patriarch. The Sixth Patriarch, for the sake of Xingchang’s safety and out of kindness and compassion, gave him ten ounces of gold and asked him to come back some other day with his appearance changed to avoid retaliation.

When Xingchang indeed came back to see the Master, he was a vigorous cultivating bhikshu whose gratitude towards the Master had inspired him to

呈偈，終不得法」，表示他心向外求，想要從師父那裡「得法」。五祖勸導神秀要直見本性，但是神秀卻無法從中覺悟，以致最終「心中恍惚，神思不安，猶如夢中」。

以此類推，如果一個人能夠接受上乘之法，卻授以小教，這樣也沒有辦法藥到病除。以比丘智常為例，他「髫年出家，志求見性」這樣堅決地要見性，可以說是利根之人，堪能接受頓法。然而當他參訪大通和尚時，和尚的教導卻沒有與他的根器相應。大通和尚對正見的解釋，不能引導他見其自性，因而「未決狐疑」；這些疑問，也更加證明他與頓教的契機。直到長途跋涉參學六祖，他才終於心意豁然。

一個導師的用心和教導，取決於弟子的意樂及心志所能達到的程度。因此想要探學頓教，首先要反思我們的真正發心。唯有專志以明心見性為目標，才能找到唯欲引導弟子「自悟自解」的善知識。

「有緣」。它的第一層意思，就是能夠建立一份深厚的關係。這種關係通常是以一個共同的、崇高的「因」——明心見性——為基礎，而且這種關係能使師徒在真摯的層面上，摒除所有的虛假，彼此真正地互相理解，師父的教導也就更能震撼弟子的內心深處。但有時緣份不足的情況下，可以採取一些方法來締造善緣。最極端的例子，或許就是張行昌行刺六祖大師。

張行昌當時非常震驚六祖不為刀劍所傷的特殊能力，這種能力通常正是德行的一種表現。意識到這點，這名充滿敵意的刺客，從殺手變成羞恥慚愧、請求原諒的人。他徹底改過自新，決定拜六祖為師，出家修行。為了保護張行昌的安全，六祖大師慈悲地給他十兩金子，囑咐他外貌改變之後再回來，以免被徒眾報復。

當張行昌再來拜見六祖時，已經是一位精進修行的比丘了，因為感念六祖的

teach and liberate all living beings. Thereafter, when he asked the Sixth Patriarch about the meaning of “permanent” and “impermanent,” the background and the affinity were present. The direct teaching from the Master led him to a great awakening. Therefore, great virtue, kindness and compassion can create a strong and wholesome affinity when there was none.

Another example would be the Fifth Patriarch's followers in the monastery; they had no intention of realizing their own nature but would rather invest in advocating Shenxiu as the new Patriarch. Faced with such a lack of affinity for the direct teaching, the Fifth Patriarch expediently encouraged them to practice according to Shenxiu's verse so they could work on cleaning up their habitual tendencies. If the followers indeed practiced diligently then it would lessen their obstructive afflictions, therefore making them more receptive to direct teaching. In other words, lessening one's strong views and habitual tendencies can also create an affinity with the direct teaching.

Stimulating Good Dharmas. By stimulating good Dharmas such as trust, remorse, vigor, sincerity, gratitude, and so on, conditions are created for transformation to take place. Equally important, these good Dharmas are also needed as an aide in counteracting afflictions and habitual tendencies. A timely direct teaching can act like a powerful force that pulls afflictions out by the root, while the good Dharmas can function like the nutrients in the soil that nourish the person and further motivate him/her to make progress in cultivation.

When Bhikshu Zhidao, a monk who studied the *Nirvana Sutra* for over a decade, came to ask the Sixth Patriarch for help with his confusion on the meaning of the sutra, he explained his doubts on the physical body and Dharma-body with the following statement:

“Which body ceases, and which enjoys the bliss? When the physical body perishes, the four elements scatter. That is total suffering; such misery cannot be called bliss! If it's the Dharma-body that ceases, it would be just like grass and trees, rocks and stones—who is there to experience bliss? Moreover, the Dharma-nature is the essence, and the five skandhas are the functioning of birth and death. One essence has five functions. So birth and death are permanent, eternal: because birth initiates the functions that go forth from the essence, and at death the functions withdraw and revert back into the essence. If there is rebirth, then sentient beings never cease to exist and never die. If, on the other hand, there is no rebirth, then sentient beings would simply die out and be forever extinct, the same as inanimate things. Thus all things would stop with nirvana—and since one does not even get to live, how could there be bliss?”

This long list of questions is marked with strong underlying doubts and emotions. It paints a vivid picture of Bhikshu Zhidao who spent more than ten years contemplating his own existence and arrived at this existential crisis. Because of his doubts and fear on the existential level, his cultivation is not only stagnant but on the verge of breaking apart from despair.

Upon hearing his doubts, the Sixth Patriarch first scolded Zhidao harshly by saying that as the disciple of the Buddha, he had failed the noble practice by cultivating the direct teaching using the “heretical views of nihilism and eternalism.” By doing so, he not only pointed out the root of his doubt but

恩德，他發心出家度眾生。因此當他請問六祖大師「常」與「無常」之義時，因為「因」和「緣」都具足了，所以能在六祖的直頓之教下大悟。因此在無緣的情況下，高超的德行與慈悲可以締造堅固的善緣。

另外一個例子是五祖寺中的徒眾。他們沒有覺悟自性的志向，而是更情願推崇神秀為下一任祖師。面臨如此缺乏施展頓教的因緣，五祖就善巧地鼓勵他們按照神秀的偈頌來修行，如此便去除積習毛病。他們若能確實依此精進修行，煩惱障礙減少之後，就比較容易接受直頓之教。換句話說，減少我見和習氣，也是在跟頓教法門結緣。

「發起一切善法」。信、慚愧、精進，誠心、感恩等善法的發起，可以開創轉化的機緣。這些善法也是對治煩惱和習氣的重要工具。時機得當的當頭棒喝，就如同一股強大無比的力量，能把煩惱連根拔除；而善法就如同肥沃的土壤，滋潤並鼓舞著我們繼續精進修行。

另一位僧人志道，修學《涅槃經》十幾年，未明大意，參拜六祖時道出了自己對色身與法身的疑惑。他說道：

「不審何身寂滅？何身受樂？若色身者，色身滅時，四大分散，全然是苦，苦不可言樂。若法身寂滅，即同草木瓦石，誰當受樂？又法性是生滅之體，五蘊是生滅之用，一體五用。生滅是常，生則從體起用，滅則攝用歸體。若聽更生，即有情之類，不斷不滅。若不聽更生，則永歸寂滅，同於無情之物。如是，則一切諸法被涅槃之所禁伏，尚不得生，何樂之有？」

這一長串的提問，夾雜著強烈的疑惑與情執，同時也生動描繪出比丘志道花了十多年的時間，思惟己身的存在，卻生出了存在危機。也正由於對自我存在層面的疑惑與恐懼，他的修行不僅停滯不前，還面臨因失望而崩潰的危險。

聽取志道的疑問後，六祖大師首先嚴正地斥責志道——身為佛子卻失于正

also reminded him of his initial resolve of cultivation – cultivating the Buddha’s teaching, the noble path. Then the Sixth Patriarch went on to point out Zhidao’s dualistic view of physical body and Dharma-body and to show that his assumption of someone experiencing the bliss is because of his attachment to the familiar existence of birth and death as well as to worldly pleasure. By saying this the Sixth Patriarch reminded him of the important aspect of monastic life – giving up worldly pleasure.

Then the Sixth Patriarch gave him the direct teaching, instructing him on “the true bliss of nirvana”—a state with no sign of arising or passing, no sign of birth and death; because there is no discrimination of self and others, there is only bliss but no notion of someone enjoying or not enjoying the bliss. The bliss is so trustworthy that even **“When the con-ending fires burn to the bottom of the sea, / And the winds pound the mountains like drums, / The true bliss of permanent quiescence—the mark of nirvana remains, as it really is.”** By using “forced words” to describe the state of nirvana, the Sixth Patriarch not only corrected Zhidao’s view but more importantly restored his faith in the practice, re-instilled the true refuge (of the Buddha, his teaching and the Monastic practice) in him.

During the whole process, the Sixth Patriarch not only addressed the wrong views and pulled out the afflictions, he also stimulated the good qualities in Zhidao and nurtured his ground of cultivation. As a result Zhidao was rid of his decades long existential crisis and despair. He “experienced a profound awakening” and became overjoyed.

CONCLUSION—THE TEACHER WITHIN

In the spirit of the Sixth Patriarch’s teaching on the non-dual nature of all being, the external teacher-student relationship is really not apart from the internal cultivation of self reflection and self-understanding. The inherent good teacher is our mind, which is fundamentally pure, without grasping or rejecting and it can also manifest its teaching as afflictions. To learn from the intrinsic teacher within our mind, our own nature, the qualities of the internal teacher-student should also be:

- 1) Having the Background—which means to have self-awareness of the true intention of our cultivation, to unify the discursive intentions and align them with the goal of uniting with our original mind;
- 2) Having the Affinity—which means to take strong inner refuge with our inherent nature, to be true to this refuge, and be sincerely willing to work on changing ourselves.
- 3) Stimulating Good Dharmas—which means to be willing to trust the nature and transform difficulties and pressure into constructive motives and opportunities that help us in accomplishing the Way.

With all this in mind, we can then follow the Sixth Patriarch’s exhortation to his students: **“Each of you work hard; and try your best wherever circumstances take you.”** ❀

修，反而以外道的斷常邪見來修習頓教。六祖的訓斥，不僅指出志道疑問的根本，同時也提示他修道的初心——修行佛法正道。接著六祖再指出志道對色身和法身的二元觀，以及他「有身受樂」的假設，是出於對一般存在的生死和世間樂的執着。六祖大師以此提醒志道出家修行的重點——放下世間的欲樂。

六祖大師接下來對志道開示了頓教，教導他「涅槃真樂」——無有生相，無有滅相，更無生與死之相。因為沒有我相、人相的分別，所以此真樂並不是「誰」在受或不受之樂。這種真樂，真實不虛，即使「劫火燒海底，風鼓山相擊，真常寂滅樂，涅槃相如是。」六祖大師「強言」涅槃境界，不但糾正志道的邪見，更重要的是恢復了他修行上的信心，使他重新認知真正的皈依（佛、法、僧）。

整個過程中，六祖不僅糾正邪見、拔除煩惱，更啟發了志道心中的善法，滋養了他修行的資糧。結果志道破除了十多年對於自我存在的絕望與危機感，聞道大悟以後，踊躍歡喜。

結語——自性的導師

在六祖大師的教導——一切眾生無二之性的精神下——外在的師徒關係不離內在修行的自我反省和自我認知。內在的導師就是我們的心性，這個心性在本源上是清淨的，既不會貪取，也不會排斥，還能示現煩惱來教化我們。要向內心自性導師來學習，內在師徒的本質也必須具備：（一）有「因」——要自覺修行的真正目的，要統束散亂的意向，使之與回歸本性的目的一致；（二）有「緣」——要向內堅固地皈依自性，要真實對待此皈依，要願意認真地去改變自己；（三）發起善法——就是能夠信從自性，把困難和壓力轉化成有建設性的驅動力和機緣來幫助我們圓滿修道。

銘記這些在心後，我們才能依照六祖大師對徒眾的勸勉——「各自努力；隨緣好去。」❀