

Comparative Conceptions of the Self

Evan Thompson

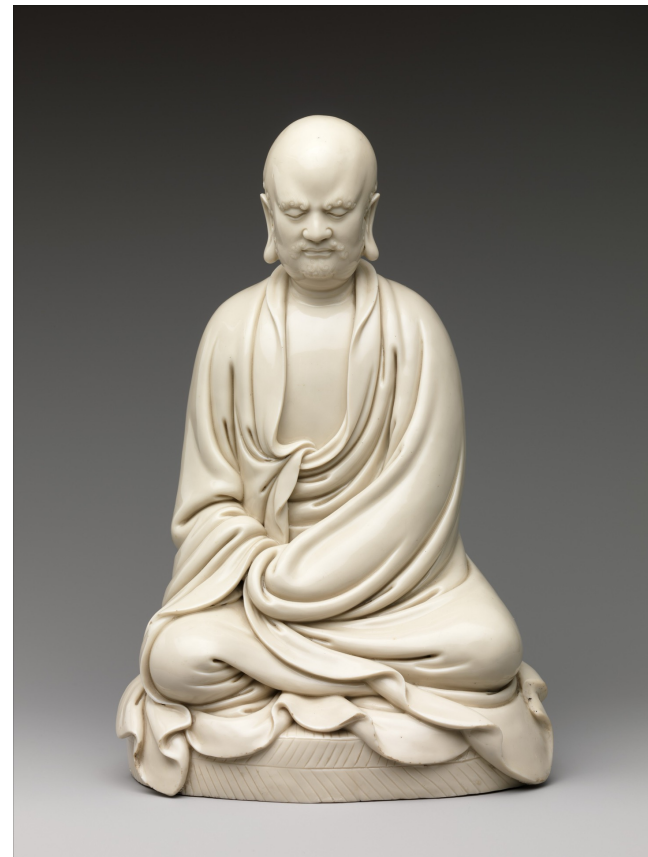
Lecture 9

Chan

Chán 禪 is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, usually translated as “meditation.”

Chán zōng 禪宗 = “School of Meditation.”

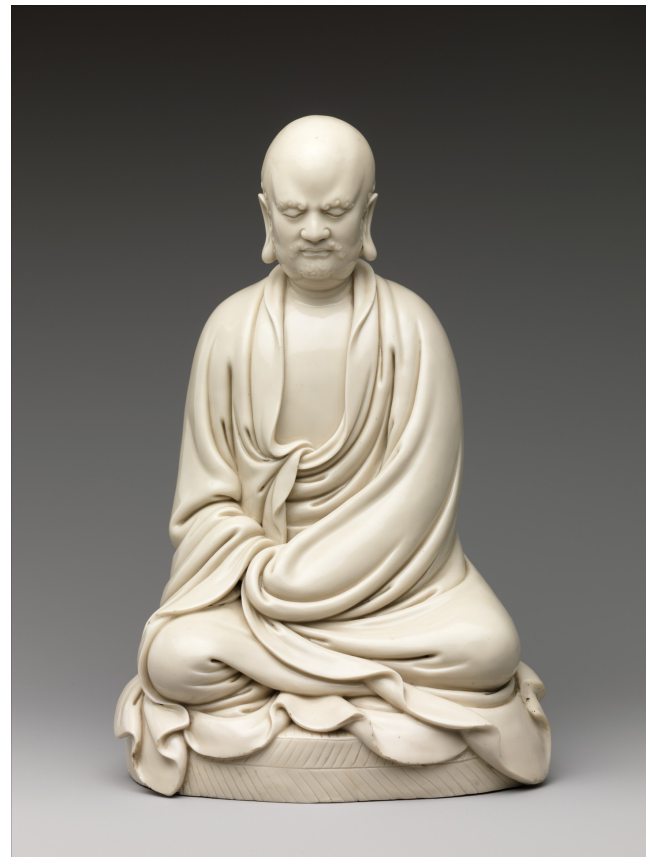
Generally known in English as “Zen Buddhism.”



Chan

Traces its origin to the Flower Sermon (拈花微笑 *niān huá wéi xiào*).

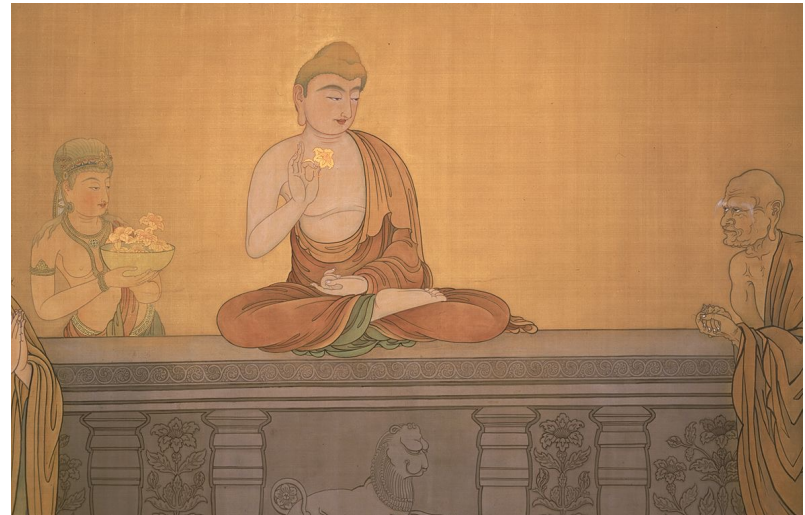
A later text that tells the mythic story of the origins of Chan.



Flower Sermon

The Buddha gives a wordless teaching by holding up a flower.

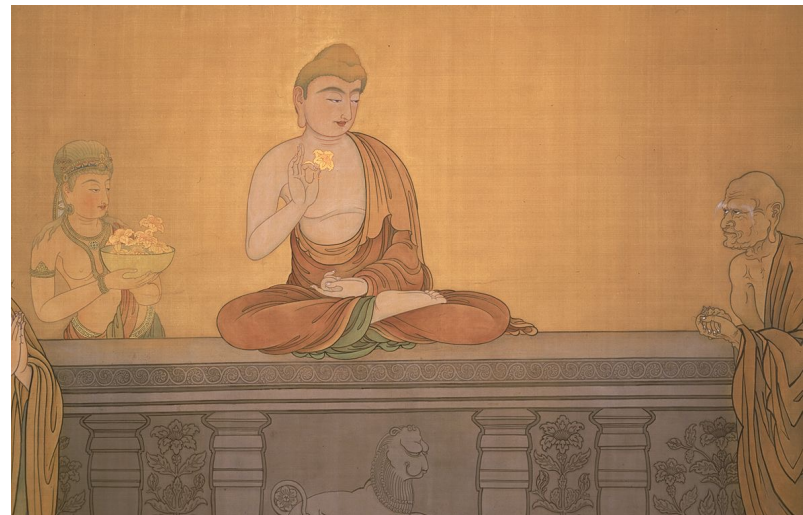
No one understands except Mahākāśyapa who smiles.



Flower Sermon

In response the Buddha says:

“The true Dharma is not found in words, but is a special transmission outside the scriptures, which I entrust to Mahākāśyapa.”



Bodhidharma

The first Chan (Zen) patriarch, an Indian monk who arrives in China in the 5th or 6th century CE.



Attributed to Bodhidharma

教外別傳

jiào wài bié chuán

A special transmission outside the scriptures

不立文字

bù lì wén zì

not relying on words

直指人心

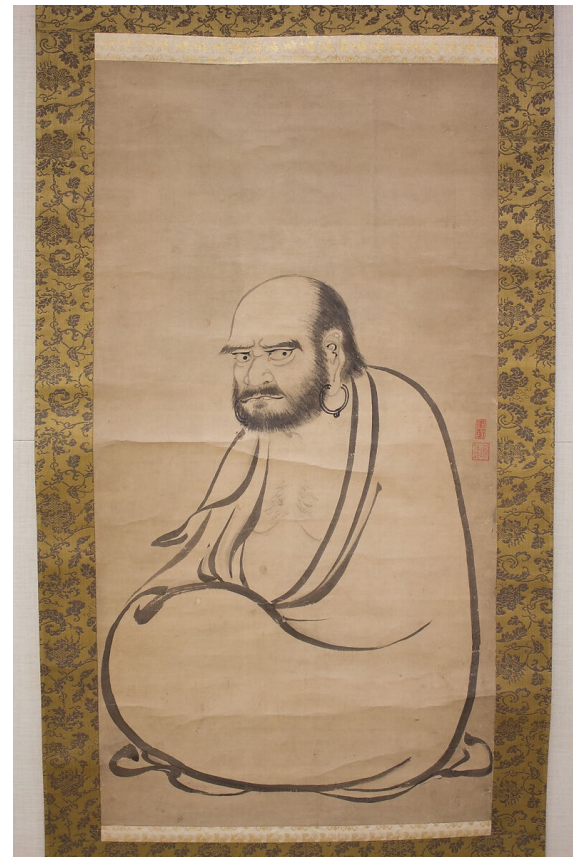
zhí zhǐ rén xīn

pointing directly to the human heart-mind

見性成佛

jiàn xìng chéng fó

seeing one's own nature and attaining Buddhahood.



Attributed to Bodhidharma

Both Chan selections in this book are apocryphally attributed to Bodhidharma, but were composed later in the 8th century by writers in the Oxhead lineage of Chan, which was very influential in the early growth of Chan.

