

On Predicting Buddhahood

(*Juki*)

Translator's Introduction: This discourse is based on the prediction by Shakyamuni Buddha that all sentient beings will ultimately realize Buddhahood. In Japanese, this prediction is called *juki*, a technical term that needs to be translated in slightly different ways depending on context. These can include the principle of predicting Buddhahood, the conferring of a prediction of Buddhahood, and affirming someone's realization of Buddhahood, among others. Towards the end of the discourse, Dōgen writes the word *juki* using a different character for *ju*, which conveys the meaning of receiving, accepting, or acknowledging the prediction.

The Great Teaching which Ancestors of the Buddha have Transmitted one-to-one is the prediction of Buddhahood. Those who have not trained with an Ancestor of the Buddha have never encountered this Teaching even in their dreams. The timing of this prediction varies. It is predicted even for persons who have not yet given rise to the Mind of Wisdom, and it is predicted for those who are not yet aware of their Buddha Nature, and it is predicted for those who are aware of their Buddha Nature, and it is predicted for those who have a sense of a personal self, and it is predicted for those who are beyond a sense of a personal self, and it is predicted for all Buddhas. All Buddhas preserve and rely on the predictions of Buddhas. In your training, you should not think that after you have had the prediction conferred on you, you will become a Buddha, nor should you think that after you have become a Buddha, you will receive some affirmation of it. At the time when the prediction is conferred there is one's becoming Buddha, and, at that same time, there is also one's continued training and practice. There is the affirmation of Buddhahood that resides within all Buddhas, and there is the affirmation that is above and beyond Buddhahood. This affirmation is given to oneself, and it is given to one's body and mind. If one then gives up on continuing to learn about 'the Great Matter* of the affirmation of Buddhahood', then one is giving up on learning through practice, and thereby sets aside 'the Great Matter of the Way of the Buddha'. The prediction of Buddhahood is present before one has a body, and the prediction of Buddhahood is present after one has a body. There is the prediction of Buddhahood that we can recognize, and there is the prediction of

* See *Glossary*.

Buddhahood that we do not recognize. There is the prediction of Buddhahood that others become aware of, and there is the prediction of Buddhahood that others do not become aware of.

By all means, you need to realize that when you affirm your prediction of Buddhahood, your true Self will manifest before your very eyes, for affirming the prediction of Buddhahood is synonymous with the manifesting of your true Self. Therefore, what Buddha after Buddha, Ancestor after Ancestor, and Successor after Successor have inherited is just this prediction of Buddhahood. And further, there is not a single thought or thing that is excluded from this prediction. So how could the great earth with its mountains and rivers, along with Mount Sumeru and its vast oceans, possibly be exceptions? There is not the least person, be it Mr. Chang's third son or Mr. Li's fourth son, who is beyond it.¹ The prediction of Buddhahood that we thoroughly explore in this way is something that we can express in one phrase, that we can hear in one phrase, that we may misunderstand in one phrase, and that we may comprehend in one phrase. It is our doing our practice in all earnestness and our giving expression to the Dharma in all sincerity. It is what instructs us to step back and what instructs us to step forward.² Our being able to sit here today whilst wearing the kesa* could not have come about had we not been able to receive the prediction that has come to us from the distant past. Because we have put our hands in gasshō* and placed the kesa upon our heads, what has manifested before us is the prediction of our Buddhahood.



The Buddha once said:

Although there are many forms for affirming Buddhahood, to summarize them briefly, there are eight:

First, you recognize it yourself, but others do not recognize it,

Second, everyone else recognizes it, but you do not,

Third, both you and everyone else recognize it,

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1. Chang and Li are common Chinese family names and, much like the western names Smith and Jones, are used to refer to anybody in general. Third and fourth sons also represent individuals who are not apt to hold a position of importance within a family. Hence, the allusion is to 'anybody and everybody'.
 2. In Zen parlance, 'stepping back' is associated with sitting in meditation and reflecting on one's True Nature, whereas 'stepping forward' is associated with going forth and doing one's daily deeds from the mind of meditation.

Fourth, neither you nor anyone else recognize it,
Fifth, those close to you perceive it, but those distant
from you do not,
Sixth, those distant from you perceive it, but those close
to you do not,
Seventh, both those close to you and distant from you
perceive it,
Eighth, neither those close to you nor distant from you
perceive it.

The affirmation of one's Buddhahood is just like this. So, do not occupy yourself with thoughts that your Buddhahood cannot be affirmed because it has not been recognized or appreciated by the living spirit within that smelly skin bag* of yours. And do not say that the prediction of Buddhahood cannot be readily given even to those humans who have not yet awakened. In ordinary, worldly ways of thinking, people have customarily been taught that they will receive this prediction when they have completely fulfilled their training and practice, for that is what is critical to their becoming a Buddha, but in the Way of the Buddha this is not what is taught. When someone gives heed to a single phrase whilst following a good spiritual friend or gives heed to a single phrase whilst following some Scriptural work, this will be the cause for their receiving a prediction of Buddhahood, because this is the fundamental practice of all the Buddhas, and it is the practice that puts down good roots amidst all the hundreds of things that sprout up in one's life. If I were to express in words what the prediction of Buddhahood is, I would say that all who receive the prediction are persons who will indeed realize the Ultimate.

Keep in mind that even a single mote of dust is unsurpassed, that even a single mote of dust is transcendent. Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include a single mote of dust? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include each thought and thing? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include all the myriad thoughts and things that arise? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include training and enlightenment? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include the Buddhas and the Ancestors? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include one's doing one's utmost in practicing the Way? Why would the prediction of Buddhahood not include great realization and great delusion? It is just as Meditation Master Ōbaku said to his disciple Rinzai, "When my tradition comes down to you, it will greatly flourish in the world." And it is just as Meditation Master Enō said to his disciple Nangaku, "You too are like this, and I too am like this." The prediction of Buddhahood is a mark of the Dharma. The prediction of Buddhahood is "How could it be otherwise?" The

prediction of Buddhahood is a face breaking out in a smile. The prediction of Buddhahood is birth and death: it is coming and going. The prediction of Buddhahood is the whole universe in all its ten quarters. The prediction of Buddhahood is the whole universe's never having been hidden from us.



Gensha Shibi was once walking in attendance with his Master Seppō, when Seppō pointed to the ground right before them and said, “This plot of land would be a fine place to erect a seamless stupa for me.”

Shibi asked him, “And how high would it be?”

Thereupon, Seppō looked up and down as though measuring it.

Shibi then said, “There will certainly be great good fortune for all ordinary humans, as well as for those in lofty positions, from such a stupa. And yet, my venerable monk, it is as if you have not encountered the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak even in your dreams.”

Seppō responded, “Well, how would you put it?”

Shibi replied, “Seven feet or eight feet.”³

Now, in Shibi's saying, “And, my venerable monk, it would seem that you have not yet encountered the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak even in your dreams,” he was not saying that the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak did not exist for Seppō, nor was he saying that Seppō had received the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak. He was saying that it seemed as if the venerable monk had never encountered the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak even in his dreams.⁴

We need to use our Eye to see the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak from a higher perspective. Shakyamuni Buddha put it in words as, “I have the Wondrous Heart of Nirvana, which is the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching, and I am entrusting It to Makakashō.” Keep in mind that, in harmony with the time, when Seigen gave the prediction of Buddhahood to his disciple Sekitō, Makakashō was likewise receiving Seigen's prediction of Buddhahood, and Seigen was also conferring Shakyamuni's prediction of Buddhahood. Thus, it is

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3. A seamless stupa is a funeral monument carved out of solid rock that serves as a repository for someone's remains. When it contains the remains of a Master, it is considered to be the body of a seated Buddha six feet tall. Shibi's saying “Seven feet or eight feet” was a statement that expressed deep love and respect for his Master.
 4. By this statement, Shibi was affirming the ‘no self’ of his Master.

clear that Buddha after Buddha and Ancestor after Ancestor have had entrusted to Them the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching. Accordingly, Daikan Enō, the Sixth Chinese Ancestor of Mount Sōkei, had already conferred the prediction on Seigen. Once he had received the prediction from the Sixth Ancestor, Seigen became the real Seigen who preserved and relied upon the prediction of his Buddhahood. At this time, what all the Ancestors up to the Sixth Ancestor had learned by exploring the Matter through their training was being put into practice through affirming the prediction of Seigen's Buddhahood. This has been described as:

*Clear and bright are the tips of all the things
that sprout up;
Clear and bright are the true intentions of the
Buddhas and Ancestors.*

Since this is so, how can the Buddhas and the Ancestors not include 'all the things that sprout up'? How can all the things that sprout up not include 'me' and 'you'? Do not be foolish and think that you can see or recognize all the thoughts and things with which you are personally endowed. This is not the way things are. The thoughts and things that we recognize are not necessarily our own possessions. What we possess is not necessarily something that we ourselves see or are aware of. So, do not be skeptical, thinking that since the prediction is beyond anything we now know, or see, or think about, we are not in possession of it. What is more, what we call the prediction of Buddhahood on Vulture Peak is Shakyamuni Buddha's predicting of Buddhahood: it was given from Shakyamuni Buddha to Shakyamuni Buddha. While it would be reasonable not to give the prediction to someone whom you are not yet sure of, the underlying meaning is that there is no obstacle to affirming the prediction of Buddhahood for someone who has already received that prediction. Even where there has not been an affirmation of Buddhahood, it is not superfluous to predict someone's Buddhahood. There is nothing lacking nor is there anything superfluous: this is the principle of predicting Buddhahood that all Ancestors of the Buddha have given to all Ancestors of the Buddha. This is why the Old Buddha Unchō Tokufū said:

From past to present, Masters have raised their hossu to
point the Matter out,
Great their wish, deep and subtle, and not, I dare say,
easy to explore.
Were it not for this Truth which Masters have given
through their Teaching,
From what perspective, pray, could we talk about It?*



Now, to thoroughly explore Shibi's point, in his reckoning how high a stupa made from solid rock is, he used the expression "How high?" Thus, it is not that Shibi is dissatisfied with Seppō's looking up and down. It is simply that—thanks to Seppō—even though there will certainly be great good fortune for all ordinary humans, as well as those in lofty positions, nevertheless, Seppō's way of looking at the stupa is not what Shakyamuni Buddha's prediction of Buddhahood is about. That which gains Shakyamuni Buddha's prediction of Buddhahood exists in the expression 'seven feet or eight feet'. In our looking closely at Shakyamuni's real prediction of Buddhahood, we need to examine it by means of the expression 'seven feet or eight feet'. So, setting aside for the moment whether the expression 'seven feet or eight feet' is on target or not, the prediction of Buddhahood must unquestionably encompass the prediction of Seppō's Buddhahood as well as the prediction of Shibi's Buddhahood. Further, one should express the height of a stupa by proffering the prediction of Buddhahood. Should anyone proffer something other than the prediction of Buddhahood, it will not be an expression that conveys the Buddha Dharma.

Whenever we recognize, hear, or state that the Self is truly our self, then, beyond doubt, the prediction of Buddhahood will fully manifest our spiritual question. When we are face-to-face with the prediction of our Buddhahood, we will immediately do our utmost in practice, for this is in harmony with the prediction of Buddhahood. In order to ultimately realize the prediction of Buddhahood, just as ever so many Ancestors of the Buddha have done, one trains in order to manifest one's genuine enlightenment. And utilizing one's strength in the effort to affirm one's Buddhahood brings forth the Buddhas en masse. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha said in the *Lotus Scripture*, "Only because of Their relationship to the One Great Matter do Buddhas appear in the world." This means that, on a higher level, it is the transcendent Self, which goes beyond one's personal self, that receives the prediction of the transcendent Self's Buddhahood. This is why Buddhas receive the affirmation of Buddhas.

Generally speaking, when it comes to giving the prediction, there are those who predict it by raising one hand, and those who predict it by raising two hands, and those who predict it by raising a thousand hands and eyes, and those who are given the prediction. On one occasion it was predicted by the raising of an udumbara blossom, and on another occasion Shakyamuni predicted it for Makakashō by holding aloft a gold brocade kesa, but neither of these ways is a required way of doing it. There are various ways of conferring the prediction. There can be a prediction of one's Buddhahood from within, and there can be a

prediction of one's Buddhahood from without. The principle of thoroughly exploring 'within and without' will be found by exploring the affirmation of Buddhahood through your training with your Master. To learn the Way as an affirmation of Buddhahood is equivalent to a single iron rod extending for ten thousand miles. To sit with the stillness of a mountain as an affirmation of Buddhahood is a single instant being equivalent to ten thousand years.



Our Old Buddha Shakyamuni once said in verse:

*One after another, They were able to realize Buddhahood
And, turning to the next, They were able to confer the
prediction of Buddhahood.*⁵

The realization of Buddhahood spoken of here undoubtedly implies 'one after another', and 'one after another' refers to realizing Buddhahood bit by bit. There is a 'turning to the next' in the predicting of Buddhahood. 'Turning to the next' is a turning that begets a turning, and 'turning to the next' is a next that begets a next. It is, for instance, creating a next, and creating a next involves performing an action. That action is beyond the deliberate, calculated creation of a self, beyond the deliberate, calculated creation of circumstances, beyond any measured concoction, and beyond any deliberately created state of mind. By relying on the principle of 'turning to the next', you should, by all means, thoroughly investigate both your creating circumstances and your not creating circumstances. And by relying on the principle of 'turning to the next', you should thoroughly investigate both what you are concocting and what you are not concocting.

Now, the emerging of Buddhas and Ancestors is due to Each having been turned to through performing some action. The coming from the West of the five Buddhas and the six Ancestors was due to Each having been turned to through performing some action.⁶ And what is more, the toting of water and the carrying of

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5. A verse based on a passage in the *Lotus Scripture*, which speaks of a Transmission line that will pass through five hundred monks. 'The next' refers to one's disciple, that is, someone who is next in the line of succession.
 6. The five Buddhas are the Five Dhyāni Buddhas of esoteric Buddhism, each of whom represents a particular aspect of the Cosmic Buddha. These Buddhas are: Vairochana, the Eternal Buddha; Akshobya, the Immovable Buddha; Ratnasambhava, the Jewel-Born Buddha; Amitabha, the Buddha of Immeasurable Light; and Amoghasiddhi, the Fearless Buddha. The six Ancestors is an allusion to Bodhidharma as the First Chinese Ancestor through Daikan Enō who was the Sixth.

firewood has continued on by a turning to the next. To live your life as “One’s very mind is Buddha” is a turning towards the next. When you enter nirvana as “One’s very mind is Buddha”—and entering once or twice is nothing extraordinary—you will pass through ever so many nirvanas, and will realize ever so many realizations of the Truth, and will manifest as signs and marks ever so many signs and marks.⁷ This is nothing other than realizing Buddhahood by one after another, and entering nirvana by one after another, and predicting Buddhahood for one after another, and one after another realizing what ‘turning to the next’ is. Turning to the next is not something that is inherent, but is simply something that is all-pervasive, penetrating all. Now, Buddhas and Ancestors mutually recognize each other, face-to-face, and this face-to-face mutual recognition is what is meant by ‘one after another’. There is no room in which to turn away from or evade turning to the next in the giving of the prediction by a Buddha or in the giving of the prediction by an Ancestor.



It was an Old Buddha who said:⁸

*Now that I have heard from the Buddha
That we have received His glorious prediction of our
Buddhahood
And that through His turning to the next, we have had
His assurance conferred upon us,
My body and mind are filled with joy.*

This is saying that the glorious matter of Shakyamuni Buddha’s prediction is, beyond question, what Kaundinya heard from the Buddha. What has filled his body and mind with joy is that he has also received an assurance, which he has just now heard from the Buddha through His turning to the next. The next that is turned to will be the ‘I now’ who hears and the assurance will not be limited to some ‘self’ or ‘other’ of past, present, or future. It will be heard of from the Buddha and not from someone else. This lies beyond delusion and enlightenment, beyond sentient beings, and beyond earthly realms with their grasses and trees, for it will be what one hears from the Buddha. It is the glorious matter of His predicting our

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7. ‘Signs and marks’ is an allusion to the thirty-three signs and eighty distinguishing marks of a Buddha.
 8. The Old Buddha is Ajnyata Kaundinya, one of the five ascetics who associated with Shakyamuni before His enlightenment. As recorded in the *Lotus Sutra*, Kaundinya was the first of five hundred to receive this prediction after the Buddhas enlightenment.

Buddhahood, and it is our receiving His assurance through His turning to us as ‘the next’. The principle of ‘turning to the next’ never gets stuck in some cranny even for a moment but, bit by bit, fills the body and mind with joy. The joyous assertion that is extended through this turning to the next is undoubtedly in harmony with the body, which is seeking far and wide for the Master, and it is also in harmony with the mind, which is seeking far and wide for the Master. Further, because the body, beyond question, thoroughly permeates the mind, and the mind, beyond question, thoroughly permeates the body, Kaundinya spoke of his body and mind being filled. In other words, it is what permeates all worlds and all directions; it permeates the body and permeates the mind. This, then, is a particularly great joy. This joy clearly gladdens us, whether we are asleep or awake, deluded or enlightened. Even so, although the states of being asleep, awake, deluded, or enlightened are intimately connected with each other, they do not stain or defile each other. This is the glorious matter of predicting our Buddhahood, which is our being turned to and receiving the affirmation.



Shakyamuni Buddha, through speaking to Bhaisajyaguru, the Bodhisattva* Lord of Healing, addressed eighty-thousand other bodhisattvas, saying, “O Lord of Healing, within this great assembly of countless heavenly beings, dragon kings, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, and mahoragas⁹—both human and nonhuman—as well as male and female monastics, and male and female laity, you can see those who are seeking to be shravakas,* those who are seeking to be pratyekabuddhas,* and those who are seeking the Bodhisattva Way to Buddhahood. If such as these, who are all standing before the Buddha now, should hear but a single verse or line from My Teaching, which is the flowering of the Wondrous Dharma, and take joy in It for even a moment, I will give them all a prediction of their Buddhahood. Beyond question, all will realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment.”

9. ‘Dragon kings...mahoragas’ comprise a list of quasi-mythical beings who were originally given to violent or seductive acts but who, upon conversion to Buddhism, became spiritual guardians, each type having governance over some protective function. Hence, they may manifest as some human or non-human being fulfilling that function. Together with the heavenly beings, they are known as the eight categories of non-human beings.

So, within this assembly of countless beings, even though the wishes and levels of understanding of these countless heavenly beings and dragon kings, of those in the four categories of Buddhists, and of those in the eight categories of nonhumans may differ, who would have them hear one line or verse which would not be the Wondrous Dharma? How could any of you take joy in non-Buddhist teachings even for a moment? His phrase ‘such as these’ means those who are the flowers of the Dharma. His phrase ‘who are all standing before the Buddha’ means all who are within Buddha. Even though humans and nonhumans may hold mixed beliefs concerning the myriad thoughts and things that arise, and even though there are those who have sown karmic* seeds for hundreds of later sproutings, they will still be included in ‘such as these’. ‘Such as these’ means ‘all those to whom I have given a prediction of Buddhahood’. ‘All those to whom I have given a prediction of Buddhahood’ is correct from head to tail. Accordingly, it is the proper functioning of supreme, fully perfected enlightenment.

Shakyamuni Buddha, in addressing the Lord of Healing, also said, “Further, after the Tathagata’s extinction, if there is someone who hears a single verse or line of My Teaching, which is the flowering of the Wondrous Dharma, and that one were to rejoice in It even for a moment, I would predict supreme, fully perfected enlightenment for such a one as well.”

What would be the time span implied by the phrase ‘after the Tathagata’s extinction’ that was just spoken of? Would it be within the forty-nine years after His enlightenment or would it be within the eighty years of His whole life span? Let’s say for the moment that it is the eighty-year span. When the Buddha said, “If there is someone who hears a single verse or line of My Teaching, which is the flowering of the Wondrous Dharma, and that one were to rejoice in It even for a moment,” was he referring only to what is heard by those who are keen-witted and not to what is heard by those who are dull-witted? And does it matter if they hear it correctly or not? If we express this Teaching for the sake of others, it should be expressed as, “If there are any people by whom It is heard,” and so on. And do not treat them as being either keen-witted or dull-witted. What you should say is, “Although that which hears His Teaching, which is the flowering of the Dharma, is the profound and immeasurable wisdom of Buddhas, when some hear It, It is invariably experienced as one phrase, and when others hear It, It is invariably experienced as one verse, and when still others hear It, It is invariably experienced as one moment of joyousness.” Such a moment will be Shakyamuni Buddha’s once again giving His prediction of their realizing supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. There is His giving His prediction one more time and there is His

giving His prediction to all. Do not entrust some stumble-footed, worldly, third son of Chang with the task of spiritual prediction. Experience it through painstaking effort that is in harmony with your training. Then you will be ‘someone who hearkens with joy to a single line or verse’. There is no time to waste by treating Skin and Flesh, Bones and Marrow as if one were sticking a head upon one’s own head. His witnessing someone’s being given the prediction of supreme, fully perfected enlightenment is the Buddha’s wish being fulfilled. And it will be the same for all us skin bags. Through this prediction, the hopes of the multitudes are fulfilled. And it would be like this if anyone hears it.

Buddhahood has been affirmed by holding aloft a pine branch, by holding aloft an udumbara blossom, by holding aloft twinkling eyes, and by a face breaking into a smile. And there is the example from the past of its having been affirmed by passing on a pair of sandals. These are some examples of this Dharma’s being something that speculative and discriminatory thinking are unable to fathom. There is the affirmation of “I myself am also like this,” and there is the affirmation of, “You yourself are also like this.” This principle can be stated as, “One can give the prediction of Buddhahood in the past, present, and future.” Because past, present, and future are encompassed within the prediction of Buddhahood, Buddhahood is realized in the prediction of one’s own Buddhahood and it is realized in the prediction of the Buddhahood of others.



Vimalakirti,* in talking with Maitreya,* said, “O Maitreya, it is said that the World-honored One has given you the prediction that in some lifetime you would realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. In which lifetime are you able to receive His prediction? Is it in the past, or in the present, or in the future? If you say it was in a past lifetime, such a past life has already gone. If you say it will be in some future life, such a future life has yet to come. If you say that it is in your present lifetime, there is no present lifetime that abides. If it is as the Buddha teaches, then you, dear monk, at this very moment, are living and aging and perishing. If you are able to receive His prediction on account of your no longer being alive, then no longer being alive would be the right state to be in.¹⁰ But, then again, within such a ‘right state’, one cannot receive a prediction and one cannot realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment. So how,

10. This refers to the intermediate stage between death and rebirth.

Maitreya, will you receive the prediction in any lifetime? Will you do it by being able to receive the prediction in life just as it is? Or will you do it by being able to receive the prediction in death just as it is? If you say you can get the prediction by means of life just as it is, there is no such thing as ‘life just as it is’. If you say you can get the prediction by means of death just as it is, there is no such thing as ‘death just as it is’. All sentient beings are like this, and all thoughts and things are also like this. The wise and holy among the multitudes are also like this. And you, Maitreya, are also just like this. If you, Maitreya, are able to receive the prediction, then all sentient beings should also be able to receive the prediction. And why is that? Well, because ‘That Which Is as It Is’ is free of duality and free of any differentiations. If you, Maitreya, can realize supreme, fully perfected enlightenment, all sentient beings can likewise realize it. And why is that? Because all sentient beings are already manifestations of enlightenment.”

What Vimalakirti is saying here is not something that the Tathagata has said is not so. While this is true, Maitreya’s being able to receive the prediction was already a settled matter. Therefore, the ability of all sentient beings to receive the prediction must likewise be a settled matter. If there is no affirmation for sentient beings, there cannot be any affirmation for Maitreya, because all sentient beings are manifestations of enlightenment. It is enlightenment that receives the prediction of enlightenment. Receiving the prediction is our life this very day. Thus, because all sentient beings have given rise to the same intention to realize Buddhahood, their receiving the prediction will be the same and their realizing the Way will be the same.

Even so, Vimalakirti, by your assertion, “Within this ‘right state’, one cannot receive a prediction,” you seem not to know that the ‘right state’ is simply one’s receiving the prediction, and you do not seem to be saying, “The ‘right state’ is precisely what enlightenment is.” Further, you said, for example, that one’s life in the past has already gone, one’s life in the future has not yet come, and one’s life in the present does not abide. But the past is not necessarily something that has gone, the future is not necessarily something that has not yet come, and the present is not necessarily something that is not abiding. Although you may say that you are studying such notions as ‘already gone’, ‘not yet come’, and ‘not abiding,’ in terms of past, future, and present, by all means you need to state the principle that what has not yet come is past, present, and future. When we recognize this, then we will understand the principle that our arising and our perishing both realize the prediction, and we will understand the principle that our arising and our perishing

both realize enlightenment. When all sentient beings realize the prediction of their Buddhahood, Maitreya, too, realizes his prediction.

Now, O Vimalakirti, I would like to ask you, “Is Maitreya the same as any sentient being or is he different?” Try to say, and we’ll see! You have already said that if Maitreya obtains the prediction, all sentient beings will also obtain the prediction. If you are saying that Maitreya is other than a sentient being, then sentient beings cannot be sentient beings and Maitreya, likewise, cannot be Maitreya. But that won’t do, for at this very moment, you too could not be Vimalakirti! If you were not Vimalakirti, then this expression of yours would be useless. So, we can say that when the prediction of Buddhahood causes the lives of all sentient beings to exist, there are the lives of all sentient beings and there is Maitreya. The prediction of Buddhahood can cause everything to exist.

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