

# TRANSLATIONS

## *Sbōbōgenzō Buddha-nature*

### Part I

TRANSLATED BY  
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#### *Introduction*

“*Buddha-nature*” (Japanese, *Bussbō*) has been regarded in the Sōtō sect as one of the three central fascicles of the *Sbōbōgenzō*, together with *Genjōkōan* and *Bendōwa*. Dōgen delivered it the tenth month of 1241 to the followers gathered around him at the Kōshō-ji south of Kyoto. The work as we now have it, however, is a considerably revised form of that original text. Although neither the original or revised manuscript exists in Dōgen’s holograph, a copy by his disciple Ejō (1198–1280), including Dōgen’s later revisions, is preserved in the Eihei-ji. In most editions, *Sbōbōgenzō Buddha-nature* is the third fascicle in the collection, following *Genjōkōan* and *Makabannya-baramitsu*.

The idea that sentient beings all possess the Buddha-nature and the possibility of attaining Buddhahood is central to most of the schools of the Mahayana. Yet Dōgen’s treatment, reflecting his own unique Zen standpoint, can be said to be apart from all the rest. Strictly adhering to a nondualistic interpretation, he comments on passages from Zen and other Buddhist writings that have some bearing on this theme. What is most striking about this commentary is the manner in which it gives clear priority to religious meaning over normal grammatical syntax. In more than a few cases Dōgen chooses to read these passages in ways which are dubious, and sometimes even impossible, from a grammatical point of view. But he does it for a definite purpose. It focuses attention on what he feels to be inadequacies in the traditional ways

the texts are read, and at the same time it clearly sets forth his own understanding and rectification of those inadequacies based on his religious awakening.

For example, at the very beginning of the work he quotes a passage from the *Nirvana Sutra* ("Northern" version) well-known to all Buddhists: "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature" (一切衆生悉有佛性). This is the general Mahayana statement, which is emphasized in particular in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Dōgen goes beyond it, by reading the passage as, "All sentient beings-whole being is the Buddha-nature." This he does by reading the characters *sbitsuu* 悉有, normally "without exception have," as "whole being" (he is aided by the fact that the character 有 means both "to be," or "being," and "to have"). This changes the traditional emphasis of sentient beings having a Buddha-nature, to stress a standpoint more in keeping with the basic nondualistic Mahayana position: whole being *is* the Buddha-nature, in which "whole being" means not only sentient beings but all beings. This avoids the duality of subject (sentient beings) and object (the Buddha-nature possessed by them), the duality which regards the Buddha-nature as a potentiality to be actualized in the future, and the duality of means and end, where practice is taken as a means and realization of Buddha-nature the end. Dōgen's reading "whole being is the Buddha-nature" thus indicates the nondualistic oneness of the realizer (whole being) and the realized (Buddha-nature), the simultaneity of Buddha-nature and enlightenment (Buddha), and the identity of practice and attainment. It is the key to his understanding of the Buddha-nature as it is developed in various aspects throughout the rest of the work.\*

*Buddha-nature* is the eighth fascicle to appear in this series of translations from Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* which began in May 1971 with *Bendōwa*. As in the past, we have provided rather extensive footnotes. Their aim is to provide the English language reader a means of better arriving at some understanding of this extremely difficult work, much of which would be incomprehensible without them. We of course do not pretend that they are in any way definitive. They could not be, given the profoundly complicated and suggestive nature of the text. We have attempted, however, to have them exemplify a consistent view of the work as a whole. The edition followed is that of Ōkubo Doshū:

\* See Abe Masao, "Dōgen on Buddha-nature," *Eastern Buddhist*, IV, 1.

*Sōbōgenzō* (Tokyo: Chikuma, 1971), pp. 14–35. We would like to express our gratitude to Professor Nishitani Keiji for his valuable suggestions.

N.B. In the text, Dōgen quotes passages from Zen and other Buddhist writings at the heads of the various sections. In order to make clear both the way they are normally read and Dōgen's own sometimes peculiar interpretative reading, we have translated them according to the normal reading when the italicized quotation first appears *en bloc* at the beginning of the sections; then, when Dōgen's different reading makes it necessary, we have generally retranslated the same words as close to his meaning as the English will allow in the following phrase by phrase discussion of the quotation. When this is done the discrepancy between the two renderings is detailed in the footnotes.

### BUDDHA-NATURE

(Text)

*Sakyamuni Buddha said, "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature. Tathagata abides forever without change."*<sup>1</sup> This is the lion roar of our great teacher the Buddha preaching the Dharma; yet it is also the headtops of all buddhas and patriarchs and the pupils of all buddhas' and patriarchs' eyes.<sup>2</sup> Commitment to its study has already continued for two thousand one hundred and ninety years (until now, the 2nd year of Ninji in Japan), an undeviating, direct descent of just fifty generations (until my late master, priest T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching); maintained for twenty-eight successive generations in India and twenty-three successive generations in China.<sup>3</sup> Buddhas and patriarchs of the ten quarters of the universe have all firmly maintained it.

<sup>1</sup> Quotation of a well-known passage from the *Nirvana Sutra*, chapter 27 (Taishō 12, 522). It is translated here according to the way it is usually read. For Dōgen's reading, see below, and introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Headtops* 頂頭 and *pupils* . . . 眼睛: Characteristic Zen terms used to give concrete expression to the true, nonobjectifiable essence of Zen monks.

<sup>3</sup> The second year of the Ninji period falls in 1241, the date according to the colophon when Dōgen delivered *SBGZ Buddha-nature*. Dōgen follows the *C'ing-te ch'uan-teng lu* (hereafter *CTL*) version of Sakyamuni's life in calculating his death date as 949 B.C. 28 *generations*: from Sakyamuni to Bodhidharma. 23 *generations*: from Bodhidharma to Ju-ching, Dōgen's master in China.

## SHÖBÖGENZÖ BUDDHA-NATURE

What is the essence of the World-honored One's words, "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature"? It is his utterance,<sup>4</sup> his Dharma teaching of "What is this that thus comes?"<sup>5</sup> You may speak of "living beings," "sentient beings," "all classes of living things," or "all varieties of living being,"<sup>6</sup> the words *whole being* (*sbitsuu*) mean sentient beings and all beings.<sup>7</sup> That is to say, *whole being* is the Buddha-nature:<sup>8</sup> I call one integral entity of whole being "sentient beings."<sup>9</sup> Just when things are thus, both within and without sentient beings is in itself the *whole being* of the Buddha-nature.<sup>10</sup> And

<sup>4</sup> *Utterance*: A verbal expression or articulation of ultimate reality. For the significance Dōgen gives this see "One Bright Pearl," *Eastern Buddhist*, IV, 2, p. 114 (*dōtoku* 道得).

<sup>5</sup> *What is this that thus comes?* Well-known words spoken by Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch, to Nan-yüeh Huai-jang, which later became a koan. Nan-yüeh went to visit Hui-neng. "Where have you come from?" asked Hui-neng. "From Sung-shan," he replied. "What is this that thus comes?" asked Hui-neng. Nan-yüeh answered, "The moment I said it was 'this,' I'd miss the mark completely." Hui-neng said, "Then should one engage in practice and realization, or not?" "It is not that there is no practice and realization," said Nan-yüeh, "only that they cannot be defiled." Hui-neng said, "Just this non-defiling is what all buddhas keep in mind. You are thus now. I am thus too." From the *CTL* version, *cbūan* 5. "What is this that thus comes?" is a typical Zen way of asking "What is your Buddha-nature?" As such it is taken to indicate the manifestation of Buddha-nature itself beyond definition.

<sup>6</sup> These are different ways found in Buddhist literature for referring to sentient beings.

<sup>7</sup> *Sbitsuu* 悉有: whole, entire being. In the passage quoted from the *Nirvana Sutra* above, these words are normally read as "all have (the Buddha-nature)," or, in our translation, "(all) without exception have." The word 有 in Japanese can mean "being(s)," "to be," "to have," "to possess." Dōgen changes the usual reading of the passage to avoid the dualistic notion that the Buddha-nature is a potentiality to be actualized, or that it is *something* within them, possessed by them, and different from them. See introduction.

*All beings*: i.e., including all sentient and non-sentient beings.

<sup>8</sup> *Whole being is the Buddha-nature* 悉有は仏性なり. A key statement. See introduction.

<sup>9</sup> *One integral entity* 一悉, *issbitsu*. *Issbitsu* is usually explained here as referring either simply to a part of whole being or to the whole of whole being. But we have thought it better to translate it as "one integral entity" in which the "one" does not mean simply one portion of whole being or the total of whole being. *Issbitsu* seems to suggest that although sentient beings is only one form of whole being (*sbitsuu*), it is at the same time a total manifestation of it.

<sup>10</sup> *within and without*: Virtually the same as the "self and environment" mentioned below; see paragraph four, footnote 13.

it is not only skin, flesh, bones, and marrow that is rightly transmitted from master to disciple, because, *you* attain my skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.<sup>11</sup>

You must understand, the “being” that the Buddha-nature makes *whole being* is not the being of being and nonbeing. *Whole being* is a buddha’s words, a buddha’s tongue, the pupils of buddhas’ and patriarchs’ eyes, the nostrils of Zen monks. Nor does the term *whole being* mean emergent being; nor is it original being, or mysterious being, or anything of the like. And it is of course not conditioned being or illusory being. It has nothing to do with such things as mind and object, substance and form.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the self and environment of sentient beings-*whole being* is not

<sup>11</sup> Allusion to the following story. Bodhidharma asked his four disciples what they had attained. One of them stated his understanding and Bodhidharma said, “You have attained my skin.” Two others spoke in turn, and Bodhidharma said to one, “You have attained my flesh,” and to the other, “You have attained my bones.” The last, Hui-k’o, bowed three times and then went and stood in his place. “You have attained my marrow,” said Bodhidharma, and Hui-k’o subsequently became his successor. Found in *CTL, cbūan* 3. In a detailed treatment of this story in another part of the *SBGZ*, Dōgen states that Bodhidharma’s skin, flesh, bones, and marrow were not transmitted only to his immediate disciples, because his words (“You have attained my skin, flesh, bones, and marrow”) are an utterance of Truth extending to all sentient beings not only his four disciples. *SBGZ “Kassō,” Sōbōgenzō*, Ōkubo Dōshū, ed. (hereafter *Ōkubo*), pp. 332–3. The allusion to Bodhidharma’s words in this context also emphasizes another key aspect of the Dharma transmission, one which is essential for its correct communication to sentient beings: the actual face-to-face encounter between *you* and *I* which is the sense of “What is this that thus comes” above.

<sup>12</sup> *Paragraph 3*: The being the Buddha-nature makes whole being (“just when things are thus”) is nondual and cannot be objectified, thus it cannot be being that is in opposition to nonbeing. It is the actual living, functioning being of each buddha and patriarch; his words and the tongue that speaks them (a buddha’s “long, broad tongue” is said to reach the limits of the universe), his eye-pupils and the life-breathing nostrils of Zen monks. It is not the being of such concepts as *shū* 始有, emergent being, being that appears in time; *bonnu* 本有, original being, absolute, immutable being; and it is not even *myōu* 妙有, mysterious being, which might be described as a kind of synthesis of *shū* and *bonnu*, that is, absolute, essential being manifested as temporal being. Nor is it being that is dependent upon causes and conditions (*en-u* 緣有); or being that is the product of illusion (*mōu* 妄有), illusory being; and it has nothing to do with dichotomous ideas of mind and object, substance and form.

in the least involved in the waxing influences of karma, is not bred by illusory causation, does not come into being naturally, is not practiced or realized through miraculous powers. Were sentient being's *whole being* contingent on the power of karma or on causes or on coming into being naturally, then the realization of all saints and the enlightenment of all buddhas and the eye pupils of buddhas and patriarchs also would be produced in these ways. And they are not.<sup>13</sup>

The entire world is completely free of all dusts as objects to the self. Right here there is no second person!<sup>14</sup> That is because there is no awareness in man that the root source of the illusion is completely cut off; when could the busy and widely ranging karmic consciousness [inseparable from the Buddha-nature] ever cease?<sup>15</sup> It is not bred by illusory causation, because "nothing

<sup>13</sup> Paragraph 4. *Self and environment* (修正 *esbō*), based on the nondualistic nature of "sentient beings-whole being" (*sbujō-sbitsumu*) described above, is therefore free of the snowballing influences of karmic cause and effect (*gōzōjōriki* 業増上力); and it is not originated by man's false and illusory thoughts (*mōengi* 妄緣起). Neither is it manifested naturally and spontaneously (*bōmi* 法爾), nor attained and realized by super-natural powers (*jinzū sbusbō* 神通修證).

"Were . . . *whole being* . . .": Here "sentient beings' whole being" does not refer to unenlightened sentient beings, but sentient beings identical with Buddha-nature.

<sup>14</sup> The reason is given why sentient beings-whole being has no relation to any of the concepts mentioned in the previous paragraph. In the world of whole being there are no "dusts" or objects of perception to work upon a subject (*kakujin* 客塵). Each sentient being is at the same time whole being. Here, at that time, there is only the absolute one; there is no "second person" (*daininin* 第二人).

<sup>15</sup> The third sentence would normally be read with a negative connotation: The root source of illusion is severed but man does not yet know it, so his karmic consciousness continues on busily and widely-ranging without rest. Dōgen's way of reading it is affirmative: man is prior to knowing (and is actually living) the fact that the root source of illusion is originally and completely cut off; the unceasing and busily wide-ranging karmic consciousness in itself is the manifestation of the Buddha-nature.

*Karmic (or activity) consciousness: gossbiki* 業識: The activation of the unenlightened mind through ignorance. From this, the original negative sense of the passage points to man's ignorance (being unaware) of the complete severance of his illusion and to the unabated activity of his karmic consciousness. On the nonobjective standpoint of the absolute person, however, Dōgen asserts that one is *free from the awareness* of the severance of illusion and is actually living in this state, and the unceasing activity of the karmic consciousness in itself is the activity of the Buddha-nature, the true mode of sentient being-whole being. On this standpoint there can be no "second person."

throughout the whole world has ever been concealed." To say nothing throughout the whole world has ever been concealed does not mean that the world full of being is nothing but being. "The entire world and all its things are *my* possession" is a false, non-Buddhist teaching. It is not the being of original (and timeless) being, because it fills the past right on up through the present. It is not being with a beginning, because there is not a single object to be reflected on it. It is not being as separate entities, because it is an inclusive whole. It is not beginningless being, because "What is this that thus comes." It is not being that began at a certain time, because "my everyday mind is the Way."<sup>16</sup> You must know with certainty that it is impossible to encounter sentient beings within *whole being* no matter how swift you are.<sup>17</sup> Understood in this way, *whole being* is in itself completely and totally emancipated suchness.

A great many students of Buddhism, hearing the word "Buddha-nature," reckon wrongly that it is like the self expounded by the Senika heresy.<sup>18</sup> That is because they have not encountered a man [of the Way]; they have not encountered their true Self; they have not met with an authentic Buddhist teacher. They think vainly that the Buddha-nature's enlightenment and awakening is the same as the conscious mind which is only the movement of wind and fire.<sup>19</sup> But who has said there is in the Buddha-nature enlightenment and awakening! Although enlightened ones and awakened ones are

<sup>16</sup> Sentient beings-whole being appears in time, but it is originally free from all sense perceptions; "the entire world is completely free of all dusts as objects to the self." Sentient beings-whole being is absolute, eternal, and changeless and at the same time appears in time. It is not a being of individual entities, because it is at the same time total being. It is not being without a beginning, a timeless, eternal being, because it is right here. And yet neither is it a being that begins at some particular point in time, because the Way, the true mode of being (Buddhanature-whole being) is the common universal mind of suchness.

<sup>17</sup> *No matter how swift*: In sentient beings-whole being objectification is impossible; you can not encounter sentient beings within whole being because they are not different things. All sentient beings exist on the ground of "What is this that thus comes," where the whole is a chorus with each man singing a solo part.

<sup>18</sup> The Senika heresy: *senigedō* 先尼外道, which appeared in India during the Buddha's lifetime, emphasized the idea of a permanent self. See *Bendōwa*, *Eastern Buddhist* IV, 1, p. 146; also *SBGZ sokushin zebutsu*.

<sup>19</sup> . . . *movement of wind and fire*: Discriminations of the phenomenal universe through\*

buddhas, still the Buddha-nature is neither enlightenment nor awakening [in the ordinary sense]. And of course the word “enlightenment” that is used when reference is made to buddhas as being enlightened ones and awakened ones is not the awakening they speak of with their various mistaken views. And it does not regard the movement or stillness of wind and fire as man’s enlightenment. The true face of each buddha and the true face of each patriarch—that alone is enlightenment.<sup>20</sup>

It has often happened, that the venerable ones and worthies of the past, those who have travelled to India, those who have been teachers to men and devas, from the Han dynasty through the T’ang on up until the Sung, as numerous as the grains and grasses, have, many of them, thought that the wind and fire movement of man’s conscious mind is the Buddha-nature’s enlightenment. It is to be pitied, that such a blunder occurred because they have not paid sufficient heed to the study of the Way.

Advanced students and beginners in the Buddha Way must not make this mistake now. Even though you may study enlightenment, enlightenment is not the wind and fire movement of the conscious mind. Even though you study movement, it is not what you think it is. If you can understand movement in its truth, then you can also understand true enlightenment and awakening.

With both “Buddha” and “nature,” if you penetrate one you penetrate the

\*the sense organs and consciousness. Man’s various mental activities are understood as manifestations of the working of the Four Great Elements (*shidai* 四大; earth, water, fire, and wind) that constitute the universe.

<sup>20</sup> Though one learns or studies awakening, true awakening is not the working of man’s conscious mind. Cf. “To learn the Buddha Way is to learn one’s own self, to learn one’s self is to forget one’s self.” *SBGZ genjōkōan, Eastern Buddhist* V, 2, p. 134. This paragraph criticizes the Senika understanding of religious awakening. In the Senika teaching, the term *kakuchi kakuryō* 覚知覺了 (trans. here “enlightenment or awakening”) would involve the function of a “spiritual intelligence” which is immutable and which resides in man’s mutable body. Dōgen instead asserts the Buddhist standpoint of the realization of complete mutability, the selflessness of all things including body and mind. This realization is in itself the realization of the Buddha-nature as the true self, without substance, formless and selfless. Thus he rejects the Senika’s identification of a mind-nature with an eternal self which has an existence apart from the mutable body.

*True face*: Each buddha and each patriarch has his own “true face” which is a manifestation of whole being, and that is “enlightenment” in the authentic sense.

other. Buddha-nature is always *whole being*, because *whole being* is the Buddha-nature. *Whole being* does not mean a vast number of miscellaneous things, and it does not mean an undifferentiated, uniform oneness. It is the raising of a balled fist,<sup>21</sup> so it is not large or small. When you speak of the "Buddha-nature," it cannot be compared to the Buddhist saints. And it cannot be compared to the Buddha-nature itself either.

A certain group think the Buddha-nature is like the seeds of grasses and plants;<sup>22</sup> when this receives the Dharma rain and is nourished by it, sprouts shoot forth, branches and leaves and flowers and fruits appear, and these fruits have seeds within them.

This view is the mind-bred judgment of unenlightened men. Even though you might hold such a view, you still should penetrate in practice to the truth that seed and flower and fruit are each, one after another, the unbarred [Buddha-] mind itself. In fruits there are seeds. Though the seeds are not visible, roots, stem, and the rest of the plant grow out. Though they are not brought together [from elsewhere], still the twigs and branches multiply, the trunk thickens, by themselves. It is not a question of something in the tree or something outside the tree. It is always so, at any time of the past or present. Therefore, even though men may accept the unenlightened view, root, stem, branch, and leaf are still, without differentiation, produced and live the same life and die the same death and are Buddha-nature as the same *whole being*.

*Buddha said, "If you wish to know the Buddha-nature's meaning, you should watch for temporal conditions. If the time arrives, the Buddha-nature will manifest itself."*<sup>23</sup>

*If you wish to know the meaning of the Buddha-nature* refers not merely to knowing it. It means also "if you wish to practice it," "if you wish to realize it," and "if you wish to preach it," "if you wish to forget it." This preaching, prac-

<sup>21</sup> *The raising of a balled fist*: This again has the force of "What is this that thus comes," the absolute "What" that is manifested right here; see below, footnote 45.

<sup>22</sup> *Seeds of grasses and trees*: This paragraph and the following refute the idea of the Buddha-nature as a potentiality which is actualized as the result of a process. For a somewhat similar idea see *Genjōkōan*, *ibid*, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Dōgen devoted the previous part to the *being* of whole being-Buddha nature. This\*

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tice, realization, forgetting, and also such things as mistaking or not mistaking it, each one of these is, after all, a temporal occasion. The way to watch for temporal conditions is through temporal conditions. It is seeing this temporal condition through a *bossu*, staff, and so on. Through illusory knowledge, non-illusory knowledge, through the wisdom of original enlightenment, initial enlightenment, nonenlightenment, or right enlightenment, it can never be seen.

*Should watch for* has nothing to do with a watcher and what is watched; it has no correspondence to “right” or “false” watching. It is *just seeing*. As it is just seeing it is neither the self’s seeing nor any other’s seeing. It is “Look! temporal conditions!” It is transcendence of conditions. It is “Look! the Buddha-nature!” It is the emancipated suchness of Buddha-nature. It is “Look! buddha with buddha!” It is “Look! nature with nature!”<sup>24</sup>

\*part deals with the *time* of temporal conditions—being and time considered as Buddha-nature. This quotation is found in a slightly altered form in the *Lien-teng bui-yao* (*Renō-eyō*), *chūan* 7, where it is spoken by the Zen master Po-chang Huai-hai, who says it derives from a sutra. Although this is most probably the *Nirvāna Sutra*, the words Po-chang actually speaks represent only a loose paraphrase of a passage in that sutra (*Taishō*, 12. 531). In our text, the initial italicized block quotation shows the way the passage would normally be read. But since that reading would make the Buddha-nature a kind of potential inherent in sentient beings which they actualize in the future through practice, Dōgen rejects it. His own reading, shown in the phrase by phrase treatment he gives this quotation below, is made to reveal a nondualistic standpoint where Buddha-nature and sentient beings, practice and realization, are identical.

Since temporal conditions are seen directly through temporal conditions alone—this is nothing but the realization of the Buddha-nature—illusory and non-illusory knowledge, even the wisdom of various forms of enlightenment are unneeded.

<sup>24</sup> *Should watch for*: 當觀. *sōkan*: Dōgen here reads 當 as meaning “just,” “immediately,” or “directly,” instead of the usual “should.” Accordingly, he reads *sōkan* “just watch,” or “just see.” (In this passage we have translated *kan* as “watch,” “contemplate,” and also as “see” according to Dōgen’s shift of emphasis.) Thus there can be no question of the duality of someone watching and waiting for something; the present is nonrelative, not a means or mere process in reaching some future point.

The word “Look!” in this section is a rendering of 見 (or *mi*), a word which is strictly untranslatable but which has the force of pointing to a particular thing in question. Dōgen uses it here to avoid conceptualization, to point to what is immediately present here and now—“What is this that thus comes.” Thus, for example, “Buddha with Buddha!” points to the immediate and absolute presence of each and every Buddha, Buddha together with Buddha.

Men of the past and present have frequently had the idea that the words *If the time arrives* mean "await a future time when the Buddha-nature might be manifested." They say, "Continuing your practice this way, the time of the Buddha-nature's manifestation will be encountered naturally. If the time does not come, then whether you go to a master in search of the Dharma, or negotiate the Way in concentrated practice, it is not manifested." With this view they revert gainlessly to the world's red dusts, gazing vainly up at the Milky Way. Such people would seem to be of the non-Buddhist party who hold that all comes about as a matter of natural course.<sup>25</sup>

By way of illustration, *if you wish to know the Buddha-nature's meaning* might be read, "you are directly knowing the Buddha-nature's meaning." *You should watch for temporal conditions* means "you are directly knowing temporal conditions." If you wish to know the Buddha-nature, you should know that it is precisely temporal conditions themselves.

The utterance *If the time arrives*<sup>26</sup> means "The time is already here, and there could be no room to doubt it." Even if you doubt the time's arrival [and thereby the Buddha-nature], do so as you like, but then, "Just return the Buddha nature to me."<sup>27</sup>

As for *If the time arrives*, you should know that no time of the twenty-four hours passes by without its being come.

*If it arrives* is the same as saying "is already arrived." If the time is already here, the Buddha-nature does not have to come. Therefore, the time being already arrived is in itself the immediate manifestation of the Buddha-nature.

<sup>25</sup> *non-Buddhist party*: one of the heretical schools or teachings enumerated by Buddhists as being contrary to the true Buddhist teaching.

<sup>26</sup> *If the time arrives* 時節若至: This is the usual reading. Dōgen reads it "the time is already right here," with the character 若 meaning "already" instead of the usual "if." (This character does have some such meaning, though rare. See Morohashi *Daikanwa jiten* 9928b.)

<sup>27</sup> *Return the Buddha-nature to me*: This seems to mean: "despite my emphasis of the time's arrival as nothing other than the Buddha-nature, you may doubt it if you want to. But if you do doubt the Buddha-nature in that way, then return it to me." Dōgen's way of urging the reader to awake to the reality of the Buddha-nature, to the fact that even doubting is not apart from the Buddha-nature.

Or, "This truth is clear all of itself."<sup>28</sup> There has never yet been a time not arrived. There can be no Buddha-nature that is not Buddha-nature manifested right here.

*The Twelfth Patriarch Asvaghosa preached the "Buddha-nature Sea" for the sake of the Thirteenth Patriarch, saying, "The forming of mountains, rivers, and the earth is all dependent on the Buddha-nature. Samadhi, the six supernatural powers are being revealed through the Buddha-nature."<sup>29</sup>*

Thus, these mountains, rivers, and earth are all the Buddha-nature Sea. *The forming is all dependent on the Buddha-nature* means that this very time of their forming, is mountains, rivers, and earth. You should know, concerning "the forming is all dependent on the Buddha-nature" just mentioned, that the mode of the Buddha-nature Sea is like this; it is not concerned beyond this with inner, outer, or between.<sup>30</sup> It being thus, seeing mountains and rivers is see-

<sup>28</sup> *This truth is clear all of itself* 其理自彰: These words by Po-chang appear in the original quotation in the *Lien-teng hui-yao* cited above (see footnote 23), although Dōgen changes them to 仏性現前 when he quotes it, which would usually be read "the Buddha-nature will manifest itself," but which Dōgen interprets as "the Buddha-nature is immediately manifested" (or, in the text, as "the immediate manifestation of the Buddha-nature"). Here, although Dōgen has changed Po-chang's words, he is saying that the meaning remains essentially the same. His reason for changing them is simply to include the idea of Buddha-nature in this quotation.

<sup>29</sup> From the *CTL, chüan 1, Taishō 51. 209.*

<sup>30</sup> "The forming is all dependent on the Buddha-nature" does not mean dependence in terms of a subject-object duality. Just as the formation of innumerable waves is inseparably dependent on the sea and yet there is no sea without waves, the formation of every particular thing is nondualistically dependent on the boundless ocean of Buddha-nature and there is no Buddha-nature apart from particular things. Thus formation is itself Buddha-nature, is mountains, rivers, etc. Mountains (and rivers, etc.) and Buddha-nature are just two names for one and the same dynamic reality. This is totally realized at "this very time of their being formed," hence the identity of time and being, a key concept of Dōgen. Cf. *SBGZ Uji*; "Time itself is being(s), being(s) are all time" (*Ōkubo*, p. 189). "Mountains are time. Seas are time. Were they not time, they could not be mountains or seas" (*ibid.*, p. 193). Since this nondualistic mode is an all-pervading "ocean," there can be no question of inside, outside, or in between.

ing the Buddha-nature. Seeing the Buddha-nature is seeing a donkey's jowls or a horse's mouth.<sup>31</sup> You understand, you do not understand, that *all dependent* is "whole dependence," is a "depending whole."<sup>32</sup>

*Samadhi, the six supernatural powers*<sup>33</sup> are being revealed through Buddha-nature— You should know that the manifestation and non-manifestation of samadhis are both all dependent on the Buddha-nature. All the six supernatural powers— those being revealed through the Buddha-nature or not—are equally all dependent on the Buddha-nature.<sup>34</sup> The six supernatural powers are not simply those of the Agama teaching.<sup>35</sup> Six is the six supernatural powers perfected, three, three, before, three, three, after.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, do not investigate the six

<sup>31</sup> The Buddha-nature is seen not apart from the common things around us.

<sup>32</sup> Since "all dependent" 皆依 here is free from subject-object duality, "whole dependence" 全依, that is, total and complete dependence of things on the Buddha-nature, is at the same time a "depending whole" 依全, that is, the whole each and every thing of which is without exception depending on the Buddha-nature. In short, "wholeness" 全 and "dependence" 依 are totally reciprocal. This is because the non-dualistic activity of "depending" is Buddha-nature; the non-dichotomous function of "forming" is the Buddha-nature. This is to be understood on the one hand, but on the other it needs no understanding, for it is the Reality that is already disclosed here and now at this very moment.

<sup>33</sup> *Six supernatural powers* 六(神)通, roku (jin) tsū.

<sup>34</sup> That is, the sea (Buddha-nature) and waves (supernatural powers, samadhi) are inseparable and nondualistic, so whether the powers are being revealed through Buddha-nature or not they are still equally dependent on Buddha-nature.

<sup>35</sup> Since samadhi and supernatural powers are themselves the Buddha-nature, they are not something extraordinary or superhuman but the common activity of everyday life. So they are not the powers preached in the Agama sutras of Hinayana Buddhism, i.e., penetrating and unrestricted capabilities possessed by Buddhas and Arhats; eyes that see everywhere, ears that hear everything, etc.

<sup>36</sup> An allusion from Case 35 of the *Pi-yen lu* (*Hekiganroku*). Wen-shu asked Wu-chu, "Where have you just come from?" "The south," replied Chu. "How is Buddhism in the south?" Shu asked. Chu said, "Those monks of the latter-day Dharma only observe the precepts." Chu said, "How many are there?" "Three hundred, maybe five hundred," said Chu. Then Wu-chu asked Wen-shu, "How is Buddhism in these parts?" "Enlightened men and unenlightened live together. Dragons and snakes mixed in together," Shu said. Chu said, "Many or few?" Shu said, "Three three before, three three after."

"Three three . . ." is not ordinary enumeration but indicates each thing immediately and distinctly manifested prior to mental categories. Here "six supernatural powers"

supernatural powers as "The clear bright tips of myriad grasses are the clear bright intent of buddhas and patriarchs."<sup>37</sup> That makes us stay and be inextricably involved in the six supernatural powers; nevertheless, that is interference which only occurs within the universal flow in the Buddha-nature Sea.<sup>38</sup>

*Zen master Ta-man,<sup>39</sup> the Fifth Patriarch, was of Huang-mei in Ch'i-chou. He was born without a father, and attained the Way while still a child.*

*[In his previous existence] he was called Tsai-sung Tao-che ("Pine-planting Wayman").<sup>40</sup> Then, while he was at Hsi-shan in Ch'i-chou planting pine saplings, he encountered the Fourth Patriarch who was out on an excursion. The Fourth Patriarch said to him, "I would like to transmit the Dharma to you, but you are too old. If you get reborn into this world again, I will be waiting for you." Tsai-sung agreed. Later he*

\*perfected" thus seems to indicate the clear, unmistakable manifestation of each thing, thoroughly visible and audible; i.e., the manifestation of whole being as Buddha-nature.

<sup>37</sup> This sentence refers to words which appear in the records of the T'ang Zen layman P'ang Yün in the *Lien-teng hui-yao*, *chüan* 6: Layman P'ang said to his daughter Ling-chao, "A man of old said that 'the clear, bright tips of myriad grasses are the clear, bright intent of buddhas and patriarchs.' How do you understand that?" Ling-chao repeated the same words.

Each of every and all things (the tips of myriad grasses) is clearly and brightly distinguished in its suchness, and right here the true meaning of the buddhas and patriarchs is totally revealed. Although profound, this is still not completely free from conceptualization and generalization. Since for Dōgen the six supernatural powers are in themselves Buddha-nature, the clear, bright tips of grasses are just the clear, bright tips of grasses, and this very fact is the Buddha-nature. Thus there is no need for the six supernatural powers to be penetrated by equating the clear tips of the grasses with the clear intent of buddhas.

<sup>38</sup> When the six supernatural powers are "investigated" (*tanjū*) as "the clear, bright tips of myriad grasses are the clear, bright tips of myriad grasses (not the clear intent of buddhas), that is, as themselves and not as Buddha-nature, we are made to remain and get inseparably taken up in the supernatural powers (man's everyday life), but this is not something that takes place apart from the Buddha-nature Sea.

<sup>39</sup> Ta-man 大滿. The posthumous title of the Fifth Chinese Zen Patriarch Hung-jen 弘忍 (Gunin, 602-675).

<sup>40</sup> Tsai-sung Tao-che 栽松道者.

went to the house of a Mr. Chou and got reborn through his daughter. She abandoned the infant in a muddy creek,<sup>41</sup> but being protected by divine messengers, he remained unharmed even after seven days had passed. So she retrieved him and raised him, and he passed a normal childhood. Then, when he was seven years old, while on the way to Huang-mei mountain, he met the Fourth Patriarch Ta-i,<sup>42</sup> who saw that although he was still a child, his physiognomy was excellent and unusual, different from that of ordinary children. The patriarch asked him, "What is your name?" The boy replied, "There is a name, but it is not an ordinary name." The master said, "What name is it?" "It is Buddha-nature," said the boy. The patriarch said, "You have no Buddha-nature." The boy replied, "You say no (Buddha-nature) because Buddha-nature is emptiness."<sup>43</sup> The patriarch knew he was a vessel for the Buddha Dharma. He made him his attendant, and in the course of time he imparted to him the treasure of the right Dharma Eye. Taking up residence on the Eastern Mountain of Huang-mei, the Fifth Patriarch greatly spread and uplifted the deep profundity of the Buddha Dharma.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, when we penetrate the patriarchs' utterances we find that the Fourth Patriarch said, "What is your name?" has a meaning of essential significance. In the past, there was a man of "What" country, and there was a family name named "What."<sup>45</sup> Here, he is teaching him: "You are of 'What' family

<sup>41</sup> Presumably because, as was stated above, "he was born without a father."

<sup>42</sup> Tai-i 大誓. The posthumous title of the Fourth Patriarch Tao-hsing 道信 (Dōshin, 580-65).

<sup>43</sup> This dialogue is dealt with in detail in the comments by Dōgen that follow.

<sup>44</sup> The closest approximation to this quotation is found in the biography of Hung-jen in the *Chien-chung ching-kuo Hsiu-teng lu* 建中靖國統燈錄, *chüan* 1 *Kenchi seikoku zokutoroku*).

<sup>45</sup> "Someone asked, 'Master, what is your name?' 'My name is What.' He then asked, 'Master, what country are you from?' 'I'm a man of What country,' he answered." *CTL*, *chüan* 27. In Chinese and Japanese, *name* 姓 (*hsing*; *shō*) and *nature* 性 (*hsing*; *shō*) are homophones. Dōgen plays on this throughout this section. The question "What is your name?" means at the same time "What is your nature?"

"What" 何 may have two meanings; (1) as an interrogative, "What is it?" and (2) in the sense of "What it is," the nature of the thing in question, its quiddity. We cannot completely clarify something simply by asking "What is it?" Nevertheless the very nature of the matter in question, i.e., "What it is," is appearing before us as it is. That is the original nature or Buddha-nature of the thing which is beyond the grasp of man's thought. Hence "What" is Buddha-nature, which is undefinable, infinite and immeasurable.

(name).” This is similar, for example, to the utterance: “I am thus, You are thus too.”<sup>46</sup>

*The Fifth Patriarch said, “There is a name (nature),<sup>47</sup> but it is not an ordinary name (nature).”* That is, the name (nature) that is self-identical with being<sup>48</sup> is not an ordinary name (nature). An ordinary name (nature) is not self-identical with being.

*The Fourth Patriarch said, “What name is it?”* This means that “What” is “it” (affirmation): he is “What-ing” the affirmation.<sup>49</sup> This is his name (nature). “What-ing” comes about because of the affirmation: the affirmation is caused by the functioning of “What.” Name (nature) is both “it” (affirmation) and “What.” It is infused in herbal tea, in ordinary tea, and is our everyday meal as well.<sup>50</sup>

The Fifth Patriarch said, “*It is Buddha-nature.*”<sup>51</sup> The essential significance of this is: “it” (affirmation) is the Buddha-nature. Because it is “What,” it is Buddha.<sup>52</sup> But can “it” (affirmation) be fully comprehended only in “What” name? When affirmation is not affirmable, it is still the Buddha-nature.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> These words appear in the dialogue between the Sixth Patriarch and Nan-yüeh quoted in footnote 5.

<sup>47</sup> *There is a name (nature)* 姓即有: Against this normal reading, Dōgen reads, word by word, “Name is being.”

<sup>48</sup> That is, being is Buddha-nature in the sense of whole being-Buddha nature. See footnote 8.

<sup>49</sup> In the sentence 是何姓, usually read simply “What name is it?” Dōgen reads word for word, “Affirmation-what-name (nature),” with the three being identical. Viewed dynamically, “What” is identical with “it” 是 (affirmation). The totally inexpressible “What” present right here, is itself “It,” the affirmation of each actual being (i.e., “What-ing affirmation”). This is the name, the (Buddha) nature.

<sup>50</sup> Our eating, drinking, all our everyday acts are our nature, our affirmation, our non-objectifiable expression of universal reality (our “What-ing”).

<sup>51</sup> “*It is Buddha-nature*” 是仏性. Word for word this is “Is (or, It) Buddha nature,” which is closer to Dōgen’s emphasis of “Affirmation is Buddha-nature,” than the English translation reveals.

<sup>52</sup> Affirmation is Buddha-nature because it is “What.”

<sup>53</sup> “It” 是 i.e., affirmation, is not fully exhausted with “What,” and it is not mere affirmation either; for it is at the same time not-It, not-affirmation, and that is the true Buddha-nature.

Therefore, although “it” (affirmation) is “What,” is Buddha, when that is cast off, fully broken through, it is without fail a name (nature). Here, the name (nature) is Chou (all-pervading).<sup>54</sup> Yet this name (nature) is not received from a father, or from an ancestor; and it does not resemble one’s mother’s name. And it can, of course, never be compared with any other person’s name.

The Fourth Patriarch said, “*You have no Buddha-nature.*”<sup>55</sup> This utterance elucidates: “You is not someone. Everything is entirely up to you, but you are no-Buddha-nature.”<sup>56</sup> You should know and you should study: What time is it now, when you are no-Buddha-nature?<sup>57</sup> Are you no-Buddha-nature when you have attained Buddhahood completely? Are you no-Buddha-nature when you go beyond Buddhahood? [In your study,] do not restrict and do not grope around for all-pervading no-Buddha-nature.<sup>58</sup> Sometime you practice and realize that no-Buddha-nature is one time of samadhi.<sup>59</sup> You should be asking and you should be articulating: Am I no-Buddha-nature when Buddha-nature attains Buddhahood? Am I no-Buddha-nature when Buddha-nature begins longing for enlightenment? You should have even the temple pillars asking.

<sup>54</sup> The Fifth Patriarch’s family name is *Chou* 周; the word Chou literally means “universal,” “all-pervading,” so that throughout the dialogue “Chou” means at least two things: 1) the Fifth Patriarch’s family name 姓 is Chou, and 2) his (Buddha) nature 性 (see footnote 45) is all-pervading, that is, it is whole being-Buddhanature. Here Dōgen is alluding to the words 不是常姓, reading them as “Not-it (i.e. ‘not affirmable’) is always a name.” (Above they are translated as “It is not an ordinary name.”)

<sup>55</sup> “You have no Buddha-nature” (無仏性 *mu-butsū*) is the usual reading. Dōgen’s reading, “You are no-Buddha-nature,” asserts that *mu-butsū* does not mean sentient beings have no Buddha-nature; Buddha-nature is prior to man’s discriminations and is beyond the dichotomy of having or not having the Buddha-nature. Because it is free of the dualistic view of either having a Buddha-nature or having no Buddha-nature, *mu-butsū* (no-Buddha-nature) is the Buddha-nature genuinely realized.

<sup>56</sup> “You” does not indicate a particular person but whole being. Therefore, you (the Fifth Patriarch) are completely entrusted with whole being, so you may call it Buddha-nature or anything else, but you are no-Buddha-nature.

<sup>57</sup> Here again “time” is crucial for the realization of true Buddha-nature which is no-Buddha-nature.

<sup>58</sup> The reality of no-Buddha-nature is all-pervading, so do not try to restrict it or search around for it with your discriminations.

<sup>59</sup> *One time of samadhi* 一時の三昧: samadhi at each and every occasion or “stage of time.”

You should even ask the temple pillars.<sup>60</sup> And you should have even the Buddha-nature asking too.

Thus the utterance “no-Buddha-nature” is something that reverberates far beyond the patriarchal chambers of the Fourth Patriarch. It was seen and heard in Huang-mei, circulated freely in Chao-chou, and was exalted in Ta-kuei.<sup>61</sup> You must without fail devote yourself to the truth of “no-Buddha-nature,” never remitting your efforts. No-Buddha-nature has to be traced perplexingly, yet it does have a touchstone: “What.” It has a time: “You.” There is entering into its dynamic functioning: “Affirmation.” It is born into the same life:<sup>62</sup> “Chou” (all-pervading). It is a direct and immediate access.

The Fifth Patriarch said, “*You say no (Buddha-nature) because Buddha-nature is emptiness.*” This clearly and distinctly articulates the Truth: that is, emptiness is not “no.” [But] in uttering “Buddhanature-emptiness,” one says “no.” One does not say “half a pound,” or “eight ounces.” One does not say emptiness, because it is emptiness. One does not say no, because it is no. One says no because it is Buddhanature-emptiness.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, each piece of no is a touchstone to articulate emptiness; emptiness is

<sup>60</sup> A monk asked Zen master Pei-shu 碑樹, “What is Buddha?” He answered, “A kitten climbing up the temple pillar.” “I don’t understand,” replied the monk. “Go and ask the pillar,” said the master. *CTL, chüan 14*. In Zen, a temple pillar is often used in alluding to Buddha-nature.

<sup>61</sup> Reference to Hung-jen (Huang-mei), the Fifth Patriarch, whose utterance of no-Buddha-nature appears in the next section. The utterances of Chao-chou (Jōshū) and Kuei-shan (Ta-kuei; Isan) appear later in *SBGZ Buddha-nature*.

<sup>62</sup> Here we follow the Ejö MS text and read 同生. Ōkubo has 同姓.

<sup>63</sup> Buddha-nature is true emptiness, which is not mere nothingness but is identical with the whole universe. Here Dōgen reads “Buddha-nature is emptiness” 仏性空 as “Buddhanature-emptiness.” Because it is Buddhanature-emptiness, it can only be expressed by saying no. However, emptiness itself is not no; no is used to express it. It cannot be expressed otherwise, for example, by saying it is this or that, “a half pound,” or “eight ounces,” etc., which would only limit and objectify what is unbounded and nonobjectifiable—true absolute emptiness. Since it is absolute and nonrelative, it cannot be qualified by calling it emptiness even though it is true emptiness, or by calling it no (or nothingness) even though it is real nothingness. So the key statement here is, “He says no because it is Buddhanature-emptiness.” Therefore, the various expressions of no (no-Buddha-nature, no-mind, etc.) are touchstones to articulate emptiness. Emptiness is the very power articulating these expressions of no.

the power articulating no. Here emptiness is not the emptiness of "form is emptiness." "Form is emptiness" does not mean form is forced into being emptiness; it is not making form out of emptiness. It must be the emptiness of "emptiness is emptiness."<sup>64</sup> The emptiness of "emptiness is emptiness" is a piece of rock in emptiness.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs are asking and articulating Buddhanature-no, Buddhanature-emptiness, Buddhanature-being.

(To be continued)

<sup>64</sup> "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form": well-known lines from the *Heart Sutra*. But "form is emptiness" may suggest that there are two things, form and emptiness, and that they are identical. Here emptiness, completely nonrelative and including all things, is dynamically and nondualistically form ("a piece of rock (in) emptiness")—that is, it is "emptiness is absolutely emptiness," which is itself "form is absolutely form."

<sup>65</sup> A monk asked Shih-shuang (石霜, Sekisō), "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?" The master said, "A rock in emptiness." The monk made a bow. The master said, "Do you understand?" "No," he replied. "It's a good thing you don't," said the master, "If you did understand I would break your skull." *CTL, chūan 15*.