

Time and Self: Religious Awakening in Dōgen and Shinran

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[The nembutsu] is precisely for those who are utterly ignorant and foolish, and who therefore forget about study and practice, believing that simply to say the Name of Amida Buddha with their tongues, day and night, is to enact the fulfillment of practice. While the way of wisdom corresponds to the Tendai teaching or Zen meditation, the gate of compassion designed for the foolish does not differ with regard to what is true and real. On a cold night, it makes no difference whether you are wearing robes of patterned brocade or lying under layers of hempen patchwork once you have fallen asleep and forgotten about the wind.

SHINKEI

IN this passage from a 15th century work on *renga* poetry, Shinkei 心敬 (1406–1475) contrasts the arduous path of Tendai or Zen with the comparatively simple path of nembutsu practice.¹ While Shinkei was speaking figuratively, the literal meaning of his words—that the nembutsu is for the “foolish and ignorant”—reflects a perception of the Pure Land path that persists to this day. Buddhist studies in the modern West have largely ignored the Pure Land tradition, focusing instead on schools that are more obviously complex, philosophical, or meditative. Whether from disinterest in the doctrines and practices of the Pure Land tradition or from aversion to traditions too similar in structure to the Judeo-Christian tradition, Western students of Buddhism have neglected a large and thoroughly profound body of work.

¹ Dennis Hirota, *Wind in the Pines: Classic Writings of the Way of Tea as a Buddhist Path* (Fremont, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1995), 168–9.

A number of scholars have begun to address this gap in scholarship, and it is in this spirit that the present study will compare the work of Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262). Dōgen, founder of the school of Sōtō Zen in Japan, has been widely read and interpreted in Western Buddhist studies, while Shinran, founder of Jōdo Shinshū, has only recently begun to receive his due. These two key figures of Kamakura Buddhism invite comparison, for they address strikingly similar problems yet approach these issues from radically different perspectives. Dōgen proceeds with the understanding that one *can* attain Buddhahood, that the present, impermanent existence is itself Buddha-nature. Shinran stridently takes the opposite view, teaching that, because the self is fundamentally and irrevocably corrupt, it is altogether impossible for sentient beings to bring about their own attainment of enlightenment. This difference in self-understanding leads to the different forms of practice that Shinkei points out, as Dōgen advocates the meditative practice of *zazen* and Shinran emphasizes the recitation of the *nembutsu* alone.

Despite this undeniable difference, Dōgen and Shinran are alike in teaching that religious awakening involves the actualization of total time or true reality in the present moment. Dōgen puts forth a form of practice in which, through the casting-off body and mind, the practitioner realizes the presence of things as they are. He teaches that being is identical with time, a perspective that conduces to the experience of past and future, subject and object in the fullness of the present moment. In a similar vein, Shinran teaches that the one thought-moment of *shinjin* is “time at its ultimate limit,” in which the foolish and deluded being can stand at once within and beyond samsara. In the subjective experience of the practitioner, Amida’s Vow in the past and the Pure Land of the future are realized simultaneously. Even more striking than this similarity in temporal concepts is that Dōgen and Shinran share a view of the activity of the “self” in this absolute present. For both, there is a casting-off of the body-and-mind (Dōgen) or “self-power” (Shinran). The subject sees itself in the things of the world (Dōgen) or through the mind of Amida (Shinran). For both, this absolute moment in which the self is realized as it is coexists with linear, samsaric existence.

The present study will compare the nature of time and self in Dōgen and Shinran in order to argue that, despite their apparent differences, they share an understanding of the activity of religious awakening. Initially, each will be considered separately so that their individual views may be explored fully. Due to the centrality of temporal considerations in the religious thou-

ght of Dōgen and Shinran, each section will begin with their understanding of time in religious awakening. Their temporal views will then be related to their understanding of the self and its activity in the process of enlightenment. In the end, Dōgen and Shinran will be brought into conversation, as the similarities and differences in their visions of the religious life are highlighted. This comparison will serve as a basis for the evaluation of Shinkei's claim—that the way of compassion and the way of wisdom do not differ “with regard to what is true and real.”

Dōgen's Understanding of Time

Given Dōgen's ample treatment in *Buddhist Studies*, his teaching is an appropriate starting point for this comparative project. Temporal considerations are absolutely central to Dōgen's thought. His clearest exposition on the nature of time is the *Uji* 有時 fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏. Here, Dōgen teaches the identity of time and being and the relevance of this knowledge for religious experience. “As the time right now is all there ever is,” he writes, “each being-time is without exception entire time . . . Entire being, the entire world, exists in the time of each and every now.”² In order to understand this view of time, it is necessary to consider the mode of perception that *uji* replaces. Dōgen describes this conventional view in the following manner:

Hearing the words “the time being” (*uji*), [the unenlightened one] thinks that at one time the old buddha became a three-headed, eight-armed creature, and at another time he became a sixteen-foot buddha. He imagines it is like crossing a river and a mountain: while the river and mountain may still exist, *I* have now passed them by and *I*, at the present time, reside in a fine vermilion palace. To him, the mountain and river and *I* are as far distant as heaven from earth.³

This description highlights two essential aspects of the unenlightened mode of perception. The first sentence points to the idea of transformation: the Buddha is a three-headed, eight-armed creature at one time and this Buddha *becomes* the sixteen-foot Buddha at another. The same being exists in two

² N.A. Waddell, trans., “Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*” in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, XII, no. 1 (1979), 118.

³ *Ibid.*, 118–19.

different forms at two different times. If one were to account for the Buddha as a *whole* in a conventional view, one would have to include all of the Buddha's manifestations. This perspective implies that the Buddha possesses a "self" that persists through time and is therefore separate from time. The second sentence elucidates this problem as it relates to the perceiving subject. It describes a separation of subject, *I*, from its experience of objects. This description also evokes the conventional view in which time is seen as a linear succession of interrelated moments that contain beings and objects for limited spans of its totality.

Uji counters this conventional view of time by identifying being with time. The following passage is a clear exposition of this idea:

Mountains are time and seas are time. If they were not, there would be no mountains and seas. So you must not say there is no time in the immediate now of mountains and seas. If time is destroyed, mountains and seas are destroyed. If time is indestructible, mountains and seas are indestructible. . . . This is time. Were it not time, things would be not-so.⁴

Time is not something other than mountains and seas. It does not exist "outside" of things, for it has no independent existence at all. Hee-Jin Kim calls this view "a radical temporalization of existence and radical existentialization of time."⁵ *Uji* is a fusion of the temporal and the spatial dimensions; the things-of-the-world do not exist "in" time, but *are* time.

One correlate of this identification of being with time is a radical separation of each being-time from all other beings-times, which Dōgen considers in terms of the independence of each dharma-situation and the non-interference of myriad dharma-situations. ". . . There are myriad phenomena and numberless grasses appearing over the entire earth," he writes, "and each of the grasses and each of the forms is existing on the entire earth by itself."⁶ Each thing stands on its own as a manifestation of entire time and entire being; a single blade of grass in a field is "the entire earth by itself." In the *Tsuki* fascicle, Dōgen makes a similar statement, writing, "each quarter of the moon is complete within itself."⁷ He asserts, in other words, that the

⁴ Ibid., 126.

⁵ Hee-Jin Kim, "Existence/Time as a Way of Ascesis: An Analysis of the Basic Structure of Dōgen's Thought," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series. XI, no. 2, (1978), 52.

⁶ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 118.

⁷ Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens, trans., *Shōbōgenzō* (Tokyo: Kawata Press, 1975), I, 83.

quarter moon should not be seen as a fraction of the moon's totality. Each phase of the moon is complete. Therefore, "we should seek tonight's moon and not be concerned with last night's moon."⁸

The understanding that each dharma-situation manifests totality necessitates the denial of transformation. This idea is presented in a passage from the *Genjōkōan* 現成公按 fascicle:

Firewood becomes ash, and it does not become firewood again. Yet, do not suppose that the ash is future and the firewood past. You should understand that firewood abides in the phenomenal expression of firewood, which fully includes past and future and is independent of past and future. Ash abides in the phenomenal expression of ash, which fully includes future and past.⁹

Each dharma-situation exists entirely in the present. Neither being nor time can be found elsewhere; a single blade of grass cannot be placed within the context of multiple blades, and ash cannot be considered the future manifestation of firewood. In the *Tsuki* fascicle, Dōgen provides a thoroughly Mahayana explanation of this idea:

... The true form of Buddha, the true form of the *dharmakaya*, is universal emptiness. Therefore, all wisdom, all worlds, all phenomena are universal emptiness. Each and every form of existence, as it is, is the true form of Buddha.¹⁰

That is, insofar as each and every thing manifests suchness, it is complete within itself. Consequently, the idea that time is a linear progression is ruled out because it suggests that reality evolves or changes. From the perspective of *uji*, reality is as it is *now*. Being-time is complete in all states, firewood and ash.

While *uji* involves a complete separation of each being-time and a rejection of transformation, the fact that each being-time contains within it the *entirety* of being-time allows a certain kind of "passage" to take place. "Being-time . . . passes from today to tomorrow, passes from today to yesterday, passes from yesterday to today, passes from today to today, passes from tomorrow to tomorrow."¹¹ The idea here is that the present contains

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., *The Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), 70.

¹⁰ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 83.

¹¹ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 120–21.

within it the past and future, all history and all potentiality. According to Hee-Jin Kim, "... The whole universe is crystallized into the unique historical singularity of an individual dharma."¹² The existence of all time within the present is aptly illustrated from a subjective vantagepoint. Dōgen writes, "... When we cross the river or climb the mountain we exist in the eternal present of time; this time includes all past and present time."¹³ Joan Stambaugh further clarifies this idea: "My body-mind incorporates *now* how I was raised and nurtured as a child, how I have taken care of myself as an adult, how my parents, grandparents and so on lived their lives, whether I have trained as an athlete or sat in an armchair all my life."¹⁴ From an existential point of view, a particular moment contains all the moments that have preceded it. Again, the idea of transformation is ruled out; ash in the present moment is the complete manifestation of all that ash ever was. In other words, *uji* entails the identity of particularity and totality, one and all.

It is pertinent to consider the extent to which Dōgen sees *uji* as definitive of time as a whole. The language of the *Uji* fascicle suggests that Dōgen views *uji* as a mode that necessarily co-exists with other modes. For instance:

You should not come to understand that time is only flying past. You should not only learn that flying past is the property inherent in time. If time were to give itself to merely flying past, it would have to have gaps. You fail to experience the passage of being-time and hear the utterance of its truth, because you are learning only that time is something that goes past.¹⁵

Here, Dōgen is not ruling out other views of time, but is stressing that one should not take "only" the conventional view of time. He acknowledges that "the changing of time is clear so there is no reason to doubt it,"¹⁶ but rejects an absolute adherence to this view. Dōgen clearly holds that *uji* represents the enlightened perspective; the conventional view is a barrier to be broken through "for a time."¹⁷ However, any attempt to make this "break-through"

¹² Kim, "Existence/Time as a Way of Ascesis," 56.

¹³ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 69.

¹⁴ Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence is Buddha-Nature* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 50.

¹⁵ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 120.

¹⁶ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 68.

¹⁷ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 123.

into a new form of being that persists through linear time neglects the very nature of *uji*: it is absolute *present*. Past and future exist only in this present; thus the question of whether or not this break-through persists imposes on *uji* a foreign (i.e. conventional) conception of time.

One more aspect of Dōgen's conception of time warrants careful consideration: the oneness of practice and realization. Although this idea is not explicitly treated in *Uji*, the idea that being and time are one is correlated with the recognition of the simultaneity of practice and attainment. T.P. Kasulis explains: "By criticizing our usual understanding of time, Dōgen sets the groundwork for rejecting the idea of practice as preceding and causing authentication. Thus, he says that *zazen* falls outside the notion of time as past, present, and future."¹⁸ It is with the understanding of time as put forth in the *Uji* fascicle that Dōgen asserts: "... When even just one person, at one time, sits in *zazen*, he becomes, imperceptively, one with each and all the myriad things, and permeates completely all time. . . ."¹⁹ In other words, the rejection of transformation and the attribution of totality to particularity described in *Uji* apply to practice and the subjective experience of the practitioner. All reality—past and future, practice and enlightenment—are to be found in the absolute *now* of being-time.

This understanding of the nature of time conduces to a certain model of practice. Jackie Stone labels this aspect of Dōgen's thought "the absolutizing of a single form of practice."²⁰ Dōgen placed exclusive emphasis on the practice of sitting meditation—*zazen* or *shikan taza*, "just sitting." In *Bendowa*, one of Dōgen's earlier texts, he states that *zazen* is "the right gate to enter the Buddhist Way," practiced by Shakyamuni Buddha and transmitted through the Patriarchs.²¹ The practice of *zazen* is participation in the realization of the Buddhas. "It covers infinite time and pervades past, present and future while simultaneously working ceaselessly for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. . . . Even if all the innumerable Buddhas of the entire universe combined their wisdom and attempted to measure the merit of one person's *zazen*, they could not fathom it."²² The realization described in *Uji*, then, is manifested in *zazen*. Still, Dōgen saw this realization as a mode that

¹⁸ T.P. Kasulis, *Zen Action, Zen Person* (Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 1981), 78.

¹⁹ As quoted in Kasulis, *Zen Action, Zen Person*, 78.

²⁰ Jackie Stone, "Seeking Enlightenment in the Last Age: *Mappō* Thought in Kamakura Buddhism, II," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, XVIII, no. 2 (1985), 41.

²¹ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 150–151.

²² *Ibid.*, 150.

should be manifest in each discrete moment of the practitioner's life. The point is to extend the scope of "practice," as "... Buddhas and Patriarchs express their real selves in the everyday activities of drinking tea and eating rice."²³ There are two temporal senses to Dōgen's vision of practice then. On the one hand, he maintains that practice itself is realization; on the other hand, Dōgen's work suggests that the orientation of practice should be manifest in *all* moments.

The Self in Dōgen's Thought

The preceding consideration of *uji* shows that, as the very term indicates, Dōgen's understanding of time is intimately bound with his conception of being or existence. The subjective experience of time is the foundation, the bottom line, in *Uji*. Throughout the fascicle, Dōgen is concerned with how one sees, with the view that is taken in regard to time and the action that results. As the following passages shows, he is essentially presenting a new orientation towards temporal existence:

[The unenlightened individual] imagines it is like crossing a river and a mountain; while the river and mountain may still exist, *I* have now passed them by and *I*, at the present time, reside in a fine vermilion palace. To him, the mountain and river and *I* are as far distant as heaven from earth. But the true way of things is not found in this one direction alone. At the time the mountain was being climbed and the river being crossed, *I* was there [in time]. The *time* has to *be* in me. Inasmuch as *I* am there, it cannot be that time passes away.²⁴

Uji is not, for Dōgen, a metaphysical assertion; rather, it is subjective and is to be enacted by the practitioner. It is not the case, however, that one adopts an artificial view, that time can be seen in *any* way. Rather, the mutual identity of being-time is *true*, but is more than a theoretical realization. Time, as Hee-Jin Kim points out, is a personal concern: "... The problem of time inevitably bears upon one's personal fears and hopes, pains and pleasures, ambiguities and clarities which constitute the unadulterated particularity of one's existence." He concludes: "The irreplaceable uniqueness and freedom of an individual being is the focal point of Dōgen's religious-philosophy."

²³ Ibid., 107.

²⁴ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 119.

sophical interest. Indeed we might say that Dōgen was an individualist par excellence." The central concern of *Uji* is *me*: "... Unless I put forth the utmost exertion and live the inner dynamicity of time, not a single dharma, not a single thing will be realized, nor will it ever live out the inner dynamicity of time."²⁵

How, then, is one to arrive at such a realization? While the overall context of Dōgen's thought indicates that such a view is to be adopted through "just sitting" (*shikan-taza* 只管打坐), the *Uji* fascicle describes the process in other language. Here, Dōgen speaks of "exertion" and "penetrating": "... Entire worlding the entire world with the whole world is called *penetrating exhaustively*."²⁶ Through exertion into the present, one arrives at a qualitative rather than quantitative view of time, exerting oneself entirely the present and creating a sense of fullness in each activity. As he writes in *Uji* (italics added):

The entire world is included in ourselves. This is the principle: "We, ourselves, are time." Study the principle that everything in the world is time. Each instant covers the entire world. . . . *When we attain this level, we have clear understanding of the significance of each and every practice: one blade of grass, every single object, each living thing is inseparable from time.*²⁷

This idea is expressed in more poetic terms in *Tenzo Kyōkun* 典座教訓 [Instructions to the Cook]: "Take up a blade of grass and construct a treasure king's land; enter into a particle of dust and turn the great dharma wheel."²⁸

Dōgen's discussion of the self is constantly pushed outward, to *things* and their perception. Self-knowledge does not have an object as such, but is a mode of perception. Dōgen turns the gaze that seeks the nature of the self *away* from the self. He states this idea concretely in *Genjōkōan*:

To learn the Buddhist Way is to learn about oneself. To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to perceive oneself as all things. To realize this is to cast off the body and mind of self and others.²⁹

Authentic self-knowledge is acquired when one sheds the "false" self, the

²⁵ Kim, "Existence/Time as a Way of Ascesis," 46.

²⁶ Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 122.

²⁷ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 69.

²⁸ Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., *The Moon in a Dewdrop*, 56.

²⁹ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 1.

self of calculation and self-interest and desire. The negation of this inauthentic view allows the practitioner to perceive things as they are. Each thing “stands on its own,” and it is in the presence of each thing that the self is realized. It is important to note that the self-knowledge acquired when body and mind are cast off is not, in any sense, the acquisition of a new orientation, but is instead a return to one’s original nature. In the *Daigo* fascicle, Dōgen writes:

If everyone possesses the innate ability to have true knowledge of themselves then we can say that they are already enlightened, have received the seal of enlightenment, and practice the Buddhist Way. Therefore, when Buddhas and Patriarchs are enlightened they are simply returning to their original home.³⁰

As much as Dōgen exhorts the practitioner to cast off self and to attain a new orientation to reality, this practice is, at the same time, a return, a reclaiming, of one’s authentic self.

Dōgen encourages the practitioner to drop the inauthentic self and to allow the things of the world to confirm the self. In *Uji*, however, Dōgen directly relates this orientation to the practitioner’s experience of herself; the shift in perspective that one adopts with respect to the world is also applied to oneself. He writes, in fact, “the total penetration of being-time can only be accomplished in ourselves.”³¹ One sees only the moon that is, only the ash that is, and, similarly, only the self as it is manifest in the present. The practitioner does not seek her identity in any other time. Kasulis casts this principle in terms of “person as presence.” He writes that, rather than identifying with a reified self or projections into past and future, Dōgen instructs the practitioner to identify only with one’s “prereflective experience.” In this mode of perception, one does not *relate* to an experience, but recognizes that one’s self *is* this experience.³² In Dōgen’s words: “We cannot be separated from time.”³³

Given this practice-oriented background, it is necessary to turn to a more direct question, one that must be posed in order to open a dialogue with Shinran: what, for Dōgen, *is* this self that identifies its being with time? An answer to this question must begin with the fundamental ontological catego-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

³² Kasulis, *Zen Action, Zen Person*, 87–93.

³³ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 69.

ry of Dōgen's thought, buddha-nature, and with his reformulation of traditional Mahayana thought. It is stated in the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra* that "all sentient beings possess buddha-nature"; Dōgen renders this phrase as, "All existence is buddha-nature."³⁴ His translation evinces a clear and intentional shift in meaning. Buddha-nature is not an inherent potentiality, a static category that can be possessed, but is instead identical with being. Because existence is necessarily impermanent, it follows that buddha-nature is also impermanent. In other words, a kind of syllogism is established: all existence is buddha-nature; existence is impermanent; therefore, buddha-nature is impermanent. Dōgen expresses and toys with this logic in the *Busshō* 仏性 fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*:

... [Plants, trees, and woods are impermanent, hence Buddha-nature. Human bodies and minds are transient, thus Buddha-nature. . . . Since supreme enlightenment is Buddha-nature, it is impermanent. The perfect quietude of nirvana is momentary and thereby Buddha-nature.]³⁵

Buddha-nature, the fundamental nature of temporal existence, is not a changeless, permanent entity that persists through the flux of time, but is, in some sense, this flux itself. It is a category that cannot be objectified: reality-as-it-is. It is in this sense that Dōgen continually urges the practitioner to drop the objectification of self and other and to allow the things of the world to confirm the self. The self is to be found in the world, and "the entire world is included in ourselves."³⁶

A subtle tension exists in Dōgen's thought. As much as one is to identify being with time and thereby actualize total time in the present moment, so must one identify time with being, and thereby actualize one's authentic self within the flux of temporal existence. Dōgen stresses the impermanence, the falling away, of time, and, at the same time, stresses that absolute time is found within each discrete moment. Dōgen himself points to this tension in a passage from *Genjōkōan*:

One day, when Zen Master Hotetsu of Mt. Mayoku was fanning

³⁴ See Masao Abe, *A Study of Dōgen* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 35; Stambaugh, *Impermanence is Buddha-Nature*, 6; Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 120.

³⁵ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō Busshō*, quoted in Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, 135.

³⁶ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 68.

himself, a monk approached and asked, "The nature of the wind never changes and blows everywhere, so why are you using a fan?" The master replied, "Although you know that the nature of the wind never changes you do not know the meaning of blowing everywhere." The monk then said, "Well, what does it mean?" Hotesu did not speak but only continued to fan himself. Finally the monk understood and bowed deeply before him.³⁷

These poles, these opposite modes of perception, have in a common a rejection of persistence, duration, and substance.³⁸ Whether being is cast into the eternity of the present moment or whether the flux of time is united with being, there is an abandoning of discrimination and duality and objectification.

This tension is resolved, then, in suchness (*immo* 恁麼). Dōgen writes that suchness, reality as it is, is "the real form of truth." He emphasizes its fluidity and impermanence: "Our body is not really ours. Our life is easily changed by time and circumstances and never remains static. Countless things pass and we will never see them again." Each man is originally "that man" of suchness. That is, we "possess" original enlightenment in the sense that we are as we are; "the real nature of body and mind is *immo*."³⁹ Suchness is the concept that stands at the heart of Dōgen's conception of both time and self. Like *uji*, *immo* is a concept that points the identity of one's being and the present time; it is an admonition to the student to cast off any self, any time, any experience that is not the self-time-experience of this moment.

Shinran's Understanding of Time

Uji, in Dōgen's thought, pertains to a religious experience, an unfolding of realization in the practitioner. In shifting to Shinran's thought, then, it is necessary to begin with "the central religious awakening or experience in the Pure Land Path."⁴⁰ For Shinran, this awakening is *shinjin* 信心, the unfolding of Amida's wisdom-compassion in the practitioner, the presence of the Buddha's mind in deluded sentient beings. The theoretical basis of *shinjin* is in the

³⁷ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 3.

³⁸ Stambaugh, *Impermanence is Buddha-Nature*, 22.

³⁹ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 58–59.

⁴⁰ Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought* (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989), 146.

Eighteenth Vow of Amida: "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment."⁴¹ *Shinjin* is completely entrusting oneself to this Vow and hearing the Name without doubt. Shinran views the nembutsu as the expression of this entrusting, thereby reversing the traditional Pure Land idea that the nembutsu is a means to salvation. Key to Shinran's conception of *shinjin* is the idea that it is directed to sentient beings by Amida and is in no way dependent on the practitioner's own effort. It entails a relationship between the practitioner and that which is "reality beyond time and conception,"⁴² in which transtemporal reality irrupts into samsaric existence. In *shinjin*, the deluded being and the mind of the Buddha are simultaneously one and separate.

The relationship between Amida Buddha and the practitioner established in *shinjin* clearly has temporal implications. It implies a complex relationship between samsara and nirvana, in which these two modes of being are identical and, to the same extent, non-identical. Keiji Nishitani, in "The Problem of Time in Shinran," wrestles with the nature of this relationship in Shinran's thought, focusing on one passage from the postscript of Shinran's *Tannishō* 歎異抄. According to Shinran:

When I consider again and again the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of meditation, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone! Then how I am filled with gratitude for the Primal Vow, in which Amida settled on saving me though I am so burdened with karma.⁴³

Nishitani observes three distinct temporal phases indicated in this passage. The first time, past, is indicated by the Vow of Amida. This vow and its fulfillment took place ten kalpas ago, in the distant past. By definition, this moment is prior to any given moment in time and is therefore "further back in the past than any point in the past."⁴⁴ The second time, present, is denoted by Shinran's realization of *shinjin*. This realization is firmly grounded in Shinran's literal present; it is the realization of Shinran, "born in Japan in the

⁴¹ Ibid., 185.

⁴² Ibid., 168.

⁴³ Nishitani Keiji, "The Problem of Time in Shinran," trans. by Dennis Hirota in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, XI, no. 1 (1985), 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.

Kamakura period, as an historically actual existence."⁴⁵ The third time is indicated by the Pure Land of Amida, "which is, for sentient beings at any point in time, always the future."⁴⁶

In traditional Pure Land thought, these three times were understood in a linear fashion: because of Amida's Vow in the past, one's practice in the present leads to birth in the Pure Land in the future. Shinran's asserts, however, that Amida's vow, which was made and fulfilled in the distant past, was for his sake alone. For Nishitani, this position raises a logical problem: in what sense could Amida vow to save a sentient being that did not exist at the time? He considers and rejects interpretations based on a mythological interpretation (in which the Vow and its fulfillment are "a kind of religious fairy tale"), predestination (in which Amida obviates any participation on Shinran's part), and universalism (in which Amida's Vow is directed toward sentient beings *en masse*).⁴⁷ For Nishitani, the existential standpoint of Shinran's thought demands that we see these three times united in the transtemporal religious experience of *shinjin*. From this point of view, the past of Amida's Vow, Shinran's actual realization, and his future attainment of the Pure Land are simultaneous in an instant that is "at once in and not within time." It is the realization of eternity as manifest in the present in the salvific experience of the practitioner. The soteriological nature of time, in other words, is realized as a mode of being: "... [The] nature of time emerges as present only through man's religious existence."⁴⁸

Keiji Nishitani's analysis shows that *shinjin* entails the manifestation of past and future in a present "more present than any other present." It is necessary now to consider in detail Shinran's conception of the temporal nature of this moment of *shinjin*. He uses the term *ichinen* 一念, "one thought-moment," to designate the time frame of *shinjin*. In *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling*, Shinran considers the following passage:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of *shinjin* and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14–15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁹ Dennis Hirota et al., trans., *The Collected Works of Shinran*. Vol. I (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 474. Hereafter, *CW*.

Shinran's commentary on this passage delves into its temporal aspects. He defines the "one thought-moment" of *shinjin* as "time at its ultimate limit."⁵⁰ According to Ueda and Hirota, there are two ways of interpreting this "ultimate limit."⁵¹ In the first sense, this moment is the ultimate limit of samsaric existence, deluded and foolish existence stretched to its end. This manner of interpreting Shinran's definition brings the soteriological aspects of this moment to the fore. It is in this one thought-moment that sentient beings attain birth "immediately, without any time elapsing, without a day passing."⁵² The second interpretation casts the "ultimate limit" as connoting the absolute brevity of the one thought-moment. It is "the briefest instant of time, a moment so brief that it cannot be further divided."⁵³ At the same time, the one thought-moment of *shinjin* includes *all* time. Shinran evokes this aspect of *ichinen* in his definition of "even" (*naishi* 乃至), which "includes all possibilities, both many and few, a long time and a short time, first and later."⁵⁴ Indeed, Shinran refers to the arising of *shinjin* as "great nirvana" and, more to the point, as "eternal bliss."⁵⁵

Along with these temporal connotations, one thought-moment, as Ueda and Hirota observe, also possesses a qualitative connotation.⁵⁶ Shinran brings out this aspect of the one thought-moment in *Passages on the Pure Land Way*:

[*Ichinen*] indicates single-heartedly practicing the nembutsu. Single-heartedly practicing the nembutsu is a single voicing. A single voicing is saying the Name. Saying the Name is constant mindfulness. Constant mindfulness is right-mindedness. Right-mindedness is the true act.⁵⁷

When Shinran writes that *shinjin* takes place in "even one thought-moment," he evokes the experience of the practitioner in receiving Amida's wisdom-compassion. This experience is one of fullness—in its both its existential and soteriological senses—in a single act. *Ichinen* indicates an absolute absence of conflict and doubt in the practitioner—one's own effort drops away,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 474.

⁵¹ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 199.

⁵² *CW*, I, 474.

⁵³ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 199.

⁵⁴ *CW*, I, 474.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 301.

⁵⁶ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 199.

⁵⁷ *CW*, I, 298.

leaving only complete entrusting in the power of Amida's Vow. The fullness of single-heartedly practicing the nembutsu is further indicated in Shinran's assertion that a single voicing is *constant* mindfulness. A single voicing of the nembutsu, in other words, is the entirety of practice. It is in this sense that Shinran identifies the saying of the name with suchness:

The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light. This practice, embodying all good acts and possessing all roots of virtue, is perfect and most rapid [in bringing about birth]. It is the treasure ocean of virtues that is suchness or true reality.⁵⁸

This practice, this experience, is directed to sentient beings by Amida Buddha. The qualitative nature of *ichinen* cannot be brought about through the practitioner's deliberate effort or calculation. Nevertheless, the experience of *shinjin* is such that Shinran speaks of "the one thought-moment of joy."⁵⁹

Two aspects of this experience merit particular emphasis. First, *shinjin*, as a state of joy and absolute faith in Amida's Vow, relieves the practitioner's anxiety about death and rebirth. In a letter written at the age of 88, Shinran testifies to the impact of *shinjin* on existential dread concerning death. He writes, "I, for my own part, attach no significance to the condition, good or bad, of persons in their final moments. People in whom *shinjin* is determined do not doubt, and so abide among the truly settled."⁶⁰ Second, Shinran's understanding of *naishi ichinen* implies the simultaneity of practice and attainment. Shinran, with scriptural justification, explicitly makes this point in another letter. "Since those who have realized *shinjin* necessarily abide in the stage of the truly settled," he writes, "they are in the stage equal to the perfect enlightenment. . . . Although they differ, the terms 'truly settled' and 'equal to enlightenment' have the same meaning and indicate the same stage."⁶¹

While the arising of *shinjin* fundamentally transforms the practitioner, he or she remains within the linear flow of time. The one thought-moment of *shinjin* takes place outside of samsaric existence and therefore does not oppose or eliminate this form of existence. In *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls*, Shinran presents his vision on the Pure Land path as a whole:

⁵⁸ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 278.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶⁰ *CW*, I, 531.

⁶¹ *CW*, I, 528.

When the one thought-moment of joy arises,
 Nirvana is attained without severing blind passions;
 When ignorant and wise, even grave offenders and slanderers of
 the dharma, all alike turn and enter *shinjin*,
 They are like waters that, on entering the ocean, become one in
 taste with it.
 The light of compassion that grasps us illumines and protects us
 always,
 The darkness of our ignorance is already broken through;
 Still the clouds and mists of greed and desire, anger and hatred,
 Cover as always the sky of true and real *shinjin*.⁶²

Here, Shinran teaches that, though *shinjin* fundamentally and permanently transforms the practitioner, the practitioner's karmic evil—greed, desire, anger and hatred—remains. Realization and delusion co-exist in the practitioner. The metaphor used here by Shinran suggests a great deal about the nature of the Pure Land path. Sunlight always shines behind clouds, only occasionally illuminating the darkness. Similarly, the Buddha “always illumines and protects the person who has realized *shinjin*,” and thereby illumines one's greed, desire, anger and hatred. There are moments of *shinjin* in which the mind of Amida arises in the practitioner, breaking through karmic existence. These moments are true and real; the “darkness of ignorance” is dispelled “as though dawn has broken.”⁶³

The Self in Shinran's Thought

Shinran's understanding of the self is radically different from that of Dōgen. Shinran's knowledge of his own deluded nature—as opposed to Dōgen's view of an inherently enlightened nature—is foundational to his thought. He teaches that it is precisely the recognition of one's own incapacity that contributes to the moment of absolute surrender to Other-Power. The following passage conveys Shinran's view of the nature of sentient beings and its implications for practice:

In all small and foolish beings, at all times, thoughts of greed and desire incessantly defile any goodness of heart; thoughts of anger and hatred constantly consume the dharma-treasure. Even if one

⁶² Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 203–4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 206.

urgently acts and urgently practices as though sweeping fire from one's head, all these acts must be called "poisoned and sundry good," and "false and deceitful practice." They cannot be called "true and real action." To seek to be born in the land of immeasurable light through such false and poisoned good is completely wrong.⁶⁴

Despite one's best intentions and greatest exertions, self-attachment and desire necessarily poison all Self-power practices. Shinran typically refers to the fundamental corruption of sentient beings as "blind passions" (*bonnō* 煩惱). These blind passions are problematic in two senses. They are inherently painful to sentient beings ("Blind passions are the pains that torment the body and the afflictions that distress the heart and mind"⁶⁵) and they entrap sentient beings in the round of birth and death ("'Shackled' describes us, who are bound by all our various blind passions"⁶⁶). Shinran's writing attests to his acute sense of his own blind passions. In *Teaching, Practice, and Realization*, for example, he writes, "I know truly how grievous it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, am sinking in an immense ocean of desires and attachments and am lost in vast mountains of fame and advantage."⁶⁷

This understanding of the self is explicitly related in Shinran's thought to a temporal concept. In "Freedom and Necessity in Shinran's Concept of Karma," Yoshifumi Ueda explains Shinran's unique understanding of karma. In most Buddhist schools, certainly in the earliest ones, karma was understood in two senses: the present conditions are to be understood as created by one's past karma, while one's karmic action in the present remains free and undetermined. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, a contemporary Theravadin monk, suggests that karma be considered in terms of "this/that conditionality;" one's agency remains free, but the conditions in which that agency is exercised are determined by previous agency.⁶⁸ Shinran, however, considers only "past evil karma," positing an agency entirely bounded by the working of past actions and "implying a complete denial of moral responsibility and freedom of will in the present."⁶⁹ Present and future are subsumed by the

⁶⁴ *CW*, II, 126–27.

⁶⁵ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 235.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁶⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *The Wings to Awakening* (Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications, 1996).

⁶⁹ Yoshifumi Ueda, "Freedom and Necessity in Shinran's Concept of Karma," trans. by

past; "the present holds no meaning as the present and, accordingly, the future also lacks the significance of the future."⁷⁰ The agent has no options, according to Shinran; he or she can only be party to the working-out of past evil karma.

This interpretation of karma is undoubtedly correlated to Shinran's affirmation of the concept of *mappō* 末法, the "last Dharma age." The traditional notion of three Dharma-ages that correspond to the degeneration of the Buddha's teaching is modified in Shinran. He posits only two Dharma-ages: the age for the Path of Sages and the age for the Pure Land path,⁷¹ and treats these in terms that are more existential than historical.⁷² Shinran's focus is on the realization of one's own karmic evil: *mappō* is the age in which beings are corrupt and incapable of realization. He writes: "Now is the Last Dharma-age, the fifth span of five hundred years, for all sentient beings in this world—lacking faith in the Tathagata's compassionate vow—there can be no moment of liberation at all."⁷³

Given the fact of *mappō* and the unavailability of past karmic evil, one turns from inefficacious Self-power practice to entrusting oneself to the "Other-power" of Amida's Vow. This realization of one's karmic evil has a complex relationship to *shinjin*. On the one hand, Shinran clearly states that knowledge of one's karmic evil *precedes shinjin*, as in the following passage:

When people first begin to hear the Buddha's Vow, they wonder, having become thoroughly aware of the karmic evil in their hearts and minds, how they will ever attain birth as they are. To such people we teach that since we are possessed of blind passions, the Buddha receives us without judging whether our hearts are good or bad. When, upon hearing this, their trust in the Buddha has grown deep, they come to abhor such a self and to lament their continued existence in birth-and-death; and then they joyfully say the Name of Amida Buddha deeply entrusting themselves to the Vow.⁷⁴

Dennis Hirota in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series. XIX, 1 (1986), 79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷¹ *Shōzōmatsu Wasan* (Kyoto: Ryukoku University Press, 1980), xii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, xv.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁴ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 256.

Here, Shinran presents a linear perspective on the path of Other-power. The initial hearing of Amida's Vow produces an awareness of the blind passions; this awareness is answered by the teaching that Amida Buddha receives all; the trust that arises out of this new knowledge produces further disillusionment with this self, and it is at this point that true entrusting arises. On the other hand, given Shinran's assertion of his own foolishness and delusion, it is problematic to see this knowledge of incapacity simply as attained *before* the moment of *shinjin*. The true and real mind of the Buddha is directly correlated with insight into one's karmic evil and thus, in some sense, the knowledge of one's blind passions must arise with *shinjin*.

The structure of Shinran's thought supports this latter assertion. In traditional Pure Land thought, it was held, based on the *Contemplation Sutra*, that the practitioner should possess three minds: sincerity, deep mind, and aspiration for birth.⁷⁵ In his *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization*, Shinran, citing Shan-tao, identifies two aspects to deep mind. The first is "to believe deeply and decidedly that you are a foolish being of karmic evil"; the second is "to believe deeply and decidedly that Amida Buddha's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings."⁷⁶ Thus deep mind—which, for Shinran, is "true and real *shinjin*"⁷⁷—indicates the concomitance of Amida's salvific activity and the arising of self-knowledge. In one sense, then, it is through the arising of the Buddha's mind that sentient beings come to realize their inherent corruption: ". . . Awakening to one's own nature is called the wisdom of *shinjin*, and the person who realizes it has already been grasped by Amida's Primal Vow."⁷⁸ Shinran's work testifies to this dual nature of entrusting. Even as he maintained the salvific power of Amida's Vow and the need to abandon Self-power practice, Shinran continued to affirm his own foolishness and delusion. This dual structure is especially evident in *Tannishō*, in which the need to "just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida" is continually paired with attestations to Shinran's own incapacity and karmic evil. Thus the experience of awakening is correlated with a heightened sense of subjectivity.

Keiji Nishitani's "The Problem of Time in Shinran" provides important insight into this complex relationship between *shinjin* and self-knowledge in Shinran's thought. As stated above, Nishitani focuses on a particular pas-

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁷⁶ *CW*, I, 85.

⁷⁷ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 290.

⁷⁸ *CW*, II, 172.

sage from *Tannisho*. In addition to the temporal implications of the three distinct moments in the passage, Nishitani draws forth the implications of this moment on Shinran's self-knowledge. The one thought-moment of *shinjin*, because it contains within it the past of Amida's Vow and the future of its fulfillment, is beyond the linear progression of time. One who abides in that moment is simultaneously within the actual progression of time and extracted from that samsaric existence. Nishitani writes:

... When [Shinran] says 'for the sake of myself alone,' his existence, with its definite historical and geographical location, is extracted from world history and its entire span of time, and also from the world and its entire expanse of space. He passes clear of the scene of joint-existence with other men and stands, as it were, as the only person, alone in the universe.⁷⁹

He adds, "... The time when the Vow was fulfilled becomes the present within Shinran's realization of *shinjin* and the time of his realization of *shinjin* becomes the present at the place where the Vow was fulfilled."⁸⁰ The fusion of past, present and future as described above takes place within Shinran's realization. Therefore, writes Nishitani, the activity of Amida's Vow unfolds *in* Shinran, and he becomes "one person alone." The experience of absolute present, in other words, produces a radical self-awareness. Removed from temporal relationships, one is able to view oneself within the context of one relationship only—namely, one's relationship with Amida Buddha. The self-knowledge derived from *shinjin* is animated by the dynamics of this relationship. Inasmuch as Amida embodies nirvanic being, so the practitioner embodies samsaric being. These two modes, while retaining their distinct character, are fused when the mind of Amida Buddha arises the practitioner.

A new form of self-knowledge emerges out of this experience. The realization that arises in *shinjin* transforms the character of the blind passions, as karmic evil, once one is grasped by Amida Buddha, is transformed into good. Shinran writes, "... Evil karma, without being nullified or eradicated, is made into good, just as all waters, upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water."⁸¹ Blind passions persist, in other words, but are

⁷⁹ Nishitani, "The Problem of Time in Shinran," 21.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁸¹ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 237–38.

no longer "evil." The meaning of this transformation is elucidated with reference to the two aspects of deep mind. Amida's grasping of sentient beings is at once an entrusting to Amida's Vow and the recognition of the blind passions. Thus karmic evil is transformed into good precisely through the knowledge that it is karmic evil. *Tannishō* provides a lucid illustration of this transformation. In one passage, Yuien asks Shinran why, though he says the nembutsu, no feeling of joy at his salvation arises; Shinran replies that he, too, had arrived at such a quandary. He then states:

When I reflect deeply on it, by the very fact that I do not rejoice at what should fill me with such joy that I dance in the air and dance on earth, I realize all the more that my birth is completely settled. What suppresses the heart that should rejoice and keeps one from rejoicing is the action of blind passions. Nevertheless, the Buddha, knowing this beforehand, called us 'foolish beings possessed of blind passion'; thus, becoming aware that the compassionate Vow of Other Power is indeed for the sake of ourselves, who are such beings, we find it all the more trustworthy.⁸²

Here, Shinran expresses the process in which realization of one's karmic evil is at once realization of the power of Amida's Vow. The blind passions, though they persist, are no longer a source of despair, but are a source of assurance in one's salvation in Amida Buddha.

Shinran speaks of this transformation, this attainment of the Pure Land through the Other-power of Amida's Vow, in terms of *jinen hōni* 自然法爾. *Jinen* is defined as "naturally" or "spontaneously;" *hōni* connotes "in accord with the Dharma."⁸³ They point to the absence of self-power in the realization of *shinjin*, and the natural, agentless working of Amida's Vow. One's attainment of enlightenment, then, "comes about not through [one's] calculation, but 'naturally, by *jinen*.'"⁸⁴ *Jinen* has a second connotation, however, which Shinran describes as follows:

This Vow is the Vow to make us all attain the supreme Buddhahood. The supreme Buddha is formless, and because of being formless is called *jinen*. When this Buddha is shown as

⁸² Dennis Hirota, *Tannishō: A Primer* (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1982), 73; also *CW*, I, 665.

⁸³ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 272.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

being with form, it is not called the supreme nirvana (Buddha). In order to make us realize that the true Buddha is formless, it is expressly called Amida Buddha; so I have been taught. Amida Buddha is the medium through which we are made to realize *jinen*.⁸⁵

Here, Shinran suggests that *jinen* is the fundamental reality that is realized *through* Amida Buddha. This reality is dynamic, spontaneous, and formless.⁸⁶ It corresponds to concepts such as emptiness, suchness, or dharmabody.⁸⁷ Shinran teaches, then, that the path of Other-power leads to a realization of reality as it naturally and freely is. This realization relates the temporal and subjective elements of Shinran's thought: Pure Land practice leads to *jinen*, in which one can live "within the true and real existence that works without forms."⁸⁸ Though Shinran cautions that this teaching should not be over-emphasized and intellectualized,⁸⁹ it provides an important point for comparison with Dōgen.

Religious Awakening in Dōgen and Shinran

In comparing Dōgen and Shinran, it is best to begin with the fundamental difference in their thought. There is no getting around the fact that their views of the essential nature of the subject are diametrically opposed. Dōgen holds that "our mind is Buddha"; original purity is our mind, Buddha is Buddha."⁹⁰ Shinran, on the contrary, stresses the thoroughly depraved nature of the self, the inability of the mind to free itself from karmic evil. These differences are especially evident in terms of the self-knowledge that informs religious experience. Dōgen teaches that the practitioner can attain realization in this existence and that agency (as in the practice of *zazen*) must be used in the attainment of realization. Shinran, on the contrary, teaches that the practitioner is fundamentally incapable of realization, and that agency precludes the attainment of realization. The religious practice *par excellence* for Shinran—the recitation of Amida's name—arises out of the practitioner's experience of *shinjin*, and is therefore not a "practice" as such: "Because

⁸⁵ Ibid., 273.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 177.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 178.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 273.

⁹⁰ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 20.

[nembutsu] arises wholly from Other Power and is free of self-power, for the practitioner, it is not a practice or a good act."⁹¹

While this difference is clear, there is an equally stark similarity in the temporal nature of religious awakening in Dōgen and Shinran. For both, authentic religious experience occurs in a moment that is extracted from linear time, in which past and future are united in the experience of present-as-absolute. For Shinran, the absolute present is specifically related to the fulfillment of Amida's Vow: past (the fulfillment of the Vow) and future (Shinran's attainment of the Pure Land) are fused in the present of *shinjin*. Dōgen describes the absolute present in the context of things of the world: the completeness of each individual quarter of the moon, the "entire earth" within a single blade of grass. Both identify this moment as "eternal" while, at the same time, emphasizing the brevity and discontinuity of the absolute present. Dōgen and Shinran both speak of the fluidity of time *within* that moment. Dōgen playfully writes that "being-time . . . passes from today to tomorrow, passes from today to yesterday, passes from yesterday to today, passes from today to today, passes from tomorrow to tomorrow."⁹² Shinran relates the fluidity of the moment of realization to the fulfillment of Amida's Vow in the past and his attainment of the Pure Land in the future: the fulfillment of Amida's Vow, which took place ten kalpas ago, is present in Shinran's realization of *shinjin*.

Moreover, both Dōgen and Shinran show that the absolute present of religious awakening entails a unity of practice and realization. Dōgen writes: "Even if you sit for only a moment in *jijuyū samādhi*, the Buddha-mind seal is imprinted in your body, mind, and words; simultaneously, the entire phenomenal world is also imprinted with the Buddha-mind seal—all space is enlightenment."⁹³ In a similar spirit, Shinran writes, "People who live true *shinjin* . . . abide in the stage of the truly settled . . . There is no need to wait in anticipation for the moment of death, no need to rely on Amida's coming. At the time *shinjin* becomes settled, birth too becomes settled."⁹⁴ The implications of this stance on practice are apparent: when one engages in authentic practice, one attains complete realization. This stance suggests a great deal about realization as well. For Dōgen and Shinran, absolute reality is not an object that can be possessed. It is neither created nor discovered.

⁹¹ *CW*, I, 665.

⁹² Waddell, "Being Time: Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Uji*," 121.

⁹³ Nishiyama and Stevens, trans., *Shōbōgenzō* I, 149.

⁹⁴ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 249.

Realization is dynamic; it is a reality in which one *participates*. In this sense, both Dōgen and Shinran reformulate their schools' traditional conceptions of practice. Dōgen teaches that Buddhahood is not something created or arrived at through practice; Shinran teaches that the Pure Land is not simply something that is reached upon death. In their conceptions of the moment of religious awakening, they reject instrumentalist notions of practice. Practice transcends our notion of past, present and future. Neither Dōgen nor Shinran denies linear time, however. Dōgen is careful to use language that avoids making *uji* the *only* possible perspective of time. Likewise, Shinran speaks of *shinjin* as the sun that exists behind a layer of clouds which, while constantly illuminating those clouds, only occasionally shines unobstructed. They cast this moment of religious awakening as radically different from but coexistent with linear time.

In regard to this moment that transcends linear time, the objection could be raised that Shinran's one thought-moment of *shinjin* so exclusively concerns the salvation of the practitioner that it is fundamentally different from Dōgen's moment of experiencing the self as things. That is, Shinran's one thought-moment of *shinjin* relates only to his salvation through the fulfillment of Amida's Vow; Dōgen, on the contrary, seems to be interested in a more generalized mode of being, an awareness that does not pertain only to the practitioner. This criticism recognizes the fundamentally personal nature of *shinjin*, but ignores the inherently personal nature of *uji*. For Dōgen, the *self* is realized in the presence of the things-of-the-world: as body and mind are cast off, the self is realized in things-as-they-are. *Uji* is related to the acquisition of self-knowledge. Thus Hee-Jin Kim observes that "the irreplaceable uniqueness and freedom of an individual being is the focal point of Dōgen's religious-philosophical interest."⁹⁵ Though Dōgen's interpretation of realization differs from Shinran's, the impact of the moment of religious experience is not lost on his conception of himself as an individual. Time, for both Shinran and Dōgen, is realized as a mode of being.

Despite their different views of the self, another fundamental similarity becomes apparent when this self-knowledge is brought to practice as described above. Both Dōgen and Shinran teach the necessity of *negating* the self, of casting-off calculation and judgment and any reified view of the self. When one turns to Shinran's descriptions of self-power and the form of practice he rejects as inefficacious, one finds an orientation that Dōgen, too,

⁹⁵ Kim, "Existence/Time as a Way of Ascesis," 46.

would reject. Shinran rejects “endeavoring to make yourself worthy through amending the confusion in your acts, words, and thoughts, confident of your own powers and guided by your own calculation.”⁹⁶ He defines Other-power in opposite terms: it is the recognition of one’s confusion and the turning-away from calculation and confidence in one’s own powers. In Dōgen’s thought, the practice of *zazen* and of exerting oneself in the present are no less negations of the calculating self. “It is an illusion,” he writes, “to try to carry out our practice and enlightenment through ourselves, but to have practice and enlightenment through phenomena, that is enlightenment.”⁹⁷ Whether it is conceived of as an inauthentic self or as self-power, Dōgen and Shinran teach that our conventional self is to be cast off in the process of religious awakening.

It is helpful to look at their conceptions of the activity of the self in religious awakening in this light. For Dōgen, the self “drops away” or is “cast off,” and is authenticated as the things of the world. Similarly, Shinran sees practice as the abandonment of self-power, and the concomitant arising of the mind of Amida Buddha in the practitioner. In both, there is a recognition that the self as it is, with its judgment and grasping and delusion, is to be abandoned in a movement outward. Dōgen’s “exertion” in things of the world is paralleled in Shinran by absolute faith in the Other-power of Amida’s Vow. Again, they certainly differ in their understanding of *agency* in negating the self. For Dōgen, there are concrete acts in which one can engage in order to realize the simultaneity of practice and enlightenment. The self is to be cast-off, but the practitioner establishes the conditions for this casting-off. Shinran rejects any such possibility out of hand: it is the power of Amida’s Vow that brings about the practitioner’s realization. Thus, the specific instruction for a highly ritualized form of life that Dōgen presents in his work contrasts with the complete absence of specific instruction pertaining to quotidian matters in Shinran’s work. But the fact remains that there is a correspondence in *activity*, in movement from self to things/Other-power.

For both, it is in this movement that true self-knowledge is acquired. While both preface the experience of religious awakening with a form of self-knowledge, they see that self-knowledge as heightened and transformed in the moment of awakening. *Uji* entails the experience of buddha-nature as impermanence, yet it surpasses the realization of this experience: “When

⁹⁶ Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 219.

⁹⁷ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 1.

Buddhas become Buddhas, it is not necessary for them to be aware they are Buddhas." While the practitioner engages in *zazen* with the conviction that she is capable of realization and is inherently enlightened, she emerges from such practice having realized and surpassed her original nature. Similarly, for Shinran, the self-understanding that gives rise to the attainment of *shinjin* is preserved in the arising of Amida's Mind but, at the same time, is transformed: the blind passions persist, but are made good. They become a source of joy, for their continued existence simply turns the gaze of the practitioner to the Other-power of Amida and produces a sense of gratitude.

This transformation, this new understanding of the self, is, of course, the essence of awakening. As such, it resolves the pain and anxiety that is inherent in a strictly linear view of time. It is instructive to turn to Dōgen and Shinran's own responses to their religious awakening to grasp the deeply personal impact of this experience of complete time. Dōgen, immediately prior to his death, composed the following poem:

For fifty years seeking to illumine the great
matter of life and death;
Constantly striving, finally overcoming all
obstacles and doubts.
Now no more requests or desires
still living I enter parinirvana.⁹⁸

This poem suggests that the dominant concern in Dōgen's religious practice was a temporal one; moreover, it stresses his personal involvement, his exertion, in resolving that matter. The profoundly personal effect of Shinran's awakening is most evident in his expression of gratitude. In the following stanzas, Shinran's emotive response to the Other-power of Amida's Vow is evident:

I praise Amida's wisdom and virtue
So that being with mature conditions throughout the ten quarters
may hear.
Let those who have already realized shinjin
Constantly respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence.⁹⁹

It would be incorrect, given the nature of Dōgen and Shinran's religious

⁹⁸ Ibid., I, xx.

⁹⁹ *CW*, I, 337.

thought, to see this anxious, emotive orientation to enlightenment in an instrumental sense. However, this anxiety about enlightenment is, for both, part of the process. Dōgen explicitly deals with this issue in *Immo*: “. . . It is useless to worry about attaining enlightenment. Nevertheless, worry itself is already a step towards enlightenment. Do not be surprised to hear this. It is the only way to enlightenment.”¹⁰⁰

One more comparative point warrants consideration. Dōgen and Shinran, though divergent in some respects, both represent a fundamental orientation that is definitive of Mahayana Buddhism as a religious/philosophical school. First, as *uji* pertains to self-knowledge-in-things, and as *shinjin* is a highly subjective experience of the fulfillment of Amida’s Vow, both emphasize that realization or absolute reality is apprehended as subjectivity. Second, in their assertion of the simultaneity of two temporal perspectives, both typify the Mahayana tendency to maintain opposites—self and other, form and emptiness, samsara and nirvana—within the presence of the practitioner. Last, in their focus on a moment of religious awakening that transcends linear time, both convey the idea that ultimate reality is reality-as-it-is or suchness (*tathatā*). Dōgen writes that “Buddha is *immo*”,¹⁰¹ likewise, Shinran states: “The supreme Buddha is formless, and being formless, is called *jinen*.”¹⁰²

It is possible, then, based on this analysis of Dōgen and Shinran’s thought to return to Shinkei’s assertion that the way of wisdom does not differ from the way of compassion “in regard to what is true and real.” Though Shinran and Dōgen differ fundamentally in their understanding of the self that participates in “what is true and real,” they have strikingly similar notions of the nature of participation in that reality. They teach, in Shinkei’s words, that “one instant of thought is, in itself, the boundless length of time required for a bodhisattva to complete his practice and attain Buddhahood.”¹⁰³ The differences in regard to this moment may be attributed to their acceptance (Shinran) and rejection (Dōgen) of the idea of *mappō*. However, this interpretation places doctrinal assertions prior to personal experience, and, given the radically personal and experiential nature of their work, this analysis must be rejected. A better interpretation attributes their differences to their unique experiences. Though Dōgen and Shinran express and teach religious awakening in terms that express the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, they are

¹⁰⁰ Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, I, 58.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰² Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran*, 177.

¹⁰³ Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 159.

deeply original thinkers, uncompromising in their faithful representation of their own experience. Their ability to convey the basic orientation of their tradition in a manner that adheres unswervingly to their personal experience speaks of both their creativity and the profundity of their awakening.