

BOOK REVIEWS

SHŌBŌGENZŌ-UJI—Être-temps—Being-time. Translated from the Japanese and annotated by Eidō Shimano Rōshi and Charles Vacher. Published by Encre Marine, 42220 La Versanne, France (tel: 33-477-39-62-63, fax: 33-477-39-66-45) in 1997. 93 pages. ISBN 2-909422-24-0.

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THIS IS A trilingual edition of the *Uji* fascicle of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, translated by Eidō Shimano Rōshi and Charles Vacher. Surely one of the most profound, difficult and thought-provoking writings of this Japanese Buddhist thinker, *Uji* presents a challenge that is taken up by these two men, one a Japanese Zen abbot, the other a French Tokyo-based financier. This brief review attempts to address some of the philosophical issues involved in the translation. It will consist mainly in an examination of the key terms involved.

The translation of *kyōryaku* as regeneration (Fr. *régénération*) is innovative and somewhat unusual, but in comparison with the general "safer" renderings of passage, flow, etc., ventures in a more concrete direction that certainly does justice to the idea of transmission (of the dharma). It can also be understood in a broader sense to encompass any kind of ongoing movement or passing, even of the sort that involves decline. The continuing, not continuous, dimension of time is an undeniable fact of experience even if it does not coincide with "flying away" as ordinarily conceived. We would have to think a "regeneration" that entails and enables decline, aging and death as well as renewal of the dharma. Impermanence just is; it is oblivious to our judgments of growth, preservation or decline. This ongoing dimension must be thought in a way other than linear flying away.

Jūhōi is rendered "appropriate dharma condition" (Fr. *propre place*) which accords with most other English translations. The addition of the adjective "appropriate" serves to indicate the link of a dharma condition or situation with suchness. The dharma situation is appropriate, it is as it has to be. This simply means that it cannot be otherwise; it has nothing to do with a force or law imposed from the outside (fate, even karma).

Genjō is, of course, a key term for Dōgen and is translated as "concretization" (Fr. *concrétisation*). This is perhaps more desirable than "actualization" which can evoke the inevitable association with the Aristotelian process from potentiality (*dynamis*) to actuality (*energeia*) forming an entelechy (*entelecheia*). There is no goal orientation or entelechy in Dōgen, neither natural nor intentional. Concretization (*con-crescere*) means to grow together. This

obviates any idea of a continuous substratum which is essential to actualization as conceived by Aristotle. "Regeneration" for *kyōryaku* also implies the element of discontinuity lacking in renderings such as flow or passage. (Firewood does not become ash, spring does not become summer.) The whole concept of "becoming" would need to be radically rethought apart from its Greek opposition being-becoming and schema of potentiality-actuality.

The translation of *gūjin* as impeccability (Fr. *impeccabilité*) is perhaps not the most felicitous academically speaking since the root of impeccability is *pec-care*, to sin, a concept foreign to Buddhism as it lacks a God to disobey or sin against. But there is a more substantive issue at stake here. Most other translations agree in referring to some sort of activity for *gūjin* such as realization, practice or penetration instead of a state of impeccability or flawlessness. But one can establish a link between activity and state through the adjectival factor of exhaustive, thorough, ultimate, entire. An activity that is exhaustive and thorough results in a state of flawlessness with nothing omitted and nothing superfluous. The time-honored distinction between noun and verb loses some of its relevance in acceding to the factor of exhaustiveness. Whether activity or state, the emphasis is on completeness.

"Total combustion" (Fr. *combustion*) for *jinriki* emphasizes the burning up of preconceptions and illusions; most other translations have exertion. Whereas exertion would seem to focus on the effort put forth by the self (*jiriki*), combustion leaves the issue of self-power (*jiriki*) vs. other-power (*tariki*) open. Again, what is crucial here is the matter of utmost exhaustive power, regardless of the source of that power. The controversy over *jiriki* and *tariki* has been a heated one and is perhaps less important than sometimes assumed. After all, I cannot "will" enlightenment on my own, and yet I have to make some effort; without that effort, enlightenment will never fall gratuitously into my lap. On the other hand, I cannot presume to assert that my effort, by itself, can "produce" such an inscrutable result. Apart from the fact that "sitting" doesn't produce anything, that sitting is itself already enlightenment, still there is unmistakably an element of "transcendence" involved, something not of my own doing.

There are other interesting issues too numerous to mention in the scope of this brief review. One might be singled out as representative of the general character of this translation. In the discussion of "raising the eyebrows and having him blink" that occurs near the end of the fascicle and again at the very end, the "him" doing all this is unspecified in most translations as it is in the original. Waddell notes that *kare* can refer to a personal pronoun (he, she, it) or a demonstrative pronoun (that). This translation by Eidō Shimano and Charles Vacher ventures to render explicit what is intimated in the original: "That" is interpreted as Buddha-nature. This is certainly a feasible move; it is

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helpful to the hapless reader who may wonder who this "him" could be suddenly cropping up with no introduction or explanation.

On the whole, this translation constitutes a valuable addition to the material already available to Western philosophers as well as more expert scholars. It offers fresh insights into this text whose depths can perhaps hardly be completely fathomed.

SIMPLICITY: A Distinctive Quality of Japanese Spirituality. By John T. Brinkman. Asian Thought and Culture series, vol. 23. New York: Peter Lang, 1996, pp. xiii + 275, with bibliography and index. ISBN 0 8204 2726 8.

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TO BE OBJECTIVE and balanced in reviewing a book is always quite a challenge, but this book in particular presents me with a real conundrum. In a lapidary formulation I could say: the text of the book is in such a bad shape that it should never have been published *as is*, but the content is so worthwhile that publication was a must.

Let me first get the bad part out of the way, in the shortest possible time: if ever a text needed the iron hand of a competent editor, it is this one which was evidently deprived of it. I noticed at least 20 incomplete or muddled sentences; many cases of the use of a plural where a singular was indicated, and vice versa; typos galore, especially in the Japanese terms (which often are not translated or explained); inconsistencies in the spelling of some words (as for, example, Pure Land-Pureland, *senchaku-senjaku*, *kamikura-kamukura*), in the use of macrons, and in the insertion of Chinese characters (only present in some particular contexts). As to the content, one might remark on an imbalance in the treatment of topics: in some cases (as, e.g., the *kagura* dance, the figure of Genshin, the antecedents of Motoori Norinaga) many more details are offered than in the others, without apparent reason and without sufficient explanation as to their meaning.

These, all too numerous, "flies in the ointment" notwithstanding, the book may turn out to be a "seminal" study. It certainly is nothing if not daring. Beyond all the details of the involved history of Japanese religion (and culture), it presents a synthetic view and purports to discover the unifying "distinctive quality of Japanese spirituality." Indeed, in spite of the more discreet