

## The Simplicity of Dōgen

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DŌGEN KIGEN (1200–1253) epitomized the religious dimension of Zen and reinterpreted the meaning of Buddhist meditative practice with compelling insight whose acknowledged impress informs contemporary Japanese thought. The endeavors of his thinking were a refined influence in the transition of Ch'an from China and in its transformation in Japan. The intensity of Ch'an Buddhism attained a special status in Japan through the efforts of Dōgen.

From its origin, the practice of sudden enlightenment has been noted as a markedly Chinese development. It arose out of certain cultural processes and offered a form of Buddhism considered reformative if not revolutionary in its effect.

The Ch'an Movement, better known as Zen, has been described by Hu Shih (1881–1962) as a "reformation or revolution in Buddhism," and by [D. T.] Suzuki as a movement in which "the Chinese mind completely asserted itself, in a sense, in opposition to the Indian mind. Zen could not rise and flourish in any other land or among any other people."<sup>1</sup>

The very course and history of ritualized meditative practice in China has been understood as a pattern for Japan's timely responsiveness to the teaching of Dōgen and as presage of Zen development in its Japanese phase. A four hundred year period of Buddhist learning preceded the advent of Ch'an in China. Four centuries of Buddhist assimilation prefaced Dōgen's Zen in Japan. A 1242 conversation noted in the *Kenzeiki*, a medieval biography of Dōgen, would have Dōgen

<sup>1</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and comp., *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 425.

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himself allude to this sequence of maturation preparatory for insightful reception of Buddhism's essential truth.

In our country literal and formal Buddhism has been transmitted, and it has been somewhat more than four hundred years that the terms and forms of Buddhism have been heard of here. And now the Buddha-mind school (Zen) is becoming current: and it should be at precisely this time.

In China literal and formal Buddhism was first transmitted between 59 and 76 CE; from then to the year 520 (when Bodhidharma brought Zen from India to China) is somewhat more than four hundred years. It was at that time that the way of the adepts, direct pointing, brought from the West (India), first became current.<sup>2</sup>

The status so attributed to Dōgen in the continuum of Zen Buddhism is all the more impressive as a comment in retrospect, a hagiographer's observation of history.

The depth of the Japanese transformation of Zen is best noted in a present day comment which marvels at the remarkable confluence of monastic discipline and native vitalizing influences explicated in the teaching and person of Dōgen.

Perhaps no Kamakura Buddhist would appear more remote from folk tradition than Dōgen—anti-magical, elitist, monkish—yet, after all, his was a religion of the people which came into being and sustained itself by drawing its creativity and vitality from a source deeper and more indigenous than the enfeebled ideologies and adventures of aristocratic tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Dōgen began a powerful phase of Buddhism that survived through the centuries in Japan. This simple reflective current of Buddhist practice in its Japanese formulation has had a significant impact on intellectuality and spirituality on a world scale.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Cleary, trans., *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kim, Hee-Jin, *Dōgen Kigen, Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1975), pp. 19-20.

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Zen traditionally proclaimed a posture of no reliance on the written word. Such terms as *fūryūmonji*<sup>4</sup> and *kyōge betsuden*<sup>5</sup> indicated that Buddhism was essentially communicated not through scriptures but through an experience dictated by the discipline itself.<sup>6</sup> The words attributed to Bodhidharma: “Directly point to the mind, see the (Buddha) nature and accomplish Buddhahood. The transmission is outside the scriptures (*kyōge betsuden*), do not rely on words,”<sup>7</sup> finds specific reference in the second notation of the *Hōkyō-ki*,<sup>8</sup> the journal Dōgen kept during his study in Sung China. This record of the 1225–1227 tutelage under Ju-ching informed his approach, emphatic in its focus on practice and subtle in its regard for the sutras. “He also stressed the importance of those scriptures which were at one with the truth believing them to be identical with the Buddha Law.”<sup>9</sup> Dōgen’s selective approach to the sutras was highly incompatible with a sole adherence to one scripture as the one vehicle of all truth and the final form of revelation. Nichiren’s selection of the Lotus Sutra as superior to other sutras based on the depth of its teaching finds little accord in Dōgen’s criterion for truth. When asked the advantage of his teaching, specifically in reference to the Hokke [Lotus] school, he replied:

You should know that for a Buddhist it is not a matter of debating the superiority or inferiority of one teaching or another, or of choosing the depth or superficiality of the teaching that matters; all we have to know is whether the practise is authentic or not.<sup>10</sup>

He accepts the sutras as vessels of truth and rejects the written word as

<sup>4</sup> Nakamura, Hajime *Bukkyōgo daijiten*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 1975), 2:274.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:231.

<sup>6</sup> Masanobu Takahashi, *The Essence of Dōgen*, trans. Yuzuru Nobuoka (London: Kegan Paul International, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> James Takashi Kōdera, *Dōgen’s Formative Years: An Historical Study and Annotated Translation of the Hōkyō-ki* (Boulder: Prajña Press, 1980), p. 170, n. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen’s Formative Years*, p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> Yūhō Yokoi, *Zen Master Dōgen* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, trans. “Dōgen’s *Bendōwa*,” *Eastern Buddhist* 4 (May 1971):140.

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final authority in any sectarian sense. His practical response distinguished Dōgen from the Buddhist current of his time and set him apart from even the then known Zen tradition. He forcefully opposed any gradual approach to enlightenment yet was diametrically opposed to contemporary faith response that purposely abridged progressive attainment. In a general reference to the lack of teachers of true Buddhist transmission, he rejects current approaches with direct reference to rebirth in a Pure Land as far from an authentic teaching.

Observe their utterances. They are like those who try to fathom the source of a stream by scooping up a handful of water . . . thus some led people to seek enlightenment outside the conditions of mind, while still some others led them to desire rebirth in other lands. Confusions arise from and delusions originate in this.<sup>11</sup>

Dōgen not only decried the confusion of ways but also rejected the generally accepted mode of thought that informed Kamakura sectarian response: the *mappō-jidai*. He clearly rejected the concept of the three ages of devolution in the question and answer format of his *Bendōwa*.

Question 15: Even in these times of the evil, degenerate, latter day, can one attain realization if he practices zazen?

Answer 15: While doctrinal schools of Buddhism make much of names and forms, authentic Mahāyāna teaching does not differentiate right, semblance, and final (*shō-zō-matsu*) Dharma. It preaches that those who practise all attain the Way.<sup>12</sup>

One finds in Dōgen's exhortation to practise: "If you do not seek enlightenment here and now on the pretext of the Age of Degenerate Law or Wretchedness, in what birth are you to attain it?",<sup>13</sup> something more telling than a rejection of pretext and something more convincing than a facile recognition that each age regardless of circumstance summons man's effort to the same task. Contemporary response selected a singular moment of revelation such as that found in the *Hokkekyō* or a par-

<sup>11</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," pp. 150-51.

<sup>13</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 24.

ticular vow attained as inscribed in the *Daimuryōjūkyō* as the truth accessible to man and the source of the efficacious practise in the most hapless of times. This very premise that sponsored more immediate forms of attainment was itself rejected as a mode of mediation burdensome to true, direct response.

He opposed any sense of sequential devolution. He opposed any sense of accommodation of, or implied displacement from the complete teaching of the Buddha. His tradition was a transmission of the right Buddha Dharma at first hand in its true form.<sup>14</sup> He pointed out that in ages gone past and even directly before the preaching Buddha, there were instances of apparent invincible disbelief: "Even on Vulture Peak there were some the Buddha allowed to leave."<sup>15</sup> Hence the devolution of the age is not new in terms of a constant index of the condition of man and of his capacity to receive the unvarying dharma. In this regard, the statement of Reihō Matsunaga concerning this position of Dōgen is most apt. "Anyone who truly seeks the way can see the Buddha and patriarchs without the intermediary of time and place. For the three periods refer not to time but to man."<sup>16</sup>

Dōgen's rejection of the concept of the *mappō jidai*,<sup>17</sup> dismissed no less a datum than the then current basis of appeal to the most effective practice albeit in the worst of times. For Dōgen, the furtherance of Zen was the continuance of a tradition whose origin was the direct, wordless transmission of enlightenment from Buddha to Kaśyapa on Vulture Peak.<sup>18</sup> Dōgen presents a direct practise and non-mediated experience albeit beyond the accepted design of contemporary thought.

Dōgen understood the crisis of his times and the spiritual quest it inspired. In an age where faith response either vested no credence in human effort as in Shinran's thought or placed belief in the faith-filled action of men as in Nichiren's thought, Dōgen's concern was framed in a sense by these selfsame polarities: effort and endowment.

<sup>14</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 133, n. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 130, n. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Reihō Matsunaga, "The Standpoint of Dōgen in Zen Buddhism," *Proceedings IXth I.C.H.R.*, p. 352.

<sup>17</sup> Reihō Matsunaga, *A Primer of Sōtō Zen, A Translation of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1978), p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 132, n. 27.

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As I study both the exoteric and the esoteric schools of Buddhism, they maintain that man is endowed with the Dharmature by birth. If this is the case, why had the Buddhas of all ages—undoubtedly in possession of enlightenment—to seek enlightenment and engage in spiritual practise?<sup>19</sup>

This biographical note reflects what would come to be called the “Great Doubt” attributed to the fifteen year old Dōgen in 1214.<sup>20</sup> The dichotomy implied in original enlightenment and acquired enlightenment prescribed Dōgen’s search and presaged a final resolution in a unique sense of the simplicity of enlightenment. His focus was on the problem of endowment and effort, the struggle of man to achieve what is most intimately his own. In the working out of this conundrum, he held in common with the other major Kamakura figures, the repudiation of an inherited complexity in the exposition of a more essential truth. He too was critical of discursive thought in general and was detailed in his dismissal of the doctrinal distinctions that weighed down Zen tradition itself.<sup>21</sup> He did so, however, with no emphasis on a presumed incapacity for achievement in man. In the final analysis the focus will be on the effort to be in accord with one’s radical endowment. Debilitation is found in misplaced effort.

You should also know that basically we lack nothing of highest enlightenment. Though we are forever endowed with it, since we are unable to be in complete accord with it we have a way of giving rise to random intellection and by chasing them as if they were real, we stumble vainly in the great way.<sup>22</sup>

In this rejection of speculative complexity, we have a leitmotif that both inspired Dōgen’s early pursuits and played no diminished role in his final formulations.

On Mount Hiei, the center of the powerful Tendai sect and a

<sup>19</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen’s Formative Years*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>22</sup> Waddell, “*Bendōwa*,” p. 141.

locus of Buddhist scholarship, he put his efforts into studying the scriptures. But . . . mere knowledge could not satisfy him. . . . Like other now famous contemporaries of his, Dōgen eventually left Mount Hiei. . . . There (at Kenninji) Dōgen perceived the hiatus that lay between theory and teaching on the one hand, and practice and experience on the other.<sup>23</sup>

Dōgen was guided by a sense of the truth which estranged him from established ways. What he groped for with endurance, he recognized when encountered. He traveled to China where initial training at Mount T'ien-t'ung, left him dissatisfied. His return to this same monastery in 1225, and his instruction under the new abbot, Ju-ching, offered this revealing notation as to the character of Zen master and the calibre of the transmission sought and received.

He (Ju-ching) gives no precedence to words and letters or to intellectual understanding . . . he is the man in whom living and understanding correspond to each other (*gyōgesōō*).<sup>24</sup>

*Gyōgesōō* is best translated as a conscious conjunction of practise and knowing; a thorough union of doing and explanation.<sup>25</sup> The type of coincidence recognized in Ju-ching and the type of integration of discipline and doctrine sought by Dōgen was consistently contrasted to abstract erudition. This contrast, evident in his early years of learning, was no less pertinent in his later instructions to his own disciples.

You should therefore cease from practise based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words, and following after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inwardly to illuminate yourself.<sup>26</sup>

It would be too facile to equate Dōgen's posture with a sweeping disregard for thought or with a literal repudiation for words and letters.

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment: Origins and Meaning* (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup> Sōichi Nakamura, *Shōbōgenzō Yōgojiten* (Tokyo: Seishin Shobo, 1976), p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, trans., "Dōgen's *Fukanzazengi* and *Shōbōgenzō Zazengi*," *The Eastern Buddhist* 6 (October 1973):122.

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The genre of his own writing has been described as a nexus of profound philosophic visions in the flowing style of medieval Japanese sparsely studded with classical Chinese prose and verse.<sup>27</sup> He acknowledges the sutras as vessels of truth. Devotional practises are not meaningless.<sup>28</sup> Yet his insights are focused on the singular way of enlightenment, an experience whose immediacy and directness qualified all other forms of Buddhist practise as distant and mediated.

According to the authentic tradition of Buddhism, this Buddha Dharma transmitted rightly and directly from one to another, is the supreme of the supreme. From the first time you meet your master and receive his teaching, you have no need for either incense-offering, homage-paying, nembutsu, penance disciplines, or silent sutra-reading; only cast off body and mind in *zazen*.<sup>29</sup>

Dōgen presents only *zazen*. He does not facilely point to one practise over against other practises. He presents the one way of enlightenment. His sense of immediate, sudden enlightenment acknowledges that the turning of the dharma wheel can be occasioned by the settling of a mote of dust.<sup>30</sup> Men have flowed into the Buddha way drawn by the flowing of blossoms or the sound of bamboo.<sup>31</sup> Even the most remote causes of enlightenment are intimate to the practise of *zazen* under the character that specifies it as the singular practise: non-duality.

Question 17: As we scan past and present in India and China, we find there was one who became enlightened upon hearing the sound of a pebble striking a bamboo, another whose mind was cleared upon seeing the color of flowing blossoms . . . Yet were all of these, without exception, practitioners who negotiated the Way in *zazen*?

Answer 17: It should be understood that those very men of past and present whose minds were cleared by the sight of a

<sup>27</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Matsunaga, *A Primer*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 133.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> Matsunaga, *A Primer*, p. 63.



color, or who were enlightened by hearing a sound, all negotiated the Way without calculating or comparing, and with that there was for them *no duality*.<sup>32</sup>

In the broadest of terms, Dōgen recapitulates the fundamental datum of the Zen tradition. Zen is based on the distinction between the purity of the Buddha-nature itself and the calculating delusions common to the mind of all sentient beings. The effort is to be one with one's fundamental nature beyond all the dichotomies of the discriminating mind. For Dōgen, the effort focuses on zazen-only and the project is defined by a unique sense of singularity. The non-dual, non-mediated character of Dōgen's Zen is best understood by an investigation of the terms used to define this mode of enlightened consciousness.

Zen offers a disciplined awakening beyond the polarities used to situate this experience. As such it is best presented by the compilation of images known as the *Genjōkōan*. The *Genjōkōan* is an early work completed in 1233. It was so esteemed by Dōgen as an instructional thesis that he placed it as the first entry in the later edition of the *Shōbōgenzō* in 1252. It is a didactic description, a pedagogical portrayal of enlightenment. The images used are an instruction in the non-dual nature of enlightenment itself.

Man attaining enlightenment is like the reflection of the moon on the water. The moon does not get wet, the water is not broken. For all the breadth and vastness of its light, it rests upon a small patch of water. Both the whole moon and the sky in its entirety come to rest in a single dewdrop of grass, in a mere drop of water.<sup>33</sup>

The simile of water and light expresses more than a mutual presence or elements. It is the absence of any obstruction that is reflected in water thoroughly imbued with light. What is confirmed in the experience of enlightenment is 'defined' by a dissolution of any element of mediation.

In the same work, Dōgen offers a description of enlightenment

<sup>32</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 153.

<sup>33</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, trans., "*Shōbōgenzō Genjōkōan*," *Eastern Buddhist*, 5 (October 1972):136.

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experienced as the 'falling away of body and mind'. Here he uses the analogy of distance and the illusory quality that it implies, to point to a far more immediate experience. He indicates so intimate an experience that it discards even the minimal distance needed for subjective awareness, the distance necessary for conscious reflection. Enlightenment understood as the 'falling away of body and mind' dismisses the subjective mediation requisite for even a trace of reflection.

To be confirmed by all dharmas is to effect the casting off of one's own body and mind and the bodies and minds of others as well. *All traces of enlightenment (then) disappear*, and this traceless enlightenment is continued on and on endlessly.

The very moment one begins to seek the Dharma he becomes far removed from its environs. When the Dharma has been rightly transmitted to one, he is once the Person of his original part.

When a man goes off in a boat and looks back to see the shoreline, he mistakenly thinks the shore is moving. If he keeps his eyes closely on his boat, he realizes it is the boat that is advancing. In like manner, when a person (tries to) discern and affirm the myriad dharmas with a confused conception of (his own) body and mind, he mistakenly thinks his own mind and his own nature are permanent.<sup>34</sup>

The analogy of the shoreline perceived from the boat points to the duplicity coherent in an ordinary act of knowing. The distance to the shore that frames the error of movement stands in contrast to the insight of enlightened awareness which disavows such distance and dichotomy. In enlightenment, there is only the experience and no longer an experiencer apart. The clearest certainty of enlightenment is specified by such radical non-duality. It is in this sense that enlightened consciousness is without trace as in the analogy of water imbued with light.

These analogies flow directly from Dōgen's descriptive term variously translated as a dropping, falling or casting away of body and mind.

<sup>34</sup> Waddell, "*Genjōkōan*," p. 135.

In effect, metaphor and simile attempt to illustrate Dōgen's experience of enlightenment for which he created language to convey his emphasis.

Concerning Dōgen's use of the phrase, 'dropping the body and mind' James Kōdera notes that this saying does not appear in the collected works of his mentor, Ju-ching. The expression, 'dropping the dust from the mind' was used by Ju-ching.<sup>35</sup> Other textual evidence supports that it was highly probable that the latter was indeed the phrase used by Ju-ching. Although the Japanese pronunciation of both ideographs is the same: *shinjin datsuraku*, the Chinese pronunciation of such distinct characters is so different that Japanese phonetics is hardly a cause for misreading.<sup>36</sup> The significance of this term attributed to Dōgen is noted.

The implication of this difference is of enormous consequence. If it is indeed true that the 'dropping the body and mind' is original to Dōgen, it describes his moment of enlightenment very differently from Ju-ching's 'dropping the dust from the mind.' While Ju-ching's expression aims at the restoration of the original state of mind by removing defilement from it, Dōgen's expression assumes nothing to which an original state of purity needs to be restored.<sup>37</sup>

This difference takes on prominence, if one notes that the reading of "the dropping of body and mind" conforms to Dōgen's informative insight into the non-duality of enlightenment. There is no distinction between the body and mind on the one hand, and something from which it must be dropped or removed on the other. The effort to cleanse the mind from a film or even a mote of dust may tend to allow a distinction between effort and attainment that would stand in contrast to Dōgen's sense of oneness. The oneness of the realizer and what is realized is the index of non-mediated experience. As such, it is a 'traceless enlightenment'.

The inexplicable oneness of enlightenment and the manifestation of

<sup>35</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen's Formative Years*, p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> Matsunaga, Alicia and Matsunaga, Daigan, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism* (Reno, Nevada: Buddhist Books International 1976), 2:239.

<sup>37</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen's Formative Years*, p. 107.

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the Buddha nature is the premise for another innovative use of traditional Zen language by Dōgen.

The true meaning of the Buddha-nature can be grasped only after enlightenment, not before it; for the Buddha-nature appears together with enlightenment. This fact should be studied carefully, for twenty or thirty years if necessary. This fact cannot be understood even by a Bodhisattva at a high level of attainment.<sup>38</sup>

It is Dōgen's sense of intimacy of the arising of the Buddha-nature and the experience of enlightenment that sponsors his strikingly new reading of the most fundamental of all Buddhist axioms: "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature." His new formulation is his most comprehensive statement of the non-dual nature of things realized in enlightenment.

In the first instance of the *Shōbōgenzō-busshō*,<sup>39</sup> Dōgen quotes the Nirvana sutra: "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature. The Tathagata abides forever without change."<sup>40</sup> This affirms the general principle of Mahāyāna Buddhism, that all have the Buddha nature and possess the possibility of attaining buddhahood. However, he gives this axiom a reading based on his own rectification of the text: 'All existence is the Buddha nature'. The following presents the conventional reading of the Northern version of the Nirvana sutra in contrast to the unique reading of Dōgen:

Śakyamuni Buddha said (釋迦牟尼佛言): 'All sentient beings (一切衆生) exhaustively possess the Buddha-nature (悉有佛性); the Tathagata (如来) exists eternally (常住) and is without (有無) change (變易)' . . . Dōgen read it as: Śakyamuni Buddha said (釋迦牟尼佛言): 'All (一切) are sentient beings (衆生), all things are (悉有) the Buddha-nature (佛性) the Tathagata (如来) exists

<sup>38</sup> Yūhō Yokoi, "The *Busshō* (Buddha-nature) Section of the *Shōbōgenzō*," *Aichi Gakuin Zen Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 8 (March 1979):5.

<sup>39</sup> Sōichi Nakamura, ed., *Shōbōgenzō*, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Seishin Shobo, 1975-1977), 1:16.

<sup>40</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, trans., "Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature, Part I," *Eastern Buddhist* 8 (October 1975):95.

eternally (常住) and is non-existent, yet existent (無有), and changing (變易).<sup>41</sup>

James Kōdera states the definite meaning of the grammatical rearrangement of the terms.

Dōgen rejected the interpretation that there is an eternal element of the Buddha nature in all sentient beings, who are subject to constant change. Rather, he proposes that all things that are sentient are the Buddha nature.<sup>42</sup>

More to the point of our investigation is the comment of Yūhō Yokoi's interpretation of the text.

The characteristic of Dōgen's Zen, however, lies in the original identity or absolute unity of all dualistic things. This is why Dōgen states that "all sentient beings" means "all of existence" and the word "have" really signifies "is," that is to say, all of existence is the Buddha nature.<sup>43</sup>

More in keeping with the genre of the work, as an instruction in practise, and more refined in its focus on the intent of Dōgen, the explanation of Abe Masao indicates the comprehensive meaning of non-duality that informed the text.

This (Dōgen's rendering) avoids duality of subject (sentient being) 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 practise is taken as a means and realization of Buddha-nature the end.<sup>44</sup>

For Dōgen, this central caption of Buddhist truth was in need of a rendering that emphasized the very character of its experience. The duality

<sup>41</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen's Formative Years*, p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Yokoi, "The *Busshō*," p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Waddell, "Buddha-nature," p. 95. For a fuller explanation of these concepts see Abe Masao, *Zen and Western Thought* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), pp. 58-59.

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apparent in possessing and yet attaining the Buddha nature lacked for Dōgen an emphasis on the essential character that qualified enlightenment as enlightenment, immediacy. He gives a rereading to no less a sutra teaching than the Mahāyāna statement of the closeness of the Buddha nature to all sentient existence: 'All sentient beings, everywhere possess the Buddha nature; the Tathagata exists eternally and is without change'. Dōgen offers a reading even more intimate. He asserts that 'All existence is the Buddha nature'. He refines the established understanding of how the Buddha nature is the absolute term of reference for all sentient beings. He does so in terms of his own experience.

The 'dropping of body and mind' and 'All existence is the Buddha nature' are expressions uniquely ascribed to Dōgen. The transcendence of all modes of mediation, physical and psychic, and the affirmed identity of all existence and the Buddha nature offer a common theme. Both phrases state with certitude that nothing separates one from the Buddha nature at one with the experience of enlightenment. We have a Buddha nature that is all existence and its very arising in consciousness is described as direct, non-mediated awareness, 'the dropping of body and mind.'

It is important to know Dōgen's complete understanding and further exposition of this key passage. Regarding the final section: 'the *Tathagata* exists eternally and is without change', it has been observed:

Dōgen further argues that Tathagata, which does not refer to the historical Buddha in this case but is interchangeable with the terms 'Buddha-nature' and 'all things,' is non-existent yet existent and is changing.<sup>45</sup>

This further explanation of *Tathagata* indicates that it is without change and changing, exists and is non-existent. The exposition of the Buddha nature in the *Shōbōgenzō-busshō* states that it is simultaneously temporary and permanent, is and is not. It is empty and yet has the power to embody all phenomenon. It is possessed by all but it is not capable of being possessed. Citing the example of the Buddha nature, Yūhō Yokoi states that the meaning of Dōgen's use of such paradox is found in the transcending of concept.

<sup>45</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen's Formative Years*, p. 63.

Dōgen's paradoxical words 'The Buddha-nature is (both) temporary and permanent' means that the Buddha-nature is beyond such dualistic concepts as temporary and permanent.<sup>46</sup>

Dōgen presents paradox to proceed beyond duality and to state in a more accurate way the true nature of things. His ultimate terms of reference are presented by a oneness or identity and by a pattern of paradox that insures no static identification. This process is most descriptive in his work, *Ikka Myōjū*, "One Bright Pearl." As in Dōgen's other terms of reference, the "one bright pearl" represents a comprehension of all reality and presents the experience of comprehending itself as beyond ordinary categories.

In Dōgen's *Ikka Myōjū*, the nature of the universe is expressed. This work affirms the statement of the T'ang Zen master, Hsüan-sha (835-908): "All the universe is one bright pearl," as the central description of reality.<sup>47</sup> The statement itself is clearly one of instruction from the perspective of enlightenment. "After he (Hsüan-sha) had finally attained the Way, he would say, in order to instruct people, 'All the universe is one bright pearl.'"<sup>48</sup> In this work, Dōgen alludes to a number of *mondō* or recorded dialogues between this master and his disciples as the text for instruction in his own further explanation.<sup>49</sup> Dōgen quotes Hsüan-sha's response, 'Separated', in reply to a monk's statement: "When sensations arise one is separated from wisdom."<sup>50</sup>

This (Dōgen's excerpt) is a simplification of the following *mondō* recorded in the *Lien-teng hui-yao* 聯燈會要, 25 (*Rentō eyō*): "A monk asked, 'I have heard it has been said that when sensations arise one is separated from wisdom, that

<sup>46</sup> Yokoi, "The *Busshō*," p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, trans., "One Bright Pearl, Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Ikka Myōjū*," *Eastern Buddhist* 4 (October 1971):109.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to know that the history of Zen centers upon the personalities of its great masters, and that anecdotes from the lives of these masters were a means of conveying the essential teachings of Zen. In the case of Chinese Zen the anecdotes preserved deal mostly with the experience of achieving enlightenment. See Tsunoda Ryusaku et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1958), 1:229.

<sup>50</sup> Waddell, "Pearl," p. 113.

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when thoughts change substance is different. But what of the time before the arising of sensations?' The master said, 'Separated!' <sup>51</sup>

The above *mondō* and its reference to 'substance' and 'wisdom' alludes to the Chinese development of Zen. A brief explanation would further clarify Dōgen's position. It would indicate the purpose of his selection and reveal his sensitivity to former Chinese contribution to Zen tradition that inspired the selection of this *mondō*.

As early as the T'ang period, the sixth patriarch, Hui-neng (638–713) placed his formative mark on Zen development.

Hui-neng maintained the unity of meditation (*ting*) and wisdom (*hui*) comparing them to "substance" and "function" or to a "lamp" and "light," respectively. He rejected the contemplative and instrumental view of meditation and the intellectualistic and substantialistic view of wisdom, whereby the unity of meditation and wisdom was understood in terms of activity. Dōgen took very seriously some thoughts such as these that were implied by certain elements in Hui-neng's teachings. On the other hand, Dōgen severely criticized the idea of "seeing into one's own nature" (*kenshō*) and went so far as to regard the Platform sutra as a spurious work and not the words of the sixth patriarch . . . From his own standpoint (Dōgen's), the activity of seeing was itself one's own nature.<sup>52</sup>

The very categories of Hui-neng that established a notion of the union of meditation and wisdom are reaffirmed by Hsüan-sha's rebuke: 'Separated!' and confirmed in Dōgen's selection of this dialogue. When Hui-neng's categories, e.g., *kenshō*, hint at a possible duality in enlightened experience: 'one seeing into' and 'one's own nature,' Dōgen strongly favors a strict sense of a non-dual 'traceless enlightenment', even to the point of discounting the words of the sixth patriarch as counterfeit. For Dōgen the interior meditative process mirrors the same simple non-mediated quality of the fundamental nature of all reality with which it

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., n. 15.

<sup>52</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 69.



is one. This dialogue in which the T'ang master rebukes a disciple's notion of perceived separate realities in bodily sensation and mental insight, illusion and wisdom, affords Dōgen the opportunity for further commentary.

And because its (the universe) own nature is prior to such activity, it is beyond grasp even through the essence of the activity.<sup>53</sup>

One bright pearl is able to express Reality without naming it, and we can recognize this pearl as its name. One bright pearl communicates directly through all time; being through all the past unexhausted, it arrives through all the present. While there is a body now, a mind now, they are the bright pearl. That stalk of grass, this tree, is not a stalk of grass, is not a tree; the mountains and rivers of this world are not the mountains and rivers of this world. They are the bright pearl.<sup>54</sup>

This pattern of exposition is significant and sheds light on the basic meaning of Dōgen's terms that present the absolute. There is a stated identity. All the universe is one bright pearl or the Buddha nature is all sentient beings. Fundamental to the subsequent affirmation and negation is the sense of reality beyond the ordinary means of confirmation. The affirmed categories denied, opposites in apposition, offer a sense of transcending concepts in an instruction into the deeper dynamics of things. Beyond the categories of being and not being, of mind and body, it is the original nature of things that take on expression in the 'one bright pearl'. The Buddha nature is all existence in a manner grasped beyond ordinary dichotomous means of perception. For Dōgen, the quality of absolute terms of reference is non-mediated presence. Hence, in the selected teachings instructive in the way, in the innovative phrases definitive of enlightenment and in the images descriptive of the experience; Dōgen presents this singular emphasis.

In quoting the exclamation, "Separated!," in his *One Bright Pearl*,

<sup>53</sup> This activity is characterized as that of a subject separate from or over against the nature of things to be realized, i.e., *chikukoimotsu*. See S. Nakamura, *Shōbōgenzō*, 1:133.

<sup>54</sup> Waddell, "Pearl," p. 113.

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Dōgen notes and sustains the significance of the Zen masters, Hui-neng and Hsüan-sha. He furthers this instructional tradition of established recorded dialogues and commentary. It is enough to note the import of Hui-neng to be mindful of the certitude and emphasis with which Dōgen enters this transmission. He is so emphatic in his insight into the non-duality of Zen that he holds the Platform sutra itself to be suspect and not to be considered authored by the sixth patriarch. Dōgen's emphasis is unequivocal. He enters the instruction of the way of sudden awakening to insure its clear immediacy.

The clearest instances of this intent are the phrases: 'dropping body and mind' and 'all existence is the Buddha nature'. The former is more than a translation of established Zen instruction. It identifies enlightenment as an experience beyond the mediation of body and mind in any ordinary sense. The latter is an identification that sponsored dramatic grammatical change. It is clearly an accommodation of text to suit Dōgen's thesis of the immediate, simultaneity of the Buddha nature and the experiencing of enlightenment itself.

In Dōgen's instruction, even traditional images used to describe enlightened experience take on a consistent character difficult to miss. Metaphors of light and reflection, movement and distance are mentors of a traceless experience exclusive of even a suggested acquired accord or achieved affinity with something distinct or apart. The described awareness of the sacredness of things is expressed in seamless categories whose consistency lies in the sheer simplicity of realization itself. Enlightenment is a clarity of mind presented by images of non-mediation.

The sense of oneness evident in the descriptive images of enlightenment and in the terms used to explain the enlightened experience also qualifies Dōgen's sense of practice. Practise and realization are one.

To think practise and realization are not one is a heretical view. In the Buddha Dharma, practise and realization are identical. Because one's present practise is realization, one's initial negotiation of the Way in itself is the whole original realization . . .

Practise is from its outset inseparable from realization; . . . You should know that, in order to keep us from defiling this realization that is inseparable from practise, Buddhas and

patriarchs teach unceasingly that we must not abate our practise. If we cast off the wondrous practise, original realization fills our hands; if we transcend original realization, wondrous practise permeates our body.

. . . The abbots of these monasteries (in China), teachers who transmit the seal of the Buddha-mind, told me when I asked for the essence of Buddhism, that practise and realization are not two stages.<sup>55</sup>

The concepts *shushō-ittō*,<sup>56</sup> (“the oneness of practise and enlightenment”) and the concept, *shūshō-fu’ni*,<sup>57</sup> (“the non-duality of practise and enlightenment”) refer to the above passages in the *Bendōwa*.<sup>58</sup>

Hence it is not a statement of the identity of two stages that establishes definition but a presentation of a simple oneness (*ittō*) explicated by a dynamic negation (*fu’ni*) of all modes of mediation. Both concepts shed light on the text. ‘Oneness of practise and enlightenment’ could be considered merely an implied contrast, i.e., a oneness over against a duality. Such an exposition would be comparative and not free from duality as such. The ‘non-duality of practise and enlightenment’ transcends all dichotomy even that inherent in the elements of contrast. The implied oneness goes beyond the categories used to situate the experience. *Shūshō-ittō* focuses on a simple oneness while *shūshō-fu’ni* states the dynamic negation that ‘establishes’ this oneness as truly simple. Immediacy predicates identity. As Dōgen states elsewhere:

There (in the Great Way of the Buddhas and patriarchs where there is endless practice) is not the slightest separation, the smallest crevice between initial resolve, practice, enlightenment and Nirvana.<sup>59</sup>

These ‘stages’, if you will, are simply one. There is nothing that stands

<sup>55</sup> Waddell, “*Bendōwa*,” p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> Sōkō Katō, *Shōbōgenzō Sakuin*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1962), 1:1288.

<sup>57</sup> Shōbōgenzō chūkai zensho kankō-kai, comp., *Shōbōgenzō chūkai zensho*, 11 vols. (Tokyo: Shōbōgenzō chūkai zensho kankō-kai, 1956–1957), 11:90.

<sup>58</sup> Komazawa Daigakuin, ed., *Zengaku Daijiten*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1978), 1:505.

<sup>59</sup> Sokuō Etō, ed., *Shōbōgenzō*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1942), 2:15.

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between them, neither the smallest crevice or smallest gap. It is in terms of non-mediation that practise and enlightenment are one.

For Dōgen the practise of Zen is simple, that is, it allows no duality of effort and attainment. The experience of enlightenment is not to be sought as a future goal realized through correct practise. He affirms the existing tradition of sudden enlightenment in a manner intolerant of any studied labor for, or gained affinity with, what is man's most intimate reality. Dōgen realized that if the absolute is not present totally to the finite moment, if the end is not already present and if there is not total availability of the absolute in the particular moment of practise, then no number of finite steps will lead one to ultimate reality perceived in the intuition of *satori*. What is most transcendent is most simply present.

We do not deal with a reduction to a single static entity. We deal with a dynamic effort to state a comprehension that is the essential character of enlightenment both as the experience of the practitioner and as the explication of reality as it truly is. The context used to state with emphasis that practise and enlightenment are one centers on the mind of the practitioner as one of an imperceptible mutual presence to, a simple participation in the myriad things of the universe.

If practise and realization were two different stages as ordinary people consider them to be, the one sitting in *zazen* and things should perceive each other. To be associated with perceptions is not the mark of realization, because the mark of realization is to be beyond such illusions.

Moreover, although in realization the mind (of the *zazen* practitioner) and its objects both arise and disappear within the stillness of *samādhi*, since it occurs within the sphere of *jijuyū*, it does not disturb a single mote of dust, nor infringe upon a single phenomenon. It does great and wide-ranging buddhahood, and performs the exceedingly profound, recondite activities of preaching and enlightening. The trees, grasses, and land involved in this all emit a bright and shining light, and preach the profound and incomprehensible Dharma; and it is endless. . . . The dimension of self-enlightenment *qua* enlightening others basically is fully replete with the characteristics of realization, and causes the principle of realization to

function unceasingly.

Because of this, when even just one person, at one time, sits in *zazen*, he becomes imperceptively, one with each and all of the myriad things, and permeates completely all time, so that within the limitless universe, throughout past, future, and present, he is performing the eternal and ceaseless work of guiding beings to enlightenment. It is, for each and every thing, one and the same undifferentiated practise, and undifferentiated realization.<sup>60</sup>

This confirms the insights stated elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō* and cited in this essay. The experience expressed is inseparable, that is, it is not distanced by anything apart from itself. It is inactive, that is, it is not activated by anything outside of itself. In this context, it is imperceptible, that is, it is not perceived by any reflection apart from itself. The absence of mediation is the absence of illusion. The participation in buddhahood is recondite, that is, what is remote from ordinary perception, is inexplicably intimate to realization, enlightened accord with all phenomena. The meditative process mirrors the same simple non-mediated quality of the fundamental nature of all reality with which it is one. The immediate character of this participation is reflected in the efficacy of the one practise. One person, in one instance of practise, in the one way of *zazen*, participates in and mirrors the one Buddha action of guiding all to enlightenment.

Dōgen's concentration on the one practise is based on his appreciation of the sacred economy of things as eminently simple in essence and experience. In realization the mind participates in *jijuyū samādhi*, self enjoying concentration. The context of the text confounds the very distinction between self and others inherent in the term itself. The self enjoyment of one's awakening, *jijuyū* and realization for others, *tajuyū*, finds coincidence in "the dimension of self enlightenment qua enlightening others."<sup>61</sup> The interior processes of *zazen* mirror the activity of the Buddha. Dōgen's appeal is to the Buddha who attained right en-

<sup>60</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," pp. 135-37.

<sup>61</sup> *Jikaku-kakuta*, the awakening of self is the awakening of others. The translator's note indicates that *jijuyū samādhi* includes *tajuyū samādhi* for Dōgen. See Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 136, n. 52.

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lightenment under the Bodhi tree and sat in self-joyous meditation and opened the right path to all.

His reference is ultimately to the one Buddha framed in the one aspect of enjoyment who reveals the one true practice. In *zazen*, the experience excludes all distinctions of duality. What is most transcendent is simply present, there is but one 'undifferentiated practise and undifferentiated realization'.

The very first lines of the *Bendōwa* state this central thesis as the work's syllabus. In this instance, introduction is summation.

The Buddhas and Tathagatas have an excellent way—unequaled and natural—to transmit the wondrous Dharma through personal encounter and to realize supreme enlightenment. As it is imparted impeccably from Buddha to Buddha, its criterion is the *samādhi* of self-fulfilling activity (*jijuyū-zammai*).

For playing joyfully in such *samādhi* (*kono zammai ni yuke suruni*), the upright sitting in meditation is the right gate.<sup>62</sup>

The translation of the term *mui*,<sup>63</sup> i.e., inactive or non-doing, as "natural" is of interest. The stated intent of the translator was to indicate the spontaneity of Dōgen's transmission. In using the word, "natural," he draws an analogy to Shinran's *jinen hōni*: "'naturalness' which means the spontaneous working of Tathagata's vow-power without man's contrivance."<sup>64</sup> In this context, the indicated spontaneity excludes self-action. The practise of *zazen* excludes any sense of self-agency that would distinguish the experiencer from the enlightened experience with which he is unequivocally one.

The spontaneity of Dōgen's sense of sudden enlightenment, however, is best seen in the general pattern of interpretation which informed his translation of *zazen* to Japan. He understood his exposition as a conscious continuation of the first direct, wordless transmission of 'the right Dharma eye, wondrous mind of Nirvana', i.e., "*Shōbōgenzō nehan myōshin mujo no daihō*"<sup>65</sup> to Mahakāśyapa alone on Vulture

<sup>62</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 67.

<sup>63</sup> Etō, *Shōbōgenzō* 1:49. See also Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 128, n. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 330, n. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Etō, *Shōbōgenzō*, p. 58.

Peak.<sup>66</sup> This is the reference that informs the very title of his works. He was informed by the masters of China and wrote to inform others that: "Indeed unless you concentrate on one practise you cannot attain the one wisdom."<sup>67</sup> When he returned, his teaching was acknowledged as the simplest of foreign traditions to be introduced to Japan. Dōgen's own statement that he returned to Japan "empty handed," *kūshū-genkyō*,<sup>68</sup> only in part reflected the absence of the usual large scale transference of religious accouterment common to such travels. The observation: "His sole 'souvenir' presented to his countrymen was his own body and mind, his total existence, which was now completely liberated and transformed. He himself was the surest evidence of Dharma,"<sup>69</sup> finds consistency in his unheard of insistence on zazen as the undistracted focus of his teaching. All Dōgen's Japanese predecessors even Eisai had to transmit Zen as one aspect of the Tendai *enmitsuzenkai* tradition. The choice was either compromise with the current schema of mixed-practises or retire to seclusion and risk the eventual dissolution of teachings acquired through such arduous odyssey.

In Kyoto and nearby Uji he (Dōgen) refused to teach anything but Zen, and when put under pressure to change his ways, preferred to move to the remote province of Echizen rather than give in to the established order.<sup>70</sup>

His writings simplified and refined the meditative practise of Buddhism. Dōgen's specific interpretations exhibit the amalgamating power of a truly simple experience of the sacred. Immediacy is the quality of the unvarying transmission of the one right Dharma.

<sup>66</sup> Waddell, "*Bendōwa*," p. 143.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>68</sup> Matsunaga, *Foundation*, 2:239.

<sup>69</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 46.

<sup>70</sup> Tsunoda, *Sources*, p. 232.