

Dōgen's View of Time and Space

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I. Young Dōgen's Doubt

Dōgen's view of time and space cannot be understood apart from his standpoint of Buddha-nature. It also cannot be grasped aside from his standpoint of continuous practice. Unless we speak from within the standpoints of Buddha-nature and continuous practice, any discussion of Dōgen's view of time and space, however finely detailed, must remain casual and uncertain. The standpoint of Buddha-nature is really the standpoint of *whole-being-Buddha-nature* (悉有佛性 *shitsuu-busshō*), or, if we investigate it further, the standpoint of *impermanence-Buddha-nature* (無常佛性 *mujō-busshō*). Apart from this standpoint, Dōgen's doctrines of "being-time" (有時 *uji*), and "nothing concealed in the entire universe" (徧界不曾藏 *henkai-fusōzō*) probably cannot be understood correctly. The standpoint of continuous practice is the standpoint of the *unceasing circulation of continuous practice* (行持道環 *gyōji-dōkan*) or the *spontaneous manifestation of continuous practice* (行持現成 *gyōji genjō*). Apart from this standpoint, Dōgen's doctrines of the "absolute now" (而今 *nikon*) and the "true person revealed in and through the whole universe throughout the ten directions" (尽十方界真実人体 *jinjippōkai shinjitsu jintai*) cannot be grasped correctly.

How did Dōgen himself come to realize the standpoints of "whole-being-Buddha-nature" or the "unceasing circulation of continuous practice"? In order to clarify this point, we must first examine the doubt that young Dōgen faced during his practice on Mt. Hiei, which

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led him to travel to Sung China to seek a resolution. That is because the standpoint Dōgen sets forth after his return to Japan was one that had been reached in China through the enlightenment experience of the casting off of body-mind (身心脫落 *shinjin-datsuraku*), approved by Zen master Ju-ching, in which this doubt was dissolved. According to *Kenzeiki*¹ [the traditional biography of Dōgen], the doubt was:

Both exoteric and esoteric Buddhism teach the original-Dharma-nature and innate self-nature. If that were true, why have the Buddhas of past, present, and future awakened the resolve for and sought enlightenment through ascetic practices?

This refers to a serious question about the Tendai standpoint of “original awakening” (本覺 *hongaku*). That is, if, as Tendai Buddhism teaches, all sentient beings are originally endowed with the true Dharma-nature (Buddha-nature) and are spontaneously awakened to the innate self-nature, then for what reason have all Buddhist practitioners awakened the resolve for satori and practiced to achieve it—it is a doubt about whether resolve and practice are, indeed, necessary. This seems to be the unavoidable question surrounding the standpoint of original awakening.

But when young Dōgen faced this doubt, didn’t he apparently consider the Dharma-nature or innate self-nature as a kind of unmediated reality? Didn’t he understand the original Dharma-nature or original awakening as a reality arising directly beyond time and space? There must be a form of idealization or conceptualization implicit in his understanding of original awakening. That is, at the same time that the original Dharma-nature is idealized, resolve and practice are conceptualized so that their reality appears lost. But, as Tendai master Chih-i has said, “Where do a primal Maitreya and innate Sakyamuni appear?”² Dharma-nature or Buddha-nature does not exist as a direct and unmediated reality. It is disclosed only through our own resolve and practice in time and space as an indispensable *condition*.

In contrast to such a question about the standpoint of original

¹ *Kenzeiki* 建齋記, *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, vol. 115 Tokyo, 1922 SSZ 17:16a.

² This phrase often ascribed to Chih-i is found in *Tendai Shikyōgi* by Korean monk, Taikan. *Taishō*. 46-779a.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

awakening, there is another doubt that arises from the opposite angle. That is, if our own resolve and practice are indispensable, then how can we speak of a Dharma-nature or self-nature that is originally endowed or naturally bestowed to us? In that case, there is a doubt about why Buddhism talks about an original Dharma-nature or innate self-nature. This would be the doubt arising from the standpoint of “acquired awakening” (始覺 *shikaku*). In the standpoint of acquired awakening, in which awakening is seen as attained only as a result of resolve and practice, the Dharma-nature or self-nature is never thought to be a direct and unmediated reality. Rather, awakening is reached only as the goal of practice and negotiation of the Way in time and space, and the Dharma-nature is not considered to be something originally endowed to us. But there must also be a form of idealization and conceptualization implicit here. There is, so to speak, a reversal of the former position. But, equally in this case, the Dharma-nature is idealized—as the ideal to be reached—and resolve and practice are conceptualized—as the means to reach it. This leads to the misconception of putting too much emphasis on the need for our own resolve and practice in time and space as the indispensable *ground* for the awakening of Dharma-nature.

The unavoidable question that tormented young Dōgen was, why are resolve and practice considered necessary if the original Dharma-nature is an endowment. In contrast to that, this other doubt wonders how the Dharma-nature is said to be originally endowed if resolve and practice are indispensable. Each of these two questions must be said to idealize, conceptualize, and objectify, from the opposite standpoints, the matter of “awakening” in Mahayana Buddhism—also referred to as “Buddha-nature,” “self-nature,” “Mind,” “Dharma,” or “Thusness.” Both of these doubts create an abstraction which objectifies the thoroughly nonobjectifiable status of awakening, which primordially cannot be idealized or objectified.

The error in such an abstraction derives either from confusing “what must be the ground or basis” and “what must be the condition or occasion” without distinguishing them, and thereby recognizing only the one side and disregarding the role and function of the other, or from mistaking both sides for one another. To put it more concretely, in the case of young Dōgen, “awakening,” or what is called Dharma-nature and self-nature, is grasped as a reality which must be the *ground* of all

sentient beings—and is understood as beyond the limits of time and space. But there is then a doubt about the necessity of our own resolve and practice in time and space which must be the indispensable *condition* for the awakening to this ground as the ground. Here “awakening” or Dharma-nature, which must be the ground, is grasped abstractly as if it were an unmediated reality without any condition of resolve and practice. As opposed to this, the other standpoint puts too much emphasis on the necessity of our own resolve and practice in time and space, viewing them as if they were the ground itself, although they are originally no more than the condition. It thereby creates an abstraction which interprets “awakening” or Dharma-nature as an extension of resolve and practice. Here, “awakening” or Dharma-nature, which must be the original ground, loses its reality and status as ground by being understood only as a signpost guiding our own resolve and practice in time and space—its meaning is no more than that of a condition. Even though “awakening” is there understood to be realized at the extreme limit of time and space, it is not seen as beyond the limits of time and space.

The doubt which young Dōgen faced, “why are resolve and practice necessary if the original Dharma-nature is already endowed?” was for him a truly subjective and existential concern. But at least intellectually he must have also been aware of another doubt, namely, why is the original Dharma-nature discussed if resolve and practice are indispensable? That is because both of these doubts deriving from the matter of “awakening” or Dharma-nature are completely and inseparably connected. There must also have been many monks and novices practicing on Mt. Hiei while Dōgen was there who also faced one or the other of these doubts, even if neither may have been as clear and acute as in Dōgen’s case. In any case, while Dōgen was studying Tendai Buddhism on Mt. Hiei, he unconsciously idealized “awakening” and doubted the necessity of practice. Moreover, he probably felt a deep sense of anxiety due to an estrangement of his own existence from the very basis of reality. That is why Dōgen says in the opening paragraph of *Hōkyōki*:³

The mind that aspires to enlightenment arose in me at an ear-

³ *Hōkyōki* 宝慶記, trans. N. A. Waddell, *Eastern Buddhist* (Hereafter *E.B.*) Vol. X, No. 2, p. 117.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

ly age. In my search for the Way I visited religious teachers in my own land and gained some understanding of the causal nature of the world. Yet the real end of the three treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) was still unclear. I clung vainly to the banner of names and forms.

It must have been this anxiety stemming from his feeling of separation from the very basis of reality that motivated Dōgen to sail to China at the risk of his own life. There, “[he] visited many leading priests of Liang-che, and learned of the different characteristics of the Five Gates.”⁴ But he says, “Ultimately, I went to T'ai-pai peak and engaged in religious practice under the Zen master Ju-ching until I had resolved the one great matter of Zen practice for my entire life.”⁵ At this point Dōgen attained an “awakening” which overcame all the previous idealization, conceptualization, and objectification. He entered into the reality of “awakening” and appeared as a personal embodiment of “awakening.” When Dōgen says that “practicing Zen is the casting off of body-mind,”⁶ he means that all idealization, conceptualization, and objectification engaged in concerning awakening and discipline, attainment and practice since his study on Mt. Hiei are completely cast off through the body-mind of Dōgen himself. Then the “innate self-nature” in its true sense is fully realized as the “body-mind which has been cast off” (脱落身心 *datsuraku-shinjin*).

II. Oneness of Practice and Attainment as the Resolution of the Doubt

How did Dōgen directly overcome the problem of the relation between the original Dharma-nature and resolve-practice in the experience of casting off body-mind (or the body-mind which has been cast off)? The resolution of this problem is expressed here and there in Dōgen's writings:

⁴ *Bendōwa*, trans. N. A. Waddell and Masao Abe *E.B.* Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 130.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Gyōji II. Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* (Hereafter *DZZ*) Vol. I, ed. by Ōkubo Dōshū, p. 158.

This Dharma is amply present in every person, but unless one practices, it is not manifested; unless there is realization it is not attained.⁷

To think practice and realization are not one is a heretical view. In the Buddha Dharma, practice and realization are identical. Because one's present practice is practice in realization, one's initial negotiation of the Way in itself is the whole of original realization. Thus, even while one is directed to practice, he is told not to anticipate realization apart from practice, because practice points directly to original realization. As it is already realization in practice, realization is endless; as it is practice in realization, practice is beginningless.⁸

As for the truth of the Buddha-nature: the Buddha-nature is not incorporated prior to attaining Buddhahood; it is incorporated upon the attainment of Buddhahood. The Buddha-nature is always manifested simultaneously with the attainment of Buddhahood. This truth should be deeply, deeply penetrated in concentrated practice. There has to be twenty or even thirty years of diligent Zen practice.⁹

In the Great Way of Buddhas and patriarchs there is always continuous practice which is supreme. It is the Way which is circulating ceaselessly. There is not even the slightest gap between resolution, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana. The way of continuous practice is ever circulating.¹⁰

The significance is similar in all these expressions: in the relation between awakening and discipline, attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha, it is not the case that one side is considered primary and the other secondary. Rather, both are indispensable and inseparable components of a dynamic relationship. This is in-

⁷ *Bendōwa*, p. 129.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁹ *Busshō*, trans. N. A. Waddell and Masao Abe, *E.B.* Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 88. For Dōgen's view of Buddha-nature see Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought*, Macmillan and the University of Hawaii Press pp. 25-68.

¹⁰ *Gyōji*, I. *DZZ* Vol. 1, p. 122.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

icated by the expressions, "the oneness of practice and attainment," the "simultaneity" of Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha, and the "unceasing circulation of continuous practice." For example, Buddha-nature is not awakened as Buddha-nature without the attainment of Buddhahood; at the same time, the attainment of Buddhahood is possible simply because Buddha-nature is originally endowed. The truth of the dynamic simultaneity of Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha is thereby realized.

To properly grasp this matter, it may be helpful to clarify the problem by distinguishing the following two stages:

(1) Attainment—awakening or Buddha-nature—and practice—discipline or becoming a Buddha—are both indispensable, but the former is indispensable as the *ground* and the latter is indispensable as the *condition*. In this regard, the distinction as well as the irreversible relation between them must be clearly realized.

For young Dōgen, the indispensability and reality of attainment (Buddha-nature) is recognized, but just because of this, the indispensability and necessity of practice (becoming a Buddha) is questioned. The transcendental reality of attainment (Buddha-nature) beyond time and space is realized, but the reality of resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha which are not beyond the limits of time and space could not help but be doubted. But isn't that because Dōgen understood the reality of the latter only by taking the reality of the former as the standard? That is, isn't it that he failed to distinguish "what must be the ground" from "what must be the condition," and mistook both sides for one and the same dimension? Mistaking both sides for the same dimension creates an abstraction, because the standpoint of attainment (Buddha-nature) which is beyond the limits of time and space and the standpoint of practice (becoming a Buddha) within the limits are clearly different dimensions. The former is "what must be the ground" of human existence, and the latter is not. But should we say on that account that only the former possesses reality while the latter is lacking in reality? Such an understanding represents an unwarranted abstraction and idealization of the issue. The latter, that is, the standpoint of resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha bound by the limits of time and space, is an indispensable reality in a different sense than the other dimension. It is indispensable not as "what must be the ground," but as "what must be the condition" through which one realizes the

ground as ground. In that case, it has an *indispensable reality as the condition*. That is, both attainment (Buddha-nature) and practice (becoming a Buddha) have an indispensable reality for human existence, but the former has it as the ground and the latter as the condition. Attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha are mutually inseparable, but in order to avoid creating an abstraction of the issue, the distinction between “ground” and “condition” must never be disregarded. As previously quoted, Dōgen maintains,

The Dharma is amply present in each and every person, but unless one practices, it is not manifested; unless there is realization, it is not attained.

This was one of the things Dōgen realized when he cast off body-mind.

Therefore, the standpoint of the doubt opposite to the one Dōgen felt, namely, why is the original Dharma-nature stressed if resolve and practice are indispensable, puts too much emphasis on the indispensability of resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha. It understands resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha within time and space, which are only the condition for the attainment of Dharma-nature, as if they were its very ground. But, here again there is a confusion of “what must be the ground” and “what must be the condition.” How such a standpoint lapses into an abstraction which is also estranged from reality must have been clearly realized by Dōgen through his awakening realization of the casting off of body-mind.

(2) Attainment (Buddha-nature) indispensable as the ground is itself a nonsubstantive and nonobjectifiable no-thingness. Therefore, practice (becoming a Buddha) indispensable as the condition has, as mentioned above, an irreversible relationship with Buddha-nature (in terms of the latter being the ground and the former the condition). But that is not the only perspective. Practice (attaining Buddhahood) as the condition itself comes to be understood as having a reality as the ground through the realization of the *no-thingness* of the ground (the realization of the non-substantial ground) so that attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha come to be grasped as a reversible identity.

Attainment (Buddha-nature) indispensable as the ground of human existence is expressed by Dōgen’s statement, “you say no (Buddha-

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

nature) because Buddha-nature is emptiness."¹¹ Buddha-nature is not a thing, it is in itself empty, nonsubstantial, unobjectifiable, and nothing. Therefore, although Buddha-nature is the ground which is only realized through practice and becoming a Buddha as the condition, it is not a substantial ground in the ordinary sense, but a self-nihilating ground, or a nonsubstantial and nonobjectifiable ground. In it, not only is the ordinary distinction between the ground and the condition overcome, the irreversibility of the two sides is transcended as well. At this point, that which is conditional is directly realized as the ground. That is why Dōgen expresses the doctrine of *impermanence-Buddha-nature* by saying, "Impermanence is in itself Buddha-nature."¹²

In other words, impermanence, which is strictly limited by time and space, is realized as it is as the Buddha-nature which is beyond time and space. Resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha are not merely the condition for the attainment of the Dharma-nature, but in themselves have the meaning of the original attainment which must be the ground. Conversely, the original attainment, which must be the ground, is never realized apart from resolve, practice, and becoming a Buddha, which are usually understood as the conditions. Therefore, a reversible relationship between attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha, is realized. That is why Dōgen says,¹³

In the Buddha Dharma, practice and realization are identical. Because one's present practice is practice in realization, one's initial negotiation of the Way in itself is the whole of original realization. . . . As it is already realization in practice, realization is endless; as it is practice in realization, practice is beginningless.

It is also the reason he says,¹⁴

There is not even the slightest gap between resolution, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana. That is the unceasing circulation of continuous practice.

¹¹ *Bushō E.B.* Vol. VIII, No. 2 p. 108.

¹² *Ibid. E.B.* Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 91.

¹³ *Bendōwa*, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Gyōji I. DZZ* Vol. 1, p. 122.

Practice is thus not merely practice, but *practice in attainment* (証上の修 *shōjō no shū*). Therefore, it is realized as *wondrous practice*, (妙修 *myōshū*) and is indistinguishable from *direct pointing to original attainment* (直指の本証 *jikishi no honshō*). The same is true with the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature is not “incorporated prior to attaining Buddhahood.” It is “incorporated upon the attainment of Buddhahood.” In the end, “Buddha-nature is always manifested simultaneously with the attainment of Buddhahood.” This is nothing other than what Dōgen calls “the truth of Buddha-nature.”¹⁵

Dōgen’s standpoints of the oneness of practice and attainment, Buddha-nature, and the unceasing circulation of continuous practice are found in this truth. This is precisely what Dōgen attained directly through the casting off of body-mind under the guidance of Ju-ching, which completely dissolved the doubt he had faced since Mt. Hiei. Therefore, while the oneness of practice and attainment, the unceasing circulation of continuous practice, and the simultaneity of Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha are maintained, it is not simply the case that practice and attainment, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha, consist of a direct identity unmediated by the realization of some negation. We must note that the awakening which overcame young Dōgen’s doubt concerning original awakening includes the following previously discussed points: (1) attainment (Buddha-nature) as ground and practice (becoming a Buddha) as condition are equally indispensable and yet must be distinguished; (2) attainment is nothing but the realization of *no-buddha-nature* or *impermanence-Buddha-nature*. Because of this, attainment as the ground and practice as the condition are non-dualistically identical through this realization of *no-Buddha-nature* or *impermanence-Buddha-nature*—the dynamism mediated through negation implicit here cannot be overlooked. To put it another way, the standpoints of the oneness of practice and attainment, the unceasing circulation of continuous practice, and the simultaneity of Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha do not simply indicate that attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha, have a sheer reversible identity. Rather, the absolute irreversibility of attainment and practice, Buddha-nature and becoming a Buddha comes to have a reversible identity in the sense that they can be absolutely reversed by

¹⁵ *Bushō, E.B.* Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 88.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

virtue of the self-nihilating character of attainment and the emptiness of Buddha-nature. That is, we cannot overlook that in the formation of Dōgen's standpoint of awakening, the reversible identity is always inseparably connected with irreversibility.

The above discussion has considered the standpoints of the oneness of practice and attainment, Buddha-nature, and the unceasing circulation of continuous practice mainly as a problem based on our *subjectivity*. That is because of the significance of Dōgen's statements, "The Buddha-Dharma is originally in the *self*"¹⁶; and "To learn the Buddha Way is to learn one's own *self*."¹⁷ Yet, since Dōgen also says, "To learn one's self is to forget one's self. To forget one's self is to be confirmed by all dharmas,"¹⁸ to study the *self* is nothing other than to be confirmed by *all dharmas*. This is the meaning of *whole-being-Buddha-nature*. That is, in the standpoint of the Buddha-nature, the one side, the realization of the absolute self expressed as, "Right here there is no second person!"¹⁹ is attained *simultaneously* with the other side, the realization that the entire world is this very self, expressed as, "The entire world is the Dharmakaya of the self."²⁰ Stated another way, the standpoint of whole-being-Buddha-nature is not simply the standpoint of being-Buddha-nature. It is rather the standpoint of no-Buddha-nature. Moreover, the standpoint of no-Buddha-nature is not simply the opposite of the standpoint of being-Buddha-nature. Dōgen enjoins us to "just set aside the nothingness of 'being and nothingness,' and ask, What is this Buddha-nature?,"²¹ thus taking the standpoint of *impermanence-Buddha-nature* as the true standpoint of Buddha-nature. It is also "the fundamental reason of the Way: that our *self* is *time*."²²

Dōgen's view of time and space speaks from within such a standpoint of Buddha-nature. This is the reason we said in the opening passage of this essay that without speaking from within the standpoint of Buddha-nature, the discussion of Dōgen's view of time and space, however finely detailed, will remain a casual one. This standpoint of

¹⁶ *Bendōwa*, p. 151.

¹⁷ *Genjōkōan*, trans. N. A. Waddell & Masao Abe, *E.B.* Vol. V, No. 2, p. 134.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Busshō*, *E. B.* Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 99.

²⁰ *Yuibutsu-yobutsu*, *DZZ* Vol. 1, p. 781.

²¹ *Busshō*, *E.B.* Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 90.

²² *Uji*, trans. N. A. Waddell. *E.B.* Vol. XII, No. 1, p. 118.

Buddha-nature is really inseparable from what Dōgen calls the oneness of practice and attainment and the unceasing circulation of continuous practice. It also cannot be differentiated from the standpoint of self-fulfilling samadhi (自受用三昧 *jijuyū zammai*).

III. One Person Practicing Zazen at One Time

So, how did Dōgen view time and space?

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 everything, one and the same undifferentiated practice, and undifferentiated realization.²³

This one sentence of “Bendōwa” fully expresses by itself the foundations of Dōgen’s views of time and space. Although there may be *only one person practicing zazen at one time* (the zazen of the self right here at this very moment), if it is truly the zazen of the oneness of practice and attainment, the zazen of original attainment-wondrous practice, or the zazen of the casting off of body-mind, it becomes imperceptively one with *all dharmas* (the myriad things of the universe) and penetrates completely to *each and all times* (all moments of time). This is because in the zazen of the oneness of practice and attainment, or the zazen of the casting off of body-mind, the ordinary self (the self-centered self) is liberated from itself, and the self-liberating awakening boundlessly extends throughout the ten directions of the universe. The self which practices zazen right here at this very moment is practicing zazen *in the unfolding of a self-liberating awakening which is continuously circulating*. All beings which exist in the universal field of limitless space are awakened as discrete or distinctive beings. At the same time the aspect of all beings ever-changing in the moment-to-moment life-and-death process in the flow of limitless universal time is equally awakened

²³ *Bendōwa*. p. 136–7.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

as discrete and distinctive. We say, "beings are awakened." But it refers to an awakening which has no *subject* because it is the awakening of self-liberating realization in the unfolding of self-liberating awakening. It is awakening without a subject which awakens to something. Therefore, it is also an awakening without an object which is awakened. It is an awakening which has no *object*. That is why Dōgen says in the fascicle "Busshō," "The entire world is completely free of all dust as objects to the self."²⁴ Because it is awakening which is truly beyond the dichotomy of subject and object, the self which has cast off body-mind through *zazen* in the circulation of such an awakening "*becomes, imperceptively, one* with each and all of the myriad things, and *permeates completely* all times." All beings in universal space and all times in universal time are each awakened to their distinctiveness. Yet they are "permeating imperceptively and completely" into the self-liberating "zazen practiced by one person at one time." The world of self-fulfilling samadhi is thereby spontaneously manifested. This is, in itself, neither the world of being-Buddha-nature nor no-Buddha-nature. It is the world of impermanence-Buddha-nature. Right here, the world of impermanence-Buddha-nature is ever-unfolding in which all impermanent beings and all impermanent times are each realized in their distinctiveness and yet penetrate each other thoroughly and without obstruction in limitless universal time and universal space. Because of this, Dōgen writes,

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 practice, and undifferentiated realization.

All beings circulating in the unlimited universe and all time extending throughout past, present, and future are all spreading the Buddhist teaching of original attainment without losing their individuality and particularity. All are equally identical in terms of the undifferentiated practice and the undifferentiated realization. This is not a world of fixed and static reality. It is the fullest dynamic world which is limitlessly unfolding in the ten directions of the universe and in which each and every particularity in time and space thoroughly and mutually

²⁴ *Busshō*, E.B. No. IX, No. 1, p. 99.

penetrate and circulate through each other in each moment. This is precisely the world of "one person practicing zazen at one time."

When Dōgen says, "time is already being, and beings are all time,"²⁵ that does not express a philosophical realization of the identity of being and time. It expresses the identity of being and time in the self-fulfilling samadhi of "one person practicing zazen at one time," or *zazen of the self right here at this very moment*. *Uji* (有時, being-time), in one sense, is literally 或る時 (*aru toki*) "a certain time." "Sometimes standing on the highest mountain peak, sometimes walking on the deepest ocean floor"²⁶ means that at a certain time there is standing on the highest mountain peak, and at a certain time there is walking on the deepest ocean floor, beyond before and after and without continuity. However, *uji*, in another sense, is really 有る時 (*aru toki*) "being is time," or "time which is identical with being." That is, a certain time standing on the highest mountain peak and a certain time walking on the deepest ocean floor, while different moments of time, are both *completely permeated* with "one person practicing zazen at one time." Therefore, there is no obstruction between them. Furthermore, "one person practicing zazen at one time" is not only completely permeating all times. It is also *imperceptively being one with each and all of the myriad things*. Thus, the being of "the highest mountain peak" and the being of "the deepest ocean floor," while completely different beings, are equally permeating imperceptively the zazen of the self at this very moment. Therefore, they are mutually nonobstructive. Dōgen appropriately expresses this by saying, "You must see through each and every particular thing of the entire universe as each and every time. The mutual nonobstruction of each and every thing is just like the mutual nonobstruction of each and every time."²⁷

Put in terms of space, it is the nonobstruction of each and every thing 事事無礙 (*jijimuge*). Put in terms of time, it is the nonobstruction of each and every time 時時無礙 (*jijimuge*).²⁸ But it is not that there are two kinds of nonobstruction. There is only one nonobstruction, and

²⁵ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 189.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Concerning the nonobstruction of times and times, see my essay "Sōzō to Engi" (Creation and Dependent Origination) *Risō* No. 531 and 533.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

everything is nonobstruction. In the world of self-fulfilling samadhi in which "one person practices zazen at one time," *the nonobstruction of each and every thing in itself is the nonobstruction of each and every time*. We must see through this truth of being-time. Therefore, while "a certain time" is "a certain time," it is *being-time (uji)*—"time is already being." On the other hand, while "a certain being" is "a certain being," it is *being-time (uji)*—"being are all time." This can only be expressed in the *nonobstruction* of self-fulfilling samadhi. It cannot be expressed apart from "one person practicing zazen at one time." The truth of being-time is only realized in the standpoint of the self-liberating self practicing zazen at this very moment, or the self of the oneness of practice and attainment. Here, the *self* is *being*, and the *self* is *time*. Just before the above passage from the fascicle "Uji," Dōgen says, "The configuration of my-self makes up the entire universe."²⁹ This indicates that the *self* is *being*. In the same passage, he also clearly maintains that the *self* is *time* when he states that "projecting the configuration of my-self I see that. Such is the fundamental reason of the Way: that the Self is time"³⁰ *Uji* is not realized apart from the self-liberating self, or the self of the casting off of body-mind and the body-mind which have been cast off. In this sense *uji* 有時 cannot be sufficiently grasped from the standpoint of being-time. *Uji* 有時 must be grasped from the standpoint of *muji*, 無時, that is nothingness-time. It is only when grasped from the standpoint of *muji*, or nothingness-time that *uji*, being-time, can be truly grasped as *uji*, being-time.

IV. The Truth of Being-Time

Above we said that the standpoint of being-time, which Dōgen expresses as "time is already being, and beings are all time," is possible in the self-liberating self of self-fulfilling samadhi. Based on this, when inquiring further about Dōgen's view of time and space, we must clearly establish at least the following three points.

(1) Each and every being as it is realizes all other beings, and each and every time as it is realizes all other times. It is in and through "the

²⁹ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 190.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

self' that being and time in the above sense are identical. This is the truth of being-time.

Each and every being and each and every time has a particularity irreplaceable by any other being. Dōgen refers to this as "abiding in a dharma-stage" (住法位 *ju-hōi*):

You should realize that although firewood is at the dharma-stage of firewood, and that this is possessed of before and after, the firewood is beyond before and after. Ashes are in the stage of ashes, and possess before and after. . . . Life is a stage of time, and death is a stage of time. . .³¹

But, in the *dharma-stage*—each and every *stage* which is beyond before and after—*everything* is spontaneously presenting itself. Because of this, if we discuss life and death at the present moment, at the same time that "life is a stage of time, and death is a stage of time," it is also the case that "life is the manifestation of the total dynamism (*zenki*) of all dharmas, and death is the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas."³² The notions that each and every thing is abiding in a dharma-stage and that each and every thing is the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas are not contradictory but identical with one another. In this regard we are not simply referring to life and death. We are referring to all beings and all times. Therefore, while firewood abides in the dharma-stage of firewood, it is the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas, and while ashes abide in the dharma-stage of ashes, they are the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas. While today abides in the dharma-stage of today, it is the manifestation of all dharmas. While yesterday abides in the dharma-stage of yesterday, it is the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas. While each and every being and each and every time abide in the dharma-stage of their own particularity, they are *equally* the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas. Therefore: (1) all beings are mutually nonobstructive; (2) all times are mutually nonobstructive; and (3) all beings and all times are mutually nonobstructive and mutually interpenetrating. This is well expressed in the following passages:

³¹ *Genjōkōan* p. 136.

³² *Zenki*, *DZZ* Vol. I, p. 204.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

The truth of life as the manifestation of total dynamism has nothing to do with beginning and end. Although it fills the entire earth and the entire sky, it not only does not obstruct any other life as the manifestation of total dynamism, it does not obstruct any death as the manifestation of total dynamism. Although death as the manifestation of total dynamism fills the entire earth and the entire sky, it not only does not obstruct any other death as the manifestation of total dynamism, it does not obstruct any life as the manifestation of total dynamism. Because of this, *life does not obstruct death, and death does not obstruct life.*³³

There is passageless passage (経歴 *kyōryaku*) from today to tomorrow, there is passageless passage from today to yesterday, there is passageless passage from yesterday to today. . .³⁴

You must study each and every grass and each and every phenomenon in the entire world. . . . it is by virtue of this very time that *being-time* appears at *all times* and that *being-a-grass and being-a-phenomenon* alike are *time*. *All beings of the entire universe are in time at each and every moment.* You should seriously consider whether or not *any being* in the entire universe lies outside this very moment of *time*.³⁵

*All beings in the entire universe are linked together as time's occurrence at each and every moment.*³⁶

(Italicized by author)

Furthermore, the dynamic total relationship without obstruction between being and time cannot be separated from "the self"—the self of the casting off of body-mind expressed as, "The whole universe throughout ten directions is in the light of this very self,"³⁷ and,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. 1, p. 191.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 190.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 191.

³⁷ *Kōmyō*, DZZ Vol. 1, p. 116.

“There must be time in my-self. I already am and time does not slip away.”³⁸

(2) Each and every being does not sequentially *turn into* or *become* (なる, 生成する *naru-seiseisuru*) another being, and in the same way, each and every time does not continuously *pass away* (移る, 経過する *utsuru-keikasuru*) into another time. Rather, each and every being is the *spontaneous manifestation* (現成 *genjō*) of all beings while maintaining its particular dharma-stage, and in the same way, each and every time makes a *passageless passage* (経歴 *kyōryaku*) to other times while maintaining its particular dharma-stage at this very moment.

As noted in (1) above, each and every being (for example, firewood), because it is the manifestation of the total dynamism of all dharmas while abiding in its own dharma-stage, cannot be seen as sequentially turning into or *becoming* another being (for example, ashes). The relationship of one being and another being is not a process of *becoming* (生成 *seisei*) but a spontaneous manifestation (現成 *genjō*). Dōgen expresses this by saying, “You must realize the truth of the birth of a child. . . . You should study not only that the child comes from the parent but also that the parent comes from the child. You must also study and thoroughly investigate that the moment of the arising of parent and child is the practice and attainment of the manifestation of childbirth.”³⁹ But, although the relationship of one being and another being is a spontaneous manifestation, the spontaneous manifestation itself is not understood as an event in a linear, sequential temporal dimension. As already noted, all of being-time is grasped from the standpoints of the self-liberating self, the oneness of practice and attainment, or the unceasing circulation of continuous practice in “one person practicing zazen at one time.” Therefore, it is understood in a dimension which transcends the ordinary dimension of time and space. So, at this point, the child is the total spontaneous manifestation of the self-liberating self, and the parent is the total spontaneous manifestation of the self-liberating self. It is the same with firewood and ash. Dōgen also says, “practice always possesses the capacity of spontaneously manifesting the entire universe.”⁴⁰ Thus, not only the spontane-

³⁸ Uji, DZZ Vol. I, p. 190.

³⁹ Sansuikyō, DZZ Vol. I, p. 260.

⁴⁰ Bukkyō, DZZ Vol. I, p. 311.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

ous manifestation of particular beings, but the spontaneous manifestation of the entire world including all beings are realized precisely by virtue of the capacity of authentic discipline and continuous practice.

In the same way, each and every time (for example, yesterday), because it is simultaneously the manifestation of the total dynamism of all times while abiding in its own dharma-stage, cannot be correctly seen as passing into another time (for example, today). The relationship of one time and another time must be seen not as a matter of *passing away* (経過 *keika*), but as *passageless passage* (経歴 *kyōryaku*). To see it as merely passing away is to understand time as simply *flying by*. But, Dōgen says,⁴¹

You must not understand time only as flying by. You must not study flying by as the only function of time. If time had only the one function of flying by, there would have to be a gap in time. If someone does not heed the way of being-time, it is because he sees it only as something that is slipping away.

Then, what is heeding the *way of being time*? It is to know that being-time has "the function of passageless passage." Therefore, Dōgen says,⁴²

There is passageless passage from today to tomorrow, there is passageless passage from today to yesterday, there is passageless passage from yesterday to today, there is passageless passage from today to today, and there is passageless passage from tomorrow to tomorrow.

Passageless passage does not necessarily exclude flying by or passing away. It does not simply negate the irreversibility of time. Rather, these aspects are contained within it. Passageless passage encompasses a tracing back to the origin along with flying by. Furthermore, as in "passageless passage from today to today," it includes a self-deepening and inner circulation of time itself. While passageless passage, in one sense, is always irreversible, it bears the reversal of all time from a transtemporal dimension. This is "the function of passageless

⁴¹ Uji, DZZ Vol. I, p. 191.

⁴² Ibid.

passage" which is not limited by passing away. The freely nonobstructive function of passageless passage extending throughout yesterday, today, and tomorrow as well as past, present, and future is really the spontaneous manifestation of the self-liberating self through the zazen of the oneness of practice and attainment. "As self and other are both times, practice and attainment are time."⁴³

However, "spontaneous manifestation" is not only the spontaneous manifestation of being. As Dōgen says, "Spontaneous manifestation is spontaneously manifested as the whole earth, the entire universe, all times, and all dharmas,"⁴⁴ it is spontaneously manifested in terms of every thing in time and space. That is the reason, for Dōgen, that everything is the spontaneous manifestation of true suchness (現成公案 *genjōkōan*). But, the special form constituting the spontaneous manifestation of time may be seen as the passageless passage of time.

In order to clarify the truth of being-time, if we use temporarily the term *spontaneous manifestation* only for *being* and *passageless passage* only for *time*, then we may express the following: The spontaneous manifestation of being in the entire universe is as it is the passageless passage of time throughout all times, and the passageless passage of time throughout all times is as it is inseparable from the spontaneous manifestation of being in the entire universe. But, although the spontaneous manifestation of being and the passageless passage of time are indistinguishable from one another, this does not signify that the spontaneous manifestation of being in the entire universe is a sequential appearance in a temporal process nor that the passageless passage of time throughout all times is simply the transition of life-to-death of beings in space. To interpret these aspects in such a way would be to confuse spontaneous manifestation (現成 *genjō*) with becoming (生成 *seisei*) and passageless passage (經歷 *kyōryaku*) with passing by (經過 *keika*). Spontaneous manifestation is different than becoming and transcends a sequential life-to-death transition. Also, passageless passage is different than passing away, and transcends a unidirectional process. Both of them express the dynamism in which all dharmas are totally presencing dynamically in each and every particular dharma-stage. Therefore, in the spontaneous manifestation of only a single being the entire universe

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Shoakumakusa*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 278.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

is fully realized; also, in the passageless passage of only a single time all times are universally realized. We must not overlook that each and every being unfolding in being spontaneously manifests itself directly at this very place and that each and every time is precisely the very moment of the absolute now.

(3) The truth of being-time is never realized apart from this very place (absolute here) and this very time (absolute now). This, however, does not obstruct the manifestation of particular things in all the places of limitless universal space as expressed by Dōgen, "Nothing throughout the whole world has ever been concealed."⁴⁵ And since he says that "As the time right now is all there ever is, each being-time is without exception entire time,"⁴⁶ the absolute now contains limitless universal time.

Because the truth of being-time is always realized from the standpoints of the oneness of practice and attainment, self-fulfilling samadhi, or impermanence-Buddha-nature, it constitutes a nonobjectifiable subjectivity. It is a standpoint of the self-liberating Self which has overcome the distinction of self and other. All objectification of space is overcome and the absolute here—this very place—is realized. All objectification of time is negated and the absolute now—this very moment—is realized. Apart from this very place there is no oneness of practice and attainment, and aside from this very moment it cannot be said that "impermanence is itself Buddha-nature." This is the reason why Dōgen refers to what Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng asked Nan-yüeh Huai-jang, "What is it that has thus come? [What thus appears at this place]" and says, "You must not doubt the truth of liberation at this very place."⁴⁷ Again, that is the reason he says that when you correctly study the Dharma, "the Way of Tathāgata is spontaneously manifested at this very moment."⁴⁸ But although he mentions this very place and this very moment, they do not refer to a merely particular point occupied in space or a merely particular point flowing in time. Rather, at this very place and this very moment space itself and time itself are emancipated. All beings and all times liberated from the limits

⁴⁵ *Busshō*, E.B. Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 100.

⁴⁶ *Uji*, E.B. Vol. XII, No. 1, p. 118.

⁴⁷ *Kokyō*, DZZ, Vol. I, p. 185.

⁴⁸ *Muchūsetsumu*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 244.

of time and space are distinctively manifested. If a person says that he has liberated the self and yet the mountains, rivers, and the great earth are not liberated, then this person's liberation is not a genuine one. When the self is liberated, mountains, rivers, and the great earth are simultaneously liberated. That is why Dōgen says, "The whole universe throughout the ten directions is in the radiance of the Self."⁴⁹ That is also the reason he says, "The practice of Buddha is the same as the practice of the entire universe and all sentient beings. If it is not practice with all other things, it is not yet the practice of Buddha."⁵⁰ In the same way, Dōgen says, "At the very moment of the arousing of the resolve for enlightenment, the resolve for enlightenment is aroused throughout the entire universe."⁵¹ At the very moment the self resolves to seek enlightenment the self shares the resolve for enlightenment with all beings in the entire universe. Again he says, "All sentient beings at all moments of past, present, and future in the whole universe throughout the ten directions are all Buddhas of the past, present, and future of the whole universe throughout the ten directions."⁵² All sentient beings at all times of the past, present, and future are understood to attain enlightenment simultaneously with the enlightenment of the self. From the standpoint of the absolute now the meaning of the simultaneity of practice and the simultaneity of attainment which Dōgen refers to as, "for each and every thing, one and the same undifferentiated practice, and undifferentiated realization,"⁵³ is truly realized throughout the two aspects of time and space.

Therefore, it is natural for Dōgen to make the following revision of the passage from the *Nirvana Sutra* in the fascicle "Busshō." The original is:⁵⁴

Buddha said, if you wish to know the Buddha-nature's meaning, you should watch for temporal conditions. If the time arrives, the Buddha-nature will manifest itself.

⁴⁹ *Shohōjissō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 371.

⁵⁰ *Yuibutsu-yobutsu*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 784.

⁵¹ *Shinshin gakudō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 38.

⁵² *Sangai yuishin*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 355.

⁵³ *Bendōwa* p. 137.

⁵⁴ *Busshō*, E.B. Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 102. This sentence is, as it stands, not an actual quote from the *Nirvana Sutra*, but from the *Rentōeyō*. Dōgen further changes Po-chang's words which are based on the *Nirvana Sutra*.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

Dōgen's interpretive reading is:⁵⁵

The passage "If the time arrives" means the "time is already here" and there could be no room to doubt it.

He further interprets, "'If the time arrives' is the same as saying 'it has already arrived.'" ⁵⁶ From the standpoint of the absolute now, Dōgen completely rejects as the naturalistic heresy the viewpoint which thinks, "You await a future time when the Buddha-nature will become manifest," and maintains that, "continuing your practice this way, the time of the Buddha-nature's manifestation will be encountered naturally. If the time does not come, then whether you go to a master in search of the Dharma, or negotiate the Way in concentrated practice, it is not manifested."⁵⁷ All *times* are the *temporal occasion* of the manifestation of Buddha-nature, so that a *time* which does not have the significance of *temporal occasion* does not exist at any point in the flow of limitless universal time. Such a temporal condition is not accelerated and matured by anything outside of itself. That is why Dōgen says, "The way to watch for temporal conditions is through temporal conditions."⁵⁸

Just as all times are the occasion of the manifestation of the Buddha-nature, all beings are the Buddha-nature. When Dōgen refers to "whole-being-Buddha-nature," the term Buddha-nature is not merely about *being*. At the same time, the term cannot be separated from time in the sense of the temporal occasion for the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. *Whole-being* is *Buddha-nature* at the same time that *Buddha-nature* is *time* in the sense that it is temporal conditions, as expressed in the passage, "If you wish to know Buddha-nature's meaning you should know that it is precisely temporal condition themselves."⁵⁹ Being and time are identical in terms of the *Buddha-nature*. To put it more correctly, being and time are identical in terms of the *manifestation* (現前 *genzen*) of the Buddha-nature. This is the truth of being-time. Moreover, for Dōgen, Buddha-nature in the end is neither

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

being-Buddha-nature nor nothingness-Buddha-nature, but impermanence-Buddha-nature. Therefore, in the awakening of impermanence-is-itself-Buddha-nature, the truth of being-time as the non-duality of being and time must be said to be realized.

V. Being, Time and Self

Dōgen's view of time and space seen in terms of the truth of being-time in the above discussion, as already frequently noted, is realized inseparably from the standpoint of the Self casting off body-mind or the self-liberating Self. This Self is simultaneously "the Self prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself" (the Self prior to the creation of the universe) and the "Self" which constitutes the whole universe throughout the ten directions at all times (the world of universal time and universal space) as the whole body of the Self. In that case, while all subjects and objects are mutually reversible, the subject is always the subject and the object is always the object. Self and other are non-dual but do not lose the distinction between them; and being and time are identical yet differentiable. It is only on this basis that the world of the truly free and nonobstructive creations is manifested.

In the standpoint of the ordinary self (the self-centered self) prior to the casting off of body-mind, self and other, subject and object are opposing dimensions, and therefore everything is objectified as centering around the self. This is also the world bound by time and space. When we question the meaning of original awakening and acquired awakening, Dharma-nature and practice from the standpoint of this ordinary self, they are differentiated from one another by objectification. Original awakening is regarded as a reality that is not mediated by acquired awakening, and the Dharma-nature is looked on as the goal based on practice. But, for the self-liberating Self which has cast off body-mind, the distinction of self and other, subject and object, is overcome at its root by the complete dissolution of self-centeredness, and the world of identity in which self and other are nondualistic is realized. In this experience, the boundaries of time and space are also dissolved, and the circulation of awakening extending throughout the limitless ten directions is realized. As noted above, it is awakening without a subject who awakens, and awakening without an object that

is awakened. It is self-awakening in which self-awakening self-awakens self-awakening. The self-liberating Self, or the Self of the casting off of body-mind, is nothing other than the circulation of this awakening. This is the awakening originally beyond the distinction of subject and object which is limitlessly circulating in the ten directions. Moreover, according to the passage, "The true person revealed in and through the whole universe throughout the ten directions is itself the Self,"⁶⁰ the circulation of awakening extending throughout the ten directions is truly "the *Self*." It is the Self prior to all selves, the Self which is not the ordinary self. This "Self" is not the self realized in time and space, but the "Self" through which limitless time and limitless space are in themselves realized, or the "Self" as the foundation for the realization of time and space.

Dōgen calls this "the Self prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself,"⁶¹ or "the Self prior to the *kalpa* [aeon] of the great void."⁶² But, although the "Self" is more primordial than the arising of the universe, it has no previous existence that is independent or separable from the universe. Rather, as the "Self" which is the *foundation* of the arising of time and space, it is *spontaneously manifested everywhere* throughout limitless universal space and *makes passageless passage at all times* of limitless universal time. When Dōgen says, "The whole universe throughout the ten directions is this particular true person, life and death, coming and going are the true person,"⁶³ the true person is none other than this "Self." Dōgen also says, "The place of the turning of the Dharma-wheel is the domain of mutuality and the time of mutuality. It is the body of the true person although there are distinctions among the various spheres."⁶⁴ This means that in the place of the turning of the Dharma-wheel throughout everywhere in universal space and at all times in universal time, although there are distinctions among the various spheres, these spheres are all the "Self" or the body of the true person. The "Self" is truly the "place of turning the Dharma-wheel." This is above all the Self of this very place at this very

⁶⁰ *Kōmyō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 116.

⁶¹ *Sansuikyō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 258.

⁶² *Bukkyō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 407.

⁶³ *Shinshin gakudō*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 39.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

time. That is the reason Dōgen says, "You at this very moment and I at this very moment are the persons who realize the body of the true person in the whole universe throughout the ten directions. You should learn the Way by not overlooking this point."⁶⁵ Therefore, "the Self prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself" is *you at this very moment*, and "the self prior to the *kalpa* of great void" is *I at this very moment*. It is "one person practicing zazen at one time"—the self which practices zazen at this very moment. The "Self" which practices zazen here at this very moment is simultaneously turning the Dharma-wheel everywhere in the universe at all times. This is no different than the above quoted statement,

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 everything, one and the same undifferentiated practice, and undifferentiated realization.

The dynamism of the "Self" which contains everything in universal time and universal space is fully manifested at this point.

The following passage is cited to discuss *being* in terms of the dynamism of the "Self." In "Eihei Zenji Goroku" [the recorded sayings of Dōgen of Eiheiji Temple], volume 5 of *Dōgen Oshō Kōroku*, in citing a *mondo* between Sōzan and Tokujōza, Dōgen says, "The donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey; the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey."⁶⁶ This is Dōgen's own view concerning the following question: Referring to a sentence from "The Golden Light Sutra" (*Suvarnaprabhasa-sūtra*), "The true Dharma-body of the Buddha is like the empty sky but, like the moon reflected in the water, it manifests forms in response to something,"⁶⁷ Sōzan asked Tokujōza, "Can you explain the meaning of just such a response?" In Dōgen's view, the donkey appears as the subject (the self), and the well

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *DZZ* Vol. II, p. 100.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

the object (the other). That the true Buddha-body "manifests a form in response to something" is not a phenomenon in which the donkey as subject merely sees the well as the object. Rather, it is simultaneously a phenomenon in which the well as the object sees the donkey as the subject. At this point there is a reciprocity of guest (object) and host (subject) liberated from self-centeredness. Reality transcending objectification and conceptualization is fully realized. But, however reciprocal the guest and host may be, and however interchangeable subject and object may be, it is not the case that the subject stops being the subject and the object stops being the object. The reverse is true. At this point, the subject is always realized as the subject, and the object is always realized as the object. That is the reason Dōgen says, "The well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey." This is the manifestation in which the subject is realized distinctively as the subject, and the object is realized distinctively as the object. If that is not the case, then subject and object cannot be manifested interchangeably either. In the reciprocity of guest and host, the particularity of each and every guest and host is not lost or fused. The reciprocity of guest and host is established on the basis of their distinctiveness. This is the spontaneous manifestation of being. This dynamic spontaneous manifestation of being is realized because the true Dharma-body of the Buddha (the Self that has cast off body-mind) is "like the empty sky," and is "the Self prior to the kalpa of the great void," or "the Self prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself." Here again what is called "manifesting a form in response to something" is realized.

When Dōgen says, "The donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey, the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey," the consistent point is the function of "seeing." This is seeing without a subject that sees or an object seen. It is seeing that cannot be called ordinary seeing. It is seeing in the sense of not-seeing. It is only in this sense, referred to as "the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey," that a completely nonobjectifiable subjective seeing is realized. In the free reciprocity which maintains the distinctiveness of subject and object referred to as the donkey and the well, the function of absolute "seeing" is consistent. At this point, the self which sees the world objectively is radically turned over. Although the function of absolute "seeing" is the seeing of not-seeing, nay, precisely because it is so, it is seeing which sees seeing. Or, seeing sees seeing. It is also the truth of

“manifesting a form in response to something.” The reciprocity of guest and host which maintains their distinctiveness is the “response.” “The donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey” is certainly the spontaneous manifestation of being. But in understanding the relation of subject and object in just this way, the spontaneous manifestation of being cannot be fully realized. To take it further, it is only when we understand “the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey” that the spontaneous manifestation of being is fully realized.

Now, we must discuss the passageless passage of *time* exactly in the same way we discussed the spontaneous manifestation of *being*. As previously quoted, Dōgen says, “There is passageless passage from today to tomorrow, from today to yesterday, from yesterday to today, from today to today, and from tomorrow to tomorrow. This is because passageless passage is the distinctive function of time.” He also says in the fascicle “Den’e”:⁶⁸

The robe of the true transmission of the Buddhas and patriarchs is not arbitrarily transmitted from Buddha to Buddha. It is the robe transmitted from the former Buddha to the latter Buddha, and from the ancient Buddha to the contemporaneous Buddha. It transforms the Way and it transforms the Buddha. In transforming the past, present, and future, it is the true transmission from the past to the present, from the present to the future, from the present to the past, from the present to the present, from the future to the future, from the future to the present, and from the future to the past. It is the true transmission only between a Buddha and a Buddha.

The question of being raises the basic issue of the two dimensions of subject and object, but the question of time raises the issue of the threefold aspect of past, present, and future. These issues, however, are fundamentally the same. What is the passageless passage of time? What is the true transmission of the Dharma which “transforms the Way and transforms the Buddha?” *Passageless passage* is not only the passing from yesterday to today, and from today to tomorrow, or the true transmission from past to present, and from present to future.

⁶⁸ *Den'e*, DZZ Vol. 1, p. 292.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

That cannot be said to *transform* the Way. In that case, time is objectified in a form that is understood as an irreversible process proceeding unidirectionally. That is, the self sees time as something *external* by its standing *apart* from time conceived of as a process proceeding unidirectionally. But, we do not stand outside of time. The self and time are inseparable. It is only when seen not from the outside but the inside that time is realized as nondualistically united with self. Or, to put it more accurately, it is only when it is grasped from *neither the inside nor the outside*. Here, the Self is not the ordinary self (the self-centered self) which objectifies time, but the self-liberating Self. Time realized from neither the inside nor the outside as nondualistic with the self-liberating Self is not merely irreversible time which proceeds unidirectionally, but reversible time. This simultaneously includes the direction of tracing back to the origin, referred to as, "from tomorrow to today, and from today to yesterday," or "from future to present and from present to past." The Dharma-wheel of time turns itself with the self-liberating Self as the turning place. It is only because of this that the dynamic *passageless passage of time* is realized beyond the passing away of time.

But, this alone is not a full realization of the passageless passage of time. However reversible time may be, that does not mean that the particularity of each and every aspect of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, or of past, present, and future is dissolved into a monolithic uniformity. This is exactly the same as the case that however much the reciprocity of guest and host is realized, referred to as, "the donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey," it does not indicate a merging of the particularity of each and every aspect of guest and host into a false unity. Guest and host are reciprocal, yet their distinctiveness is maintained. That is to say, subjective seeing not based on anything outside of itself is manifested, as expressed by "the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey." The exact same realization as this occurs in terms of the passageless passage of time. Dōgen says of this, "you must realize that there is passageless passage without anything outside of itself."⁶⁹ He then explains, "For example, the passageless passage of spring always makes passageless passage in-and-through spring. Although passageless passage is not just spring, since it is the

⁶⁹ Uji, DZZ Vol. I, p. 192.

passageless passage of spring, *passageless passage attains the Way now at the very time of spring.*"⁷⁰ Here, "transforming the Way and transforming the Buddha" are determined by the passageless passage of time. Therefore, however reversible time may be, in order to realize time's reversibility, there must be *passageless passage without anything outside of itself*, as expressed by "passageless passage from today to today, and from tomorrow to tomorrow." Also, there must be a *true transmission only between a Buddha and a Buddha* without anything outside of itself, as expressed by, "there is true transmission from past to past, from present to present, and from future to future." This indicates that the passageless passage of time is fully realized only when the total dynamism of time is grasped, such that the irreversibility of time is not only seen as reversible, but each and every aspect of time is seen as making passageless passage in and of itself without anything outside of itself.

VI. Dynamism of Impermanence-Buddha-Nature

Above, the spontaneous manifestation of being and the passageless passage of time were discussed separately. But, these originally are just two aspects of one and the same truth of being-time. As previously discussed, the truth of being-time cannot be realized apart from the standpoints of the oneness of practice and attainment, the unceasing circulation of continuous practice, or self-fulfilling samadhi. These standpoints are also inseparable from the standpoints of the Self that has cast off body-mind, the Self prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself, or the Self prior to the *kalpa* of the great void. In that case, we have two dynamisms. (1) One is the dynamism of the spontaneous manifestation of being in which the reciprocity of guest and host, called "the donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey," is founded on the subjective awakening to the distinctiveness of guest and host, called "the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey." (2) The other is the dynamism of the passageless passage of time in which the complete reversibility of time, called "passageless passage from yesterday to today, and from today to tomorrow, as well as from

⁷⁰ Ibid.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

tomorrow to today and from today to yesterday," is realized through the passageless passage of each and every time not based on anything outside of itself, called "passageless passage from yesterday to yesterday, from today to today, and from tomorrow to tomorrow." These two dynamisms [the dynamism of the spontaneous manifestation of being and the dynamism of the passageless passage of time] are equally grounded on the dynamism of the standpoint of the oneness of practice and attainment, or the Self that has cast off body-mind.

As previously stated, the standpoint of the oneness of practice and attainment is realized when practice and attainment are grasped in their inseparable identity. This cannot mean, however, that practice and attainment are a direct identity unmediated by the realization of some negation. Rather, as the oneness of practice and attainment was realized through the overcoming of young Dōgen's doubt concerning original awakening, attainment as ground and practice as condition form a nonduality or oneness mediated through the realization of no-Buddha-nature or impermanence-Buddha-nature. As Dōgen says, "Thus, even while one is directed to practice, he is told not to anticipate realization apart from practice,"⁷¹ the time of practice is only for diligent practice without any anticipation of attainment beyond practice itself. It is only practice practicing practice. Dōgen also says, "At the time of attainment, attainment spontaneously manifests itself as attainment without obstruction."⁷² The time of attainment is only attainment, and practice is not a prerequisite to attainment. It is only attainment attaining attainment. In this way, the absolute nature of both practice and attainment is clearly realized. Referring to the spontaneous manifestation of being, this corresponds to the distinctiveness of guest and host, expressed as "the well sees the well, the donkey sees the donkey." And referring to the passageless passage of time, this corresponds to passageless passage not based on any thing outside itself, expressed as "passageless passage from today to today, and from tomorrow to tomorrow." The oneness of practice and attainment is established precisely when attainment is realized conforming to the absolute nature of practice, and practice is realized conforming to the absolute nature of attainment. Here is the dynamism of the oneness of

⁷¹ *Bendōwa, E.B.* Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 144.

⁷² *Gabyō, DZZ* Vol. I, p. 210.

practice and attainment as expressed by the passage, "as it is *already* realization in practice, realization is endless; as it is practice in realization, practice is beginningless."⁷³ We can say that without the realization of this dynamic oneness of practice and attainment, the reciprocating nature of guest and host in terms of being, and the reversibility of past, present, and future in terms of time, cannot be realized.

For Dōgen, the dynamism of the oneness of practice and attainment is deeply based on the realization of impermanence-Buddha-nature. As mentioned before, Dōgen strongly rejects the standpoint of being-Buddha-nature while emphasizing whole-being-Buddha-nature.

How could all sentient beings be Buddha-nature? How could they have a Buddha-nature? If a sentient being were to have a Buddha-nature, he would belong with the devil-heretics. . . . *Since Buddha-nature is just Buddha-nature, sentient beings are just sentient beings.*⁷⁴

Here, we see the absolute quality of the Buddha-nature as Buddha-nature, and the absolute quality of sentient beings as sentient beings. To directly connect Buddha-nature and sentient beings is to belong with the devil-heretics. Further, Dōgen quotes the words of Po-chang in rejecting no-Buddha-nature along with being-Buddha-nature:

To preach that sentient beings have Buddha-nature is to disparage Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. To preach that sentient beings have no Buddha-nature is also to disparage Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.⁷⁵

What is Dōgen's own standpoint? Nothing other than the standpoint of impermanence-Buddha-nature as in, "Impermanence itself is Buddha-nature." Dōgen says:⁷⁶

Therefore, the very impermanency of grass and trees, thicket and forest, is itself the Buddha-nature. The very impermanency of men and things, body and mind, is the Buddha-

⁷³ *Bendōwa*, E.B. Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 144.

⁷⁴ *Busshō*, E.B. Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 74-75.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ *Busshō*, E.B. Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 93.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

nature. Nations and lands, mountains and rivers are impermanent because they are Buddha-nature.

He goes on to say,

Supreme and complete enlightenment, because it is the Buddha-nature, is impermanent. Great nirvana, because it is impermanent, is the Buddha-nature.⁷⁷

How surprising these words are! Dōgen says that enlightenment (*satori*) is impermanent because it is Buddha-nature; nirvana is the Buddha-nature *because* it is the impermanent. The dynamism of Dōgen's subjective realization reaches the fullest point here. The dynamism of the "Self" which contains all of universal space and universal time is none other than the dynamism of impermanence-Buddha-nature. Therefore, both the dynamism of the complete and spontaneous manifestation of being and the dynamism of the complete passageless passage of time attain this dynamism of impermanence-Buddha-nature.

The realization of impermanence-Buddha-nature covers limitless universal space and penetrates limitless universal time. Each and every thing in universal space and each and every moment in universal time cannot be separated from this realization. There is not one thing that is not turned in terms of impermanence-as-it-is-Buddha-nature and Buddha-nature-as-it-is-impermanence based upon this realization:

All kinds of beings [all the particularities of existence] which are being-time in darkness and light [the invisible and visible worlds] are the spontaneous manifestation and passageless passage of *my* utmost exertion. You should realize that without *my* utmost exertion at this very moment, there would be neither the spontaneous manifestation nor the passageless passage of a single dharma or a single thing.⁷⁸

This is precisely the world in which the dynamism of impermanence-itself-is-Buddha-nature unfolds. The world of creation takes place based upon the spontaneous manifestation of *my* utmost exertion and

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 192.

the passageless passage of *my* utmost exertion. The *Self* in this sense is not the ordinary self (the self-centered self). It is the self-liberating *Self* which has extricated itself from self-centeredness, the *Self* of the casting off of body-mind. Or, to put it another way, it is the *Self* prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself or the *Self* prior to the *kalpa* (aeon) of the great void. Each and every thing and each and every time of the universe can be neither spontaneously manifested nor making passageless passage without the "utmost exertion" of the *Self* prior to the universe sprouting any sign of itself, or the *Self* prior to the *kalpa* (aeon) of the great void. We must, however, not forget that this *Self* is directly the "*Self*" which at this very moment is "one person practicing zazen at one time." In this regard, Dōgen also says, "The rotation of east, west, north, and south is the arising and dissolution of this very *Self*."⁷⁹ And again, "This very moment of being-time in myself is itself being-time."⁸⁰

This is at the same time the world of self-fulfilling samadhi and the world of the spontaneous manifestation of true suchness. In this world, turning the mountains, rivers, and the great earth into the *Self* as well as turning the *Self* into the mountains, rivers and the great earth takes place.⁸¹ It is also expressed as, "We cause the mountains, rivers, earth, sun, moon, and stars to practice and conversely the mountains, rivers, earth, sun, moon, and stars cause us to practice."⁸² This is the world of the nonobstruction of things and things which "is turning both self and other."⁸³ Dōgen also says,

Even if there is resolve, practice, and attainment for a *mere instant*, this very mind itself is the Buddha: even if there is resolve, practice, and attainment in an infinitesimal entity, this very mind itself is the Buddha; even if there is resolve from immeasurable *aeons ago*, this very mind itself is the Buddha.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *Gyōji*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 141.

⁸⁰ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 190.

⁸¹ *Keiseisanshoku*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 218.

⁸² *Shoakumakusa*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 278.

⁸³ *Keiseisanshoku*, DZZ Vol. I, p. 222.

⁸⁴ *Sokushinzebutsu* DZZ Vol. I, p. 45.

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF TIME AND SPACE

Also:

The mountains and waters of this very moment are the manifestation of the Way of the primordial Buddha. . . . Because they are *active prior to the kalpa (aeon) of the great void*, they are *alive at this very moment*.⁸⁵

Time freely makes passageless passage transcending the unidirectionality of past, present, and future, and directly realizing an identity of the present moment and eternity. This is the world of the nonobstruction of times and times. If we speak from within the standpoint of the spontaneous manifestation of being-time, this has to be said:

The complete realization of all times as all beings leaves no dharma left over.⁸⁶

The nonobstruction of times and times in limitless universal time as it is *fully realized* as the nonobstruction of things and things in limitless universal space. Outside of this there is not one other thing left over. In the dynamism of the "Self" the nonobstruction of things and things and the nonobstruction of times and times are identical and result in one single nonobstruction. This is the truth of impermanence-Buddha-nature, expressed by, "Impermanence itself is the Buddha-nature." The world of being-time realizes that the nonobstruction of things and things itself is the nonobstruction of times and times, and the nonobstruction of times and times is the nonobstruction of things and things. This is the world of creation in its deepest sense.

The world in which we live is the world of the spontaneous manifestation of true suchness. It is the world making passageless passage at this very moment. It is always the world of impermanence, but because it is ever impermanent, it is an ever-creative world.

Translated by Steven Heine

⁸⁵ *Sansuikyō*, DZZ Vol. 1, p. 258.

⁸⁶ *Uji*, DZZ Vol. 1, p. 192.