

REVIEW ARTICLE

Truth and Method in Dōgen Scholarship

A Review of Recent Works

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Translations

Thomas Cleary, trans. *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. Pp. 123.

Hee-Jin Kim, trans. *Flowers of Emptiness: Selections from Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*. Lewiston/Queenston; The Edward Mellon Press, 1985. Pp. xviii + 346.

Nishiyama Kōsen, and John Stevens, trans. *Dōgen Zenji's Shōbōgenzō (The Eye and Treasury of the True Law)*. Sendai, Japan: Daihokkaikaku, 1975-1983. 4 vols.

Tanahashi Kazuaki, ed. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985. Pp. xii + 356.

Yokoi Yuho, trans. *The Shōbō-genzō*. Tokyo: Sankibo Buddhist Bookstore, 1986. Pp. 876.

Commentaries

William R. LaFleur, ed. *Dōgen Studies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (The Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 2), 1985. Pp. 185.

I. Introduction: The Relation between Truth and Method

The publication over the past few years of several new Dōgen translations and commentaries highlights the increasing intensification and specialization in English-language studies of the field. The translations now make available two complete versions of the *Shōbōgenzō* as well as numerous renderings reflecting different approaches and emphases of almost all of the most philosophically important fascicles. An assessment of these can indicate how much progress has been made toward a

“definitive” (thorough and accurate) English edition of Dōgen's masterwork in addition to the obstacles that remain in reaching that goal. The secondary literature explores diverse methodologies, including phenomenology, hermeneutics, theology, ethics, and historiography, to uncover the essential meaning and significance of Dōgen's thought in a contemporary and comparative context. It focuses on such key issues as Dōgen's relation to Chinese Zen and Japanese Tendai, the role of language and kōan in the transmission of Dharma, the unities of practice-attainment and body-mind, and the moral and social implications of authentic awakening. The combined impact of the two sets of material is to focus attention on why such a deep interest in Dōgen, once long-dormant, continues to escalate. What is the inherent attractiveness of Dōgen's writing; how can its distinctively evocative power best be conveyed in translation and interpretation; and is there a need for so many approaches—do they enhance or restrict our understanding?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these new works in disclosing the true meaning of Dōgen, it is necessary to situate their place in the context of modern Dōgen scholarship. The life and works of Dōgen have been increasingly recognized from many scholarly perspectives for their special contribution to the history of both Japanese and Buddhist thought. For example, in one of the earliest Western accounts of Dōgen which cites the work of Masunaga Reihō, a leading Sōtō scholar who also published what is perhaps the first English translation of Dōgen's writing, Heinrich Dumoulin accords Dōgen the following praise:

Many are proud of this ‘unique religious personality, arisen from the very heart of Japanese culture,’ as the embodiment of the best elements in the Japanese genius. Indeed, it may well be that Dōgen is the strongest and most original thinker that Japan has so far produced. Doubtless he was a man of singular magnetism. His writings preserve for posterity his genuine humanity and his creative thought.¹

¹ Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism*, tr. Paul Pressey (Boston, Beacon Press, 1963), p. 151. Dumoulin cites Masunaga Reihō, *Eihei Shōbōgenzō—Dōgen no shukyō* (Tokyo, 1956).

What constitutes the apparent “uniqueness” of Dōgen? The central factor seems to be a consistent and uncompromising religious vision underlying the complex connections between philosophical writings, admonitions for zazen and strict monastic training, and a sense of personal dedication in his approach to Zen theory and practice. Dōgen's unique quality is captured in what has become the standard account of his background and development. This standard account functions in many ways as a “sacred myth”—though this is not always acknowledged—if that term is used in the non-judgemental and value-free sense of referring to an expression that strictly may be neither historically real nor unreal, but is symbolically significant for conceptual or soteriological reasons. The question of whether the account can lie beyond or must be subject to verifiability, and the implications for interpreting Dōgen's thought, are addressed in Carl Bielefeldt's article in *Dōgen Studies*, to be considered below.

The standard account focuses on at least five major stages of Dōgen's renunciation of various aspects of the mainstream culture and religion of his time in favor of a spiritually purer and philosophically richer creativity. These include:

1. Dōgen's departure from the aristocratic society in which he was born to pursue the Dharma at the age of 13 in 1212 based on his personal sense of sorrow due to the early death of his parents that was revelatory of the universality of impermanence;
2. his dissatisfaction with conventional Tendai Buddhism on Mount Hiei because of his doubt about the necessity of resolve and practice in light of the original enlightenment doctrine that all sentient beings are endowed with an innate Buddha-nature;
3. his disdain for both the laxity and overemphasis on kōan-introspection of Zen masters in Sung China, until his breakthrough experience of casting off body-mind (*shinjin-datsuraku* 身心脱落) during intensive training in zazen-only (*shikan-taza* 只管打坐) under Sōtō master Nyojō (C. Ju-ching) in 1225;
4. after returning to Japan, his continuing refusal of involvement with Court government or religious institutions, leading to the establishment of Eiheiji Temple in remote Echizen province in 1244;

5. his rejection of the customary Rinzai forms of transmission which tended to deny the efficacy of language in attaining a non-conceptual awakening, by his composing the expressionally innovative and philosophically complex *Shōbōgenzō*.

According to this account, Dōgen absorbs and reflects many influences, including esoteric and exoteric Mahayana, Japanese Tendai and the “new” Kamakura Buddhism, Chinese Zen and Japanese culture. But each aspect of his career is seen as bearing the particular stamp of his philosophical identity and religious integrity. If a preeminent thinker is defined as someone who transcends or remains unlimited by both the predecessors who have had an impact on his development and the followers who have tried to apply his teachings, Dōgen would apparently qualify.

Although distilled from Dōgen's writings and traditional biographical sources, the formulation and widespread acceptance of the standard account has been accomplished only in the 20th century after hundreds of years in which Dōgen was lost in obscurity. Stimulated by Watsuji Tetsurō's famous 1925 essay, “Shamon Dōgen” (“Dōgen the Monk”),² one of a series on the foundations of Japanese spirituality, Dōgen scholarship has progressed in the fields of philosophy, cultural history and literary criticism in addition to Buddhist history and thought. Leading thinkers and scholars have viewed Dōgen's life and works as one of the most important and fundamental keys to understanding the structure and function of Japanese language, morality, metaphysics, aesthetics, and religious values. The non-sectarian investigations have helped rekindle the efforts of Sōtō scholars, who are among the leaders in textual and biographical studies of Dōgen.

² A good example of the reevaluation of some of the stereotypical or set interpretations of Dōgen Zen is presented by Francis Cook, who argues that it is unfair and inappropriate to view Dōgen as supporting gradual enlightenment in opposition to sudden enlightenment, as there are both gradualist and suddenist elements in his teaching. See Cook, “Enlightenment in Dōgen's Zen,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1983), pp. 7–30. For a discussion of self-power and other-power in Dōgen's thought, see my, “Dōgen Casts off ‘What’: An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 53–70.

The standard account of Dōgen seems to have evolved through the interaction of these diverse approaches. Despite the development of a modern and more objective methodology than had been used in the sectarian tradition, the overall effect has been not to discredit but to greatly enhance the evaluation of Dōgen's uniqueness. He has been placed not only at the peak of Japanese thought but as a leading figure in international religion and philosophy. As various aspects of Dōgen's career have been explored with increasing depth and originality, the status of the standard account, with few exceptions, has been strengthened by both sectarian and non-sectarian sources. At its best, the exchange between the disciplines and attitudes has been fruitful and mutually constructive. Yet the question can be raised whether some of the basic presuppositions implicit in the standard account have been fully and critically investigated.

A translation or interpretation that attempts to highlight the special quality of Dōgen's writings reflects a particular approach to the truth and method of the standard account, especially the 3rd and 5th stages which stress Dogen's view of language in relation to enlightenment that contrasts with other forms of Zen. The translator must deal directly or indirectly with the issue of Dōgen's criticism of the Rinzai view of the kōan, the philosophy of language he advocates, and how it is demonstrated in his use of discourse as a means of expressing the experience of realization. The commentator selects a method which seeks to appropriate the inner essence of Dōgen's work that derives from personal attainment while keeping a critical distance, and allows the reader to empathize without losing objectivity.

The diversity of available approaches seems to be a response to the paradoxical and multifaceted levels of truth in Dōgen's thought expressed in what often appears as an ambiguous and abstract Sino-Japanese prose that demands alternative means of access. Perhaps no single method is suitable to articulate or explicate the full significance of Dōgen's experientially based writing. Yet this variety also indicates that Dōgen studies may now risk being overwhelmed by a proliferation of competing perspectives, in some ways overlapping and reinforcing and in others conflicting and contradictory. Within the context of the alternative renderings and commentaries, any particular standpoint may clarify one passage or issue but leave an unclear impression about another, or cast an inevitable shadow on some aspect of the field by its

partial illumination. At the same time, some of the most crucial concerns about Dōgen's thought remain problematic and controversial—for example, his relation to the key persons and doctrines that influenced him, as well as the role of self-power and other-power, sudden and gradual enlightenment, kōan-introspection and silent-illumination in his religious practice.³

On what basis can the methods themselves be evaluated? Watsuji's early essay foreshadows the complexity of the current situation in the field in his discussion of what can be referred to as the fundamental methodological paradoxicality underlying approaches to the central aim of locating the "truth" (*shinri* 真理) of Dōgen. In order to achieve that goal, Watsuji raises and then refutes two possible objections to a modern, nonsectarian perspective. First, how can an outsider such as himself discuss religious experience without reducing its profundity and heights to shallowness and superficiality? Also, can the method of intellectual history, which views reality in objective and relative terms, interpret the claim of absolute and eternal truth embodied by great religious personalities? Watsuji responds to his questions by arguing that because of both the impurity of contemporary Zen temples and the historically determined nature of religious truth (as reflected in Dōgen's own view of the temporality of the Buddha-nature), historical scholarship actually leads to the most genuine understanding. Thus, an "outsider" may be paradoxically more inside the essence of Dōgen than a so-called "insider"; an objectivist approach can come closer to the truth than one which presumes its constancy.

An assessment of Watsuji's contention is not in question here. But the impact of his discussion is the radical reevaluation and relativization of the connections between the methods of the insider and outsider in terms of practice, and of the perspectives of objectivism and absolutism in regard to truth. Over half a century after Watsuji, the matter of defining the substance and implications of these standpoints has become more difficult as the boundaries between them are increasingly tenuous. For Watsuji, an outsider was someone who did not participate in the institutionalized praxis of the sect, although he may have

³ Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977), vol. 4. The importance of Watsuji's essay is cited in William R. LaFleur's introduction to *Dōgen Studies*.

done zazen or some form of meditation. From that definition, most English-language interpreters would be looked on as outsiders. But Watsuji's view of methodological paradoxicality sets the precedent and standard for a scholar or thinker to be considered genuinely inside from a variety of rationale. These include an existential sense of sharing an illuminative experience or idea as in *Dōgen Studies* author Thomas P. Kasulis's notion of "philosophical intimacy" with Dōgen's skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, or Francis H. Cook's view of himself as a "Buddhologist" (the Buddhist equivalent of a theologian). The insider mode might range from Tanahashi Kazuaki and colleagues whose translations reflect their involvement in American Zen center practice, to Hee-Jin Kim's emphasis on the role of "reason" (*dōri* 道理) as the basis of Dōgen's alchemical ability to manipulate language, and finally Bielefeldt's skeptical historiography which seeks to "recarve" the standard account stripped of any apparent hagiography.

The difficulty in defining the method and perspective of any approach is compounded by several factors. First, the relation between insider and outsider is constantly shifting. Therefore, what appears to be outside from one angle may seem like an insider position from another. For example, to a strict traditionalist, the notion of philosophical intimacy would be labelled an outsider view, but for the modern objective historian, it would probably represent an insider standpoint. Another factor is the variability in correspondence between the selection of method and the understanding of truth. Generally, an insider method is absolutist in considering the religious truth claim to have an enduring validity, and an outsider is objectivist in viewing truth as historical and relative. But, it is certainly possible for an outsider to be—or be considered—an absolutist. Watsuji, for instance, thought of himself as objective, but he shares the presupposition of an essential truth in Dōgen that awaits discovery. Conversely, an insider who uses modern textual criticism to some extent may hold an objectivist position. Underlying the connections between truth and method is the implicit judgement about the aim and value of each approach. Does it seek the advancement of scholarship, the development of comparative thought, the dissemination of Zen, or the growth of personal identity?

Beyond these concerns is the issue of whether it is desirable or even possible for a translator or interpreter to avoid some adherence to the

absolutist position and maintain a fidelity to Dōgen's use of language. In his study of Dōgen's rereading and rewriting of material from the Mahayana sutra and Zen recorded saying literature, for example, Kagamishima Genryū argues that one of the main aspects of Dōgen's creativity is "the transmutation of a source passage which has a relative meaning into an expression of the absolute."⁴ Kagamishima cites the example of Dōgen's reinterpretation of the term *tajintsu* (literally "seeing into other's minds" 他心通), which was conventionally criticized as a distracting by-product of meditation, to divulge the radical overcoming of the subject/object dichotomy. If the transformation to absolutism—that is, the effort to transmit the absolute on its own terms by eliminating any trace of objectification—is indeed basic to Dōgen's writing style, then the method of study should convey the meaning and significance of this aim beyond the conventional distinction of reality and illusion. It must attempt to leap into the midst of the essence of Dōgen by perceiving, appropriating and applying its relevance. On the other hand, as LaFleur points out in the fascinating introduction to *Dōgen Studies*, a hypothetical roundtable discussion between philosophers, textual critics, and social scientists, a work on Dōgen should also be sensitive to discrepancies of correctness and inaccuracy, fact and fiction in translation and historical studies. Fidelity to the absolute Dōgen seeks to express does not erase the need for a hierarchical judgement about truth or falsity relative to the particular passage or issue in question.

II. An Examination of the Translations

A definitive translation of the *Shōbōgenzō* requires completeness, thoroughness, and reliability. First, a complete rendering would cover all of the fascicles in the standard Japanese editions. Dōgen was apparently never able to finish composing the 100 fascicles he projected as a goal. There are numerous Japanese versions of the *Shōbōgenzō* generally ranging from 75- to 95-fascicles, but Ōkubo Dōshu's *Com-*

⁴ Kagamishima Genryū, *Dōgen zenji to in'yō kyōten-goroku no kenkyū* (Tokyo, Mokujisha, 1965), p. 72.

plete Works,⁵ generally considered the definitive critical edition, includes 92-fascicles (75 basic or “earlier writings,” which tend to be more philosophical, 12 “later writings,” which are generally more monastic, and 5 “miscellaneous writings”). The Terada-Mizuno Iwanami edition⁶ includes 88 fascicles (87 plus “Bendōwa”). Most scholars agree that the material beyond the 92nd fascicle is of questionable authenticity. The translator would probably be expected to follow Ōkubo unless there are textual reasons to do otherwise. Although the sequence of fascicles does not affect their meaning or the connection between them, the Ōkubo edition beginning with “Genjōkōan” again seems standard. Also, the translator should be aware of scholarship based on a study of various medieval manuscripts, many discovered recently in Sōtō temples and libraries, which affects an assessment of the accuracy of the various Japanese editions.⁷

The thoroughness of the translation is based on its using traditional and modern commentaries to support a careful word-by-word analysis that clarifies the literal meaning and opens up the philosophical implications of every passage. (A high standard has already been established by the Norman Waddell-Abe Masao series of Dōgen translations that appeared in *The Eastern Buddhist*.) The translator may use annotations and glossaries to inform the reader about the connections between Dōgen’s writings and the source of his references to Chinese and Japanese texts. Since Dōgen frequently and freely quotes Mahayana and Zen literature, these links are often direct and easily justifiable. At other times they are more speculatively based and developed by a long scholastic tradition. The annotations should also point out internal cross references in the *Shōbōgenzō* as well as Dōgen’s collected writings.

Reliability is a matter of consistency and impeccability in the context

⁵ Ōkubo Dōshū, ed. *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969–1970). Ōkubo’s text includes an appendix to three fascicles to comprise 95-fascicles. For a discussion of textual issues, see Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 312–318.

⁶ Terada Tōru and Mizuno Taoko, eds., *Dōgen*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970 and 1972).

⁷ For a discussion of the *Shōbōgenzō* texts, see Kawamura Kōdō, “Shōbōgenzō,” *Dōgen no chosaku in Koza Dōgen 3* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1980), pp. 1–73.

of Dōgen's overall religious and philosophical aims and ideas. The translation must strike a balance between the literal and the abstract or symbolic levels of writing based on an understanding of Dōgen's own expectations about the role of language. In a key passage in the "San-suikyō" fascicle (cited in Kim's introduction), Dōgen explains his view that language is not an obstacle or barrier to realization, but the essential vehicle for exploring and articulating the enlightenment experience. He refutes what he considers the overemphasis of Sung Chinese masters on the use of illogical and incomprehensible utterances that deny rather than utilize the disclosive potentiality of language. According to Dōgen, the illogical approach sees discourse as a skillful means used to defeat the "entangling vines" of conceptual thought (to quote the metaphor from the "Kattō" fascicle also discussed in "San-suikyō"). Dōgen claims that such a view fails to see how language can effectively disentangle the vines of discrimination through the use of those very vines. "It is a pity," he writes, "that they do not know that thought is discourse, or that discourse releases (or breaks through) thought." (*Aware beshi, karera nenryo no goku naru koto wo shirazu, goku no nenryo wo tōdatsu suru koto wo shirazu.* あわれむべし、かれら念慮の語句なることをしらず、語句の念慮を透脱することやしらず。) Thus, the method of translation requires an attunement to Dōgen's understanding of the truth of language as a means of expressing enlightenment.

The two complete translations of the *Shōbōgenzō* are Yokoi and Nishiyama/Stevens. Actually, the current work by Yokoi Yuhō, a handsomely bound Japanese publication that may not get the distribution it deserves in the West, contains 80 fascicles (75 plus 5). It can be considered a complete rendering of the Ōkubo text if combined with Yokoi's previous translation of the 12 "later writings" in *Zen Master Dōgen* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976). Yokoi's translation is word-by-word and in many ways it can be counted upon. Each fascicle includes a brief introduction explaining the main terminology and ideas in the text, and annotations that give some of the internal and external references. This version tries to provide a definitive translation in a single package, though it is sometimes marred by a lack of precision and the tendency to leave untranslated key terms, often titles, used by Dōgen in many of the fascicles.

Dōgen's writing often consists of an innovative and playful

manipulation of the characters in a traditional Buddhist term or phrase to draw out subtle and frequently paradoxical implications. Yokoi's rendering of the terms is sometimes quite interesting from a philosophical standpoint, as in the case of "spiritual communion between master and disciple" for *kattō* (literally, "tangled vines" 葛藤) and "visionary blossoms in the sky" for *kūge* ("flowers in the sky" 空華). But by leaving the terms in transliteration rather than translation in many key passages in the body of the fascicles, the Yokoi version becomes confusing and at times misleading. One problematic example occurs in "Muchū-setsumu" ("Disclosing a Dream within a Dream" 夢中說夢), based on a term Dōgen borrows from the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* referring to the relation between delusion and enlightenment, which Yokoi translates as "Expounding a Dream in its Realm." First, the failure to repeat the word "dream" (*mu* 夢) that appears twice in the original phrase loses the implication that Dōgen seeks to extract regarding the complex interplay of two provisionally separate states of mind based on a non-dualistic reality. Then Yokoi translates a key passage as, "[In other words] they see enlightenment in its realm, so we call this *muchū-setsumu*. . . . The land and the training assembly of the Buddhas or teachings and the sermon assembly of the patriarchs—all this is enlightenment in its realm, and a expounding a dream in its realm." (p. 341–2) In the first sentence above, the transliteration fails to get across the expressional connection between "enlightenment in its realm," or "manifesting enlightenment within enlightenment" (証中見証), and "disclosing a dream within a dream." Also, the second reference to enlightenment is actually a contrast with the first phrase so the passage should conclude, ". . . enlightenment beyond enlightenment (証上而証) and disclosing a dream within a dream."

The Nishiyama/Stevens translation consists of 92 fascicles from the Ōkubo text. However, the sequence presented does not follow Ōkubo and is not explained by the translators. Each volume does include an index and occasional annotations. The first two volumes by Nishiyama Kosen and John Stevens appeared in the later 1970's. The final volumes, published in 1982–1983, were done by Nishiyama with the assistance of John Stevens, among others. The earlier books have been criticized in other reviews for paraphrases, deletions, and misleading renderings that seem partially attributable to an overdependence on some of the *gendaiyaku* (modern Japanese translations) rather than a

careful following of the original text.⁸ The third and fourth volumes show improvement in most instances and seem more reliable than the previous efforts. To be sure, this remains the most popular and least scholarly translation which has a primarily *via negativa* use for the specialist. Yet, it can be helpful for readability and completeness as well as a comparison with the other renderings.

The issue is whether looseness for the sake of accessibility is useful or counterproductive. An example of how this approach appears limited occurs in the rendering of the critical opening passage of the “Busshō” fascicle in which Dōgen transforms the *Nirvana Sutra* saying, “All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature,” which may have the dualistic implication that the Buddha-nature is an object to be possessed, into “all beings are Buddha-nature” or “whole-being-Buddha-nature” (*shitsu-u-busshō* 悉有仏性) based on the twofold meaning of the word *u* as “to have” and “to be.” Nishiyama translates the source phrase as, “All sentient beings totally possess Buddha-nature,” and Dōgen’s rereading as, “‘Totally possess’ is Buddha-nature,” thereby losing both the wordplay and the non-objectifying aim of Dōgen’s philosophical interpretation. The use of “totally possess” also causes the translation of several subsequent passages in Dōgen’s commentary to come across as vague and even incomprehensible. For instance, Nishiyama has, “We must know that the ‘possess’ of ‘totally possess’ is not related to possession or non-possession” (p. 120), instead of, “You must realize that the being which the Buddha-nature makes whole-being is not the being of [the conventional opposition of] being and non-being.” And again, “‘Totally possess’ does not mean a myriad of things, nor unified existence” (p. 122), rather than, “Whole-being is neither a multiplicity of forms nor a uniform identity.”

Kim’s *Flowers of Emptiness* is the first of three volumes to include selections from the 92-fascicle Ōkubo text. Volume 1 contains material from the first 30 fascicles of the 75 “earlier writings.” Its annotations give a comprehensive view of both Dōgen’s sources and Kim’s helpful interpretations of important and difficult passages. (Kim’s version of “Busshō,” the longest fascicle, has 87 notes, many of them rather lengthy.) The bibliography and glossary are also effective tools. In

⁸ Thomas Kasulis, “The Zen philosopher: A review article on Dōgen scholarship in English,” *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 28, no. 3 (July 1978), pp. 353–373.

many ways, Kim's translation is the most precise, dependable, and illuminating of the current ones. Although it is possible to argue any given point, Kim can be counted on for accuracy as well as a consistency and insight which allows the multiple levels of Dōgen's wordplay and philosophical meanings to unfold.

Nevertheless, Kim can be criticized for the fundamental decision to translate portions rather than the entirety of each fascicle by excluding "the explicitly autobiographical and historical sections." (p. ix) On the one hand, the reader simply wishes to see the whole effort which might put us at the threshold of a definitive edition. But the deeper point is that the sections Kim leaves out are sometimes inadequately marked by ellipsis, often disrupt the continuity of the writings, and frequently seem due to a questionable and subjective judgement. They include sections that are both philosophically important and crucial to a grasp of the fascicle, such as the whole poem by Wanshi Shōgaku (C. Hung-chih Cheng-chueh) entitled "Zazenshin" on which the fascicle by that name is based.

Yet the material Kim does translate is invariably strong and should always be consulted. An example of the effectiveness of Kim's method can be seen in his handling of the aforementioned sentence in "Busshō" in which Dōgen refuses to define "whole-being" in terms of either multiplicity or uniformity. According to Kim: "'All existence' is neither a motley of myriad piece nor a single iron rod." (p. 69) By sticking to the literal meaning of the final phrase (一条鉄), which also appears later in the fascicle, and then using a vivid word like "motley" to characterize the world of differentiation, the translation gets across the underlying significance in a concrete way. In contrast, Yokoi uses a more philosophical rendering that is no less accurate but does not capture the physical image: "This totality is neither many separate entities nor one whole." (p. 23)

Another illustration of Kim's approach in relation to the other translators involves a comparison of the various renderings of a key sentence in "Sansuikyō," mentioned above, concerning the relation between thought and discourse, or the role of conceptualization and language in experiencing and explaining enlightenment. This sentence is crucial to an understanding of Dōgen's view of language and his critique of Sung Zen masters. Although in some ways rather simple and straightforward, it presents a number of grammatical and

philosophical thorns to the translator which can result in a confusion about the author's intentions. First, the word *no* in the opening phrases of the second and third clauses should be read not as the possessive "of" but as the particle *ga* indicating that the preceding word is the subject of the clause. Also, the inversion of these phrases, *nenryo no goku* 念慮の語句 and *goku no nenryo*, suggests a paradoxical element that is reinforced by the two meanings, or at least double-edged meaning, of "thought" (*nenryo*) as a process that is both positive and negative. Finally, the verb *tōdatsu suru* (literally "to penetrate or permeate" + "to expel or escape" 透脱) indicates a twofold significance of overcoming and exploiting in relation to thought.

The translations read as follows:

- Nishiyama/
Stevens: It is a very sorry thing that they are unaware of the inadequacy of their cognition; they do not realize that the words of the Buddhas and Patriarchs transcend ordinary cognition. (vol. II, p. 166)
- Cleary: What a pity—they do not know that thoughts are verbal expressions; they don't know that verbal expressions transcend thoughts. (p. 92)
- Yokoi: Unfortunately, they know neither that thinking and discrimination are words, not that the latter are beyond the former! (p. 361)
- Tanahashi: How sad that they do not know about the phrases of logical thought, or penetrating logical thought in the phrases and stories! (p. 101)
- Kim: How pitiable are they who are unaware that discriminating thought *is* words and phrases, and the words and phrases *liberate* discriminating thought! (p. 298)

The first version loses the second clause of the original in paraphrase and gives a partial view of Dōgen's meaning in the third clause. By translating the term *tōdatsu* as "transcend," it suggests that language is beyond thought, which is one aspect of the sentence's significance, but does not convey the sense that language is the self-extricating potential of thought itself. That is, language at once transcends or is eman-

culated *from* thought and *allows* thought to transcend or break through itself through the disentangling vines of entanglement. Although Cleary and Yokoi are more grammatically accurate, they also seem to miss the author's intention by using "transcend" and "beyond."

Both Tanahashi and Kim genuinely capture Dōgen's twofold sense of releasing language from and to thought with "penetrate" and "liberate." Tanahashi misreads the grammar in the first half of the sentence, and his translation of *nenryo* as "logical thought" seems too strong. The philosophical point seems to come through more emphatically and convincingly in Kim's version, yet his use of "discriminating thought" implies a dualistic and conceptual approach to thinking which is somewhat misleading. The neutral terms "thought" or "deliberation," which suggest both inauthentic conceptualization and genuine self-reflection are more appropriate. Whereas Cleary, Yokoi, Tanahashi, and Kim all strive for a word-by-word accuracy and fidelity to the text, in the case of translating Dōgen, strict grammatical correctness is not always a sufficient criterion for a clear and readable rendering. If literal accuracy is not based on a solid philosophical grasp of the author's intention, the result may be a vagueness and ambiguity that does not capture but rather obfuscates the original paradoxicality. The general rule for translation seems to be that the most careful and philosophical version is also the least abstruse and most easily understood.

Although it is not incumbent on a translator to write analytic pieces, Kim's introductory essay on "Language in Dogen's Zen" (which also appears in *Dōgen Studies* under a different title) highlights the relation between a method of translation and the understanding of truth. Kim critiques, from Dōgen's standpoint, what he labels the "instrumentalist" view of the koan as a strategic spiritual device designed to create a psychological impasse followed by a dramatic breakthrough to a realm beyond rationality. He shows that Dōgen, on the other hand, sees language not as inherently illogical or potentially exhaustible, but as the continuously liberating and transformative unfolding of "reason" reflective of the inner dynamism of the "realization-koan" (*genjō-kōan* 現成公案). For Kim, Dōgen is an alchemist who turns the raw material of ordinary words, whose enriched possibilities usually remain unrecognized, into magical and metaphorical manifestations of

enlightenment. He supports this approach with dozens of examples of Dōgen's reshuffling and reworking of the multiple levels of meaning in Chinese ideographs and Japanese pronunciations, frequently based on and sometimes surpassing Japanese studies by Kagamishima Genryū and Terada Tōru. Kim's essay, however, tends to overdraw the contrast between Dogen's language and earlier Zen masters' creative expressions which also developed rich textures of verbal communication in light of the injunction to "not rely on words and letters" (*furyū monji* 不立文字). He also fails to explain the meaning of "reason" in Dōgen, and whether it can be seen as comparable to *logos* when its poetic and evocative style make it appear to be a form of *mythos*. Or does Dōgen's writing represent a unique combination of the two forms of thought and expression?

The translations by Tanahashi and Cleary each contain a number of *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles done in a careful and thoughtful manner. *Moon in a Dewdrop*, edited and co-translated by Tanahashi and over a dozen collaborators from the San Francisco Zen Center, includes twenty fascicles, four other short instructional texts, and a brief selection of Dōgen's Japanese and Chinese poetry. The translations are clear and dependable, though the presentation of each fascicle in numbered sections may be seen as misrepresenting the text. On the other hand, the ordering of the *Shōbōgenzō* into four categories, covering practice, philosophy, poetic imagery, and transmission, is a new and helpful guideline for understanding the diverse aspects of Dōgen's thought. *Moon* is also noteworthy for its supplementary material, including an exhaustive glossary/index highlighting the influence of Chinese sources on Dōgen's writing that stands on its own as a valuable contribution to English-language studies. Thomas Cleary offers thirteen fascicles with an interesting introductory essay and notes that also stress how the *Shōbōgenzō* is grounded in Chinese Buddhist literature. Though generally accurate and thorough, this translation sometimes uses contemporary idioms for technical terms, such as "the whole works" for *zenki* (generally "total dynamism" 全機), which may appear inappropriate.

To sum up the main strengths of the various translations: Kim is the most solid and is especially useful for the specialist; Tanahashi's volume may serve as one of the best textbooks available to introduce Dōgen given its selection of fascicles and glossary; Yokoi is the clearer

of the complete translations; Cleary (along with Tanahashi and Kim) greatly advances an understanding of Dogen's connection to Chinese works; Nishiyama/Stevens gives another accessible version.

III. An Examination of the Commentaries

Dōgen Studies is an anthology consisting of article originally presented by some of the leading figures in Zen and Japanese studies at a 1981 Kuroda Institute conference on the contemporary meaning of Watsuji's view of Dōgen as "belonging to mankind." The connecting thread is the exploration of various methodologies in relation to the truth of Dōgen. LaFleur's hypothetical debate among various specialists who echo the book's contributors indicates the complexity of the current hermeneutic situation. A continuous blurring and refocusing of some of the seemingly rigid and stereotypical dividing lines between disciplines allows for crossover affinities, such as the "second philosopher's" advocacy of an historicist rather than speculative approach to philosophy. The main disagreement in the book, however, is between Carl Bielefeldt's positivist historiography, which seeks to debunk on objective grounds what he considers the dogmatic fabrications and "immaculate hagiographical shell" surrounding the standard account, and the absolutist view of Kim, Kasulis, and Cook who, despite divergences, all seek to locate and divulge the relevance of the meaning of Dōgen. Bielefeldt doubts the validity and veracity of Dōgen's Zen, which he views not as a single, unified entity, but as variable, inconsistent and plural, and he insists on separating truth from falsity. The other scholars debate the means of illuminating the already presupposed transcendent truth.

Bielefeldt focuses his criticism on the third stage of the standard account, the transmission of Dharma from Nyojō to Dogen, which he claims is clouded by inconsistency and fabrication due to sectarian motivations. He argues that the Nyojō's transmission of the doctrines of *shinjin-datsuraku* (casting off body-mind) and *shikan-taza* (zazen-only) did not take place as recorded in traditional biographical material such as *Hōkyōki* and *Kenzeiki*. Rather, it is a product of Dōgen's exaggerated emphasis on his Chinese mentor and coterminous harsh attacks on Chinese Rinzai masters such as Daie Sōkō (C. Ta-hui Tsung-kao) in the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles written in the period beginning 1240–1241

(the fourth stage of the standard account). Dōgen was at that time bent on criticizing rivals who were forcing him to flee Kyoto for Echizen as well as enticing potential converts. On the basis of such secularized considerations by which Dōgen supposedly revised or created his view of Nyojō, Bielefeldt questions the authenticity of Dōgen's Zen, which he says should "not undergo historical development," (p. 26) but "must be one with the understanding of his master." (p. 47)

This method of research largely based on non-sectarian scholars including Yanagida Seizan, Masutani Fumio, and Imaeda Aishin challenges modern Dōgen studies to continue to examine and expose layers of encrusted dogmatism which may be prevalent in the standard account. It helps open the shell of hagiography so that "we shall at least begin to see [Dōgen] as a man," (p. 47) thereby fulfilling one of Watsuji's initial aims. Yet, Bielefeldt's approach has several fundamental shortcomings. First, he frequently berates recent "Sōtō apologists" without ever naming them or reconstructing their arguments, and he overlooks the role of high-pitched rhetorical criticism in Zen (and other religious works), such as Daie's well-known stridency toward Wanshi. More importantly, Bielefeldt does not take into account the creativity in Dōgen's writing, especially his consistent and comprehensive philosophical rationale for the ever-changing nature of the transmission of the Dharma in such key doctrines as the "passage of being-time" (*uji no kyōraku* 有事の経歴) and the "sustained exertion" (*gyōji* 行持) of practice beyond Buddhahood. Thus, Bielefeldt's charge that Dōgen's apparent change of mind undermines his expression of truth is untenable for two reasons: first, the argument is not substantiated here on strict historical grounds and perhaps never can be due to difficulties in accurately reconstructing the era in question; second, it fails to account for Dōgen's main claim that transiency itself is the nature of existence and thus of the transmission.

The absolutist response to the historian's position stresses that truth and untruth are primordially interpenetrating in that the supposed untruth of poetic imagery, religious symbolism, and levels of subjective awareness can be as real as truth in nourishing and enhancing the enlightenment experience. Thus, the method of inquiry must be unfaithful to the truth—and not the other way around—which encompasses and redeems apparent untruth. Kasulis attempts to resolve the relation between truth and untruth by submerging it in the notion of

philosophical intimacy, which he maintains is derived from a hermeneutic listening to Dogen's own theory of hermeneutics. That is, Kasulis argues that Dogen himself would insist that interpretation be based on an absolute and radical subjectivity—or what Kasulis calls “an initiation” into the indescribable mystery of Dōgen's presence unmediated by any lack or gap. Therefore, his emphasis, in contrast to Kim, is not on reason but the depths of personal encounter, by which the reader becomes “an inextricable part of the [author's] equation” (p. 95) so that it is “impossible to separate fully the thought of one from that of the other,” which is “the ultimate criterion for the interpretation's correctness.” (p. 96)

Kasulis certainly takes a bold and thought-provoking stance which stimulates and demands some level of scholarly subjectivity. Yet, in eliminating the need for critical distance, seen as a merely inauthentic objectification, by his confusing the absolute truth of Dōgen's thought with the variations of interpretation, Kasulis may violate Dōgen's own standard for evaluation. As expressed in “Genjōkōan,” Dōgen distinguishes between “great enlightenment about illusion” and “great illusion about enlightenment.” Whereas Dōgen's writing may be absolute—enlightenment about illusion—there must be a hierarchy of judgement to determine the relative merits of alternative viewpoints concerning truth and untruth, and to make possible the transformation from the former to the latter.

Another absolutist approach is taken by Cook, who maintains that Dogen never wavered throughout his career in his commitment to the renunciation of egocentrism and anthropocentrism as reflected in the doctrine of self-realization through self-forgetting, which surpasses the similar philosophies of Heidegger and Whitehead. Cook thus highlights the value of comparative philosophy as a means for continuing the transmission of Dōgen's stirring and much-needed message for personal growth and social change. He differs with Kasulis in stressing the intermediary function of the Buddhologist as a spokesperson who unpacks Dōgen's symbolism, which represents a subtle form of objectivism. The major drawback here is that Cook does not fully clarify how an ethics based on meditation could concretely resolve modern political, economic, and scientific issues to lead to “a reshaping of culture.” Abe Masao agrees with Cook that Dōgen's major contribution to contemporary thought is to offer a tonic to social “restlessness”

and uncertainty through the notion of the interpenetration of means and end as a way of overcoming the objectification of self as end and nature as means. Abe convincingly shows that Dōgen's approach constitutes the resolution of his doubt (second stage of the standard account) about the relation between original enlightenment and the necessity of practice.

The remaining articles strike a compromise between absolutism and objectivism. Robert Bellah retorts Cook and Abe not by questioning the merit of Dōgen's ethical implications, but by wondering if America's sudden fascination with Zen cannot be help but be due to self-centered individualism rather than an authentic personal quest. John C. Maraldo argues that Dōgen's approach to the mind-body problem exposes the deficiencies in Western standpoints, including holography and phenomenology, due to its thoroughly holistic and experiential basis, yet he concedes that the function of language and metaphor in Dōgen's explanations remains enigmatic and in need of further clarification.

In conclusion, the juxtaposition of translations and commentaries raises the question of whether a definitive translation is possible or even necessary at this stage of Dōgen scholarship. From the absolutist standpoint, every interpretation can be legitimized as an expression of the all-embracing truth. This contention seems supported by the proliferation of *gendaiyaku* in recent Japanese studies. Yet, the rendering of the *Shōbōgenzō* into a foreign language has different requirements than the modern Japanese translations, since a good part of the readership cannot be expected to have any access to the original text. Thus, some criteria for distinguishing true from untrue interpretations must be methodologically grounded and maintained. Beyond grammatical accuracy, the ultimate standard is the ring of truth itself based on a reconstruction and assessment of the multiple meanings that the text expresses, or the appropriateness of the method to the true sense of Dōgen. Just as correctness does not conflict with but is reinforced by philosophical understanding, a contemporary rendering that makes clear and enlightening the "words and letters" of Dōgen highlights the temporal continuity of the transmission of the Dharma conveyed by the text.