

Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist

HIGASHI SEN'ICHRŌ

HEE-JIN KIM's recently published *Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist* (University of Arizona Press, 1975) is a study of the thought of Dōgen Kigen (1200–1253), founder of the Japanese Sōtō Zen sect, which focuses especially on his main work, the *Shōbōgenzō*. There have of course been a great number of Japanese studies published on Dōgen. Since the appearance of pioneer works such as Watsuji Tetsurō's *Shamon Dōgen* (Sramana Dōgen) 1920, Tanabe Hajime's *Shōbōgenzō tetsugaku shikan* (A Personal View of the Philosophy of the Shōbōgenzō) 1939, and Akiyama Hanji's *Dōgen no kenkyū* (Studies in Dōgen) 1935, efforts have been made by a number of philosophers to break away from the stereotyped "Genzō" tradition of sectarian scholars and to evaluate afresh Dōgen's fundamental thought as one of Japan's major contributions to world philosophy.

Professor Kim's approach, while certainly influenced by such Japanese studies, is in many ways unique. His intention in typing Dōgen as a "mystical realist" is to try to present "an understanding of Zen in its totality." He thus seeks to introduce to a contemporary Western audience a comprehensive view of Dōgen's fundamental thought in its theoretical and philosophical dimensions.

In the philosophical and spiritual milieu of his own land Dōgen may be said to occupy a position roughly comparable to that of Meister Eckhart in German philosophy. The spiritual legacy left by Dōgen, should it ever be recognized by the Japanese, could become a crucial factor in helping decide the direction to be taken by modern Japanese philosophy which up to now has been determined largely by the metaphysical orientation of Nishida Kitarō. The present study of Dōgen's thought should thus prove encouraging even to Japanese scholars who are presently at such a crossroads in the study of Japanese philosophy.

What is the understanding behind Kim's characterization of Dōgen as a "mystical realist"? The combination of "mysticism" and "realism" may indeed

appear strange—perhaps even incompatible—when viewed within the conventional framework of philosophy: “mysticism” being a term used in medieval Europe to imply a union of God and man, while “realism” in modern times is invariably connected to rationalism.

The mysticism which Kim refers to with respect to Dōgen's thought is not the same as the mysticism of the medieval West. The latter is an aspiration for union with God on the presupposition of a disunity between God and man, the terms themselves deriving from the Western ethos that separates God and man. The terms “Dharma” and “Self” in Dōgen, however, are essentially devoid of the dualism implied by the qualitative separation of God and man. Although it is not possible for me to fully explain in this limited space the exact implications of the term “mystical realist” as it is used here, it seems that “mystical” is used to characterize the understanding of a certain reality free from dualism. Kim is aware that an understanding of reality from the perspective of mystical realism requires an emancipation from dualism which is neither a “transcendence of duality” typical of the medieval West nor an immanent realism borne of modern times. What is required, in Dōgen's words, is “a thorough realization of ‘here-now’ ” (現成公案 *genjōkōan*).

The essence of Zen, when viewed from the perspective of Kim's proposed “total understanding of Zen,” is none other than that found in “this very human body” (眞実人体 *shinjitsu-jintai*), based on the notion of “slaying the Buddha, slaying the Patriarchs,” which far transcends ordinary “religiosity.” In contradistinction to the mysticism of the medieval West mentioned above, there essentially is no room in Dōgen's “this very human body” for a God-man dichotomy. In Dōgen's words, “living-dying or coming-going is of itself the very human body.” This clearly expresses the Non-duality of the Dharma (i.e., “living-dying or coming-going”) and our Self (i.e., “this very human body”).

Since for Kim, terms such as “mystical” or “mysticism” would probably imply this Non-duality of Dharma and Self, it is no doubt natural he should call someone like Dōgen who had such a realization himself in “this very human body,” a “mystical realist,” different in every sense from the medieval Western mystic who aspired for a union of God and man. The mysticism which thoroughly realizes the Non-duality of Dharma and Self by breaking through the bottom of the phenomenal self ultimately penetrates to the realism of the “wondrous existence of true emptiness” that transcends conceptual being. Dōgen's realism as such is not to be identified with a higher religious realism

such as we see in Schleiermacher, which is actualized within the confines of the dualistic relationship between God and man.

Possibly, the standpoint which may correspond to Dōgen's could be described as transcending the fundamental duality found in the God-man relationship of the medieval West as well as the derivative duality in contemporary man's subject-object opposition that was originally made possible by his withdrawing from the God-man relationship. If so, Kim might well be justified in his special usage of the term "mystical realism" as distinct from the position of modern realism which is based on subject-object dichotomy.

Dōgen's fundamental thought is most thoroughly examined in chapter four of Kim's work, "The Religion and Metaphysics of Buddha Nature." Here, in reference to Dōgen's mystical realism, with special emphasis on the notion of *ippō-gūjin* (一法窮盡 the total exertion of a single element), Kim states:

This is Dōgen's metaphysics of "mystical realism" which is epitomized in the statements "When one side is illumined, the other is darkened" (*ippō o shōsuru toki wa ippō wa kurashi*) and "the total experience of a single thing is one with that of all things" (*ippōtsū kare mambōtsū nari*).

Kim refers to *ippō-gūjin* in other passages as well (pp. 133-34, 159, 176, 201). The main point he makes in them is that this idea contains what he calls "the crux of Dōgen's mystical realism." As I have stated above, he consciously distinguishes Dōgen's mysticism, which he says is basically revealed in the Non-duality of Dharma and Self, from medieval Western mysticism. But the question of urgent concern here is what this Non-duality in fact is. And it seems to me the reason Kim was brought to speak of *ippō-gūjin* as the "crux of Dōgen's mystical realism," is to be found here.

As he elsewhere points out, Dōgen's concept of *ippō-gūjin* must be understood as being grounded in the perception of Non-duality of Dharma and Self. He directs our attention to Dōgen's well-known passage from the "Genjōkōan" section of the *Shōbōgenzō*:

Mustering our bodies and minds (*shinjin o koshite*) we see things and mustering our bodies and minds we hear sounds, thereby we understand them intimately (*shitashiku*). However, it is not like a reflection dwelling in the mirror nor is it like the moon and water. As one side is illumined, the other is darkened.

Kim then remarks:

The Way is "intimately understood" in and through what man expresses and enacts by mustering his body-mind, thus man and the Way are no longer in dualistic relation of the moon and the water, the mirror and the reflection, or of the knower and the known (p. 139).

The passage "as one side is illumined, the other is darkened," is thus understood by Kim also as the basic expression of the Non-duality of the Way and man, of Dharma and Self. It would seem that this represents Kim's fundamental understanding of Dogen. At the same time, however, he is not unaware of the fact that the realization of the Non-duality of Dharma and Self is ruled throughout by the logic of mystical realism called "vines" (conflicts), which testifies to its oneness with the realization of the actuality of Duality, rather than the indiscriminate transcendence of Duality. The passage in question then is not merely an ontological expression of the Non-duality of Dharma and Self; it is an expression made significant by our own practice. It is indeed only in practice that the wondrous existence of true emptiness is actualized.

Dogen's basic position of the Non-duality of Dharma and Self being actualized in the passage "as one side is illumined, the other is darkened" can also be found in his notion of *jūhōji* (住法位 residing at a dharma-stage).

Although firewood is at the dharma-stage of firewood, and that this is possessed of a before and after, the firewood is beyond before and after.

Thus, in the actual moment open to us, it bears fruit as the wondrous existence of true emptiness, where "Life in itself is the total expression; death in itself is the total expression," and "There is nothing but life in living; there is nothing but death in dying." Kim says that in this "nothing but" is the essence of Dogen's mystical realism, for the stark "thusness" (like this) expressed as "nothing but" is the very metaphor of Non-duality of Dharma and Self, neither transcendental nor immanent. It goes without saying that this metaphor does not point to some transcendent or immanent ultimate reality: here we find ultimate reality itself.