

Dōgen, Hakuin, Bankei

Three Types of Thought in Japanese Zen

Part I

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WHEN we attempt to fully appreciate the special character of Bankei's Zen, taking into consideration its significance and place in the history of Zen thought, especially within the context of Japanese Zen, it becomes necessary for us to distinguish between what may be called the three types of thought in Japanese Zen. By "types of thought" I mean the typical attitude of interpretation taken toward Enlightenment, which constitutes the basic reality of Zen. Differences in this attitude are also differences in the way of evaluating the Enlightenment in terms of the thought implied in it, and, accordingly, in the way of bringing it to expression. This comes to involve differences in the methods or techniques for realizing Enlightenment and also differences with regard to how that Enlightenment is construed. These various differences may be said to fall into three general types. They are exemplified in the Zen of Dōgen (1200-1253), Hakuin (1689-1768), and Bankei (1623-1693).

Dōgen's Zen joins the Zen of *shikan taza*, "just sitting," and the Zen of his *Sbōbōgenzō*, to the Zen of the Chinese Ts'ao-tung (Sōtō) tradition. It is unique to Dōgen. Hakuin's Zen systematized the traditional Rinzai Zen from the point of view of koan practice and developed it into the Japanese-type Rinzai Zen which we see today. But Bankei, with his term "Unborn," puts Zen experience into the area of general thought, without however forgetting to bring to play within this its direct, intuitive nature.

* This is the second chapter of the author's *Zen sbisō-sbi kenkyū*, I ("Studies in the History of Zen Thought," first series), Tokyo, 1943; included in the first volume of his Complete Works. All footnotes are by the translator.

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I think that by comparing Bankei with the other two figures, the distinctive character of his Unborn Zen will be given greater clarity. The basic principles of Unborn Zen are well described in the following excerpts from a compilation of Bankei's sermons made by his disciple Itsuzan.¹

Bankei spoke to an assembly of people, "Each of you must realize your vitally functioning Buddha-mind. For hundreds of years now in both China and Japan the Zen Dharma has been misunderstood. People think Enlightenment 'opens' by doing zazen, or they try to discover a 'master of seeing and hearing.' They're seriously mistaken. Zazen is another name for the fundamental mind. It means peaceful sitting, peaceful mind. When you sit, it is just sitting, when you do *kinbin*, it is just *kinbin*. The Buddhist Dharma could not be preached even though you had all heaven and earth for a mouth. Men who preach the Buddhist Dharma, by and large, only blind other men. There is not a speck of illusion in the mind your mother imparted to you when she gave birth to you. To say because you're unaware of this, 'I'm deluded because I'm an ordinary unenlightened man'—that's even unjust to your parents. Buddhas of the past and people of the present day are all of one body. There's nothing setting them apart. When you draw water from the ocean and pour it into different buckets, it will freeze solid in very cold weather, and its shape will vary according to the shape of the bucket, large, small, square, or round, that it is in. But when it thaws, it is all the same ocean water.

"You are unaware that you're a living, acting Buddha, and you think that by accumulating merit from religious practice and gaining Enlightenment you become a Buddha. But that's terribly mistaken, and you wander from darkness into darkness. Isn't it a sad thing!

"As for me, I don't preach about Buddhism. I just give my comments and criticism on the mistaken notions you people have."

A visiting priest said, "I practice with an aim to being enlightened. What about that?"

¹ *Bankei Zenji Hōgo*. See *Eastern Buddhist* VIII, 2.

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Bankei said, "Enlightenment is something contrasted to illusion. Each person is a Buddha-body without a speck of illusion. So what are you going to enlighten out?"

"That would mean being a fool," the priest replied. "In the past, Bodhidharma, and after him many Zen masters all attained the great Dharma in Enlightenment."

Bankei said, "As a fool a Tathagata saves people from suffering; he neither comes nor goes,² he is just as he was born and doesn't obscure his mind. All the patriarchs throughout past generations were just like that."

The word "Unborn" does not appear here, but that is the signification of such expressions as "vital Buddha-mind," "original mind," and "Buddha-body." Itsuzan was not deliberately avoiding the word; it appears often elsewhere in his compilation:

Clenching your fist, hurrying around too, all is the Unborn. If you have even the slightest thought that you want to become a good person, or you get the idea to hurry and seek for something, you're already acting counter to the Unborn.

At the place of the Unborn there's no telling the difference between being born and not being born. Everyone speaks about the principle of the Unborn, but there aren't any principles in the Unborn. If there were even so much as a principle, it wouldn't be Unborn. Nor is there any need to become Unborn. It's even beyond not having anything to do with principles. Things being just as they are, that's the true Unborn.

Each of these comments contains the central idea of Bankei's Zen, and, to be sure, Enlightenment itself as well. In all the quotations Bankei would seem at first glance to be denying Enlightenment. However, when he says a Tathagata and the patriarchs work to save sentient beings like fools, that is not a rejection of Enlightenment as such; what he is rejecting is the attitude of this specific questioner with regard to Enlightenment—admonishing him. If from the first he remains as Enlightenment, as the Unborn, that is enough.

² Tathagata, an epithet used for a Buddha, means "one who is thus come."

Yet he tries to make something else out of Enlightenment and hopes by some special method to get possession of it—and that, Bankei stresses, is wrong. Make Enlightenment relative by placing it in opposition to illusion and it loses its absoluteness and ceases to be Enlightenment. Since Enlightenment is, as such, the Unborn, its basic nature of suchness, “as-it-is-ness” (*sono mama*), must be preserved and maintained to the very end. That is why what Bankei calls “suchness” is not something relative; it is fundamentally and originally absolute. In the presence of this absoluteness nothing which may be called illusion is discernible—there is “not a speck of illusion,” Bankei says. Yet by their mistaken notions people temporarily manufacture what is originally nonexistent, and thus the commencement or “opening” of Enlightenment is said to occur. In reality, however, Enlightenment is not something that is inaugurated; it is something that exists originally, exists just as it is. This is what Bankei calls the Unborn. Around it the central thought of Bankei Zen unfolds. Indeed, it is with an eye to this very point that he says, “I preach neither the Buddha Dharma nor Zen.”

There is no question that in this sense Bankei’s Unborn Zen is “*sono mama* (being-just-as-it-is) Zen.”³ Ultimately, in any religion whatever the place where peace of mind is finally achieved is not a single step beyond this *sono mama* (as-it-isness). Religions all come to settle down in absolute passivity. The variety of appearances they display comes only from the differences in the paths that get them there and in the manner in which they then enjoy things “as they are.” In the thought of a great figure of so-called “total activity” (*zentai sayū*) Zen such as Rinzai, one would probably not expect to find even a trace of the passivity and non-activity that is found in *sono mama* Zen. And yet an open reading of the following passages from the *Rinzai roku* (“Records of Rinzai”) demonstrates otherwise. To be sure, Rinzai’s words have an intensity and vehemence that makes us sense the commanding presence of the brusque “Shogun Rinzai.” But nevertheless what is flowing under the surface is *sono mama* Zen. It is none other than the mental state of absolute passivity of Rinzai’s “noble man doing nothing whatever.”

Sono mama is also identical with “no-mindedness.” Yet those who have

³ The expression “*sono mama* Zen” has been used, especially in Hakuin Zen, as a term of disapprobation.

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not deeply penetrated this reality tend to regard *sono mama* in a merely spatial, static, negative sense, neglecting to see its temporality and its dynamic and positive side.

Here now are excerpts from Rinzai's sermons:

"I don't have a thing to give you. All I do is cure your ills and take the chains off you. You men of the Way, try to come forward here independent of all things, I'd like to have a real exchange with you. But I've been waiting five, no, ten years now. There hasn't been a single man yet. All I've had here is ghosts hanging around the tree leaves and in the grass, disembodied spirits in the woods and bamboo groves, fox-spooks, biting madly into so many heaps of filth....

"I'm telling you, there isn't any buddha, no holy teaching, no practicing, no realizing! What are you doing looking around in neighbors' houses? You mole-eyed monks, putting on another head over your own! What do you lack in yourselves? You men of the Way, what you're making use of here right now is the very thing that makes a buddha or patriarch. But you don't believe that. You go on seeking outwardly. Make no mistake about it, there isn't any dharma outside. There's nothing inside you can lay your hands on either. You grasp at the words from my mouth. What you should do is stop what you're doing. *Do nothing....*

"As far as I'm concerned, there isn't much to do. Just be ordinary. Put on your robes. Eat your rice. Pass the time *doing nothing*. You come here from all over wanting to seek buddha, wanting to seek Dharma, wanting to seek emancipation, wanting to seek to get out of the three realms. Fools! When you've left the three realms where are you going to go? 'Buddha,' 'patriarch'—those names only fetter you up in chains of praise!"

In one sense this too can be called *sono mama Zen*. In any case, just like shrimp that cannot get out of the seine no matter how they jump, all of us are living and dying at the place of the absolute Unborn. But when this is brought forth onto the field of thought it comes to have a diversity of aspects. In which case, where is it the orientations of Unborn Zen and Dōgen Zen may be said to be dissimilar?

Bankei's Unborn Zen rejects on the one hand all relative interpretations of Enlightenment, and on the other does not subscribe to the fixed and ready-made system of koan Zen either. It may on this score possibly be said to resemble greatly the emphasis of Dōgen's Zen. What, then, is the significance of Dōgen's *sbikan taza* ("just sitting")? How is "just sitting" different from *somo mama Zen*? Unborn Zen does indeed call to mind views held by Dōgen.

Here I shall first take a look at the so-called "*taza*-ism" of Dōgen. This should result in a more distinct elucidation of Bankei's Unborn Zen as well. A discussion of the points of difference between Unborn Zen and koan Zen will be taken up in a later chapter.

The *sbikan taza* espoused by Dōgen stresses something he received in transmission from his master Ju-ching while he was studying at Mount T'ien-t'ung in China. In the sixth part of Dōgen's *Eihei Kōroku* ("Comprehensive Records of Eihei Dōgen")⁴ is a lecture that begins,

The distinguishing characteristic of all the family of buddhas and patriarchs is negotiation of the Way in zazen. My late master T'ien-t'ung (Ju-ching) said, "Sitting crosslegged is the teaching of wise old buddhas. Commitment to Zen (*sanzen*) is body-and-mind dropping off. There is no need for offering incense, paying homage, doing nembutsu, penance disciplines, or sutra reading. It is attained only in *sbikan taza* (just sitting)."

"Just sitting," "crosslegged sitting," "zazen"—all refer of course to the same zazen. This "zazen" is used, however, in at least two senses, and there is, moreover, no order to the way they are used, nothing to tell the reader which meaning is intended in a particular case. In *Sbōbōgenzō* as well, unless we read along very closely things can become very confusing. In passages like, "Buddha-patriarchs transmit zazen from one to another" (*SBGZ zazen-shin*); "For one lifetime or ten thousand, from beginning to end, without leaving the monastery—just sitting crosslegged day and night" (*SBGZ sammai-ō-zammai*), reference is obviously to zazen as such, "body-and-mind

⁴ The *Eihei Kōroku* 永平廣錄 is a comprehensive collection of Dōgen's lectures, sayings, and miscellaneous writings in Chinese.

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dropping off.”⁵ In the case of the previous quotation from the *Eisai Kōroku*, the distinction between zazen, crosslegged sitting, commitment to Zen (*sanzen*), and just sitting, cannot be said to be clearly drawn. On the other hand, when Dōgen says such things as, “Sit, and by this means attain body-and-mind dropping off” (*Bendōwa*), “The primary concern above all else for Zen monks is to engage in *sbikan taza*” (*Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*),⁶ “Clarify the great matter by doing *sbikan taza*” (*ibid.*), zazen signifies the technique or method of negotiating the Way in intense seeking (*kufū bendō*).

On the plane of the identity (or nonduality) of practice and realization, both zazen as the means (practice) and zazen as the end (realization) may possibly be called non-dual. But when our chief object lies in explanation, it is best to have this difference well defined. The dispute between *Kanna Zen* and Silent Illumination Zen⁷ comes on the whole from not making this distinction. It can be said that “*taza*-ism” places weight on philosophy and overlooks the psychological or practical side. The nonduality of “practice and realization are nondual” belongs to philosophy. This non-duality alone is not enough. Once we speak of practice or of realization, we are compelled to give thought to each of them.

In the *Zazenshin* written by the Chinese Sōtō priest Wanshi Shōgaku, and in Dōgen’s own *Shōbōgenzō zazenshin* as well, the writers are expounding their respective understandings of the Buddhist truth. There is no mention of *sbikan taza*, “just sitting,” only an account of the event of body-and-mind dropping off that is attained through sitting. There, in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō zazenshin*, we observe how he mixes at will in a confusing way the two

⁵ A term used frequently in Dōgen’s writings indicating attainment of total freedom from all hindrances physical and mental. Its context will be given more fully in Part II.

⁶ A collection of Dōgen’s talks and occasional remarks compiled by his disciple Ejo (1198–1280).

⁷ Originally, the designation *Kanna* (*K’an-bua*, “examining the koan”) Zen was a term of reproach applied to the Daie Sōkō (Ta-hui Tsung-kaō, 1089–1163) line of Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen by followers of the Sōtō (Ts’ao-tung) master Wanshi Shōgaku (Hung-chih Cheng-chūch, 1091–1157) for its stress of koan study. The Daie faction in turn called Wanshi’s Zen *Mokusō* (*Mo-chao*, “silent illumination”) Zen for its emphasis on sitting.

senses in which he takes zazen, using the word at random to assault just about everything around.

Many of those who serve at present as temple masters in the various monasteries in the land of the great Sung (China) do not know zazen or learn it. Even if there are some who have clarified their understanding of it, they are few. In the temples there are of course prescribed times set aside for zazen. From the head priests down to the brotherhood of monks, doing zazen is made the proper duty for all. In the counselling and guidance of Zen students as well, zazen practice is encouraged. But, in spite of this, head priests who understand zazen are rare.

An examination of the meanings zazen has in this quotation reveals the following:

1. "*Many of those who serve at present as temple masters in the various monasteries in the land of the Sung (China) do not know zazen or learn it.*" I do not think this could mean they do not know or learn how to do zazen correctly in its formal sense. We may suppose that in China monks were engaged in crosslegged sitting in all the monasteries in conformity with traditional practice. So I gather that here Dōgen means that they knew nothing about the proper frame of mind during zazen, the purpose and significance of zazen, or about the introspective investigation of its spiritual implications, and that they made no effort to learn about such things.

2. "*...there are of course prescribed times set aside for zazen*" is apparently a reference to the regular practice of sitting in the Zen Hall.

3. "*...doing zazen is made the proper duty for all.*" I presume this means that doing the zazen described in number 2 is the primary responsibility of Zen priests, and also that it is the practice all students of Zen are encouraged to do. As such, this is the same sense as "For zazen a quiet place is suitable," "Exert effort solely in the practice of zazen," and "All buddhas and all patriarchs, when doing zazen..." in *Shōbōgenzō zazengi*.⁸

4. "*But in spite of this, head priests who understand zazen are rare.*" This is

⁸ See the translation of *SBGZ zazengi*, *Eastern Buddhist* VI, 2, p. 127-128, for the full context of these remarks.

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zazen in its inner content: with all but a very few exceptions, head priests are ignorant of where the original aim and essential significance of zazen lies. Perhaps we may even regard this as being spoken from the standpoint of the non-duality of practice and realization: namely, head priests do not know that zazen is what Wanshi in his *Zazenshin*⁹ (see below) terms “the essential dynamic moment of all buddhas and all patriarchs.” This is the zazen Dōgen describes with these words: “If the Buddha Dharma is not transmitted, neither is zazen. What is passed from master to disciple in the authentic personal transmission is the quintessence of this zazen alone” (*SBGZ zazenshin*).

Dōgen goes on to deliver a withering blast at the category of brief writings on zazen known as *Zazenshin* and *Zazenmei* used in Zen circles in China.¹⁰

Therefore, although in the past a few eminent priests have written *Zazenmei* (*Zazen* Inscriptions), a few have written *Zazengi* (*Principles of Zazen*), and a few have written *Zazenshin* (*Zazen* Exhortations), among these, there is nothing at all to be obtained from any of the *Zazenmei* or *Zazenshin*. The *Zazengi* are unclear as to the actual practice of zazen. They were written by people who knew nothing about zazen and who had not received it in authentic personal transmission. Examples of these works are the *Zazenshin* in the *Keitoku-dentō roku* and the *Zazenmei* in the *Katai-futō roku*.

The words *mei* (inscription) and *shin* (exhortation) are similar in their significance,¹¹ but *gi* (principles), as in Dōgen’s own *Fukanzazen-gi* (“The Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen”) for example, refers to some-

⁹ Wanshi’s *Zazenshin* (Chin. *Tso-ch’an chen* 坐禪巖) is quoted in full and commented on in Dōgen’s work of the same name, *Sbōbōgenzō zazenshin*. See below for a translation.

¹⁰ There were a great many works entitled *Tso-ch’an chen* (*Zazenshin*, “Zazen Exhortation”), *Tso-ch’an ming* (*Zazenmei*, “Zazen Inscription”), and *Tso-ch’an i* (*Zazengi*, “Principles of Zazen”) in China. Dōgen mentions two which must have been particularly well known, being included in two of the principal Zen histories, the *Cbing-te ch’uan-teng lu* (*Keitoku-dentō roku*) and the *Chia-t’ai p’u-teng lu* (*Katai-futō roku*).

¹¹ *Shin* 巖 is described as a needle or tool used by physicians in treating patients; to needle, to probe; by extension, to inscribe admonitions or precepts, or inscriptions themselves. *Mei* 巖 means to inscribe or carve; inscription.

thing concerned chiefly with the practitioner's deportment in zazen, how to do zazen. In the quotation above, the statement, "The *Zazengi* are unclear as to the actual practice of zazen," seems to be an independent sentence; the following "They were written by people who knew nothing about zazen..." thus refers presumably to the authors of all three categories, *Zazenmei*, *Zazenshin*, and *Zazengi*. The zazen in this context must probably be understood in the meaning of item 4 above. Therefore, these criticisms may be supposed to contend that none of those throughout the past who have spoken about zazen have had any understanding of the zazen of body-and-mind dropping off, the essential and pivotal moment for every buddha and patriarch; that they have all been ignorant of the zazen which is "sitting undisturbed in self-joyous samadhi" (*Bendōwa*).

In this next quotation from *Shōbōgenzō zazenshin* we come upon the words *kufū* (intense seeking) and *taza* (sitting). In what relation do they stand to zazen? *Kufū* is sometimes used in combination with *bendō*, *kufū bendō*, "negotiating the Way in intense seeking." Again, since Dōgen states that *sanzen* (commitment to Zen) is zazen, *kufū* can also denote *sanzen*. *Taza* seems to connote regulation-style zazen in some places; in other places, it does not.

It is to be pitied that those priests pass a whole lifetime in Zen monasteries and yet do not for a single sitting engage in intense seeking (*kufū*). Their sitting (*taza*) is not themselves when they are sitting. Their seeking does not encounter their self. This is not because their zazen dislikes their body-and-mind; it is because they do not aspire to true intense seeking and in their impulsiveness they become confused and muddled. What they have compiled in their works tells merely about how to "return to the source" and "reflect into the origin," about the vain business of thought-cessation and mind-tranquillization. They do not even reach the levels of Tendai meditation practices or the views of the highest Bodhisattva stages. How much less could they personally transmit the authentic zazen of the buddha-patriarchs! Such works were mistakenly collected by the compilers of Zen writings in the Sung period.¹² Zen practitioners of later times should lay them aside without reading them.

¹² E.g., compilers of the previously mentioned *Keitoku-densō roku* and *Katai-fusō roku*.

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From this we are led to conclude that works like the *Zazenshin* ("Exhortation to Zazen") of the Chinese priest Goun in the *Keitoku-dento roku* collection of Zen records and miscellaneous writings do not transmit authentic zazen; they teach nothing but thought-cessation, mind-tranquillization and so forth. On the other hand, Dōgen holds up the *Zazenshin* of the Chinese Zen master Wanshi as a rare utterance that expresses the genuine truth of zazen. His praise of Wanshi and his work knows no bounds:

It is the Buddha-patriarchs, the real zazen exhortation. A direct utterance of truth. It is a single radiant light illumining the Dharma-world inside and out. It is the buddha-patriarch of all buddha-patriarchs new and old. Buddhas before and buddhas after go forward exhorted by this exhortation. Patriarchs of today and patriarchs of old come to appear from this exhortation.

He goes on, raising up Wanshi's work still a notch higher,

The "exhortation" of Wanshi's zazen exhortation is an actual manifesting of the great activity. It represents a way of life beyond the world of sound or form. It is your features at the time when your parents were not yet born. It is "You'd better not disparage the buddhas and patriarchs!" It is "You could still lose your person and life." It is a three-foot head and a two-inch neck. (*Sbōhōgenzō zazenshin*)

Readers without some experience reading the sayings in the Zen records will be able to make very little out of such comments. Briefly, he is saying that Wanshi's *Zazen Exhortation* gives the clearest and most thoroughgoing explanation of that which makes buddha-patriarchs what they are, which is beyond any appearance in sound or form, word or object, and is prior even to the differentiation of heaven and earth, but which, nevertheless, does not lie outside the way of life in the world of appearances where eyes are horizontal and nose is vertical. This, Dōgen informs us, is zazen. Learning this zazen is Zen.

Zazen is therefore both the original realization and the wondrous practice: "As it is already realization in practice, realization is endless; as it is practice in realization, practice is beginningless...If we cast off the wond-

rous practice, original realization fills our hands; if we transcend original realization, wondrous practice permeates our body" (*Bendōwa*). This is the *zazen* of Wanshi's *Zazen Exhortation*. Dōgen describes it in the following way in *Bendōwa*:

Because of this, when even just one person, at one time, sits in *zazen*, he becomes, imperceptively, one with each and all of the myriad things and permeates completely all time, so that within the limitless universe throughout past, future, and present, he is performing the eternal and ceaseless work of guiding beings to Enlightenment. It is, for each and every thing, one and the same undifferentiated practice and undifferentiated realization. Only this is not limited to the practice of sitting alone; the sound that issues from the striking of Emptiness is an endless and wondrous voice that resounds before and after the fall of the hammer. And this is not all the practice of *zazen* does. Each and every thing is, in its original aspect, provided original practice—it cannot be measured or comprehended.

You must know that even if all the incalculable buddhas in the ten directions, as countless as are the sands of the Ganges, mustered all their might together and by means of buddha-wisdom attempted to measure and know the total merit of the *zazen* of a single person, yet they could not know the whole of its measure.

Dōgen always attempts to preach Zen from a twofold standpoint. He is, on the one hand, a great thinker, and on the other, a devout, passionate, solemn, practical, conscientious man of religion and student of Zen. As a thinker, he places *zazen* on the plane of the nonduality of practice and realization; but as a practical man of Zen he treats *zazen* as the art of intensely seeking and negotiating the Way. At the end of the fifth part of *Sbōbōgenzō zuimonki* we find the following passage:

Although there may seem to be some understanding gained through examining koan and model cases, that is in fact something which causes you draw away from the Way of the buddha-patriarchs. If, without gaining or realizing anything at all, you pass your time sitting erect, that in itself is the patriarchs' Way [this is the reason

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for the name “Silent Illumination” Zen]. Those of the past, it is true, encouraged both the study of the model cases and sitting, but they principally encouraged the practice of sitting. And, although there are men in whom Enlightenment opened through the study of model cases, even there, the Enlightenment occurred on the merit of their sitting. Truly, the merit hinges on the sitting.¹³

Dōgen of course does not repudiate Enlightenment; he places a stronger emphasis on *zazen*. He even says, “among the basic essentials of the study of the Way *zazen* is first and foremost” (*Zuimonki*). Here practice clearly is preached apart from realization, and that also is a feature of his teaching. In Dōgen’s case, realization is Enlightenment, *satori*, and practice is sitting, *zazen*, *taza*. And to see the presence of the identity of practice and realization and the nonduality of *dhyāna* and *prajñā* in this very “sitting erect” alone—not in vacantly “passing the time sitting erect”—is in effect a wedding of Dōgen’s philosophic thought and Zen intuition. At the same time, however, there is in him a strong tendency to take the standpoint of nonduality as a peak and to see, from there, the myriad different ways leading out. Although we find, for example, in the passage in *Bendōwa*, “...make all the myriad dharmas exist in realization and practice the one total Reality on the way that leads out from that realization,” a full expression of the core of truth implied in every act of negotiating the Way of intense seeking, in works like *Shōbōgenzō zazenshin* we see a *contemplation* of the Silent Illumination type, and the dynamic aspect of the reciprocal interrelation between one thing and another, the aspect of discrimination in non-discrimination, rather tends to be obscured. Though he does speak of “fish swimming along in utter ease,” and “fish swimming like fish,” what seems to have a higher level of resonance than this sense of activity, is the silent, contemplative aspect of “the water is clear to the very bottom,” “the clarity of the water penetrates into the earth.”¹⁴ This feeling is especially pronounced in the parts preceding the last two sentences about fish and birds at the end of Wanshi’s *Zazenshin*,

¹³ Words in brackets are the author’s.

¹⁴ The four phrases quoted here are found in Dōgen’s *SBGZ zazenshin*: the first and third are from Wanshi’s *Zazenshin* (see trans. below), which Dōgen quotes; the third and fourth represent Dōgen’s own paraphrase of Wanshi’s lines.

where the compositional development seems, conceptually, to be giving attention to the aspect of identity (*soku*) alone.

It was the richness of the speculative element in Dōgen's Zen that gave rise to his voluminous ninety-five book *Sbōbōgenzō*. A thorough historical and scientific study is needed to determine just what parts of it are authentic and what parts are later additions, but at any rate, it is a fact that the difficulties of *Sbōbōgenzō* have often left his descendents in the Sōtō sect crying at the crossroads. When we read Dōgen's discourses in Chinese in the *Eibei Kōroku*, they do not seem much removed from Zen tradition, but when we read *Sbōbōgenzō*, written in Japanese, we are confronted in the free mastery of the Japanese idiom, the rhetoric and the hermeneutic, with something extraordinary and altogether unprecedented that astounds us. In this, we can see the great difference from the tradition of Rinzai Zen in the direction of applying Zen practice. Now, for reference, here is the complete text of Wanshi's *Zazenshin* ("Zazen Exhortation"), followed by Dōgen's commentary on it, as found in *Sbōbōgenzō zazenshin*. First, Wanshi's work.

The dynamic moment of all buddhas, the momentous dynamic essence of all patriarchs, knows without touching things and illumines without confronting conditions. As it is knowing without touching things, its knowledge is naturally subtle. As it is illuminating without confronting conditions, its illumination is naturally wondrous. As this knowing is of itself subtle, there is not the slightest discriminative thought. As this illuminating is naturally wondrous, there is not the least indicative sign. If there is not the slightest discriminative thought, the knowing is beyond compare or comprehension. If there is not the least indicative sign, the illuminating is ungraspable yet perfectly known. Water is clear to the very bottom, fish swim along in utter ease. The sky is infinitely vast, birds are flying far, far off.

This, with its skillful interplay of parallels, is a finely wrought piece of Chinese literature. The substance, however, is in the part that reads "knows without touching things, illumines without confronting conditions." "Knowing" is absolute knowing, non-discriminative wisdom. "Illumining" is the way

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things are before heaven and earth reveal "any indicative sign." "Things" refers to discrimination, "conditions" to differences or distinctions. This is the *prajñā* logic of *soku-bi*.¹⁵ Dōgen expounds on the significance of this *Zazenshin* with a rhetoric that is typical of his unique style.

"Knows without touching things." "Knows" is not perceiving [discrimination]; perceiving is an inferior capability. It is not cognitive knowing; cognitive knowing is a mental function. Because of this, knowing does not "touch" events or things [is not objective knowing]; not-touching-things is, as such, knowing. It must not be considered as omniscience or universal knowing. It must not be limited as a personal, inborn knowing. This not-touching-things is "when the bright one appears, smite the bright one; when the dark one arrives, smite the dark one." It is "Sit off your mother-born hide."¹⁶

"Illumines without confronting conditions." This illuminating is not a reflective illumination. It is not spiritual illumination. "Not-confronting-conditions" itself is this very illumination. Not that illumination becomes conditions; for conditions are, as such, illumination. "Not-confronting" means "never being concealed throughout the whole world," "not presenting oneself even when the world is broken asunder." It is subtle and wondrous, and it is non-reciprocity/reciprocity.

Dōgen's outlook has always this characteristic of non-reciprocity/reciprocity (*ego-fuego*).¹⁷ Non-reciprocity implies twoness, but having the two relate reciprocally, he makes this twoness not two. One is not treated apart from the other; the whole is said to be reciprocal and non-reciprocal. Or, taking advantage of the grammatical possibilities inherent in the Chinese, he simply leaves both in juxtaposition as "reciprocity/non-reciprocity." It is left to the understanding of each reader to furnish the logical connection between these two concepts. The fish swimming the deep waters like fish, the birds

¹⁵ See footnote 15, p. 67.

¹⁶ Words in brackets are the author's.

¹⁷ *ego-fuego* 同互不同互.

soaring up to the heavens like birds—this is the “real and immediate manifestation of truth” (*genjō kōan*); this is *shikan taza* (just sitting); this is the “zazen personally transmitted between the buddhas and patriarchs.”¹⁸

This zazen Dōgen speaks of as the personal transmission of buddhas and patriarchs—*shikan taza*—can be said to have features which resemble closely Bankei’s Unborn Zen. And yet the odour of Silent Illumination that accompanies Dōgen’s kind of sitting is not easily removed. This tendency, which has been described by Hakuin as “sitting still and silent like a withered tree and holding on to the death,” is readily discernible in words such as these in Dōgen’s *Eihei Kakun* (“Precepts of the Eihei Dōgen School”):¹⁹

Zen master Daibai Hōjō...went into the highest peak of Plum Mountain. Living on pine tree flowers and wearing lotus leaves for clothing, he practiced zazen day and night for the rest of his life, nearly thirty years....Therefore, his is an excellent achievement in the Buddha Way. We can thus understand that zazen is the deportment that comes with Enlightenment. Enlightenment is just zazen, nothing else.

In contrast, Bankei’s Unborn Zen is active. With the Unborn, he says, all is perfectly well taken care of. The Unborn is not found in intractable non-thinking. It is presenting itself in its unbarred eloquence on all occasions in our daily life. It is something that makes do with “you yourself as you are today.” Bankei’s Zen is our everyday mind just as it is. In Dōgen’s Zen a faint shadow of inactivity and stagnation is visible. He is a great thinker, the author of a magisterial ninety-five book collection of unique Zen writing. Bankei is like the common citizen, more down-to-earth, ordinary, less articulate. Yet he musters all the deep profundities of the buddhas and patriarchs which he fully embodies in himself and brings them together in the one word “Unborn,” and he casts it before people, leaving it to each one to grasp what he can according to his own capability. Of course, with different

¹⁸ These three expressions, *genjōkōan*, *shikan taza*, and *tanden no zazen*, are key terms in Dōgen’s Zen.

¹⁹ *Eihei Kakun* 永平家訓. A two-fascicle work compiled by the Tokugawa Sōtō priest Menzan Zuihō (1683–1769) from Dōgen’s *Eihei Kōroku*, and comprised of various admonitions for Zen practitioners.

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historical backgrounds, both Dōgen and Bankei have their own unmistakable singularities. Bankei seems to have a largely Japanese character. I mean, for instance, the way he shies away from theoretical argument, stands clear of all verbosity and goes to the bare essentials of the matter at hand, while at the same time somehow making sum and substance understandable. Whether or not this is a characteristic that should be unconditionally promoted in the future is of course a separate matter. Really, with Bankei the ultimate source of this knack of directly grasping the essence cannot be ascribed merely to his being Japanese. And that the Unborn is the product of his thought should of course go without saying.

Dōgen, as a thinker, is surely one of the great Japanese. Yet I think the reason for his position of reverence as the founder of the Sōtō sect and for the unabated continuance to this day of the religious line emanating from him, is due really to the specific character of Dōgen himself and not to the *Sbōbōgenzō*. Unquestionably, *Sbōbōgenzō* is also an important factor making up one side of his great personality. But is there not something even more important and more potent in Dōgen? Rather than the philosophy incorporated in *Sbōbōgenzō*, is it not the spirit that moves that philosophy and at the same time supports the "sustained practice" (*gyōji*),²⁰ that has built the Sōtō sect? I feel as if Dōgen's true face is seen even more deeply in the *Sbōbōgenzō zuiimonki* than it is in *Sbōbōgenzō*. Of course, in the formation of a religious sect, an individual, his personality, sustained principles, and so forth are not in themselves enough. In the disciples that gather around the teacher and then succeed him, true talent and capacity must be present. The background of the age cannot be overlooked either.

(To be continued)

Translated by Norman Waddell

²⁰ *gyōji* 行持. One of the key terms in Dōgen's Zen. Title of a long two-part book of *Sbōbōgenzō*.