Zen Notes

Before Your Original Face...
Who was your Mother and Father?

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

THIRTY-FIFTH LECTURE

Saturday, March 25th, 1939

"And for the sake of the sentient beings of the future world, may we listen to your sermon on the sutra of 'The Complete Discourse of the gates of the Dharma,' in order that the sentient beings may dispel their doubts and be released from their mortifications."

Thus Bodhisattva Vajra-garbha entreated the Buddha, repeating these words three times over and casting himself upon the ground in profound salutation.

Then Lokanatha spoke to Vajra-garbha:

"Very well, very well, Obedient One! You have asked me in the name of all the Bodhisattvas and of the sentient beings of the future world, how to understand the fathomless mysteries and what is the ultimate expedient to attain the mysteries."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The name Vajra-garbha means "Diamond Receptacle." The diamond is hard -- it is a metaphor, the symbol of intrinsic wisdom. This Vajra-garbha is not a historical figure, but a personified doctrine of Buddhism. As in your Christianity today, Saint Peter is a personified doctrine -- different from the historical figure.

Personification is an old, old method in the Orient. It is highly dramatized. Many people of the West who read the Mahayana sutras think it is not important -- but to us these legendary records are very important.

This Sutra was written in a later period; many Western scholars will regard it as of no importance. Here, the Bodhisattva Vajra-garbha asked several questions of the Buddha.

"And for the sake of the sentient beings of the future world, may we listen to your sermon on the sutra of 'The complete Discourse of the Gates of the Dharma, ..." -- We are "the sentient

beings of the future world." And this sutra on which I am giving a commentary is "The Complete Discourse of the Gates of the Dharma" for perfect awakening. This whole sutra was in the Buddha's mind -- still undisclosed -- so the Bodhisattva Vajra-garbha asked him to reveal the hidden teaching in the mind of Gautama.

"*... in order that the sentient beings may dispel their doubts and be released from their mortifications.*" -- "Dispelling doubts" is a very important term on which I must give a little explanation. When you have a doubt in your mind, you cannot enter into any religious faith. Usually there are three doubts: First, you doubt yourself; second, you doubt your teacher; third, you doubt the teachings. These are called the Three Doubts. Adherents of all religions are bothered by these Three Doubts.

1. In doubting yourself -- you put your hand on your breast and with a long sigh: "I am not good enough to get any faith. I have not the brain to think any deep thoughts. I am so confused that I cannot reason anything out. I wish I were a philosopher with a good, logical brain! Well, I will give up. As long as I have clothes to put on, food to eat, and a house to live in -- I do not need any religion!" And this one will live for the rest of his life like a man in a dream.

2. When you doubt your teacher, he can teach you nothing. "Oh, that Hindu! I met him a long time ago. He had a turban on his head and I called him 'Swami!' Well, it was a long time ago, he needed money, was compelled to found a little circle on consciousness." Thinking of other teachers of the past, he doubts all, visits new groups, finds nothing to trust -- and fails.

In Japan, this often happens. A student sees a monk in the temple, then finds him in a noodle-house! "Why, he cannot teach -- he eats noodles in a noodle-house!" Or, "I thought a Buddhist teacher eats only vegetables -- but I saw him eating sukiyaki! Disgusting!" A teacher is like a utensil to keep the teaching in. Which do you prefer -- the utensil or the teaching?

When I entered the monastery, ten others entered at the same time. In three months I was the only one left! The reasons for leaving -- the teacher was too young, he ate noodles, the temple was too small! I knew these things were so -- but I needed the teaching. I stayed. In all my life I had just one teacher -- and I found Buddhism.

Many monks go to an old teacher; he dies and they must find a new teacher. It is like a woman who marries a second time -- very difficult to choose a second husband!

3. You doubt the teaching. You say, "I studied Buddhism for a little while, but there is nothing in it." An American gentleman studied Zen, and said, "It is just dramatization -- nothing in it. To study Buddhism one must go to India or Ceylon!"

Buddhism in Japan is 1,300 years old -- but, "We must go to Tibet for the deepest Buddhism; meet the White Masters. Then we can go, at midnight, to the top of the Woolworth Tower and communicate with them!"

These are the three doubts.

For nine years I have watched people come and go. They go because they doubt the master and the teaching. It is like a sick man who calls for a doctor. But he doubts the doctor and the medicine -- and finally he will die.

The Buddhist teacher is like a good doctor. He has many expedients, many devices to read into the truth, cut off doubts, emancipate you from regrets -- and finally he will allow you to see our own original countenance.

But first the teacher will give you a dose of medicine to relieve you from delusion: The outside is not existing. Color belongs to the retina of the eye; sound belongs to the ear-drum, etc. All is our own product -- our own dream. When you awake, the dream will vanish -- the dream of this consciousness which is common to all human beings. It is like subterranean water which appears in different wells -- but it is the same water. To know that this consciousness dreams and creates this world -- this is the first medicine.

Then you will find your own consciousness; until this time it is attached to the outside; you have never looked into your own consciousness. Now you attentively observe your mind, your own dreams -- your inner state. This is the second dose of medicine.

Finally, you will realize your original nature and reach the bottom of faith.

This is so-called "expedient," this type of meditation. But, though you may save yourself you cannot save the other by meditation. You must now realize that meditation is not only to enter the state of Reality but also the state of activity. Then, mounting on this activity -- as upon the white elephant -- you reach out your hand to the other, using all means to give the other realization. This is the third dose.

"Thus Bodhisattva Vajra-garbha entreated the Buddha,

repeating these words three times over and casting himself upon the ground in profound salutation. (As I made my salutation to my Buddha tonight) *Then Lokanatha spoke to Vajra-garbha: "Very well, Obedient One! You have asked me in the name of all the Bodhisattvas and of the sentient beings of the future world, how to understand the fathomless mysteries and what is the ultimate expedient to attain the mysteries*." I shall explain the word "Mystery."

There are two mysteries: the first is the teaching of the Buddha, and the second mystery is Buddha himself. In a word, the one thousand meanings are concealed -- in the Buddha's teaching each word is a mystery. When you say "one," you mean "first," "all," "many," "beginning" -- all these meanings are concealed in this ONE. Or if we say emptiness, sky, mother, earth -- all are mysterious.

When the Buddha picks up the lotus and shows it to you, there are numberless meanings concealed in it -- a mystery.

The questions are mysterious; We ask you, "Before father and mother, what was your original face?" and you say, "I was not there!" We say, "If you were not there, how could you exist in this present moment?"

We say, "There was no creation of the universe; there was no beginning and there will be no end." Then emptiness produces nothing. "But this world is not emptiness!"

The beginning is a mystery and the end is a mystery; therefore the present is a mystery. To understand the true meaning of reincarnation -- this too is mysterious.

What is "*the ultimate expedient to attain the mysteries?*" The Buddha explained this mysterious teaching later. In the beginning he spoke very plainly. When he came into the Deer Park after his enlightenment, he preached his first sermon to five monks who were his old friends. He spoke of agony, the cause of agony, the cessation of agony, and the means for the cessation of agony. In such teaching there is no mystery! But he finally taught the mystery through which all sentient beings might attain enlightenment. Therefore, "mystery" is the "ultimate expedient."

The Buddha himself is a mystery, the body is a mystery, the word is a mystery, and the mind is a mystery.

He taught that this world is not an existence -- that, in Reality, nothing which is visible exists. It is a delusion. But the Buddha existed. He had a body -- and his body is, therefore, a mystery.

The Buddha is like a crystal ball which produces rainbows from all sides -- but when you come near, observe it closely in meditation, it is colorless.

And his mysterious "world" is like a sound produced in a deep glade -- it resounds endlessly. Cause begets result; result becomes cause and begets result; the result undergoes change and begets the mysterious "word."

The Buddha's mind is mysterious -- not the mind of Shakyamuni Buddha. IT is the KNOWER -- the creator of everything. When we die we are embraced in this cosmic consciousness although there is no consciousness. Yet it produces consciousness.

The Buddha gave us "the ultimate expedient" -- the mysterious teaching through which everyone may attain Enlightenment. We bow down before him.

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BANKEI AND HIS WORLD

by Peter Haskel

Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in their land had been debased and finally destroyed during the preceding two or three centuries. If Zen was to continue, such reformers argued, it had to be thought through again from the beginning, not only revitalized but reinvented. The Zen of Bankei's age, the Tokugawa period, was in many ways a rejection rather than an extension of the Zen that came immediately before. To fully understand Bankei and seventeenth-century Zen, it is therefore necessary to start with a discussion of Japanese Zen in the late Middle Ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the latter part of what is referred to as the Muromachi period (1333-1573), after the Muromachi district of Kyoto where the reigning Ashikaga shoguns had their palace. Much of the information cited below is drawn from the pioneering research of Tamamura Takeji, a leading scholar of medieval Japanese Zen history. The discussion here focuses on the two principal groups identified by Tamamura as dominating Muromachi Zen: the sorin, the official Gozan temples patronized by the shogunate; and the rinka, those temples like Daitokuji, Myoshinji, Sojiji, and Eiheiji that remained largely outside the official system.

ZEN IN THE MUROMACHI PERIOD (Part 1, #7)

(Continued from the Spring '05 Zen Notes)

The tatchu system and Gozan Zen

For the Muso-line, already well-established as the supreme power within the sorin, the tatchu, or sub-temple, system provided an important mechanism to consolidate and extend its influence beyond the temples of its own line. With the political backing of the Ashikaga government and the offices of soroku and assistant soroku under its control, the Muso-line was at times prone to act coercively in asserting its dominance over the other groups in the Gozan. There are even accounts from the Muromachi period that tell of Muso-line samurai supporters in the provinces arresting Daio-lineage monks traveling on pilgrimage and executing them when they refused to transfer their allegiance to the Muso line. Generally, however, the Muso line's own approach seems to have been more subtle, involving the erection of sub-temples.

While steadfastly refusing to honor the jippo, or open-abbacy system within its own establishments, the Muso line used Bakufu support to engineer appointments for its members to the abbacies of many temples of outside lines, and upon completion of his term, the Muso-line abbot would generally proceed to establish a sub-temple within the temple's grounds. Such tatchu were never subordinate to the temple itself, but to the main headquarters tatchu to which the Muso-line abbot belonged, and thus constituted a kind of foreign presence within the temple and a stalking horse for Muso-line interests. This became the principal pattern of expansion for the Muso line in the period following the death of Muso's heir Shun'oku Myoha (1311-1388). It posed a considerable threat to the integrity of temples of the other Gozan lines, those of jissatsu or shozan status being particularly vulnerable to appointment of Muso-line abbots from above. Eventually, the non-Muso-line temples were compelled to take various precautions to insure against being overwhelmed, forbidding Muso-line abbots to remain within the temple grounds after completing their terms, or simply barring construction of sub-temples altogether, apart from that of the temple's founder.

Aside from such changes in the institutional structure of the Gozan temples, the tatchu system profoundly affected the character of Gozan Zen itself. The temple life of the Heian period had degenerated from its original, disciplined Chinese model into a lax, quasi-domestic mode of existence, and the strict communal practice of the early Kamakura sorin had represented to many Japanese monks an attempt to counter this tendency. With the spread of the tatchu system, however, the Gozan temples of both Kyoto and Kamakura followed a pattern similar to that of the Heian sects, as the Zen monks left the sodo, or monks' hall, of the main temple for the privacy of their lines' sub-temple. Here, small groups ranging from fourteen to twenty monks lived and studied under their teacher in an atmosphere that became progressively more cliquish and ingrown, while the regular observance of monastic discipline was allowed to lapse. Tamamura claims that the rise of the tatchu, in effect, spelled the end of traditional sodo life, of orthodox sanzen and most zazen in the Gozan.

If Chinese Zen, as such, ceased to exist in the Gozan sub-temples of the early Muromachi period, it was here that Chinese literary studies enjoyed their greatest prestige. Gozan literature was, in a sense, the offspring of the tatchu life style, the product of the period when the disciplined communal life of the Zen temples had collapsed and given way to the rarified atmosphere of the individual cloisters.

With instruction in Zen study and meditation generally ignored, the curriculum for the monks centered on Chinese

literature, each sub-temple boasting its particular literary specialty, referred to as *kagaku* or *ie no gakumon*. The *kagaku* might encompass Zen materials, but it was equally likely to include Confucian texts and standard Chinese classics. As a rule, the student would take up the basics of reading and calligraphy in his own sub-temple and then proceed to master its specialty, following which he would set out on a kind of literary angya, or pilgrimage, making a circuit of other sub-temples to acquire expertise in their particular kagaku. This procedure eventually acquired the character of a secret oral transmission (*denju*) and literary lines evolved in the Gozan distinct from the existing Dharma lines.

With this method of study under the sub-temple system, Gozan literature and Chinese studies in the sorin attained their loftiest development. Yet, like the tatchu system itself, the literary *denju* reflected the rising current of Japanization that was sweeping the Gozan, becoming increasingly conspicuous from the close of the Kitayama period (1390-1449). As a result of their close contact with the imperial court, the Gozan monks had acquired the refinements of traditional Japanese culture as practiced among the court aristocrats (*kuge*) and this influence made itself felt in many areas of temple life.

Wa-kan renku, linked Japanese and Chinese verses, became a popular poetic form in the sorin while, as seen above, even the transmission of Chinese literary teaching conformed to the pattern familiar to Japanese aristocratic literary culture, that of a secret oral transmission, stylized and hereditary. *Kuge* influence in this period also revealed itself in the deepening bureaucratic atmosphere of the temples and in the headway made by Esoteric Buddhist (*mikkyo*) practices, as more and more Gozan monks participated in initiations and rites.

During the Higashiyama period (second half of the fifteenth century), interest in both Japanese literature and esoteric practice continued to expand within the Gozan temples, combined with a general vogue for Pure Land thought. Though, like the esoteric practice popular in court circles since the Heian period, Pure Land influence had been far less conspicuous in Muso's teaching than that of Esoteric Buddhism, and Muso's disciple Gido had rejected nembutsu practice as a suitable form of meditation for Zen monks. Nevertheless, interest in the syncretism of Zen and nembutsu practice had already taken root in the Kitayama Gozan temples, and the fifteenth century saw a widespread enthusiasm for Pure Land belief among the sorin monks and their aristocratic patrons.

Though Zen in style, the late-fifteenth-century culture that centered on the Shogun Yoshimasa's (1436-1490) palace in Kyoto's Higashiyama disrict appears to have had a strong

underpinning of Pure Land thought. Pure Land Buddhism became extremely popular in court circles at this period, and Yoshimasa's own religious leanings in his later years seem to have been deeply influenced by the sudden turning to Pure Land faith of his intimate friend Emperor Go Tsuchimikado (1442-1500). In constructing the Silver Pavilion, or Ginkakuji, the temple which became a kind of symbol of his reign, Yoshimasa abandoned his plan to erect a retreat on the design of Yoshimitsu's Kitayama palace, selecting instead the site of a former Jodo temple and making an Amida Hall the pivot of his new structure. Pure Land influence gradually penetrated all the temples of the Gozan, even extending to Daitokuji, where Ikkyu Sojun (1394-1481), rumored to have been Go Tsuchimikado's illegitimate son, threatened to renounce his place in the degenerate Zen establishment of the day for membership in the Pure Land school, changing his name to "Jun-ami." (*Ami*, a contraction of Amida, was a suffix sometimes adopted by Pure land believers.) Overall, Pure Land belief seems to have replaced whatever remained of Zen practice, and came to constitute perhaps the only strictly religious element in the Gozan temples.

Unfortunately, documentation for the actual details of Zen study within the sorin is not available, so that our conception of Gozan Zen teaching, as such, is necessarily imprecise. Much of our information derives from sources outside the temples, records of the military and court figures who undertook Zen study with Gozan monks. One such document, the diary of a courtier, Yamashina Noritoki (1338-1420), describes the writer's Zen study during the Oei period (1394-1428).

Noritoki mentions receiving instruction from priests of several Rinzai lines including the Daio line, attending lectures on various Zen classics, practicing zazen, and even studying koans under a Shokokuji master. Again, however, there is an absence of concrete detail, and the added problem of whether such aristocratic followers of the Gozan monks ever achieved a real understanding of Zen, or merely engaged in a kind of appreciation, as would often seem to have been the case.

Dogen Zenji, 1200 - 1252

Books Reviewed by Ian Chandler

Master Dogens Shobogenzo, in 4 Volumes, Translated by Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross. 1999. Windbell Publications. Woods Hole, MA. 1262 Pages. $125.00

Dogen and the Koan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shobogenzo Texts by Steven Heine. SUNY Press. Albany, NY 1994. 329 Pages. $28.50.

Dogen Zenji is credited with having founded the Soto school of Zen in Japan. However, his true position within the society of his own time is more complicated than is generally thought. Born to a high-ranking Koyto government official in 1200, Dogen lost both his parents by the age of eight. At thirteen, he was ordained on Mount Hiei, the center of the Tendai sect in Japan. Buddhism had already been in Japan for 600 years, and it was an age when prayers and ceremonies were an important source of income for some monks, and major monasteries had armed monks who engaged in combat. In a classic passage, he discusses the start of his spiritual search:

Dogen Zenji

After I established the will to pursue the Dharma, I visited [good] counselors in every quarter of our land. I met Myozen of Kennin [temple]. Nine seasons of frosts and of flowers swiftly passed while I followed him, learning a little of the customs of the Rinzai lineage. Only Myozen had received the authentic transmission of the supreme Buddha-Dharma, as the most excellent disciple of the founding master, Master Eisai the other students could never compare with him. I then went to the great Kingdom of Sung, visiting [good] counselors in the east and west of Chekiang and hearing of the tradition through the gates of

the five lineages. At last I visited Zen Master Nyojo of Dai-byaku-ho mountain and there I was able to complete the great task of a lifetime of practice. After that, at the beginning of the great Sung era of Shojo, I came home determined to spread the Dharma and to save living beings. It was as if a heavy burden had been placed on my shoulders. Nevertheless, in order to wait for an upsurge during which I might discharge my sense of mission, I thought I would spend some time wandering like a cloud, calling here and there like a water weed, in the style of the ancient sages.[1]

After Dogen returned to Japan, he once more took up residence at Kennin-ji in Kyoto, where he remained for three more years and composed Fukan Zazen-ji, A Universal Recommendation for Zazen. Disappointed with life at Kennin-ji, he moved to Anyo-in temple, where he composed the first section of the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, or Shobogenzo. Unlike many Buddhist religious writings at the time, the Shobogenzo was composed in Japanese, not classical Chinese. He later moved to Kosho-ji, where he constructed a meditation hall and started giving practical guidance to monks and devout laymen. At Kosho-ji, Dogen composed 40 sections of the Shobogenzo and acquired several dedicated disciples, including Ejo, two years his senior, who was responsible for compiling the Shobogenzo. His growing fame attracted a large number of devotees as well as the condemnation of Mt. Hiei. Perhaps because of political pressure, he left Kosho-ji and taking several of his disciples with him, moved to Yoshi-mine-dera, a temple on the Japan sea, where he enjoyed the protection of Hatano Yoshishige, a devout Buddhist. With Yoshishige's patronage, Dogen became the founder of Eihei-ji, Temple of Eternal Peace. In 1247, he accepted an invitation from Hojo Tokiyori, head of the feudal military government in Kamakura to initiate him into the Buddhist precepts, but declined Tokiyori's request to stay in the Imperial Capital. He also twice refused the purple robe offered to him by the emperor Gosaga, finally accepting it the third time, but refusing to wear it.[2] At the age of 52, he became ill and died after a brief illness.

The *Shobogenzo*, A Treasury of the Mind's Eye, is a complex, multifaceted work of 95 short chapters dealing with a wide variety of topics. It was started in 1231, but most of its chapters were composed and preached as *teishos*, or Zen lectures, between 1239 and 1246, when Dogen was 39-46 years old and at the height of his monastic career. During this period he was in residence at

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[1] Master Dogen's Shobogenzo. Translated by G. Nishijima and C. Cross. Windbell Publications 1994. Vol 1 Pages 2-3

[2] Zen Master Dogen by Yuho Yokoi. Weatherhill. New York. 1976, Page 37

Kosho-Horin-ji and initiated 2000 people into the boddhisattva precepts.[2] About a dozen additional chapters were written down by his disciple Ejo after his death in 1253.

The *Shobogenzo* has an unusual position within the history of Zen Buddhism. It was fairly influential in Soto Zen circles during the hundred years or so after it was composed. However, its current position of pre-eminence within the Soto school is based on the historical revival of the text during the medieval period. By the seventeenth century, the Dharma successorship had become corrupt, and ..." *the inheritance of the temple buildings (garan) entailed the passing on of the Dharma.*"[3] Manzan, a Soto reformer in the 17th century, pointed out to his fellow monks that in the *Shobogenzo*, the Dharma transmission was a special mind-to-mind transmission outside the scriptures having nothing to do with acquiring real-estate. Manzans efforts at revitalizing Japanese Zen were accompanied by a period of intense literary activity surrounding Dogens work, including the re-issuing and publication of a new edition of the *Shobogenzo* by the monks of Eihei-ji. The *Shobogenzo* became, in effect, the primary text of a broad-based reform movement within Soto Zen.

At the risk of over-simplifying, the *Shobogenzo* contains seven broad categories of material:

(1) Autobiographical Material: There is a fair amount of autobiographical material in the *Shobogenzo*, scattered in different places throughout the text. Dogen discusses the start of his spiritual search (quoted above), and relates the stories of many of the monks and Zen masters who he met during the course of his life. He also related incidents which happened while he was visiting monasteries in China.

(2) Monastic Forms are discussed at great length. The *Shobogenzo* includes detailed discussions of the *kasaya* (Buddhist monks robe): how a *kasaya* is constructed from strips of cloth and how to wear it; operation of the kitchen; use of the begging bowl; how to conduct a summer retreat; a very detailed discussion of how to use the latrine; how to do prostrations before the Buddha; how to enter the sanzen room; the importance of washing the face and cleaning oneself. Dogen stresses the link between physical bathing and spiritual purification; and how to practice zazen:

To practice Zen is to sit in Zazen. For sitting in Zazen a

[2] Shobogenzo: Zen Essays by Dogen. Translated by Thomas Cleary. University of Hawaii Press. Honolulu. 1986 Pages 4-5.

[3] Zen Buddhism: A History, By Heinrich Dumoulin. Macmillan Publishing Company. New York. 1990. Page 336

quiet place is good. Prepare a thick sitting mat. Do not allow wind and smoke to enter. Do not allow rain and dew to leak in. Set aside an area that can contain the body. There are traces of those in the past who sat on a diamond [seat] or sat on a bed or rock. The sitting place should be bright; it should not be dark, day or night. To be warm in winter and cool in summer is the way. Cast aside all involvements and cease the ten thousand things. Good is not considered. Bad is not considered. It is beyond mind, will, or consciousness, and beyond mindfulness, thought or reflection. Do not try to become a Buddha. Get free from sitting and lying down. Take food and drink in moderation. Guard time closely. Love sitting in Zazen as if putting out a fire on your head. The Fifth Patriarch on Obai-zan mountain had no other practices. He solely practiced Zazen.[1]

(3) The Sutras: Throughout the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen quotes extensively from the *Lotus Sutra* (a total of 139 references), and thirty-six other sutras, including the *Surangama Sutra*, the *Parinirvana Sutra*, the *Maha-prajana-paramita Sutra*, the *Mahavaipulya Sutra*, the *Golden Light Sutra*, and the *Platform Sutra*. There are also innumerable references to the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna and scores of different classical Chinese writings. Dogen stresses the importance of Sutra study and intellectual understanding. He does not believe that Zazen is the only form of practice that really matters.

(4) Koans: Mumon (1183-1260), the compiler of the *Mumonkan*, was an older contemporary of Dogen, although there is no evidence that the two ever met. The *Shobogenzo* contains commentaries on several koans from the *Mumonkan*, including Joshu's Mu, Hyakujo's Wild Fox, The Buddha Holds Up a Flower, Polishing a Tile to Make a Mirror. In addition, there are scores of koans from other sources, including many from the *Hekiganroku*.

(5) Clerical Invective: Dogen attacks several antagonists, including:

(i) Those who insist that the Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tzu all expound the same teaching. Dogen dismisses this notion as a shallow idea promulgated by people who dont really understand the teachings of any of the Three Sages:

Among the monks of the Sung dynasty in recent days, there had not been even one who knew that Kung-tzu and

[1]Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 3 Pages 167- 168.

Lao-tzu are inferior to the Buddha-Dharma. Although people who had become descendants of the Buddhist Patriarch, like rice, flax, bamboo and reeds, filled the mountains and fields of the nine states, there was not one person or half a person upon whom it had dawned that, beyond Kung-tzu and Lao-tzu, the Buddha-Dharma is outstanding in its excellence.[4]

(ii) Those who like to talk about The Five Schools of Zen Buddhism or the different sects of Zen. Dogen insists that the distinctions between different groups of Zen practitioners are essentially meaningless. These distinctions are being made by people who don't really understand Buddhism and foster sectarian ideas about Zen:

Rinzai never says Do not destroy my Zen Sect, never says Do not destroy my Rinzai Sect, and never says Do not destroy my sect. He only says, Do not destroy my right-Dharma-eye treasury. We should clearly remember that the great truth authentically transmitted from Buddha to Buddha must not be called the Zen Sect and must not be called the Rinzai Sect. We must never even dream of calling it the Zen Sect.[5]

(iii) Those who advocate reciting the names of Buddhas as a vehicle to enlightenment:

Trying to arrive at the Buddha's state of truth [only] through action of the mouth, stupidly chanting thousands or tens of thousands of times, is like hoping to reach [the south country of] Etsu by pointing a carriage towards the north. Those who chant endlessly are like frogs in a spring paddy field, croaking day and night. In the end it is all useless.

(6) Inspirational passages: The *Shobogenzo* contains innumerable passages which point to the heart of Buddhist religious experience. From Chapter 18, *Uji* , Being-Time:

An eternal Buddha says,
Sometimes standing on top of the highest peak
Sometimes moving along the bottom of the deepest ocean
Sometimes three heads and eight arms
Sometimes the sixteen-foot or eight-foot [golden body]
Sometimes a staff or a whisk
Sometimes an outdoor pillar or a stone lantern

[4] Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 4 Page 206

[5] Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 3 Page 72

Sometimes the third son of Chang or the fourth son of Lee
Sometimes the Earth and space.

In this world sometimes, Time is already just Existence, and all Existence is Time. The sixteen-foot golden body is Time itself. Because it is Time, it has the resplendent brightness of Time. The leaving and coming of the directions and traces [of Time] are clear, and so people do not doubt it. They do not doubt it, but that does not mean they know it.[1]

(7) Poetry: From Chapter 9, *Keisei-Sanshiki,* The Voices of the River-Valley and the Form of the Mountains:

The voices of the river valley are the [Buddhas] wide and long tongue,
The form of the mountains is nothing other than his Pure Body.
Through the night eighty-four thousand verses.
On another day, how can I tell them to others?[2]

From Chapter 59, *Baike,* Plum Blossoms:

It is the time when Gautama got rid of the Eye,
In the snow, a single twig of Plum Blossoms
Now every place has become a thorn
Yet I laugh at the swirling of the Spring wind[3]

Different English Language Translations of the Shobogenzo

The Nishijima and Cross translation, Master Dogens Shobogenzo, is obviously a labor of love. The translators have taken great care to produce an English rendering which comes close to conveying the beautiful language of the original text, at the expense of being a little bit awkward. Compare, for example, three different translations of a brief passage from the chapter *Bendowa,* A Talk about pursuing the Truth:

Nishijima and Cross: Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: *I met Myozen of Kennin [temple]. Nine seasons of frosts and of flowers swiftly passed while I followed him, learning a little of the customs of the Rinzai lineage.*

[1] Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 1 Page 110
[2] Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 1 Page 86
[3] Op Cit Nishijima and Cross. Volume 3 Page 173

Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law: *I met the priest Myozen of Kenniji and studied with him for nine years.*

Kazuaki Tanahashi: Moon in a Dewdrop, Writings of Zen Master Dogen: *Then I met priest Myozen of Kennin Monastery, by whom I was trained for nine years. Thus I learned a little about the teaching of the Rinzai School.*

The Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens translation employs very direct, concise English, but sacrifices some of the poetry of the original. The Kazuaki Tanahashi translation is good, but in my opinion (although I dont read Japanese) is not as inspiring as the Nishijima and Cross translation, which I like the best.

Nishijima and Cross have included a Glossary of Sanskrit terms, a diagram of the layout of an actual Buddhist monastery, a diagram of a *Kasaya*, extensive footnotes in Japanese and Classical Chinese, and a bibliography listing more than 100 works referenced by Dogen. The only major deficiency in their translation is that it lacks an index.

If you make it through the *Shobogenzo*, and want to read a scholarly discussion of its place in the larger context of 13th century Japanese Zen literature, consider Steven Heine's Dogen and the Koan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shobogenzo Texts. Steven Heine discusses Dogen's use of Koans in the *Shobogenzo*, and the full complexity of Dogen's relationship to the Koan tradition:

> *Dogen, who is generally known as a strong critic of koans, emphasized the importance of zazen only and referred to koan training as misguided and deficient. Yet, Dogen is also cited as playing a central role in introducing koans to Japan, and it is said that he brought back to his native country the first copy of the most prominent koan collection, the Hekiganroku, which he copied in a single night just before his return from China as the epitome of what he had studied there.*[1]

This book is somewhat long-winded, and partially written with a deconstructionist academic audience in mind. However, notwithstanding its arcane slant, it does a very good job of developing the literary context of the *Shobogenzo*, particularly in relation to koans. The author assumes that the reader has at least some familiarity with Zen koan collections such as the *Mumonkan* and *Hekiganroku*.

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[1] Dogen and the Koan Tradition A Tale of Two Shobogenzo Texts. By Steven Heine.SUNY Press, Albany, NY 1994. Page 3.

Original Face...

(from the editor, 12/31/05)

My sense is the old zen boys and even more so, the new, haven't gone far enough with this *Original Face* business. While we do, like wells, share a mysterious common ground water as Sokei-an put it, the arising of the individual wells is, perhaps, even more a mystery and the doctrine of "emptiness" does not really scratch the surface here. While these individual wells appear to come from "emptiness", it is not their inspired source, just the fluid interface to come into some form of conscious/unconscious existence. Those mysterious threads appearing at the extremes of the Alaya Vijana have puzzled seekers since long before Buddha.

This "coming in" seems to be as much a body/emotion thing as a mind/spirit thing and while it is true that little or big mind can scratch its surface, it is wasting its' time trying to figure it out. If it actually descended into the body/emotion realm for healing, it might eventually experience it out and genuinely know from the soles of its feet as well as from its heart and mouth. But so far, body/emotion realm, if lucky, is in the back seat and usually in the trunk, though, occasionally, a dummy drivers wheel is offered to placate it.

From the early Christian tradition in the Gospel According to Thomas, (the 114 sayings of Jesus #29, Concord Grove Press 1983) comes a rather interesting prose on this matter:

If the flesh
Came into Being for the sake Of the Spirit,
That is A Mystery.
But if the Spirit came into Being
For the sake of Body
That is a Wonderous Miracle.
How did such great wealth
Make its home, I wonder,
In such poverty?

Good question, which is more, "*Before Your Original Face, Who was your Mother and Father*" than the other way around. As the year is almost over at the end of this summer issue, I will say no more except:

Have a Real New Year,

... and **...**

When the man of no rank meets the great mountain,
Who is the wood nymph that appears, unseen,
smiling before him?...

A Zen Notes leap year,
flying over the rooster's pen
As summer howls to the Old year's end
and greets the New with an old dog's zen...

"Mu ain't Nothing,...
but a hound dog..."

(Presly lyrics and drawing by Seiko Morningstar)

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PUBLISHED BY

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New York City, New York 10016
(212) 686-2520

VOLUME XLXII, NUMBER 3 Summer 2005
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

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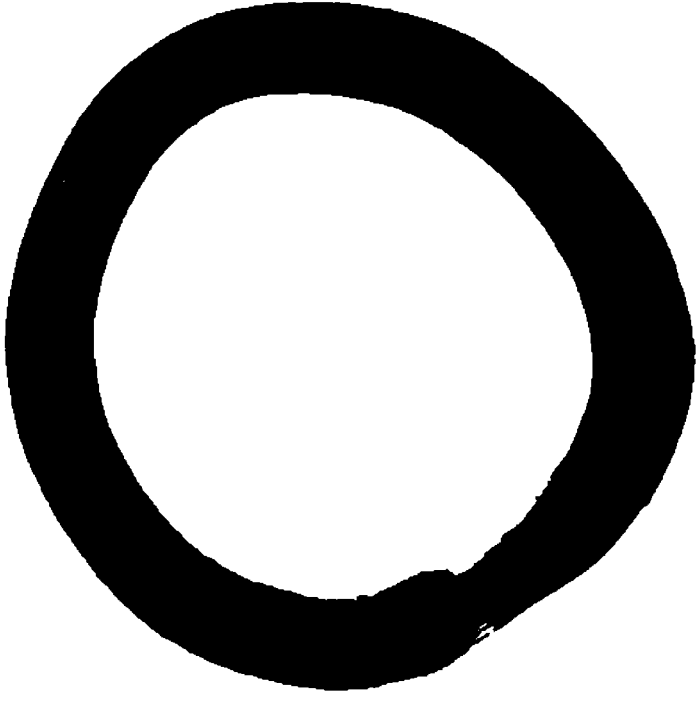
(ZN Vol 52, No. 3)
www.firstzen.org



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