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STUDIES IN EAST ASIAN BUDDHISM NO. 2

Dogen * Studies

Kuroda Institute
Studies in East Asian Buddhism

Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen
Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory

*Dogen * Studies*
William R. LaFleur

The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism John R. McRae

Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism
Peter N. Gregory

Sudden and Gradual: Aproaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought Peter N. Gregory

Buddhist Hermeneutics
Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

Dogen * Studies

Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 2

Edited by
William R.
LaFleur

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Dogen * in the Academy

William R. LaFleur

Some of us may live to see Japanese customs pervading our land.
—Josiah Royce (1908)

The Context

The induction of Dogen into the modern academic world, or perhaps more accurately, the academic world's first real engagement with Dogen came about 1924 when Watsuji Tetsuro* (1889–1960) published a provocative essay entitled "Shamon Dogen."[1] It was this essay that to many of Watsuji's contemporaries seemed to rescue Dogen from what they considered to be his entrapment for nearly seven centuries in the sectarian embrace of the Soto* school. Watsuji insisted that Dogen no longer should be thought of as belonging exclusively to the monastic community. Claiming, instead, that Dogen "belongs to mankind," Watsuji with this declaration initiated the non-sectarian study of this thirteenth-century figure and in effect commenced what are called Dogen Studies [*Dogen kenkyu**] in modern times.

As one way of exploring what it might possibly mean to say that Dogen "belongs to mankind," the Kuroda Institute held a conference on Dogen at Tassajara Springs, California from October 8 to 10, 1981. The essays of this volume are a part of its result. Asked to edit these, I decided first to reread Watsuji's essay in order to grasp how Watsuji saw the relationship between Dogen and the academic community. I came away from this reading with the distinct impression that, at least in some ways, my task would have been easier if I had been writing in 1924 rather than 1983. To Watsuji the task before him was quite clearly defined. He was immensely impressed with the quality of Dogen's writings and quite critical of the Soto monks for their readiness to accept a flawed and sketchy account of their own founder. He censured them for their total lack of interest in history, writing:

> There may be some who defend themselves by saying that they have entered the Zen life for the sake of their own enlightenment and that the gaining of a historical understanding of Dogen * is not their main goal. But then I wonder why it is so important that *he* be the founder of their school and why his individual personality is the core of their organization.[2]

In the face of such apathy about who Dogen really was and what he really wrote, Watsuji held that the study of such things in the academic world was now of fundamental importance.

He also saw it as a relatively uncomplicated procedure. Compared to the wide range of approaches used in today's academy, those of Watsuji's time were much more limited and, as a result, scholars working then had what now seems to us to be a long-lost confidence that they could quite simply differentiate truth from error. Their assurance about such things was very strong and straightforward. Watsuji quite easily assumed that he and his colleagues would be able to carve out of their materials a Dogen quite different and at the same time more accurately portrayed than the Dogen revered but at that time little read or bothered about in the Soto* school itself. The time had come, he felt, to "free" Dogen from centuries of basically blind, hagiolatrous treatment. Textual analysis and the historical reconstruction of the past— something Watsuji himself did to some degree in his essay—were heady enterprises in the 1920s and were entered into by academics with little doubt about their own ability to peel off all encrustations and locate the structure of truth beneath.

By contrast, the ambience in academia today is quite different.[3] The very success of modern scholarship has meant an incremental proliferation of methodologies and these now vie with one another as separate ways of looking for the "underlying truth" in the texts and data of history. So many rival claims, however, have caused a sharp drop in the confidence that any—or even all of them together—can ever gain access to the real truth about something. In this the academic world of Japan today is not unlike that of the West and, as a consequence, the interest in Dogen is no longer something confined to one or two closely related disciplines. One book recently published there, *Gendai shiso* to Dogen* [Contemporary thinking and Dogen] demonstrated quite clearly that Dogen studies are no longer the private preserve of philologists, Buddhologists, and historians; persons in medicine, in psychiatry, and in the study of society are also nowadays quite ready to study the *Shobogenzo** for insights into their respective

disciplines and for help in knowing where these might move in new and fruitful directions.[4] Naturally, however, with all this proliferation of methodologies, the identification of the "real" Dogen becomes more and more problematic.

The essays of this book certainly reflect much of this development, even though we here still lag far behind our Japanese colleagues in studies such as these. When the Kuroda Institute convened the Tassajara Conference on the Significance of Dogen, * its purpose was to recognize that Dogen studies even in the West have grown considerably in the last two decades, but that, since continued interaction is much more difficult among like-interested scholars here than it is in Japan, more is needed. Our distances are greater and our resources more limited. The assemblage of scholars at Tassajara reflected not only this development of Dogen studies but also the progressive widening of approaches now taken to understand Dogen and his significance.

In thinking about this introductory essay, I asked myself how I might deal with this diversity. I decided not to ask the reader to "tolerate" the variety of approaches and viewpoints—as if they were unfortunate or some kind of indication that Dogen studies in the West are undeveloped or unfocussed. My own judgment is that the variety of approaches in this book is a very positive sign, something that points to the fact that Dogen studies here are not only deepening in terms of primary engagement with the texts themselves but also broadening in terms of the variety of disciplinary specialists who, somewhat like their Japanese counterparts writing in the *Gendai shiso* to Dogen* volume, are beginning to explore Dogen from relatively new points of view. In addition, I simply find a certain intellectual fascination in the fact that such a variety of disciplines implicitly or explicitly contend with one another in order to make their own claims upon Dogen and what he "means."

What follows in the remainder of this introductory essay, then, has been devised to fit the format of a round-table discussion on Dogen, one in which I try to provide a context for the other essays by exploring some of the assumptions and implications in current debates on this topic. I wish to make it clear, however, that what follows is in a real sense a fiction and not the direct product of the scholars' conversations at Tassajara in 1981. There was, of course, a good deal of discussion there and it lasted for three days; but what follows is not a record in the usual sense. The reader, therefore, should not spend any time trying to figure out whether the characters in the following fictional discussion bear any resemblance to the writers of any of the essays that comprise the remainder of this volume. Any such resemblance would be coincidental and not very important.

The point, of course, is that this is fiction which tries to be true—true, at least, to the contours of certain current debates among us. It is offered with the hope that, at least to some degree, it teases out and plays with the multiplicity and diversity of "Dogens*" that appear when scholars like ourselves—that is, scholars in 1983 rather than 1924—insist upon looking at Dogen in the context of the academy *of our own time*. And that academy is, I think, one in which even within single disciplines such as history, philosophy, or sociology there will be a surprisingly wide variety of approaches. In fact, I am quite willing to let the "representatives" of the disciplines wobble on their pivots and shift in their alliances while they talk about Dogen *. That is to say, I think that Stephen Toulmin's description of the academic disciplines as "shifting conceptual populations" is accurate;[5] moreover, because I believe that such an academy is, in fact, an honest and healthy one, I find it interesting to see how sustained intellectual engagement with Dogen's writings permits and even encourages such freedom to move and interact in new ways. For the various academic disciplines too there may be some value in studying the self—that is, the usually presumed and asserted "self" of each discipline—and to do so with a readiness to lose that self if and when necessary.

The Conversation

CONVENER: As you know, our purpose here is to give each of you a chance to share the ways in which your several disciplines nowadays tend to look at Dogen and then to see what happens when we respond to one another's approaches. I assume that those of you basically interested in philosophy will see somewhat of a different Dogen than those who are historians—and so on. I will merely intervene from time to time to keep the discussion moving—and to make points which I simply can't resist making. Let's begin with one of our philosophers and see what kind of enterprise "Dogen Studies" has become when he engages in it.

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: Well, we have to be candid and admit from the outset that Dogen is not likely to be a

name with which most philosophers in the West are acquainted. Not having been in the tradition of thinking that began with the ancient Greeks, Dogen never had the chance to provide even one of the famous "footnotes to Plato," so naturally there are many among the academic philosophers of the West who wonder why the writings of this thirteenth-century Japanese should even be classified as "philosophical"! The situation, as most of you know, is very different in Japan, where interest in the thought of Dogen has been found within the universities—sometimes fairly strongly so—ever since Watsuji introduced the topic there and it was picked up with even more philosophical intensity by Tanabe Hajime. Part of that interest may stem from a certain national pride on the part of those Japanese who study him. But another part also arose, I suspect, precisely because in Dogen it was hoped that the basis might be found for a traditionally "Eastern" but at the same time philosophically sophisticated approach to life— something of an alternative to the philosophies of the "West" then being avidly studied and mastered by Japanese scholars. Remember that Watsuji himself had been specializing in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche studies before he made his sudden turn back towards his own tradition and took up Dogen. My impression is that, even among my own colleagues in philosophy in the West, those who have showed an interest in Dogen * have usually been scholars distressed by the cultural provincialism of Western philosophy. But, perhaps because Dogen is not a name our academic colleagues are likely to know, those of us who are Dogen enthusiasts within the philosophy departments of universities here have had to spend a good deal of energy showing that Dogen's thought is very sophisticated, integrated, and worked out in great detail—even though on the surface he uses language-forms that are quite different from the usual discourse of Western philosophers.

FIRST HISTORIAN: Yes, but that's precisely where I see a problem. As a historian I begin to get suspicious when I hear talk about Dogen's "Thought"—that is, as something in the singular rather than in the plural. The term "Dogen's thoughts" is, of course, awkward but to me as a historian it is more accurate. This happens, I suspect, because when I and many of the people in my discipline look at the *Shobogenzo** and other writings attributed to Dogen, we notice not so much a neatly and architectonically constructed philosophical edifice but a man of the thirteenth century who in the course of his life and varied experiences really had a whole succession of ideas about things—and these often seem to have changed quite a bit! Dogen was, after all, a man of his times and was deeply influenced by things such as rivalry with other Zen teachers of the time, the possibility or impossibility of official patronage, and the ever-changing views of what Ch'an or Zen had been in China. We should, I think, accept the fact that Dogen was bound to be influenced by such things and that he seems at times to have changed his mind, made reversals, and gone off in quite new directions. As a historian, I am most interested in these changes and their place in the course of Dogen's life. That's why talk about Dogen's "Thought" makes me nervous. Is its unified structure really there? Or is it something we ourselves are projecting on to the *Shobogenzo* and his other works?

SECOND PHILOSOPHER I must confess that I feel quite close to this way of doing things—even though I am a philosopher, not a historian. I have to admit that the older way of doing what was often called "comparative philosophy" is something with which I no longer can identify very readily. I don't wish to caricature it, but I fear that the comparisons of "East" and "West" that took place under that rubric over the years now leave me quite cold. They often seemed oblivious to all of history and to culture—especially to the way in which a particular philosopher of the past was engaged with the very particular questions specific to his age and the possibilities of expression within it. What was often called "comparative philosophy," I am afraid, often seemed to want to show that, except for very minor and inconsequential differences, a thorough analysis of the thought of "X" will prove that he was a Chinese Leibniz, that of "Y" makes him the Indian Wittgenstein, and that of "Z" suggests beyond doubt that he was really the Japanese Descartes. Doing comparative philosophy in this way was to do it on a grand scale but it ignored every kind of history. I am now more inclined to accept Richard Rorty's insistence that philosophers ought no longer do their work in a way so unconcerned about history; he claims that "the common message of Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Heidegger is a historicist one." [6] And this is, I would suggest, a message also for those of us interested in philosophy that originated outside the ambit of the West. As an exercise in this newer mode of "comparative philosophy"—if the term can still be used—I much prefer Herbert Fingarette's way of handling a figure such as Confucius; Fingarette took account of the vast cultural and historical gap between ancient China and the questions asked by philosophers in the modern West and, by adjudicating these difference in discourse, nevertheless made Confucius and his concerns seem intelligible and philosophically significant.[7] I am in favor of doing something like that with and for Dogen*—if we can.

TEXTUAL CRITIC: That's interesting but I fear that usually when people wish to stress the importance of

historical factors they quickly assume that these are "external" influences—that is, things that impact a figure such as Dogen from *outside*. For me a thinker and that thinker's texts are influenced also by his or her earlier writings. In fact, I would stress that the author of the *Shobogenzo** was not only a thinker but also a writer. That is to say, he was bound to be self-conscious about what was gradually unfolding as his oeuvre and himself often keenly aware when there were gaps and inconsistencies in his own work. And, being human, he would probably wish to cover the tracks of these problems or "rectify" these in one way or another over the years; that is, he would wish to "create" the semblance of a unity and a consistency of structure even when it was not there. History, at least in my view, involves the impact not only of external events upon a given writer's work—the kinds of things the political and institutional historian likes to point to as the "real" determinants!—but is also the subtle effect wrought by his or her earlier works upon a writer's later program. My own reading of Dogen would suggest that there is a considerable amount of this kind of thing in his writing.

FIRST HISTORIAN: As a historian I appreciate this but it leaves me, I am afraid, still ambivalent. On the one hand I applaud your readiness to see Dogen's thinking or his "program of writing" as complex and other than cut from whole cloth. But I find that your approach will force us to become easily satisfied with the fact that a large part of Dogen's oeuvre consists of Dogen's own "projections" onto his earlier work—that is, a magnificent piece of writing but largely self-contained. In this way his text easily becomes a "textual meditation" on itself. External events—power plays, land deals, rivalries, wars, and the like—become, at least in terms of their effect on the text, unknowable and ultimately unimportant for you. My problem with this approach is that, if it is so, then *everything* becomes a kind of "writing" and everything becomes equally true! There is a kind of hearty and maybe even attractive solipsism in this. But I worry that it may also be a sophisticated excuse for scholarly laziness. It has become easy nowadays to deride the naive assumptions of Auguste Comte and the overly simple canons of positivist historiography, but I fear that much of this has become all too easy an exercise in disdain. I wish to hold out for the possibility that there is still something of value in that approach. I'm still interested in trying to sort out facts from fabrications—and Dogen * is as good a place as any to be at work.

SOCIOLOGIST: With your permission I would like here to interject a few remarks that arise from my perspective as a sociologist. It is extremely interesting to me that all of you—whether historians or philosophers—have thus far been assuming that Watsuji's act of "rescuing" Dogen from entrapment in the Soto* school resulted in giving Dogen over to those to whom he *properly* should belong, namely, those of us engaged in academic pursuits. You seem to assume that for some reason or other the religious community claiming a primary allegiance to him had usurped him or was wrong in claiming its right to interpret him and the significance of his life. Now I wish to make it clear that I don't want to turn back the clock of history or even suggest that Watsuji did not begin something very important. I merely want to say that we academics should not leave the Soto school or today's Zen practitioners bereft of any right whatsoever to Dogen! Nor should we assume that the "interpretation" or explanation is something that ought only take place within the academic venue. It may be true, of course, that over the centuries the Soto people enshrined Dogen as holy founder and neglected to study the *Shobogenzo** as we today think it ought to have been studied. But, I am afraid that our strictly textual analyses proceed on the assumption that the best interpretation of Dogen happens when we scholars, as so many individuals working in our private studies and with our books and commentaries, pore over the writings of Dogen as another individual writing in the thirteenth century. This portrays the matter as something that is carried directly by books alone over a seven-century chasm between one individual and another. From my perspective as a sociologist you are all forgetting that texts in some sense arise *within communities* and, especially in a case such as this, continue to be embodied in the ongoing community attached to that text or its author. And, incidentally, our interpretations as scholars also arise within a community, the academic community—even though we much prefer to forget this fact and conceive of ourselves as individual researchers, somehow "uncontaminated" by the shifting intellectual fashions of our day and the sometimes almost sectarian allegience such trends and "schools" often demand in the academy.

CONVENER: Do you mean it's time to turn Watsuji on his head? That we ought now to give Dogen * back to the intentional religious community from which Watsuji wanted to rescue him, a community which today exists not only in Japan but also to some extent in the West as well?

SOCIOLOGIST: Some might say that. I myself would be satisfied merely with the recognition among us that we are not the only ones who "own" Dogen, some realization that the religious community too has a right to its own interpretation of him and his significance. Dogen, after all—and we ought not forget this!—was first of all interested in the formation of the Zen community and its perpetuation through time. His great emphasis upon the

"bodily" expression of Buddhahood implies, I think, not only that he has something to say about the "mind/body" problem of contemporary philosophy but also that his conception of Buddhahood includes man's corporate—that is, his social and communal—nature.

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: In this connection I want to come back to defend Watsuji a bit and state that in my understanding the "practice" of Zen is not limited to what can be done within such primary religious communities. Modern philosophy in Japan has, of course, taken many forms. But certainly one of the most important has been that of the so-called Kyoto school, the works of which I've been trying to understand for some years now. As many of you know, the influence of Buddhism on this school was considerable; it was somewhat covert in the writings of Nishida Kitaro* (1870–1945), the founder of the school, but has become much more overt in recent decades—especially in the writings of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, Nishitani Keiji, Ueda Shizuteru, and Abe Masao. In some of these the influence of Dogen is especially clear. But here is where I think that those of us who are Western readers of the writings of this school easily make a mistake. The importance of Zen and Dogen for the Kyoto school has not been, I would suggest, merely because these provide "Eastern" or "Buddhist" views on problems that are long-standing problems within the world of philosophy. My own reading of the connection between Zen and the Kyoto school is quite different. It has to do with the fact that the philosophers connected with this school have insisted that the proper work of philosophy is that of examining *the* fundamental issue having to do with life and death. Work on this problem is, they have held, the real work of philosophy. And this requires a rigorous probing, self-examination, and thoroughgoing penetration! It is instructive to notice how important words like these are in Kyoto school writings. And it is, then, no mere coincidence that the closest analogue to all of this is that of Zen practice. Comparative philosophy wants to know what the Buddhist "view" on a panoply of problems might be; the Kyoto school, adopting much more of Zen's way of turning the question around, often asks why the discussion of these "problems" has become merely a way of avoiding *the* problem, that of life and death.

CONVENER: But isn't this what philosophy has always been about? Why was Dogen * needed to remind philosophers to do what they were already doing?

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: Perhaps it is what philosophy had once been! But I think the reason why the Kyoto school during the past few decades has really stressed the importance of Zen and Dogen has been the obvious fact that much of Japanese philosophy, somewhat in imitation of trends in the West, had begun to turn away from the larger, more difficult problems of human existence and had begun to focus upon smaller, more readily and empirically soluble ones. Like the natural sciences, philosophers wanted "results"—even if this meant narrowing the scope of their concerns and eliminating entirely the older, much more difficult questions with which philosophy had long dealt. It was this abandonment of the older, more fundamental problem that worried the Kyoto school and it is why, since this was the basic problem of Zen practice according to Dogen, he had such an intrinsic appeal to the Kyoto philosophers.

CONVENER: But wouldn't it have been easier and more direct for those so concerned to have simply joined one of the monastic communities where this was already the ordinary practice?

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: I don't think so. This is why Watsuji had a point; the existence of a monastic community is not itself a guarantee that Dogen will be rightly understood and remembered. Ossification was and always will remain a danger for such communities; Watsuji and others seemed to feel that the study of Dogen in the academic context could prevent or at least serve as a partial check against this.

SECOND PHILOSOPHER And isn't there also simply the danger in a religious community that old concepts and ways of thinking will be revered simply because they are there and are the tradition? To me one of the interesting developments within the Kyoto school is what might be called a Buddhist revision of traditional Buddhist teachings. Nishitani, for instance, in his *Shukyo* to wa nanika* did not hesitate to subject the traditional understanding of transmigration to a rigorous analysis and go on to suggest that it might reasonably be regarded as "mythic" from the viewpoint of modern man.[8] I don't see this kind of thing as very likely to occur outside of the academic world and the freedom it gives to make such a move.

SECOND HISTORIAN: You seem to be suggesting that the real grappling with Dogen * and his concerns takes place in the academic world. But isn't it pretty clear that Dogen, at least in the last phase of his life at Eihei-ji,

insisted that the true practice of Buddhism is something that takes place in separated, strictly monastic communities? This is obviously an area in which the renewed study of Dogen's own writings in our time has produced a problem for those of the Soto* school who want to hold to the important role of the laity in Zen.[9] But you seem to be advocating that in the modern world the role of the monastic community may be no longer viable—that Dogen is now better understood within the walls of the university or, at least, that there one is still able to probe the basic question of the meaning of life and death.

SOCIOLOGIST: I would simply add the observation that it is not at all easy to decide what is and what is not appropriate for so-called "modern" man and modern society. While some Buddhist thinkers in Japan may be ready to say that the monastic community is hopelessly medieval and has outlived its usefulness in the modern world, individuals in the contemporaneous West may be very ready to see the formation of such communities here as precisely what is needed to rescue our lives from a hopeless enmeshment in the fractured nature of modern life. As a sociologist I may be seeing all these things somewhat differently, but, given lots of other developments in our society, I am not at all surprised to see the growing interest in Dogen as a growing interest in a form of Buddhist monastic or semi-monastic community life. In addition, to ignore what is happening in our own time and in our own society is to pass up a valuable way of gaining insight into what may have been even the original dynamic and appeal of a charismatic figure such as Dogen in the thirteenth century.

CONVENER: But is it really Dogen and his kind of Zen that is being established in the West in our time or is it something which, in spite of the community's desire to claim "transmission" across oceans, time and cultures, is really something entirely different? I'd be especially happy to hear what an anthropologist thinks of this problem.

ANTHROPOLOGIST: I, of course, can't speak for all anthropologists, but I can give my own view. I happen to be one of those anthropologists who is impressed with the relative strength and cohesiveness of what we call a given culture and the fact that the movement of ideas and religious philosophies from one culture to another is usually much more difficult than the transfer of tangible and technological cultural artifacts. One of the mistakes we often make is one of assuming that, because a robe, a bowl, a mandala, or a holy icon have made it across a mountain range or an ocean, somehow or other the exact meaning and usage of that material object have also made the transition. I doubt this very much. Even with the best linguistic training and attention to transcultural problems, the "translation" of something like Dogen's * view of things into twentieth-century American ears and minds will, I am afraid, be spotty, fragmentary, and haphazard at best. Although I hear the book has its critics and much of its expertise is different than my own so I can't really judge it, I like Hajime Nakamura's *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*.[10] Nakamura is a Buddhologist rather than an anthropologist but he has a viewpoint which made sense to me when I read it. That is, he stressed the internal integrity and cohesiveness of each of the following Asian cultures—India, China, Tibet, and Japan. I am no expert on the liguistic matters involved but I was interested in his view that the cultural predispositions of Dogen as a Japanese so strongly influenced him that while he was in China he only would—maybe even only could!—hear and understand those things for which he was predisposed. That is, the Zen he received was a Zen that "fit" into the cultural and intellectual presuppositions of the Japanese. I suspect that is true. What becomes important then is not what Dogen received from Ju-ching— which may not have been so much after all—but what he in fact shared with his Japanese contemporaries such as Nichiren and Shinran—even though there may have been no direct contact with them, and Dogen himself would have disavowed it as unimportant. With Nichiren and Shinran he shared certain cultural predispositions, problems, and forms of expression and these were the "common sense" of that particular cultural context. Being the kind of anthropologist I am, this strikes me as probably correct.

CONVENER: Does that mean that we ought to be completely unconcerned about whether or not Dogen's understanding of Buddhism—or Nichiren's for that matter— was in any sense authentic or orthodox?

ANTHROPOLOGIST: Well, it would be nice, of course, if we could show that it were somehow authentic or orthodox. But it seems highly unlikely to me that, having passed through the history of many centuries and having already been filtered into and then through the Chinese mind, there was really much left of some presumed "original" Buddhism that could have passed to Dogen. You understand, of course, that in my view cultures—especially in intellectual and religious matters—are rather opaque, maybe even obdurate. They don't allow for the easy passage we would like them to provide. Of course, we *want* them to be permeable—especially when we

ourselves are standing at the end of the line of transmission or of textual reception.

CONVENER: Doesn't this mean that you end up being much more interested in Dogen, who—however unintentionally—really gave expression to certain modes of *Japanese* thinking rather than to Buddhism per se? This has, from my impression, been a major theme in the writing of many Japanese Buddhologists. But I have always assumed that this was influenced by a bit too much Japanese concern for detecting what is uniquely Japanese—and have disregarded it as such. But now you are suggesting that, at least from your point of view, it has validity, a validity inasmuch as *each* culture is uniquely structured, and that at least your kind of anthropology would support its likelihood.

ANTHROPOLOGIST: Well, who is to say there ever was a "Buddhism per se"? It seems to me that we must admit that even what used to be called "primitive Buddhism" or "original Buddhism" was embedded in a particular language and had Indian cultural suppositions from the outset. The existence of a primitive—by which people often seem to have meant a "culture free"—Buddhism seems to have been largely the projection of European students of Buddhism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

SECOND HISTORIAN: Yes, but our awareness of multiple cultures and their differences within the world should not betray us into thinking that Dogen * had a similar notion of culture and cultures. Here is where I again want to insist upon attention to the categories and problematics of Dogen's own era. Certainly in going to China, Dogen experienced it as "different" and he may even have contemplated an even greater "strangeness" in the Sanskrit texts and Indian people he may have encountered while in China. But a sense of strangeness does not imply a *concept of cultures*—especially not one of cultural relativity. Dogen's own education had not included courses in cultural anthropology and I would maintain, in addition, he would not have been inclined to approve of our notions of cultural relativity. The texts of his own writings seem very clear on this point. They show a single-minded concern about the Buddhist Dharma, not some kind of curiosity concerning how that Dharma might be differently understood in different cultures. For Dogen the concept of *upaya** or *hoben** did not seem to imply a cultural relativity in the meaning and application of that Dharma. He claims, of course, to have been gravely disappointed in the practice of the Buddhists he met in China—with the important exception of Ju-ching. But this was not because their Buddhism was strangled by too much Chinese culture; it was because their practice was lax. To Dogen it was a human problem, not a cultural one. Orthopraxis for him was not a matter that had to be altered by passage through cultural filters and adapted to cultural variations. As historians and even as anthropologists it seems important to me that we notice when persons or peoples share or do not share our own notions of history and of culture.

LINGUIST: I am not so certain about that. I think we must take into account not only what you claim to be no overt interest in cultural relativity on Dogen *'s part, but also his deliberate decision to compose the *Shobogenzo** in Japanese rather than Chinese. Wouldn't the fact that he made such a decision, something very much at variance with his contemporaries' practice of writing Buddhist treatises in Chinese, argue strongly that he wanted to make an accommodation to being "Japanese" at this level, probably the most basic level of all? After all, what can be more basic in terms of cultural awareness than the choice to move what had usually been written in classical Chinese, a kind of "ecclesiastical Latin" for Japanese clerics at that time, into the vernacular of his own people? Isn't this to communicate—even if implicitly— a deep sense of cultural awareness and the desire to translate Buddhism into a totally Japanese form?

TEXTUAL CRITIC: Ah, but there is good reason to question just how "easily communicable" Dogen's Japanese was and is. Even for his contemporaries it had nothing of the cozy familiarity that Luther's German had, for instance, for his countrymen.

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: I can vouch for that! Some years ago I thought I had learned classical Japanese quite well . . . but then later I tried reading Dogen! I go along totally with those scholars who say the text of the *Shobogenzo* looks like Japanese but really must be called something like "Dogen-ese.*" It is very idiosyncratic, to say the least.

TEXTUAL CRITIC: But that's a very important point—Dogen's intentional difficulty! And it's a point recognized by Japanese scholars who deal with medieval Japanese literature.[11] I would like to return to something I said

earlier, namely, that we should not be overly conscious of the role of "outside" influence upon Dogen or even of exactly how "Japanese" his thinking is. To me it is a fascinating and extraordinarily rich text because of its verbal and linguistic finesse. Dogen seems to have been a very self-conscious writer; his rhetoric is marvelous and, from everything I can detect, the text has a texture, and that texture is remarkably consistent throughout.

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: But is that just an accident or some kind of literary "spit and polish" that he added to what he wanted to say? I would maintain that this was due to the depth of his religious and philosophical penetration of ultimate issues. Dogen's style is evidence of his freedom and his freedom is the freedom of the enlightened mind. It is shown on every page. The religious profundity is patent for anyone to see and it clearly shows up in his capacity to "play" with language. His language is that of a man in *samadhi**.

FIRST HISTORIAN: Yes, but the problem—at least as someone rather neo-positivist like myself sees things—is that, while our textual critic's analysis fits in very well with contemporary philosophy's sensitivity to the language of various thinkers, it turns out once again to present Dogen * as a "systematic" thinker. It sees all his rhetorical devices as part of a *verbal fabric* and, as such, lays heavy emphasis upon the structure in it all. My problem is that when I look at the text with the kind of training I have had in reading such things I am boggled by the surprising discontinuities, flips, and reversals in the course of Dogen's writing. Not only that. There is also the very serious problem of whether or not he understood his Chinese mentor Ju-ching while in China. As most of you know, Takasaki Jikido* has taken special notice of the fact that the key phrase in Dogen, *shinjin datsuraku* ("dropping off body and mind"), is one that *never* appears in what we have of Ju-ching's writings.[12] Takasaki goes on to suggest that there may have been a serious linguistic misunderstanding between the master and his disciple—as it were, something of a language breakdown between the Chinese mouth and the Japanese ear. Ju-ching's phrase probably was not "dropping off body and mind" but simply "dropping the dust from the mind."

SECOND HISTORIAN: Yes, but James Kodera questions that interpretation, noting that, although the two phrases are homonyms in Japanese, they are not so in Chinese, the language Ju-ching would certainly have used.[13] Kodera goes on to suggest that Dogen's phrase is in some ways "better" than that of his master. If I understand Kodera correctly, he says that Ju-ching's expression aims at the restoration of the original state of the mind by removing defilement from it, but Dogen's expression assumes nothing to which an original state of purity needs to be restored.

FIRST HISTORIAN: That is interesting but it overlooks, I think, the fact that the *Hokyo-ki**, a work which purports to be Dogen's own later "record" of his earlier days in China, attributes the "cast off body and mind" phrase not to himself originally but to Ju-ching!

LINGUIST: Wouldn't that mean either that a very serious problem of interlinguistic communication occurred precisely at the point at which Dogen was receiving his master's most important teaching or—and this may be even more disturbing!—that Dogen in later life, when at the point of recollecting and writing down his "record" of his long-past days in China, *imagined* that Ju-ching must have said "cast off body and mind"? In this latter case we would have to say that Dogen didn't really receive the transmission but rather appears to have invented it.

FIRST HISTORIAN: Yes, that's the problem. Of course, there is also the possibility that the *Hokyo-ki* was much less Dogen's work than that of his immediate disciples. But in either case there is something deeply problematic, at least to a historian like myself, at precisely that point where there is supposed to have been the most vital link between master and disciple.

TEXTUAL CRITIC: I hope you will pardon me but, to tell truth, I don't find that either surprising or disturbing. To come back to something I was saying earlier, Dogen *, after all, was a writer in addition to being a Zen master. I guess I simply expect a writer to be a writer. Therefore, even when a writer purports to be giving us something that he himself called "reliable" as a record or as history, there will always be some fictionalizing and fabrication in it. It's inevitable! Borges noted that great poets create their own precursors and the contemporary literary critic Harold Bloom—in books such as *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*—has been giving us brilliant analyses of how much misunderstandings and fabrications work in literature and why they are such a necessary part of being truly creative.[14] If great poets must create their own precursors, so too, I imagine, great Zen masters must create their own ancestors and patriarchs!

CONVENER: But then, if I correctly understand what you are saying, what are usually called the great patriarchs of Buddhism and of Zen were to a great extent the product of later fabrications, even of storytelling—in spite of the great emphasis within the tradition upon correct and authentic "transmission" of the Dharma, an emphasis that continues to the present day.

TEXTUAL CRITIC: According to what I have read, this has been quite apparent for some time already. The close checking of actual documents by persons really concerned about documentation has shown that there was a good deal of this within the tradition. The "history" of the transmission of Zen to the Sixth Patriarch is, I suspect, a classic case.[15] The connection between Ju-ching and Dogen may be merely another instance. The thing I wish to stress, however, is that it is not necessary to bring some kind of moral judgment to bear on all of this. It is also why I think my approach is different from that of the historian. Unlike people in my discipline, he adopts something of the role of a detective trying to sort through the evidence to find the "truth" under the skillful obfuscations and evasions created by people wanting us not to know it; his discipline is propelled by a certain moral energy. Mine is more low-keyed and maybe it is less purist in its view of what writing—even the historiographical variety—is likely to be. Frankly, we regard historiography—even its most modern forms—as itself another form of writing and, therefore, of storytelling. As a consequence, people in my discipline would *expect* the ancient Zen masters to have "played" with the truth abit and we will even admire them for the skill and creativity of their fictions. From everything I can tell Dogen * was a writer in this sense.

ANTHROPOLOGIST: I have a hunch that there is even some suggestion of this in the manner in which people in the Zen tradition have always been somewhat skittish about any attempt to describe "transmission of the Dharma" as if it were some kind of "thing" that were being passed down from one person to another and could, by examination, be declared more or less intact. Some teachers of Zen speak, for instance, of the circularity and reciprocity of transmission. I don't know exactly what is meant, for instance, by the phrase "direct transmission from mind to mind"—at least I don't know what someone involved in that transmission means by it. I can, however, at least make an outsider's judgment concerning it and say that such language is what we might call "boundary-marking" language. It functions to seal off a certain area of experience as very unlike even its closest analogues in the experience of other people. It says: "Don't come in here wearing the clumsy, dirty boots of 'ordinary' understandings and interpretations! This is something special and, unless you shed your usual categories of understanding, you'll never be able to grasp what this means." Some of my colleagues in anthropology have begun to mold their methodology to accommodate the importance of this. Jacques Maquet, for instance, has felt no reluctance in being what he calls an "observing participant" in the meditations and religious life of Buddhist communities both in Asia and North America.[16] There is this sense among certain anthropologists that the old stance of supposed "objectivity" was precisely that: a stance and nothing more. It really created a distance and therefore a distortion—or, more seriously, an unacknowledged distortion—in what was being observed.

SECOND HISTORIAN: But isn't that to say that you have to be *in* the line of such a transmission or, at least, be involved in Zen practice itself in this case to be able to understand exactly what is meant here? Doesn't it imply that all the structures of interpretation which we academics offer up are nothing but futile attempts? And isn't this to suggest that each of us in our own way has been looking merely at our own finger pointing to the moon rather than at the moon itself?

FIRST PHILOSOPHER: If by that you mean that some actual practice of Zen might complement and may even give further focus to our academic understanding, I have no problem. But if you are suggesting that we academics should drop our own studies of Dogen and merely learn of him in the context of *zazen* and under the tutelage of "teachers" in the official line of transmission, I am afraid I will hold out for the continuation of interpretations through books and the older mode of cross-reference and open critiques. The academic study of Dogen is still, I think, too tender and fragile a flower to be already abandoned. We have only just begun! To my mind the current anomie in the academy ought not to inhibit our studies but, on the contrary, should make the study of Dogen * perhaps even more fascinating than we had thought it to be.

SOCIOLOGIST: I concur with that. I maintain that the practicing community's understanding must be listened to and respected but there is always an acute danger of ossification there. People who are busily involved in doing *zazen* and working on koans* will not, in fact, have a lot of time for reading the *Shobogenzo**—or even the

Zuimonki. While I am ready to champion the right of community to interpret its master, I would hate to see the Zen community on this side of the ocean do what the one in Japan appears to have done some centuries ago, namely enshrine and then treat Dogen with benign neglect. And Dogen, as has been forcefully noted here, is difficult. For spare-time or "easy" reading there is always the vast, eclectic, and all too accessible supermarket of English language books on "Eastern religions" and popular Zen—all of these things infinitely easier than Dogen! This, in my opinion, argues for the need of a separate, continuous, and academic study of Dogen—for a long time to come!

CONVENER: Are you suggesting that the future of Dogen studies will be most safe if we have *two* fingers . . . and work at keeping both of them pointing at the moon?

The Credits

In the convening of the Tassajara conference it was recognized from the beginning that it would be impossible to include all the Western scholars who have been working on Dogen and thinking about his significance. It was hoped that the conference would represent different points of view and, in order to make this a certainty, the range of scholarly interests was as wide as the budget could let it be. The facilities, food, and hospitality provided at Tassajara Springs by the San Francisco Zen Center were wonderful and stimulating for our discussions. The setting of a monastic community in the mountains made the participants speculate that maybe they had gotten as close as possible to Eihei-ji while still remaining in California. In addition to the conferees who contributed the papers in the following pages, Professor Yasuaki Nara of Komazawa University, the author of an extremely interesting paper entitled, "Kaigai kara mita Dogen" [Dogen seen from abroad],[17] added much to our sense of there being, in fact, an ocean-crossing community of scholarly interest in our topic. Likewise, Professor Masatoshi Nagatomi of Harvard shared with us much of his knowledge as a Buddhologist and his own perspective on Dogen * in the Kamakura period. Monks and lay practitioners from the San Francisco Zen Center and from the Zen Center of Los Angeles kindly listened in while we scholars, loquacious as ever, did all the talking.

Taizan Maezumi Roshi and Richard Baker Roshi focused much of the discussion, however, during one especially memorable evening when the scholars and the practitioners sat in a circle to share their mutual interpretations of Dogen. The Kuroda Institute and its director at that time, Michael Soule, sponsored and coordinated the conference and made it possible. An anonymous benefactor helped us meet the travel and other expenses involved. In the editing of these papers Peter Gregory, the present director of the Kuroda Institute, was an invaluable help to me—as were my UCLA colleagues Robert S. Kirsner and Jacques Maquet. I certainly also am very grateful to Tai-wo Kwan, who not only prepared the glossary but also helped immeasurably in many details of the editing process. Stuart Kiang of the University of Hawaii Press gave advice and editorial assistance at many points along the way.

Finally, there will be propriety in a note to the reader concerning translations and textual apparatus. Persons already familiar with Dogen studies in the West know that we are still many years away from having a complete and definitive translation of Dogen's complete works. Individual scholars, some of whom are represented here, have done translations of certain portions of Dogen's writings and naturally have their own individual preferences when it comes to matters of how exactly to translate into English portions of the thirteenth-century master's prose or, for that matter, even the titles of various of the fascicles of the *Shobogenzo**. These are matters about which the scholars here represented often feel quite strongly—since they touch on their own individual ways of interpreting Dogen. Therefore, in editing these essays I have not tried to impose a uniformity of translation and terminology on these contributors since such would be premature at this stage of our studies and contrary to their exploratory and investigative purpose. Being definitive in that sense will have to be the task of another book—at another stage in our studies.

Perhaps for similar reasons we are in a stage where certain words of Indian origin have over the years become sufficiently known to get entered into our own dictionaries—words such as sangha, nirvana, samsara, dharma, mahayana, hinayana, theravada, and sutra. These words, without the diacritical marks they once possessed, have now become English words and to me there seems no need to "re-alienate" them here. Other words of Asian origin have, to the best of our abilities, been rendered with proper diacriticals.

Four works in the footnotes will appear repeatedly and have been abbreviated in the following manner:

DZZ 1 and *DZZ* 2 refer respectively to the two volumes of the *Dogen * zenji zenshu** edited by Okubo* Doshu* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo*, 1969–70.

SSZ refers to the twenty volumes of the *Soto* shu* zensho* (Tokyo: Komeisha*, 1929–38).

T refers to the standard version of the Chinese Buddhist canon, the *Taisho* shinshu* daizokyo** in eighty-five volumes (Tokyo: Taisho Issaikyo* Kankokai*, 1924– 34).

EB refers to the new series of *The Eastern Buddhist*.

Notes

1. Reprinted as a chapter in Watsuji's "Nihon Seishinshi Kenkyu*" in Abe Yoshishige et al., eds., *Watsuji Tetsuro* Zenshu** (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977), vol. 4, pp. 156–246. For a more full account of modern Japanese scholarship on Dogen, see Hee-Jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 1–9.

2. Ibid., p. 161.

3. A very different approach to hagiographical writing, for instance, can be seen in the various essays included in Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps, eds., *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976). In these essays the hagiographical element is detected in varied kinds of writing and is not merely "peeled off" but is itself made the subject of interest and study.

4. Kagamishima Genryu* and Tamaki Kojiro*, eds., *Gendai shiso* to Dogen* (Tokyo: Shunjusha*, 1981). See also the way Dogen's thinking is stretched to invite both philosophical and psychological research in Yuasa Yasuo's important study *Shintai: Toyoteki* Shinjinron no Kokoromi* (Tokyo: Sobunsha*, 1977).

5. Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 336ff.

6. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 9. Here I must apologize to the reader for appending footnotes to a text that purports to be oral conversation but then this is, after all, a fabrication and there seems to be no good reason to deny the reader access to its sources. Although the conversation is a fiction, the notes, to be sure, refer to real books and essays.

7. Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

8. This important work now exists in English translation: Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, translated with an introduction by Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982).

9. See Shibata Doken*, *Dogen Zenji no Zaike kyoka** (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1979).

10. Nakamura Hajime, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964).

11. For an excellent literary analysis of Dogen's language see Yasuraoka Kosaku*, *Chuseiteki* Bungaku no Tankyu** (Tokyo: Yuseido*, 1960), pp. 96–139.

12. Takasaki Jikido * and Umehara Takeshi, *Kobutsu no Manebi: Dogen** (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1969), 43–52.

13. Takashi James Kodera, *Dogen's Formative Years in China: An Historical Study and Annotated Translation of the Hokyo-ki** (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 106–107.

14. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

15. See Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967).

16. Jacques Maquet, "Bhavana* in Contemporary Sri Lanka: The Idea and Practice," in Somaratna Balasooriya et al., eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honor of Walpola Rahula* (London and Vimamsa: Gordon Fraser, 1980), pp. 139– 153.

17. Nara Yasuaki, "Kaigai kara mita Dogen" in Kagamishima and Tamaki, op.cit., pp. 244–276.