

NOT FALLING, NOT OBSCURING:  
DOGEN AND THE TWO TRUTHS OF THE FOX KOAN

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## ABSTRACT

Within recent Japanese Buddhist scholarship there is a debate over the interpretation of Karmic causality evidenced in the 75 and 12 fascicle editions of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, one salient example being that found in the *daishugyō* and *shinjin inga* fascicles on the fox kōan from the *mumonkon*.

At issue is whether a Buddhist of great cultivation transcends karmic causality, with the earlier *daishugyō* promoting a balanced perspective of both “not falling into” and “not obscuring” causality, while *shinjin inga* instead strongly favors the latter over the former. Traditionalists interpret the apparent reversal in *shinjin inga* as an introductory simplification to aid novices, while some Critical Buddhists see Dōgen as instead returning to the orthodox truth of universal causality.

I argue that Dōgen philosophically favored the view found in *daishugyō*, but moved away from it in his later teachings due to misinterpretations made by both senior and novice monks alike.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Recent Japanese scholarship has begun to grapple with the question of whether and how Dōgen Kigen's (道元希玄 1200-1253) voluminous writings are the product of changes he underwent in his lifetime, and thus whether some of his works should be interpreted as distinct and even contradictory standpoints that constitute a significant change in his teachings. One group that has sparked this debate is the “Critical Buddhist” movement (*hihan bukkō* 批判仏教), which advocated a “Renewal” theory that reads the later writings of Dōgen as rejecting the Tendai and Zen-influenced “original enlightenment” (*hongaku shisō* 本学思想) ideas that permeate his early writings, and instead substituting early Buddhist conceptions of codependent origination. This is in contradistinction to the traditional Sōtō interpretations, which see no substantial change in doctrine over the course of Dōgen's lifetime, and maintain that the apparently contradictory elements of his writings are either the complementary aspects of the “two truths,” and/or *upāya* adjusted to the capabilities of particular audiences. Thus while Dōgen may adjust the form and focus of his teachings to particular circumstances, his thought is seen as perfectly consistent over his entire literary output.

The controversy between these two camps centers on the relationship between two Dōgen texts; the 12 and 75-fascicle editions of his literary masterwork *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, both of which are incorporated into the modern 95-fascicle Sōtō canon version of the text. Traditionally scholars have focused on the 75-*shōbōgenzō* as the core of Dōgen's thought, while relegating the 12-*shōbōgenzō* to a provisional teaching designed to

accommodate novices and laypeople in the community around his temple Eihei-ji 永平寺. The Critical Buddhism movement attempts to invert this hierarchy, by interpreting the 12-*shōbōgenzō* as the beginning of a radical revision of Dōgen's earlier thought. They view the 12-*shōbōgenzō* as the start of a project to replace the 75-*shōbōgenzō* completely, thus superseding the earlier text instead of serving as a mere appendix, and in the process negating many of his early ideas, particularly those that embrace Original Enlightenment.

A key point of contention in the relationship of the two texts is Dōgen's view on karma, which is emphasized heavily in the 12-*shōbōgenzō*. The phrase "Deep Faith in [Karmic] Causality" (*shinjin inga* 信心因果) appears over two dozen times in the latter work, as do stories of rebirth destinies (such as the *Jātaka* tales of the Buddha's past lives) which Dōgen uses to connect behavior to karmic consequences. One of the most illustrative examples is the fascicle named *shinjin inga*, which takes up the classic case of Pai-Chang and the wild fox, in which a former Zen master suffers 500 lifetimes as a shapeshifting fox creature for the mistake of denying causality. In *shinjin inga* Dōgen interprets the story as a warning that any denial of causality is mistaken and may lead to grave results. This is contrasted with the 75-*shōbōgenzō* fascicle *daishūgyō* 大修業 which is also concerned with the same story, but instead continues the Zen tradition of maintaining that "not falling into [karmic] causality" is as equally valid as "not obscuring causality," a strong contrast to the apparent condemnation for the former viewpoint in *shinjin inga*.

As a small part of the larger project of addressing changes over time in Dōgen's writing, this paper will closely examine the differing interpretations of the "Pai-Chang

and the wild fox” kōan outlined in the *daishugyō* and *shinjin inga* fascicles, as well as the conflicting modern views on those interpretations. First I will explain the kōan through the traditional Zen interpretation, which takes its cue from the long history of the “two truths” Buddhist doctrine. I will show that while the philosophy supporting that interpretation is sound, there are reasons to doubt that *shinjin inga* was written for an introductory audience as the traditionalists claim. Then I will summarize and critique the Critical Buddhists’ vastly divergent reading of Dōgen, which I believe overstates the changes in *shinjin inga* and does not fully take into account the broader context of his other contemporaneous writings and historical activities. I will then look beyond the contrast with *daishugyō* by also evaluating *shinjin inga* against Dōgen’s history of moral exhortation against antinomian tendencies that attempted to rationalize the loosening of monastic standards, an idea he struggled against throughout his career yet more forcefully denounced during his later years. I then conclude with some suggestions as to why Dōgen may have turned to teaching the more didactic *shinjin inga* later in his life.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FOX KŌAN: NOT FALLING, NOT OBSCURING

The “Pai-Chang and the wild fox” kōan appears as the 2<sup>nd</sup> case of the *mumonkan* 無門關 collection, from which Dōgen appears to have drawn the quotations used in the *Shōbōgenzō*. The case starts with a mysterious old man who comes to see Pai-Chang Huai-hai 百丈懷海 (720-814) when he was the master of a Zen temple. The old man confesses that he is actually a shapeshifting fox creature, who was the master of this same temple 500 lifetimes ago. At that time a disciple asked this master whether a person of great cultivation (*daishugyō*) falls into karmic causation or not, and he answered that they do not fall into causation (*furaku inga* 不落因果). Since that time the former master has been reborn into a wild fox body again and again, and he asks the current temple master Huai-hai for a “turning word” to release him from this series of transformations, which Huai-hai provides in the reply “such a person does not obscure causality” (*fumai inga* 不昧因果). Upon hearing these words the former master attains enlightenment, claims he is released from the fox transfiguration, and asks to be buried as a monk, which Pai-Chang assents to, much to his fellow monk’s bewilderment. An old fox corpse is then discovered, cremated, and buried as a monk.<sup>1</sup>

The literal meaning of the kōan seems straightforward; for denying causality, the old man is punished by that very causality through lifetimes spent as a fox creature; when causality is affirmed, he is finally released. The relationship is somewhat paradoxical in that denial of karma leads to bondage while affirmation leads to freedom, but the

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Kōan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1989), 4.

apparent moral implication is that one ought to affirm causality so as to avoid punishment and achieve enlightenment. Dōgen embraces this perspective in the 12-*shōbōgenzō*'s “Great faith in causality” (*shinjin inga*) fascicle, the same one that Critical Buddhism would advance as “true” Buddhism. Yet the classic interpretation of this story evidenced in Zen literature, including Dōgen's own earlier *daishūgyō* fascicle from 1241, is remarkably different.

Zen commentaries have traditionally resisted the literal reading, and instead entertained a more paradoxical approach, which questioned whether not falling into causality (*furaku inga*) and not obscuring causality (*fumai inga*) are as different as they seem, and thus do not advocate pursuing one approach over another. Two such short commentaries appear in the *mumonkan*;

Prose Commentary

“Not falling into causality” - why was he transfigured into a wild fox? “Not obscuring causality” – why was he released from the fox body? If you can see this with a single eye, you will understand how the former abbot of Pai-chang monastery cultivated his five hundred lifetimes of transfiguration.

Verse Commentary

Not falling [into causality], not obscuring [causality],  
Two sides of the same coin;  
Not obscuring [causality], not falling [into causality];  
Hundreds of thousands of transgressions!<sup>2</sup>

The prose commentary questions whether the transformation into a fox should be viewed as a punishment, as well as whether the release from the transformation is a reward for correct behavior; this is reinforced by describing the transfiguration as a cultivation, in some sense embracing it as a spiritual development rather than a cautionary example. This view is reflected in the *daishūgyō* fascicle, where Dōgen points

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<sup>2</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 18.



out that Rinzai's followers are not transformed into foxes for their part in preaching foolish heresies. He reasons that if the old man's lesser mistake of denying causality directly led to his vulpine rebirth, then Rinzai's followers would transmigrate as foxes tens of thousands of times; as they do not, we cannot assume a necessary connection between speaking incorrectly and this type of karmic retribution.<sup>3</sup>

The second comment can be read as highlighting the provisional nature of each perspective, wherein one approach is appropriate for one situation and inappropriate for another; the two statements ordered one way are both correct in one instance, but in the reverse ordering they are both wrong. *Daishugyō* also follows this line of thought when Dōgen claims that the mistake of “not falling” in the old man's previous life might be a correct response in his current fox body, while a response other than “not obscuring” might have secured his release 500 lifetimes ago. “If ‘They do not fall into cause and effect’ is a mistake, ‘Do not be unclear about cause and effect’ might also be a mistake.”<sup>4</sup> Dōgen goes even further by suggesting that “there is no reason for a discussion concerning ‘falling into’ or ‘not falling into,’ ‘obscuring’ or ‘not obscuring’ [causality]....”<sup>5</sup> in other words, that both statements are not quite correct, and to debate between one or another is to miss the point.

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<sup>3</sup> Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, trans. *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo* Vol 4. (London: Windbell Publications, 1999), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 19.

## The Two Truths Throughout Buddhist History

The reasoning supporting the viewpoint of the karma dilemma as provisional or paradoxical is often not explicated in the terse Chinese poetic commentaries on the kōan, but it touches on an issue that Steven Heine<sup>6</sup> has traced throughout Buddhist history, namely how the enlightened world of *nirvāṇa* is encountered in the midst of the delusion of *saṃsāra*. If enlightenment is seen as the result of discrete preparatory acts, then enlightenment itself remains a casual, finite, and therefore conditioned product. On the other hand if enlightenment is not conditioned in any way, then there is no temporal action in the conditioned world which can lead to its realization. In the moral sphere of karma, enlightenment of an individual must be achieved through causal conditioning, and yet it must be in some sense free of that very conditioning as well.<sup>7</sup>

In Pali Buddhism, the *Arahant* who achieves full enlightenment cuts the root of karma, and by maintaining perfect moral behavior in their remaining life, generates no more karmic seeds, and enters the unconditioned upon death into *parinibanna*. At this time causality is truly transcended as the *Arahant* becomes free from the *saṃsāra* of cyclic existence, and is no longer an identifiable person or moral agent. In the case of the *Bodhisattva* of *Mahāyāna* however, the *Bodhisattva* continues to be reborn in the world to aid other sentient beings, and this rebirth is usually at least mediated through the process of karma. Thus in the *Mahāyāna* context, any “transcendence” of causality would have to be in a very different sense, simultaneously embracing the continued role of

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<sup>6</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 71-73.

<sup>7</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 71.

causality for the enlightened person; this in turn requires rethinking how the two truths can interact with each other, or be seen as aspects of one reality.

The early Buddhist view of two truths derived from the Abhidharma schools, which enumerated a distinct set of causal factors for conditioned reality (*saṃskṛta*) as well as the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*.) *Saṃskṛta* describes the shared delusion of common people describing gross objects such as persons, pots, and chariots. In the *asaṃskṛta* view these objects are not real, being nothing more than temporary configurations of *dharmas*; for example, the self is famously analyzed as nothing but the five *skhandas* or aggregates (form, sensation, perception, dispositions, consciousness). Nonetheless statements about *saṃskṛta* still have a practical usefulness in imprecisely identifying a shared, if delusory, world, and are thus held to be conventionally true. The *asaṃskṛta* view on the other hand focuses on the *dharmas* as atomistic elements which truly exist in the sense that they are eternal and uncreated by causal processes. *Dharmas* combine into temporary conditioned forms, but are themselves unconditioned. Most of these elements are derived from categories presented by the Buddha in the early Nikayas such as the five human functions (*skhandas*), the six internal and six external senses (*āyatana*), the eight elements (*dhātu*) and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

Nagarjuna changed the content of the two truths model in his radical critique of Abhidharma thought. His *saṃvṛti* resembles the Abhidharma *saṃskṛta* in that it describes the illusory world of substantial objects, but the concept is extended to also include the atomistic *dharmas* which are also considered unreal. In the

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<sup>8</sup> John B. Buescher, *Echoes from an Empty Sky: The Origins of the Buddhist Doctrine of the Two Truths* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2005), 55.

*Mulamādhymakakārikā* he argues for the absurdity of the strictly causal (and thus karmic) interaction of *dharmas*, by pointing out that if effect is part of cause, then they are not truly distinct phenomena; while if effect is separate from cause, then there is no connection between the two.<sup>9</sup> Thus cause and effect are neither identical nor different, nor can any objects involved in causality (including the *dharmas*) exist independently. Whatever exists in the causality of dependent origination is empty (*sūnyatā*) of substantial, independent being (*svabhāva*). The experience and realization of this truth (as opposed to its mere verbal expression) is the unconditioned realm of *paramārtha*.<sup>10</sup>

As the unconditioned is no longer viewed as completely isolated from the conditioned processes of *saṃskṛta*, *sūnyavada* philosophy then focuses on *how* the conditioned and unconditioned, causality and acausality interpenetrate. This is expressed in the *Heart Sutra* as “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” Thus even arising casual conditions are seen to be empty and acausal – and conversely, “the limits of nirvana are no different from the limits of samsara” - that the unconditioned is not beyond causality (as *parinibanna* and the *dharmas* arguably were in the Theravada tradition).

When the distinction between the conditioned and unconditioned worlds is de-emphasized, there is the possibility that one of the two truths receives more emphasis than the other. Nagarjuna draws closer towards the unconditioned side in denying any sense of genuine reality to the conditioned world of *saṃvṛti*. Language is fully confined to this realm and is not considered truly descriptive, as "the real is not manifest in named things," and is instead merely obliquely referential and prescriptive. For example, there is

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<sup>9</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 73.

<sup>10</sup> Mervyn Sprung, "The Mādhyamika Doctrine of Two Realities as a Metaphysic," in *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta*, ed. Mervyn Sprung (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973), 43.

no such thing as a “chariot,” yet the word instructs us to enter the chariot when invited rather than mounting the horse pulling it. Similarly the unconditioned reality of *paramārtha* cannot be demonstrated (i.e. you cannot become enlightened simply by listening to Buddhist theory), but merely “monstrated,” suggested and pointed to. When one is transformed by an experience of the unconditioned standpoint, then the conditioned view itself becomes nonsense, and it is only referred to due to the limitations of language and the necessity of expedient teaching.<sup>11</sup>

In the history of East Asian Buddhism there has been a gradual tendency towards raising the status of the conditioned world. Hua-Yen 華嚴宗 Buddhism extended the *mādhyamaka* insights to a further sense of equality between conditioned and unconditioned by holding that all dualities, good and evil, delusion and enlightenment, and causality and acausality, all originate from the same one, pure “mind” – not an individual mind, but one that encompasses both subjective and objective aspects of all beings. Fa-tsang 法藏 (643-712) formulated two aspects of “suchness” of this one mind, one that is unchanging (and therefore acausal) corresponding with *li* 理, and the other that dynamically changes in accord with causal conditions, corresponding with *shih* 事. This elevates the conditioned from a mere preliminary to ultimate truth, towards an integral and equally valid aspect of reality. However, *shih* is often described as the result of the delusive mind stirring, which causes the waves of *shih* to appear on the otherwise tranquil

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<sup>11</sup> Mervyn Sprung, "The Mādhyamika Doctrine of Two Realities as a Metaphysic," 46-48.

pond of *li*. Thus while *shih* is not completely unreal, it is still a kind of accident or impurity that obscures the original perfection of *li*.<sup>12</sup>

The T'ien-t'ai 天台宗 school moved towards the center by claiming that the unconditioned mind of Hua-Yen does not generate the conditioned dharmas, and are instead always mutually inclusive, encompassing all dualities. The T'ien-t'ai founder Chih-I 智顓 (538-597) prescribes a three step meditation program; first, “entering emptiness from conventional existence” by emptying objects of substantial nature; second, “[re]entering conventional existence from emptiness” by engaging again with the phenomenal world to bring benefit to sentient beings, and finally “contemplation of the middle” wherein the earlier two perspectives are simultaneously contemplated, with neither exalted over the other.<sup>13</sup> Thus the conventional and phenomenal world of distinctions and debasement is not something to negate, but instead affirm and embrace from the perspective of pervasive, interpenetrating suchness; we will see this idea further elaborated on in some of the Japanese development of Buddhism in Chapter 3.

### The Two Truths and Daishugyō

Hua-Yen and T'ien-t'ai thought were enormously influential on Zen in general and Dōgen in particular, and both frequently use “mind” (*shin* 心) as a term for an all-encompassing reality. Thus Zen sought to equalize the status of causality and acausality against the literal reading of the fox kōan. There were two distinct strategies for

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<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 8.

accomplishing this in Zen commentaries; to either equate the “not falling into causality” and “not obscuring causality” perspectives, or to instead bypass the distinction entirely.

The former perspective is expressed by verses such as taken from this story in the

*Ts'ung-jung lu*:

Not falling, not obscuring,  
For monks or laypersons there are no taboos;  
The behavior of a commoner is the same as a king's,  
There is no enclosure or covering;  
A staff can be either horizontal or vertical  
The wild fox enters the lair of the golden lion.<sup>14</sup>

This verse stresses a fundamental equality of the behavior of people in completely opposite social roles, as well as equating the delusion of the “wild fox” with the “golden lion” of Buddhist enlightenment. The gap between “horizontal and vertical,” i.e. phenomena (*shih*) and principle (*li*), is also smoothed over by the mediation of the staff. These images of the harmony and equality of opposites are the means by which this verse expresses the “resolution” to the dilemma of not falling into or not obscuring karmic causality.

Although the aims of the harmonizing or equalizing strategy are similar, Dōgen instead favors complicating the distinction in *daishugyō*; he claims that a proper understanding of causality does not even permit the question of which is correct to be asked. In addition to questioning the debate, Dōgen criticizes those who emphasize the literal reading that “not falling” amounts to an incorrect denial of causality. Later in *daishugyō* Dōgen specifically criticizes “past masters” who “have vied to assert” the equal validity of the “not falling” and “not obscuring” perspectives, by cautioning that if they haven't correctly experienced the very words “not falling” and “not obscuring,” then

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<sup>14</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 77.

neither will they experience getting into nor getting out of a fox body.<sup>15</sup> In other words, both perspectives in the argument hint at an ongoing dynamic process which encompasses the experiences of “not falling” and “not obscuring” without collapsing the two situations into identity. Dōgen’s preference for complicating the distinction creates a dynamic oscillation of perspectives, whereas directly equating “not falling” with “not obscuring” suggests a more static if harmonious view.

The emphasis on the shifting appropriateness of answer in the different ages in *daishugyō* brings up a related issue with the simple view of conventional karma implied by the literal reading; namely, the temporal gap between cause-and-effect that places them into categories of past and future. In the conventional view, a past or present action has its fruit sometime in the future, which implies a distinction between the now and the not-now, as the fruit is anticipated at some later time. Maintaining this gap between means and ends is difficult to reconcile with the unconditioned realm, which is beyond causal changes; this was a problem for the relationship between enlightenment and the path to enlightenment, which Dōgen resolved by insisting that practice was already enlightenment.

With regard to locating thing-events in a timeline, Dōgen’s stance in *daishugyō* bears a strong resemblance to famous fascicles such as *genjō-kōan* and *uji*, in which discrete events do not lead to each other: “The Hyakujo {c. *Pai-Chang*} mountain of the past has not become the Hyakujo mountain of the present. The present Hyakujo mountain was not formerly the mountain of Kasyapa Buddha’s time. [braces added]”<sup>16</sup> This claim

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<sup>15</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 47.

<sup>16</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 47.



is remarkably similar to one in *genjō-kōan* when we are told that firewood does not become ash because the before-and-after of each time is cut off. Much like the ash and firewood, the *Pai-Chang* mountain of 500 lifetimes ago cannot become the *Pai-Chang* mountain of the present age, as each exist in their own, absolutely discontinuous dharma-stages (*ju-hōi* 住法位). When one dharma-stage is thematized, it alone can express the entirety of existence, as “the total exertion of a single thing” (*ippō-gūjin* 一法究尽.)<sup>17</sup>

The situation of the past master and the present fox, and thus the speech of “not falling” and “not obscuring,” can also be understood as separate dharma-positions, which can aid in interpreting this quote:

It is not that a wild fox which existed already lures in the former Hyakujo. And it is impossible for the former Hyakujo originally to be a wild fox. The assertion that the soul of the former Hyakujo leaves him and forces itself into the skin of a wild fox is non-Buddhism; and a wild fox cannot come up suddenly and swallow Hyakujo. If we say that the former Hyakujo subsequently changes into a fox, he must first get rid of the body of the former Hyakujo, so that he may fall into the body of a wild fox. A [master of] Hyakujo mountain can never be replaced by the body of a wild fox! How could *cause-and-effect* {*inga*} be like that? *Cause-and-effect* is neither inherent {*hon-u*} nor initiated {*shiki*}: *cause-and-effect* never idly waits for a person. [braces added]<sup>18</sup>

The terms *hon-u* 本有 and *shiki* 始起 are likely references to *hongaku* 本覺 and *shikaku* 始覺, the polarity of original versus acquired enlightenment that appeared in Tendai debates of the time. This suggests what is truly at stake here in addressing whether and how the master became a fox; the relationship of the unconditioned to the conditioned, or the acausal to the casual. The inability for one to transform into to the other asserts the absolute discontinuity of dharma-positions seen with firewood and ash, or the ancient and modern mountain where this event took place. Dharma-position is one of the many complex ideas employed by Dōgen reflecting his bid at moving beyond

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<sup>17</sup> Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tuscon: University of Arizona, 1987), 148-150.

<sup>18</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 46.

duality, to describe a state of being and awareness that integrated the causal and acasual instead of merely negating both sides or equating them with each other. As in the casual structure, the distinct times of master and fox are recognized; yet as in the acasual structure, there is no temporal gap between them, nor does after necessarily replace and erase the before.

In the *shomakuakusa* 諸惡莫作 fascicle, Dōgen explicitly applies this temporal framework to causality;

Cause is not before and effect is not after; the cause is perfect and the effect is perfect...  
Though effect is occasioned by cause, they are not before or after, because the before and the after are nondual in the Way.<sup>19</sup>

This idea appears to be referenced in discussing the “great cause-and-effect” (大因果 *daiinga*) in *daishugyō* as *eninmanga* 圓因滿果, “round fulfillment of causes and complete fulfillment of effects,”<sup>20</sup> which is the very thing beyond “falling” and “obscuring.” Contrary to our ordinary view of cause and effect, both are completed simultaneously together; a cause is already the fulfillment of its effect. While the events exist in absolutely discrete dharma-positions, they cannot be separated by before and after, because all of the varying times are just “now,” abiding in the present.<sup>21</sup> Karma too

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<sup>19</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 209.

<sup>20</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 45.

<sup>21</sup> In Dōgen’s writings this is explicitly developed in *uji*, wherein the unconditioned aspect of time is emphasized by declaring the past and future to be present in this very moment. Time is schematized in a way consistent with dharma-positions by dividing it up into completely discontinuous instantaneous moments, yet any given moment also expresses all other moments at once in the absolute now. An important note is that this atomized perspective of time also removes its unidirectional character, as Dōgen makes clear there is also passage between moments from future to past, as well as passage within moments (present to present, future to future.) A multidirectional perspective of time also necessarily entails a revised idea of how the unconditioned aspect of Karma might operate temporally.

then is understood through this lens, that the karmic fruit of an act is realized in the same abiding present as the act itself.

The importance of the preceding perspective is to complicate the overly strict boundaries in which karma is usually described, which put heavy weight on establishing a distinct and in some sense substantial subject that persists over time to experience the fruits of karma in the three times (*sanjigō* 三時業) of the present, next, and future lives. As *nirvāṇa* became increasingly seen as a transformation of the phenomenal world rather than an escape from it, so too did the view of karmic transmigration need to be transformed as well, by integrating a trans-temporal standpoint into a highly temporal concept.

### Shinjin Inga: Deep Faith in Causality

Given the subtle philosophical position Dōgen staked out in *daishugyō*, his strict adherence to the literal reading of the fox kōan in the later *shinjin inga* fascicle of the 12-*Shōbōgenzō* is surprising. After relating the exact same version of the fox kōan, Dōgen immediately points out that neglecting cause and effect is a mistake; furthermore,

*“They do not fall into cause and effect”* is just the negation of cause and effect, as a result of which [the negator] falls into bad states. *“Do not be unclear about cause and effect”* evidently is deep belief in cause and effect, {*shinjin inga*} as a result of which the listener gets rid of bad states. We should not wonder at this, and should not doubt it. [braces added]<sup>22</sup>

In *daishugyō*, Dōgen stated that “not falling into causality” cannot be construed as rejecting causality; yet at the beginning of *shinjin inga*, “not falling” is explicitly identified with that very rejection, and thus the rest of the fascicle emphasizes “not obscuring” as the only correct perspective. Where *daishugyō* promoted a careful balance

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<sup>22</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 188.

of oscillating complementary perspectives on the conditioned and unconditioned aspects of Karma, *shinjin inga* only permits one view as the correct description of the same phenomena, a dramatic reversal of his earlier opinion.

The traditional interpretation along the “two truths” model smoothes over this contradiction between early and late Dōgen by maintaining that *shinjin inga* speaks exclusively from the conventional standpoint of karmic transmigration, which is to say that it is a temporary position which does not fully negate the unconditioned standpoint. Hee-Jin Kim for example when explaining why *daishugyo* differs so much from *shinjin inga*, makes the following claim:

This position may appear contradictory to the previous one which was based on the conventional and commonsensical interpretation. However, Dogen at this point interprets the law of causation from an entirely different perspective.... Causation is viewed not merely as a moral category but also as a metaphysical and soteriological one.<sup>23</sup>

The implication is that *shinjin inga* foregrounds causal determination simply to instruct morally, whereas *daishugyo* presents the fuller ontological view of the interpenetration of conditioned and unconditioned.

Traditionalists point out at the time of writing that Dōgen had to address many converts from esoteric sects as well as a rural audience that may not have been familiar with Buddhism; these groups had to be made keenly aware of the karmic incentives for proper behavior, as an appropriate motivator adapted to their (likely limited) level of spiritual attainment. *Shinjin inga* is conventionally seen as part of a larger project in the 12-*Shōbōgenzō* to produce a simplified, slimmed down introductory work for the wider community in and around Eihei-ji. Therefore while the 12-*shōbōgenzō* text was written

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<sup>23</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 208.

later, it is portrayed as a preliminary to the *75-shōbōgenzō*, one not particularly relevant to his advanced students, and by implication, modern philosophical exegesis of Dōgen.<sup>24</sup>

There is however more that differs between the two fascicles than simply conditioned versus unconditioned perspectives. In *daishūgyō* many details of the story are questioned, and on a purely conventional level that is in direct dialogue with *shinjin inga*. Therein Dōgen doubts that the transformation into a fox was the result of denying causality, and he questions whether the fox ever was the former master of Pai-Chang temple to begin with. Shapeshifting fox spirits are notorious deceivers of humans in the *setsuwa* folklore of the time,<sup>25</sup> and in line with this *daishūgyō* questions the truthfulness of the fox's story; for example, how a debased fox form could be capable of recalling its past 500 lifetimes. It is not just that the fox lacks a special understanding of the "true" nature of his 500 lifetimes – the very words 500 lifetimes are suspected as pure fabrication, for "given that the body and knowing do not pass together" – i.e. that knowledge of a past life does not cross over to the present one in the fox's case, and thus such a creature has no way to remember past lives. Dōgen also denies that the full behavior and ceremonial accruelements of a monk (such as taking the precepts and participating in retreats) could possibly be present in a fox regardless of receiving such in a past lifetime, and thus a monk's burial ceremony is both highly inappropriate and possibly a fabrication, as Dōgen doubts whether an accomplished master like Pai-Chang could make such a grave error.

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<sup>24</sup> Steven Heine, "Critical Buddhism and Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 253.

<sup>25</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 13.

By contrast in *shinjin inga*, all of this skepticism is swept aside. Dōgen examines those who have taken the fox’s cognizance of past lives as evidence of great cultivation, who therefore reinterpret the fox transformation not as punishment but as a transcendence of causality. He counters this view with the claim that the fox’s cognizance is due not to spiritual advancement, but a part of his karmic punishment. “Even knowing a thousand or ten thousand lives does not always produce the Buddha’s teaching.”<sup>26</sup> Thus instead of doubting the foxes’ past life claim as in *daishugyō*, Dōgen instead defends that very possibility. There is also a parallel sermon on the topic in the *eihei kōroku* (永平広録), *jōdō* lecture 510, that calls doubt of the fox’s cognizance “foolish,” and that both animals and humans can be “inherently endowed with the power to know past lives.”<sup>27</sup>

The discrepancies between the two stories cannot be completely explained by the “two truths” model. The doubts about the wild fox’s story and the cause of his transmigration do not arise exclusively from a transcendent, unconditioned perspective on the absolute discontinuity of dharma positions – but also very conventional concerns, primarily Dōgen’s unwillingness to associate the debased fox with a former master of Pai-Chang in *Daishugyō*, versus his willingness to make him into an example for moral admonishment in *shinjin inga*. At best, Dōgen is picking the interpretation of surrounding details that best supports his soteriological goals at the moment, but he cannot maintain that both sets of conflicting details are true no matter what perspective they are viewed from. Instead we would need to take recourse to *upāya* – that Dōgen is intentionally

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<sup>26</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 190.

<sup>27</sup> Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 455.

falsifying some supporting truths in his efforts to make one (or both!) messages more convincing.

Care needs to be taken if the words of *shinjin inga* are evaluated as “mere” *upāya* in a bid to ensure consistency with *daishugyō*. If the logic of skillful means is pushed to an extreme, anything written in *shinjin inga* that conflicts with the “higher” truth of *daishugyō* can be interpreted as a salvific falsehood to assist those of “inferior capacities,” which those assured of their own worthiness can summarily disregard. Any possibility of change in Dōgen’s thought is thus eliminated from the outset, and the *daishugyō* view becomes an unfalsifiable one of a circularly closed belief system. If we wish to advance an *upāya* interpretation that stays close to the text, then we must find other corroborating details that support this view.

If Dōgen is promoting different *upāya* for different audiences, then we need to look closely at his audience. In *shinjin inga* there is a line which explicitly addresses this:

You people before and behind me! Never preach, with the purport of negating cause and effect, to junior teachers and late learners. That is a false doctrine. It is not the Dharma of the Buddhist patriarchs at all. It is due to sparse study that you have fallen into this view.<sup>28</sup>

Somewhat contrary to the traditional interpretation, Dōgen is directly addressing his senior monks here, even if it is for the sake of the juniors. If Dōgen wanted to reserve the “negation” perspective for a higher esoteric teaching, it seems unlikely that he would condemn it with such harsh words to his seniors, or suggest that it is due to poor understanding. He has even stronger words concerning the long line of Zen masters from which he drew the *daishugyō* interpretation, and even those of his Sōtō lineage come under fire:

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<sup>28</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol 4, 189.

In all, for this [one] story, there are eulogies to the ancients and discussion by the ancients of more than thirty people. Not even one of them has suspected that “*they do not fall into cause and effect*” is the negation of cause and effect. It is pitiful that these fellows, without clarifying cause and effect, have uselessly idled away a lifetime in a state of confusion.<sup>29</sup>”

This is a scathing repudiation of a long tradition of interpretation by honored masters. Whatever the capacities of those involved, Dōgen may have in mind a larger audience for his scolding than just the newcomers to his monastery.

While these doubts may not be sufficient to rule out an *upāya* interpretation, said view still has the potential to gloss over some of the noted differences between the two fascicles, and more importantly, the differing contexts in which they were written. The Critical Buddhists are among the first to see *shinjin inga* as radical reorientation of Dōgen’s thought since *daishugyō*, and thus examining their theory may shed some light on the possibility of change in Dōgen’s writings.

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<sup>29</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol 4,193-194.



## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL BUDDHISM AND THE SHÖBÖGENZÖ

Matsumoto Shirō 松本史朗 and Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭 are credited as the two leaders of the Critical Buddhism (*hihan bukkyō*) movement. Both scholars work at Komazawa University, associated with the Sōtō sect, yet Dōgen is not exempt from their wide-ranging critique of East Asian Buddhism. Based on their expertise in early Buddhist pali and sanskrit sources, they condemned a large number of cherished East Asian Buddhist doctrines as “not Buddhist” for contradicting the theories of causality and dependent origination. They gained much notoriety for their direct attacks and open subjectivity in a Japanese scholarly climate where both were rare, which may have been part of their strategy to bring their concerns into the public sphere.<sup>30</sup>

The central philosophical point that Critical Buddhism has targeted is the self-coined Sanskrit neologism *dhātu-vāda*, “theory of locus,” a monistic and all-encompassing ground out of which particulars emerge. Matsumoto enumerates several characteristics of *dhātu-vāda*, which can be summarized as the one Locus that gives rise to multiple super-loci. The super-loci are considered ephemeral and unreal compared to the Locus, yet the super-loci are generated by the Locus and participate in its nature, and thus have some sense of its ultimate reality. Many of the East Asian Buddhist developments that describe an interaction between conditioned phenomena and the unconditioned world roughly follow this model, such as Buddha-Nature, *Tathāgatagarbha*, and most notably for our purposes, Original Enlightenment. All such

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<sup>30</sup> Fumihiko Sueki, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 321.

*dhātu* are considered by Critical Buddhists to be the target of the *anātman* and *pratītyasamutpāda* theories of early Buddhism, which arose as a response to the *dhātu-vāda* of Shakyamuni's day, Brahman.<sup>31</sup> That is, all kinds of self-sufficient substances, even monistic ones that deny individual selves, are negated in favor of the casual system exemplified by the 12 links of the chain of dependent origination. Impermanent dharmas exist in a shifting, relative matter with no stable "ground" that they inhere in or spring from.

The question of whether these theories, particularly Original Enlightenment, are truly substantialistic and "un-Buddhist" or not, is beyond the scope of this study. Hakamaya however has proposed that the changes in Dōgen's writings are primarily motivated by a gradual awakening to the shortcomings of *dhātu-vāda*, and thus argues that these changes can be understood through the paradigm of Critical Buddhism. Without entering into the question of whether *dhātu-vāda* is normatively Buddhist or not, I will therefore evaluate how well the theory explains the change from *daishugyō* to *shinjin inga*.

### Original Enlightenment Thought

The Buddhologist Shimaji Daito 島地大等 (1875-1927) introduced the term "original enlightenment thought" (*hongaku shisō*) as an interpretive category to describe the Buddhist idea that enlightenment already existed in everyone and everything from the outset, rather than developed through a long process of cultivation. Shimaji developed the

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<sup>31</sup> Shiro Matsumoto, "The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha* Is Not Buddhist," trans. Jamie Hubbard, in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 170

notion primarily to describe Tendai Buddhism, but for many Japanese scholars the concept has become broader than the medieval Tendai doctrine of the same name, indicating an intensity of emphasis on the sacralization of the phenomenal world and unenlightened mind, just as they are, as being the full expression of enlightenment. With sufficient emphasis the view of enlightenment as a transformation could become obscured, replaced with a simple faith that one's current deluded mind is already the fulfillment of enlightenment.<sup>32</sup>

If enlightenment becomes a matter of faith rather than transformation, the next question that naturally arises is the purpose of Buddhist teachings and practices that have been often described as a path to enlightenment. For example, Soto tradition maintains that Dōgen's "great doubt" that he went to China to resolve was why practice was necessary if we were already enlightened.<sup>33</sup> Similarly if all reality without exception expresses nothing but the Buddha, then actions commonly seen as "evil" are perfectly acceptable as they express enlightenment just as well as "good" ones do.

While Hakamaya borrowed Matsumoto's ontological critique of *dhātu-vāda*, in his own writings he is more concerned with the broad societal effects of "Original Enlightenment" discourse that result from affirming social inequalities as the proper expression of Buddhism just as they are. When viewed from an unconditioned perspective, the various Buddhist dichotomies are nullified such as deluded and enlightened, impurity and purity, low rank and high rank, This process can then be

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<sup>32</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Dōgen's solution to this "problem" bears a strong resemblance to some Tendai writings, in that the first step of practice is already the full realization of the path. The difference lie in Dōgen's stress on meditation as the primary practice, instead of simply contemplating suchness, the latter of which accomodated a wide variety of esoteric rituals and lay activities as possible alternatives to meditation.

extended to also equalize social divisions such as ruler and ruled, men and women, native and foreigner, and so on. However, because of the phenomenal turn that “this very world, just as it is, is Buddha,” the existing social hierarchy and all its attendant injustices can also be seen as the full expression of enlightenment. Thus at the same time people are reassured that rank and distinction are ultimately meaningless, they are nevertheless urged to accept these distinctions and whatever unpleasant consequences may stem from them.

Hakamaya sees such reasoning at work in justifying the contemporary discrimination by Sōtō priests in the funeral rites conducted for certain ethnic groups. He also links Original Enlightenment with the broader societal context of *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 chauvinism, the passive acceptance of social injustice, and the alliance of Buddhism with jingoism in World War II. In short, Hakamaya accuses Japanese Buddhism of silencing any criticism of the status quo through Original Enlightenment discourse, and ultimately becoming morally vacuous in the process.

Noting the Critical Buddhist’s objections to Original Enlightenment, the question remains to what degree Dōgen himself identified similar objections of the course of his writings. The answer as the Critical Buddhists themselves will admit is not simple, so I will next investigate some of their specific examples.

## The Śrenika Heresy

In Hakamaya's seminal essay "Thoughts on the Ideological Background of Social Discrimination"<sup>34</sup>, he cites numerous instances of Dōgen attacking the naturalist heresy or *senni gedō* 先尼外道, which holds that upon death of the body, the eternal mind of sentient beings return to a "source" and no longer transmigrates through existence. Critiques of it appear in both *daishugyō* and *shinjin inga*, and are a consistent feature of Dōgen's early and late writing.<sup>35</sup>

The *Shinnyo kan* (Contemplation of Suchness) is a text that develops some of the Tendai *hongaku* ideas in relation to Pure Land thought. Although purporting to be authored by the Tendai Pure Land master Genshin 源信 (942-1017), it likely originates from the 12th century, therefore appearing not too long before Dōgen's birth. It was unusually written in the vernacular Japanese with furigana characters, and was likely intended for an educated lay audience. While it was not necessarily representative of most Tendai literature of the time, it does promote an idea very close to the *Śrenika* heresy as described by Dōgen:

Up until today, because we have not known that we ourselves are precisely suchness, we have been deluded beings transmigrating in the realm of birth and death for lifetime after lifetime without hope of exhausting it. But now, learning from a teacher or the teaching of scriptural rolls that we are precisely suchness, we awake from the sleep of ignorance, and the dream of delusive thoughts comes to an end. Awakening from the dream of

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<sup>34</sup> Noriyaki Hakamaya, "Thoughts on the Ideological Background of Social Discrimination" trans. Jamie Hubbard, in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 339 - 355.

<sup>35</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 79. Stone has pointed out that Dōgen's critique likely echoes the words of Nan-yang Hui-Chung 南陽慧忠 (d. 775), who explicitly connected the perishable body and eternal mind-nature with the non-Buddhist Śrenika, while critiquing southern Ch'an masters who taught "this very [untransformed] mind is Buddha." She then connects this with the Dharma-shū 達磨宗 and their focus on the same phrase, suggesting that it is them that Dōgen critiques rather than Tendai. While there is likely much truth to this, it is curious how she has not noticed the presence of similar "Śrenika-like" ideas in her own study and translation of the *shinnyo kan*.

delusive thoughts of the nine worlds, we return to original enlightenment, the principle of suchness.<sup>36</sup>

In the *bendōwa* 弁道話 essay Dōgen portrays a similar theory as follows:

This view holds that in one's body there is a spiritual intelligence. As occasions arise, this intelligence readily discriminates likes and dislikes, yes and no; it knows pains and irritation, suffering and pleasure. They all proceed from this spiritual intelligence. However, when the body perishes, this spiritual nature separates from the body and is reborn in another place. Therefore, while it seems to perish here, it has life elsewhere, and thus is ever immutable, never perishing.<sup>37</sup>

The view outlined here emphasizes the conventional, conditioned mind as an eternal thing which transmigrates through numerous bodies, a far more specific claim than the broader view of *dhātu-vāda* as a monistic envelopment of particulars. Yet it appears that in “Ideological Background of Discrimination,” Hakamaya argues that Dōgen’s attack on this specific *dhātu-vāda* theory is evidence that he opposes all such theories. The Critical Buddhists like a number of other scholars use Original Enlightenment as a very broad term covering nearly all traces of *dhātu-vāda* in East Asian Buddhism, but Hakamaya's attempt to link Dōgen's critique of *Śrenika* to a critique of Original Enlightenment is misguided. While Dōgen does oppose the specific idea of “perishable body, immutable mind” found in the *Śrenika* theory, that view is not a part of the most significant *dhātu-vādas* that Hakamaya attacks, including the tathagatagarba as interpreted by the Awakening of Faith<sup>38</sup>, nor the mind of “triple-world is mind-only” of Yogācāra as it was appropriated by Ch’an as well as Dōgen.

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<sup>36</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 194.

<sup>37</sup> Waddel and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 28.

<sup>38</sup> Sallie King, "The Doctrine of Buddha-Nature is impeccably Buddhist," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997). King argues that *tahāgata-garbha* as presented in the *Buddha Nature Treatise (fo hsing lung)* has only a soteriological meaning in that it describes the potential for sentient beings to become Buddha, and is therefore ontologically neutral. However well this interpretation fits the BNT, it does not match

From Dōgen’s early and middle writings the problem instead appears to be that the *Śrenika* heresy does not cleave closely enough to *dhātu-vāda*. Even as Hakamaya quotes Dōgen’s earliest attack on the *Śrenika* from *bendōwa*, he neglects to mention the lengthy explanation that follows his own quotation.”... The Buddhist doctrine of immutability teaches that all things are immutable, without any differentiation between body and mind.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, from the unconditioned perspective of the Locus, all things are equally unborn, undying, unmoving. Six years later in *daishugyō*, Dōgen again critiques *Śrenika* by claiming “If we say when we realize great enlightenment we have departed from and discarded the body of a wild fox, then it would not be the wild fox’s enlightenment, and we would make it serve no purpose.”<sup>40</sup> The *Śrenika* view posits human bodies as having emerged as separate entities from the source, while the main *dhātus* that Dōgen sometimes subscribes to keep entities emerged within their source; that is, even the “wild fox” of delusion is not excluded from enlightenment; similarly the “original source” cannot exclude the realm of birth-and-death, nor can the mind exclude the body. All of this follows Matsumoto’s scheme in that the super-Loci derive their reality from continued involvement in the Locus, and cannot stand apart from it.<sup>41</sup> We are

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Dōgen, who in *Bussho* explicitly attacks the potentiality interpretation, and instead links Buddha-nature with the ontological categories of being, non-being, and ultimately impermanence.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Waddel and Masao Abe, trans., *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 22.

<sup>40</sup> Cross and Nishijima, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, vol. 4, 47.

<sup>41</sup> In “Critical Considerations on Zen Thought,” Hakamaya’s critical Buddhist peer Matsumoto Shiro offers his own take on Dōgen that mirrors my point. He labels the Buddha-Nature as potentiality “within every body” as “Buddha-Nature Immanence” theory, versus the viewpoint that includes all being (sentient and insentient alike) as “Buddha-Nature Manifestation” theory. Dōgen’s attack on Senika is framed as the absolute monism of the Manifestation theory attacking the mind-body dualism of Immanence theory, and is an echo of a very common critique within Chan of the old “southern” school tradition, which was preserved

left with the great irony that Hakamaya has chosen for a blueprint of criticism a theory that does not even live up to the definition of the *dhātu-vāda*, and that Dōgen critiqued it for precisely this shortcoming.

### Dōgen's Trip to Kamakura

Hakamaya is not the first scholar to suggest that the 75-*shōbōgenzō* criticizes *hongaku shiso* for its supposedly substantialistic and antinomian implications, however he pressed the debate further by exalting the 12-*shōbōgenzō* as a more complete overcoming of traces of Original Enlightenment that continued to “haunt” Dōgen in the 75-*shōbōgenzō* (as I suggested earlier, the idea is more dominant than not in that text.) Central to Hakamaya's argument is none other than the contrast of *daishugyō* against *shinjin inga*, in which the former fascicle makes the key mistake of denying causality and embracing various *dhātu-vāda* ideas which are thoroughly repudiated in the latter.

The change in focus and tone between the 75 and 12-*shōbōgenzō* is unmistakable, but the reasons motivating that change are less clear. Hakamaya looks to the circumstances surrounding Dōgen's trip to Kamakura for an answer, where Dōgen spent eight months at the behest of the current ruler Hōjō Tokiyori at the Kamakura capital. Documentation of the trip is scarce and largely limited to 12 *waka* poems Dōgen presumably composed there, but the common speculation is that Dōgen returned from the journey troubled by the application of Rinzai Zen practice at the Five Mountains center to training Samurai for warfare, and rejected an offer to become part of the five mountain

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by the *Dharma-shū* in Dōgen's time. On this basis Matsumo disagrees with Hakamaya's claim that Dōgen attacked Original Enlightenment or distanced himself from *dhātu-vāda* in *bendowa*.



system by leading a new temple that would become Kenchōji 建長寺.<sup>42</sup> This encounter supposedly led to a complete change of heart for Dōgen, who now stressed Karmic causality as a counter to the antinomian structure of Original Enlightenment that sees the defiled world of evil acts (including killing), without transformation, as the full realization of enlightenment. The complacency of accepting things as they are without discrimination, as *dhātu-vāda* implies, is instead replaced with an unrelenting enjoinder toward moral cultivation.

This focus on the Kamakura trip is often unfortunately based more in silence than evidence however. The last dated text of the 75-*shōbōgenzō* is *shukke* 出家, written in 1246. The only texts that follow are the 12-*shōbōgenzō* which were copied by Ejō in 1255, and tentatively dated around 1253, some five years after Dōgen's return from Kamakura. There primary writings we have from this time period are from the *eihei kōroku*, the record of his Chinese public *Jōdō* sermons, which has been oft neglected by the critical Buddhists and many other Dōgen scholars. *Jōdō* sermon 3.251 recorded in 1248 actually offers support for a sudden change on the teaching of karma, wherein Dōgen suggests his time in Kamakura was spent teaching the basics of karma to laypeople. Yet it is not until 1250 that another sermon concerning karma appears (5.386 – “Genuine Faith and the Teaching of Causality”) and the next in 1251, 6.437 (“The Result of Wrong Views” on the infamous antinomian Devadatta from Aṅguttara Nikāya). In between these large gaps are an enormous number of still *dhātu*-influenced topics, such as 3.255 “Body and Mind Connected with the Ten Thousand Forms,” 4.269 “The Land is the Entire Body of Buddha,” and 4.294 “Not Denigrating Buddha” (which references the

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<sup>42</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 246.

“original source.”) If Dōgen did have a change of heart after his Kamakura trip, it was not as complete or sudden as Hakamaya suggests.

After 1250 the subject of Karma as well as other stories and considerations pertinent to early Buddhism take up an increasing number of sermons, but this timing suggests some other catalyst than the Kamakura trip itself, most likely his reception of a copy of the full tripitika canon late in 1249 from his samurai patron Hatano Yoshige, which is commemorated in sermons 5.361, 5.362, and 5.366<sup>43</sup> Although Dōgen may have encountered the tripitika during his time in China, he does not appear to have brought back any recordings of it, and the *mana shōbōgenzō* kōan collection he compiled and referred to for many sermons is naturally focused on Zen patriarchal cases. The opportunity to closely study a “fresh” source of scripture could have served as an inspiration for his sermons and writings, as well as offering a model of straightforward instruction that could also stand on the back of tradition and scriptural authority.

I would suggest that while the Kamakura trip may not be the catalyst that shifted his focus to Karma, it can still be seen as a seed or preparatory process that motivated him to think through how to present karma as a primary moral force, when previously most of his works had instead justified morality as following the tradition of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. The necessity to teach almost exclusively in the context of karma for several months to sway non-monastics possibly opened him in some way to the heavy emphasis on karma in the Indian texts he would soon receive, as well as sensitized him to

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<sup>43</sup> Steven Heine, *Did Dōgen go to China? What he Wrote and When He Wrote It* ( New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 202.

popular *setsuwa* literature and the older *jataka* tales which depict supernatural tales of karmic processes and repentance.<sup>44</sup>

Granted that Dōgen’s real target of critique is not necessarily Original Enlightenment ontology, Hakamaya’s point still stands that the majority of the 12-*shōbōgenzō* advocates very little of the *dhātu-vāda* theories that appear throughout the 75. Yet even noting some broad commonalities between the moral concerns of Dōgen and the Critical Buddhists, such as the possibility of combating monastic antinomianism, we cannot conclude that Dōgen is necessarily attacking “not falling into causality” because of its relation to *dhātu-vāda*; rather, he might instead be attacking specific theories because of the misbehavior that those holding such theories could fall into. For example, the focus of most of the 12-*shōbōgenzō* is on prescribing correct practices, not inquiring into ontological questions; most of the “correct views” advocated are standard enumerations of Buddhist categories and not extensively discussed. The theme of *shinjin inga* is a significant exception by also describing the workings of karma, but the close connection to moral behavior is still clear.

While the theories advocated by Hakamaya to explain the change are problematic, still he does highlight some areas for investigation. It is worth considering whether Dōgen is primarily concerned with correcting moral behavior more so than ontological beliefs, and if so, how that understanding can open space for a critical distinction between right and wrong to coexist with some non-dual *dhātu-vāda*. I will next examine how Dōgen struggled against the antinomian influences of Original Enlightenment specifically in the moral sphere to further substantiate this point.

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<sup>44</sup> Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, 126.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NATURE OF GOOD AND EVIL

One possible reason for promoting *shinjin inga* even to Dōgen's senior monks is that it serves as a bulwark against antinomian tendencies that have plagued his disciples since quite early in his career. Different versions of Buddhism have encountered this same problem in different ways when the unconditioned perspective is applied to moral behavior. As dualistic divisions are dissolved in the unconditioned perspective, so too can the distinction between good and evil also be eliminated. At times this has been used a theoretical base to justify any and all behavior, since ultimately good and evil can be considered conventional delusions.

The *eihei kōroku* sermon 6.437 "The Result of Wrong Views," which comments on the infamous antinomian Devadatta from *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, features an early instance of Buddhist morality mitigated via appeal to unconditioned truth. Specifically, Devadatta committed various evils such as disrupting the Sangha and killing *arhants* and *bhikṣuṇīs*. He justified his conduct to the Sangha by saying

Where there is evil, from what does evil arise? Who makes this evil and receives its consequence? I myself do not receive the results from this evil.<sup>45</sup>

Devadatta applied the no-self theory to negate the existence of the moral agent, and hence the locus for responsibility and karmic retribution.

Interestingly in the story, Buddha does not directly address the issue of unconditioned versus conditioned views, but instead proceeds from strictly the conditioned perspective in asserting that good deeds are rewarded and evil ones punished. Dōgen likewise comments on Devadatta's talk that "Speech like this is an evil view, and

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<sup>45</sup> Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 393.

certainly the Buddha Dharma will be eliminated from your body and mind." However he also adds that if his students cast off the body and mind through meditation, they will not fall into such "wrong views."<sup>46</sup>

Dōgen and his disciples were also aware of some antinomian currents in the various Zen scriptures, including one as seminal as the Platform Sutra of Hui-neng 惠能 (638-713). Although the platform sutra overall still distinguishes between correct and wrong understanding, its heavy emphasis on the subitist logic of "sudden enlightenment" can at times suspend the importance of cultivation and behavior.

Zhicheng said, "Great Master Shenxiu teaches that 'not to do evil is called morality, to practice good is wisdom, and to purify one's own intentions is called meditation.' Thus does he teach. I wonder, with what Dharma does Your Reverence teach people?"

The Dharma that I preach does not depart from the self-natures. To preach the Dharma apart from the essence is called superficial preaching and is permanently deluded regarding the self-natures. You should understand that all the functions of the myriad dharmas are all activated from the self-nature. This is the true Dharma of morality, meditation, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:

For the mind-ground to be without error is the morality of the self-nature.  
For the mind-ground to be without stupidity is the wisdom of the self-nature.  
For the mind-ground to be without disruption is the meditation of the self-nature.<sup>47</sup>

From this unconditioned perspective, morality, wisdom, and meditation are not seen as something resulting from the process of cultivation, but as always inherent qualities of the pure and original "mind-ground," i.e. Nirvana, which merely needs to be recovered in a flash of insight. According to the sutra, those of "inferior capacities" of the greater vehicle following the Northern patriarch Shen-hsui 神秀 (606?-706) ascribe to the "gradualist" view of morality, wisdom, and meditation as activities. The "greater vehicle"

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<sup>46</sup> Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 394.

<sup>47</sup> John R. McRae, trans., *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000), 73

on the other hand redefines these categories as a static absence, a description of reality in its pure and unconditioned state, which can be potentially grasped all at once in an instant. Based on this notion, the following passage explicitly urges monks not to work to destroy the afflictions (*kleśa*) of greed, anger, and delusion:

Xie Jian said, “‘Bright’ is a metaphor for wisdom, and ‘dark’ is a metaphor for the afflictions. If perchance students of the Way do not use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, how will they be able to escape beginningless samsara?”

The master said, “The afflictions are bodhi. They are nondual and not separate. If one [tries to] use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, this is the interpretation of the two [Hinayana] vehicles [held by] those fit for the sheep and deer [carts]. Those of superior wisdom and Mahāyāna capabilities are completely different.”<sup>48</sup>

The above is one sense an inevitable conclusion of the unconditioned standpoint.

As *samsāra* is a part of *nirvāṇa*, so too must the afflictions exist together with wisdom.

The key question though is how the afflictions are then practically approached in Buddhist practice, and whether these emotions are embraced as appropriate behavior for monks that might also be conducive to enlightenment.

While the overall thrust of the Platform Sutra is not clearly antinomian, nonetheless passages like these were sometimes used as a theoretical base for ignoring morality and practice. Chinese collections of monk biographies sometimes feature drunken, carnivorous characters alongside many examples of strict piety and precept observance; some commentators of the time have explained away the incongruity of these stories by appealing to the nondual nature of good and evil for those who have realized enlightenment, yet warning that an average practitioner should not imitate this behavior if they have not had a similar realization.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> McRae, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> John Kieschnick. *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 58.

Traces of this thinking can be found in the Japanese context as well, including the *Shinnyo kan*. For example, one section tells us that having become merely aware of the fact that “one’s mind is suchness” through doctrinal teaching, we are assured that Karma no longer need be a binding force:

From today on, knowing that your own mind is itself suchness, evil karma and defilements will not be hindrances; fame and profit will instead become nourishment for the fruition of Buddha[hood] and *bodhi*. Even if you should violate the precepts without shame or be negligent and idle [in religious observances], so long as you always contemplate suchness and never forget so, you should never think that evil karma or defilements will obstruct your birth in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss.<sup>50</sup>

Jacqueline Stone is quick to point out the qualifier “as long as you always contemplate suchness” when commenting on these passages, but the text elsewhere defines “contemplating suchness” not as a specific sitting meditation practice, but a kind of thinking or imagination exercise to be carried out during daily activities:

You should know that suchness is to be contemplated with respect to all things. Clergy and laity, men and women – all should contemplate in this way. When you provide for your wife, children, and retainers, or even feed oxen, horses, and the others of the six kinds of domestic animals, because the myriad things are all suchness, if you think that they are precisely suchness, you have in effect made offerings to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and to all living beings, without a single exception...<sup>51</sup>

The practice of “contemplating suchness” at least for some is more like a faith that things must be suchness, rather than a transformative direct awareness of this suchness. The *shinnyo kan* itself refers to six identities (*rokusoku* 六即) which demarcate various stages of practice, of which the second stage is “verbal identity” (*myōji-soku* 名字即) wherein one first encounters the teaching that “all things are suchness,” yet this is still prior to the third stage of meditative practice (*kangyō-soku* 觀行即.) The direction of Tendai *hongaku* texts has been to increase the value of this second stage, as both the

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<sup>50</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 194.

<sup>51</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 195.

beginning of practice and therefore the full actualization of practice.<sup>52</sup> While this may have served as a hopeful encouragement for laypersons with no time for devoted meditation, it also provides a doctrinal basis to potentially undermine the value of practice and transformation for monks, and possibly a complete disregard for Buddhist behavioral standards among all types of people.

### Dōgen and the Daruma-shū

This antinomian potential of Zen was more thoroughly realized by the *daruma-shū* 達磨宗, a short-lived Zen sect in Japan which Dōgen drew many of his core recruits from. This includes his dharma heir and main editor Ejō 懷奘 (1198-1280), as well as the “second” Sōtō founder Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1268–1325). Thus the sect had an enormous impact on Dōgen's teachings and the later development of the Sōtō sect.

In 1189, Dainichi Nōnin 大日能忍 a professedly "self-enlightened" Zen master and head of Sambōji, founded the first Zen sect in Japan which came to be later called the *daruma-shū*. Prior to this time, despite a popular following, Nōnin lacked a master and therefore legitimacy, so he sent his disciples with letter and gifts to obtain a dharma transmission and robe from China. That he didn't have a face-to-face transmission was a weakness the competing Zen sects, founded by Eisai 榮西 (1141–1215) and Dōgen, would later exploit in their writings. Nōnin presumably died sometime between this time and 1196, and in 1194 his sect was prohibited by the government, and Sambōji later

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<sup>52</sup> Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, 196.



destroyed. Yet the influence of the school lived on, among Dōgen's earliest recruits at Koshōji as well as numerous converts and supporters in Eichizōan.<sup>53</sup>

A work connected to the school is the *jōtō shōgakuron* 城等正覺論 which sketches some of the doctrines of the sect. One of the three sections is named “this very mind is Buddha,” (*sokushinbutsu* 自身即仏) and throughout the text the identification of the everyday, untransformed mind with Buddha is repeated frequently. Some sections of the text have some specific advice on morality, for example;

If you create a name where there is no name, good and bad will arise on the basis of name... Illusions do not really exist. Who determines what is good and what is bad?

Clearly, hell is a product of the mind. If you understand this, then hell is empty. Know therefore that if you see this mind, you will be immediately free of suffering.<sup>54</sup>

Faure characterizes the Daruma-shū as a highly intellectualized development of Buddhism that threw off the need for meditation and morality, or indeed any kind of specific practice, at least in theory, with the understanding that the phenomenal world already expresses Buddhist enlightenment and thus no transformation or moral practice is necessary. It is not clear to what extent these charges were based in reality or were simply polemical tools used by the opposition to silence them, but as with the earlier quoted Buddhist texts, it is possible some monks read it in exactly this way.<sup>55</sup>

Although the Daruma-shū might not have acted all that badly relative to the average Japanese monk of the time, it is likely they still at times fell short of Dōgen's exacting standards of Chinese monastic behavior, which were somewhat novel to most

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<sup>53</sup> Benard Faure, “The Daruma-shu, Dōgen and Soto Zen,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 42 (1987): 25-55.

<sup>54</sup> Faure, “The Daruma-shu, Dōgen and Soto Zen,” 34.

<sup>55</sup> Faure, “The Daruma-shu, Dōgen and Soto Zen,” 32.

Japanese Buddhism of the time. The *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* 正法眼藏隨聞記 as a whole is a hint of this, which is largely a recording of Dōgen's talks on virtue and conduct. These were chosen and recorded by Ejō, possibly because these moral admonishments were of interest to him. There are several places therein where Dōgen directly addresses antinomian interpretations of the unconditioned:

If a student, hearing that one's own self is the Buddha-Way and that one should not seek outside, would deeply believe in these words, abandon his former practice and study, and spend his lifetime doing good or evil deeds according to his basic nature, how is understanding? Dōgen said, "In this understanding, the words and the principle are contradictory."<sup>56</sup>

To indulge in evil doings with the excuse that "A zen monk does not cultivate good, nor does he have any use for virtue." is extremely one-sided. I have never heard of any precedent for indulgence in evil in the ancient standards.<sup>57</sup>

An extremely common theme in the *Zuimonki* is that monks ought to abandon their own ideas of good and evil, and especially other's judgment of good and evil, and just follow the "teachings of the Buddha." The following is typical:

...abandon the act of distinguishing good and bad in your own mind, cease thinking "good" or "bad," forget conscious thoughts about the welfare of your own body or about the condition of your mental state, whether good or bad, and follow the speech and behavior of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.<sup>58</sup>

The speech, behavior, and teachings of the Buddhas and Patriarchs is an extremely broad category that could subsume precepts and monastic regulations as well as the kind of virtue stories that Dōgen tells throughout the *Zuimonki*, not to mention the transformative power of meditation. In contrast to following the inclinations of one's own mind because it is already Buddha, Dōgen instructs to abandon that mind and instead

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Cleary, trans. *Record of Things Heard: From the Treasury of the Eye of the True Teaching* (Boulder: Prajñā Press, 1980), 47.

<sup>57</sup> Cleary, *Record of Things Heard*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Cleary, *Record of Things Heard*, 31.

follow the Buddhist teachings, and by implication, the teachings as Dōgen understands and transmits them. That this comes up so frequently and Ejō is so quick to record it suggests it may have been a persistent issue among his early Koshōji community.

Aside from the virtues extolled throughout the *Zuimonki*, Dōgen also stressed an increasingly detailed and ritualized monastic code, which he could not tolerate being ignored through any antimonial rationale. The standards of purity (*shingi*) Dōgen adopted are taken from the *Chanyuan Qinggui*, which were in use among public monasteries in China at the time, such as mt. Tiāntóng 天童山 where Dōgen studied with his master Rújìng 如淨 (1162–1228). In *Tenzōkyokun* (Admonitions for the Cook) he urges us to carefully read this text, and then quotes the text six times while further commenting on it. The *Fushukanpō* (Procedures for Taking Meals) and *Chiji shingi* (Rules of Purity for Stewards) both reproduce sections of the *Chanyuan Qinggui*, as does numerous fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō* such as *Senmen* (face washing), *Senjō* (Purifications [for the toilet]) and *Jukai* (Receiving the Precepts). Dōgen is not so much an innovator of monastic code as a transmitter nearly indistinguishable from Eisai and Enni, save for his creative commentary in his works that intertwine reproduction of the *Chanyuan Qinggui* with original Zen explanations and justifications. Nonetheless these codes were very alien to the *daruma-shū* and some work was involved in convincing the converts of its value, which might explain his motivation to link the codes and Zen theory when this connection was typically not made in China.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Griffith T. Foulk “Rules of Purity in Japanese Zen,” in *Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 139-141.

Some more evidence of Dōgen's resistance to antinomian interpretations of the unconditioned can be found ironically in the absence of talk on morality in many of his more philosophical treatise. There are an enormous number of polarities he is willing to suspend when speaking from an unconditioned perspective; *Genjo-kōan* alone tells us "When all things are without self, there is no illusion or enlightenment, no birth or death, no Buddhas or Sentient Beings."<sup>60</sup> In *Uji*, "As long as time is not a modality of coming and going, that time on the mountain [in the past] is the immediate present - right now - of 'the time being.' (being-time)"<sup>61</sup> In this perspective past and present are collapsed into an "absolute" present. *Bussho* problematizes the categories of sentient and insentient "Things not possessed of mind are also sentient beings, because sentient beings are, as such, mind."<sup>62</sup> I.E. since everything is the "one Mind," it is also all sentient beings. As we found in *daishugyō*, even "not falling into Karma" was a viable perspective. All of these dualities, when examined from the unconditioned standpoint, are temporarily dissolved.

What is remarkable about the good-evil dichotomy is that, as key as it would appear to Buddhist concerns, it rarely appears in similar contexts in Dōgen's works. The unconditioned perspective is of course only one aspect of reality, so it is juxtaposed with the conventional and conditioned perspective that recognizes distinctions as was seen in *daishugyō*, preventing a complete dissolution into monism. Yet a suspension of good and evil from the unconditioned perspective is conspicuously absent in most of Dōgen's writings. One notable exception is the *fukanzazengi*, wherein practitioners are instructed

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<sup>60</sup> Waddel and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Waddel and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Waddel and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 85.

to “cast aside good and evil,” yet this instruction is given within the context of preparing for meditation, and not woven into his famous nondual theoretical discourses. Still, Dōgen's notable fascicle *shoakumakusa* 諸惡莫作 does engage in a complex theory on the nature of good and evil, yet as I will show, he approaches the good-evil distinction therein with considerably more care to mitigate emphasis on any perspective "beyond" good and evil.

### Shoakumakusa: Do Not Commit Evil

The *shoakumakusa* fascicle is an extended commentary on the “Verse on the Seven Buddha’s precepts.” (*shichibutsu-tsūkaige* 七仏通戒偈) which Hee-jin Kim translates as:

Not to commit any evil,  
To do everything good,  
And to purify one’s mind,  
That is the teaching of all the Buddhas.<sup>63</sup>

Dōgen then discusses how we should approach the phrase “*shoakumakusa*” (not to commit any evil) and not interpret it incorrectly as a common person striving to avoid evil. Rather, it must be heard as an expression of enlightenment, that “not committing evil” is just enlightenment itself. Once this is understood, Dōgen promises his audience that their situation changes; they too can aspire to not commit evil, and upon achieving so, actualize enlightenment. Far from enlightenment obviating the need for morality, Dōgen suggests that moral activity itself is enlightenment, and furthermore that this morality is something to be enacted and practiced rather than simply recognized: “where no evil is any longer committed, the power of spiritual discipline is realized at once. This

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<sup>63</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 213.

realization is attained with the entire earth, the entire world, all time, and all dharmas as its limits.”<sup>64</sup>

*Shoakumakusa* however complicates the question of just what “evil” is: “Each of the evils now under investigation is one of the three moral natures: good, evil, and neutral. Their nature is unborn (*mushō*).”<sup>65</sup> The “objective” evil natures (as well as the good and neutral) are *mushō* 無生, which is another way of saying that their nature is empty. This is a familiar expression of the unconditioned perspective, which will not pin down evil to any clear-cut definition as completely divorced from good, neutral, or anything else.

However, this unconditioned view is immediately tempered by emphasizing a context for its emergence in the conditioned, phenomenal world. Dōgen continues in *shoakumakusa*: “Although the good nature, the neutral nature, and so on are also unborn, undefiled, and ultimately real, there are many particular forms [of moral values] in these three natures.”<sup>66</sup> Thus he qualifies that despite this emptiness, there are many specific forms that morality can take: these forms are suggested elsewhere in *shoakumakusa* as

The evils of this world and those of other worlds have similarities and dissimilarities; evils are alike as well as different according to the times preceding and following; the evils of heavenly beings and those of human beings are at once similar and dissimilar - not to speak of the tremendous differences between the good, evil, and neutral of the Buddha-way and [those of] the worldly way.<sup>67</sup>

From this passage we can infer that a monk always faces morality as a particular form - as a configuration of conditions, within a specific time, from a human perspective,

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<sup>64</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 215.

<sup>65</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 214.

<sup>66</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 209.

<sup>67</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 211.

and ideally encountered on the path of Buddhism. As always Dōgen presumes his monks should be following the teachings of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, so this means that they are given a definite and determinate morality, even if it is in flux over time. Thus despite the unconditioned truth that morality is ultimately empty of content, it is always encountered in the world as specific situation demanding a specific response for those on Dōgen's Buddhist path.

Still, the fascicle leaves some room for an antinomian misreading, on account of the nature of the “evil-refraining” and “good-doing.” The first phrase of the *shichibutsu-tsūkaige* is *shomakuakusa* 諸惡莫作 "not to commit any evil," and the second *shuzenbugyō* 衆善奉行 "to do everything good." Both *sa* 作 and *gyō* 行 have the same meaning “to do,” but the former carries an implication of more definite intention or commitment, while the latter is a continued or ongoing activity.<sup>68</sup> This is borne out in the way Dōgen expands these terms in the fascicle; evils have “no basis”; while goods are constantly "presenced." This could be interpreted as suggestion that the intention to commit evil is refrained from, while good is naturally produced without intention.

This intuitionist interpretation can be easily mistook for permission to abandon moral rules and advice and simply following your natural inclinations since your mind is already Buddha. Interestingly T.P. Kasulis made a similar interpretation in *Zen Action: Zen Person*: “In the zen view there is literally nothing to hold onto; to be responsible is simply to be responsive.” According to Kasulis, the removal of conceptual categories (including the ego) through meditation enables pure, prereflective responses to situations, which are equated with good. Good is just a matter then of staying true to pure intuition

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981), 95.

free of rational dichotomies, and if that intuition is made in the midst of rage for example, it is just as valid as when Jesus cast the merchants out of the Temple.<sup>69</sup> This might be a fair reading of D.T. Suzuki's presentation of Zen ethics, but it is an overstatement for Dōgen's fascicle. While Dōgen's enlightened person indeed avoids intending evil, and does good in a natural, unobstructed way, this does not mean that intentionality itself is evil and prereflective spontaneity itself is good. Rather, someone who has internalized *shoakumakusa* becomes a person not even capable of intending evil, and instead naturally does good acts; this does not rule out the possibility that one of lesser achievement might intend good and naturally fall into evil, for example. This can be inferred from the following passage:

Even though such people of thusness, as they are authentically enlightened, appear to live, to come and go in the environment that conduces to evil, or to encounter those circumstances which engender evil, or to be associated with those who commit evil, they no longer commit evil. Because the efficacious power of "not committing" [any evil] unfolds itself, evil loses its character as evil, being deprived of its grounds.<sup>70</sup>

Kasulis' interprets the following passage along the lines of "if one produces no categories to superimpose on pre-reflective experience, there can be no evils at all." Thus what changes is the understanding of evils as "evil" to an empty and provisional view, rather than a definite change in behavior. The standpoint of "although they are surrounded by evil they don't commit evil" is not a standpoint of evil removed from the world (as then they wouldn't be surrounded by evil, or we'd have a qualifier that even seeming to commit evil is nonproduction), but that the enlightened person does not

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<sup>69</sup> Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, 97.

<sup>70</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 215.



commit evil even among nearby temptations and depredations. This is remarkable given a quote from the *Zuimonki* 5:14 that discusses human nature:

There is fundamentally no good or bad in the human mind. Good and bad arise according to circumstances... Therefore when meeting good conditions the mind becomes good, and if it comes in the presence of bad conditions the mind becomes bad. Do not think that your mind is basically bad; you should just follow good conditions.<sup>71</sup>

The enlightened person in *shoakumakusa* has thus achieved the remarkable feat that even amidst causes and conditions supporting evil, evil is never committed. This is different from the normal human consciousness (such as that of the ex-Daruma-shū monks instructed in the *Zuimonki* ) which could hardly help but follow the evil causes and conditions into evil action. Thus "the fact is known that evil does not affect the person and the fact is clear that the person does not eradicate evil."<sup>72</sup>

Another source of confusion is the long series of statements about “not committing” and a parallel section on “doing good.” In both cases, a large number of varied things are identified with one of these ongoing activities...

Evil is not nonexistent, but simply of "not to commit"; evil is not existent, but only of “not to commit.” Neither is evil formless, but it is of “not to commit,” nor is it form, but it is of “not to commit.”<sup>73</sup>

This is a type of unconditioned perspective wherein the activity of “not to commit” exerts the entire universe and its varied phenomena. While this process does suspend the question of evil or good’s existence and emphasizes their empty nature, note that the process responsible for this suspension is the enlightened person’s exercise of morality. This is Dōgen’s twist on Original Enlightenment theory in asserting that the

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<sup>71</sup> Cleary, *Record of Things Heard*, 101.

<sup>72</sup> Kasulis *Shomakuakusa* p 2

<sup>73</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 215.

unconditioned truth is only realized in the midst of practice; just as enlightened awareness is only realized together with the conditioned act of sitting meditation, enlightened morality appears only within the conditioned activity of refraining from evil and doing good. In fact, good itself is only actualized in this very process:

Although all good exists in good nature, there is not a single instance of good actualized prior to, and in anticipation of, one who does [good]. At the very moment when a good deed is accomplished, all good comes forth. Formless as the myriad goods might be, a good act, whenever it is done, assembles them all, faster than a magnet attracts iron.<sup>74</sup>

The type of person in *Shomakuakusa* who is nonproducing has done far more than temporarily cast away the concept of evil: rather their body-mind has been transformed such that committing evil acts is impossible. This claim shows a resemblance to the Arhats of Pali Buddhism, who were similarly regarded as incapable of evil upon attaining nirvana, and manifested morality spontaneously in the sense that they had internalized the precepts such that they were no longer external injunctions or mental guides but automatic behavior.<sup>75</sup>

### Reasons for the Change

Since Dōgen has consistently opposed antinomian rationales throughout his career, the question then might be asked; what need is there for a new focus on causality in *shinjin inga*? Dōgen in the past primarily refuted such behavior as "outside the Buddha way" so why is the additional denial of "not falling into Karma" necessary?

One reason may well be that the nuanced non-dual position that Dōgen staked out was too easily misinterpreted. We have already seen a quote wherein Gikai interpreted

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<sup>74</sup> Kim, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 228.

<sup>75</sup> Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (St. Martin's Press, New York: 1992), 115.

“shoakumakusa” in an antinomian way, as well as Kasulis’ misinterpretation fueled by D.T. Suzuki, who himself transmits a legitimate Zen tendency towards extolling nonconceptual spontaneity. Part of the problem is taking a description of the highest moral achievement and conceitedly including oneself in that elite group of achievers, which is always a danger with subitist logic; there is a similar problem for example in suggesting that those of great cultivation “do not fall into causality.” By contrast, the karma of the 12-*shōbōgenzō* is “impersonal” and offers “no exceptions:” there is no room to think oneself exempt from the impetus to avoid evil and do good, no matter one’s level of achievement. The ease with which shoakumakusa can be misinterpreted may be part of the reason only one such fascicle was produced, with a heavier emphasis throughout his writings to simply “follow the teachings and practices of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.”

Whatever trouble Dōgen had with converting his early followers away from antinomian views, this problem more likely intensified during his time at Eihei-ji rather than diminishing. A year after his death, Ejō and Tettsū Gikai 徹通義介(1219-1309) have this recorded conversation:

Gikai: My Dharma comrades of past years would say: “The Buddhist [expression], ‘All Evil Refrain From Doing, All Good Reverently Perform’ (*shoaku makusa shozen bugyō*) actually means that within [true] Buddhism, all evil ultimately has been refrained and all activities are Buddhism. Therefore merely lifting an arm or moving a leg – whatever one does, whatever phenomena one produces – all embody [true] Buddhism.”...

Ejō: In our master’s [i.e. Dōgen’s] community there were some who spread such heterodox views. That is why he cut off all contact with them while he was still alive. Clearly the reason he expelled them was because they held these false doctrines.<sup>76</sup>

Gikai’s “Dharma comrades” were those formerly of the Daruma-shū, who formed the early core of Dōgen’s followers. He credits these comrades with yet another antinomian rationale, and even after Dōgen’s death seems attached to the notion. This is

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<sup>76</sup> William M. Bodiford. *Soto Zen in Medieval Japan* (Hawaii: University of Honolulu, 1993), 34.

to speak nothing of those expelled like Genmyō 玄明 and his followers, who may have not fully accepted the strict monastic observance that Dōgen insisted on.<sup>77</sup> Even in the *Goyuigon* 御遺言, a text heavily biased towards legitimating Gikai's dharma lineage and his closeness to Dōgen, we find an unusual criticism from Dōgen that Gikai needs to develop "grandmotherly mindfulness" (*rōbashin* 老婆心). According to the text, Gikai did not understand this admonition at the time, but he kept it on his mind. Three weeks after the above dialogue with Ejō, another is recorded, in which he resolved this "kōan" by accepting that true Buddhism consists of following the monastic regulations. "I have attained true confidence in this profound principle that apart from the lifting of an arm or the moving of one's leg *within one's Buddhist deportment* there can be no other reality. [emphasis added]"<sup>78</sup>

Dōgen is sometimes painted as a charismatic center of his community, in part due to his evident mastery of communication, and in equal part due to the floundering of his successors. After Dōgen's death his main disciples gradually scattered to different temples, leaving behind Ejō's leadership at Eihei-ji. According to Gikai, some monks had questioned Ejō's legitimacy, and many more left to join other sects or even carry the Sōtō name to new temples.<sup>79</sup> During Dōgen's life Gikai himself was appointed to chief cook (*tenzo*) in 1243, a position that Dōgen considered a senior one, and yet he did not fully recant his *Daruma-shū* antinomian thoughts until after Dōgen's death. As Eihei-ji grew and Dōgen's own health declined, he was likely keenly aware of the need to invest

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<sup>77</sup> Faure, "The Daruma-shu, Dōgen and Soto Zen," 46.

<sup>78</sup> Bodiford. *Soto Zen in Medieval Japan*, 57-58.

<sup>79</sup> Bodiford. *Soto Zen in Medieval Japan*, 34.

worthy leaders and successors to continue his Dharma lineage. This could be seen in the focus on monastic codes and rituals, and might have also manifested in the editing of the 12-*shōbōgenzō*. His stern warning to seniors not to pass on “obscuring Karma” likely reflect a distrust that said monks were capable of making the nuanced distinctions in their own teaching, which the novice converts could be quick to interpret in their traditional antinomian fashion.

*Daishugyō* transmitted a very traditional Zen interpretation of the kōan, albeit somewhat melded with Tendai doctrine, but ultimately did not depart far from past Buddhist teachings. We might see *shinjin inga* as a more critical adaptation of the kōan attuned to several factors: the need to combat antinomian tendencies in his followers; an incorporation of the logic of early Buddhism that was increasingly employed by Dōgen in his later lectures and thought; and perhaps even an ability to read the “literal” meaning of the koan, which communicates Pai-Chang’s “no nonsense” reputation for the establishment of the very monastic regulations that Dōgen was transmitting to Japan. In other words, *daishugyō* may have simply repeated the traditional truths that Dōgen learned in China, whereas *shinjin inga* reflects a creative adjustment of that interpretation to better suit his own aim of recreating the Chinese monastery within the cultural context of Japan.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

Both the traditionalist and critical Buddhist perspectives have instructed the interpretation advanced here in understanding the differences between *daishugyō* and *shinjin inga*, between “not falling into causality” and “not obscuring causality.” As the traditionalists suggest, it is very likely that the emphasis on “not obscuring” reflects the need to instruct and admonish those that either did not understand or take seriously the basic monastic regulations and morality. It is not clear that *shinjin inga* is motivated by the kind of ontological reorientation suggested by the Critical Buddhists, and represents more a change in communication style than a change in heart; *daishugyō* as well never denied causality, but simply promoted a more nuanced view of it incorporating the conditioned and unconditioned standpoints.

However as the Critical Buddhists have observed, much of Japanese Buddhism has exploited the antinomian implications of dhatu-vada theories, and members of Dōgen’s community such as the *dharmashaṅgha* converts were no exception, including even some of the senior monks. Thus Dōgen shares some of their concern that an overemphasis on the unconditioned view of morality was a dangerous trap to fall into, and an early reticence in discussing unconditioned morality gradually turns into a flat denial of it in his late writings, including the 12-*shōbōgenzō*, the *hōkyōki*, and *eihei kōroku jōdō* lectures from 1251 onwards which increasingly emphasized “not obscuring” karma. As *daishugyō* elegantly outlines, there is not necessarily any theoretical conflict between his earlier and later views on karma; but against the antinomian tendencies of the

*Dharma-shū*, Dōgen had to carefully isolate the ontological implications of the unconditioned view from corrupting standards of monastic behavior.

In as far as these findings attempt to reconstruct what went on in Dōgen's community on the basis of texts, they remain speculative and suggestive, but I hope that it has opened up another perspective on the debate of interpreting Dōgen beyond the traditionalist / critical divide. As Dōgen scholarship moves forward to try and reconstruct as close and accurate as possible a portrayal of Dōgen and his Echizan community, it is vital for us to look for ways to think outside of the various ideological dichotomies that may obscure those truths in the search for purity in Buddhism.

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