

your energy to a Way that points directly to suchness. Revere the person of complete attainment beyond all human agency.¹³ Gain accord with the enlightenment of the Buddhas. Succeed to the legitimate lineage of the patriarchs' samadhi. Constantly comport yourselves in such a manner and you are assured of being a person such as they. Your treasure-store will open of itself, and you will use it at will.

13. Since zazen is the practice of total reality, everyone who engages in it is a "person of complete attainment beyond all human agency" (*zetsugaku mui nin* 絶学無為人), a descriptive phrase from the *Cheng-tao ko*.

TWO

Bendōwa

辨道話

(NEGOTIATING THE WAY)

Bendōwa, the second work Dōgen wrote after his return from China, is a treatise on zazen practice as the "right entrance" to the Dharma. A colophon states that it was "written mid-autumn [the fifteen day of the eighth month], the third year of Kangi [1231], by Shamon Dōgen, a Dharma-transmitter who has travelled to China." *Bendōwa* seems to have been forgotten, and almost unknown, until it was rediscovered in manuscript in the Edo period. *Bendōwa* was not originally intended for *Shōbōgenzō*; it does not appear in any of the early redactions of the work. It was first included in *Shōbōgenzō* in a manuscript version dated 1684. It was first published, in a single-volume edition, in 1788. *Bendōwa* is often said to contain within it the essence of all ninety-five fascicles of *Shōbōgenzō*. It thus serves as an excellent introduction to the work. No doubt because of that, modern editions include it as the first fascicle in the collection.

Bendōwa is divided into two sections. In the first, roughly one-fourth of the whole, Dōgen upholds the supremacy of zazen practice vis-à-vis all other Buddhist practices. He gives a concise exposition of the *jijuyū* samadhi, tells of his pilgrimage in search of the Dharma in Japan and China, and traces the transmission of this samadhi from Shakyamuni Buddha through the Chinese Zen masters of the T'ang and Sung dynasties.

The remaining three-quarters of the work is arranged as a series of questions and answers, a popular format in religious treatises of this nature. Dōgen

uses this format to give and defend his reasons for advocating the merits of *zazen*, and at the same time he tries to counter such questions and doubts as might arise in the minds of Buddhist acolytes and adherents of other Buddhist schools (*Ōkubo*, vol. 1, pp. 729–46).

BENDŌWA

Buddha-tathagatas all have a wonderful means, unexcelled and free from human agency, for transmitting the wondrous Dharma and realizing supreme and complete awakening. That this means is only passed directly from Buddha to Buddha without deviation is due to the *jijuyū* samadhi, which is its touch-stone.¹

To disport oneself freely in this samadhi, the right entrance is proper sitting in *zazen*. The Dharma is amply present in every person, but without practice, it is not manifested; without realization, it is not attained. It is not a question of one or many; let loose of it and it fills your hands. It is not bounded vertically or horizontally; speak it and it fills your mouth. Within this Dharma, Buddhas dwell everlastingly, leaving no perceptions in any sphere or direction; all living beings use it unceasingly, with no sphere or direction appearing in their perceptions.²

The negotiation of the Way with concentrated effort that I now teach

1. For Dōgen, who often employs duplicatives, or near-duplicatives, for emphasis, the terms *Buddha* and *Tathagata* (“one who has come from suchness,” an epithet used to describe a Buddha) are virtually interchangeable.

Free from human agency translates the term *mui* 無為.

Transmitting the wondrous Dharma (*tanden* 単伝): The Dharma is said to be passed from Buddha to Buddha as water is transferred from one bowl to another. For Dōgen, this is *yuibutsu yobutsu* 唯佛与佛 (“only Buddha and Buddha”). Transmission of the Dharma can occur only between one Buddha and another.

Throughout SBGZ, the word *realize* (*shō* 証) implies realizing (making real), proving, confirming the Dharma in oneself.

Supreme and complete awakening translates *anoku bodai* 阿耨菩提, an abbreviated Chinese rendering of the Sanskrit *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, supreme and perfect enlightenment.

Jijuyū samadhi (*jijuyū sammai* 自受用三昧) signifies a state of samadhi in which an awakened one “receives” (*ju*) and “employs” (*yū*) the joy of awakening “in himself” (*ji*). (Shakyamuni, following his attainment, is said to have been self-immersed in the joy of enlightenment.) This personal enjoyment (*jijuyū*) is sometimes distinguished from *tajuyū* 他受用, which refers to the activity of aiding others (*ta*) to attain awakening so that they too can experience the joy of awakening. Here Dōgen uses the term *jijuyū* samadhi in an absolute sense, without distinguishing between it and *tajuyū*, with *jijuyū* being the basic source of *tajuyū* and including *tajuyū* in its own development. For Dōgen, the *jijuyū* samadhi is *zazen*, because *zazen* is a fundamental practice that includes both self-awakening and the awakening of all beings in the universe.

2. This describes the two aspects of *jijuyū* samadhi that are essentially inseparable: the aspect of Buddhas who dwell in this samadhi, having no attachment to any sphere of the objective world, and the aspect of all living beings who function in the same samadhi, whose perceptions are not limited by any sphere of the objective world. Here *perceptions* are not only those of the five senses but include those of the conscious mind as well.

makes myriad dharmas exist in realization and, in transcending realization, practices a total reality.³ Then, when you are over the barrier, with all bonds cast off, you are no longer affected by such segmented distinctions.

After the religious mind arose in me, awakening the desire to seek the Way, I visited many religious teachers throughout the country. I chanced to encounter the priest Myōzen of Kennin-ji.⁴ Swiftly passed the frosts and flowers of the nine years I studied with him. During that time I learned something of the manner of the Rinzai school. As the chief disciple of the patriarch Eisai, it was Myōzen alone who genuinely transmitted the supreme Buddha Dharma.⁵ None of Eisai's other followers could compare with him.

After that, I proceeded to great Sung China, where I visited leading priests of the Liang-che region⁶ and learned of the characteristics of the Five Zen Gates. Finally, I practiced under Zen master Ju-ching⁷ at Mount T'ai-pai,⁸ and there I resolved the one great matter of Zen practice for my entire life.⁹ Then, when I returned home, in the first year of the She-ting period of the Sung [1228],¹⁰ my thoughts immediately turned to preaching the Dharma for the salvation of my fellow beings—it was as though I had taken a heavy burden upon my shoulders. Nevertheless, in order to await the time when I can work vigorously to this end and unburden myself of the desire to spread the Dharma far and wide, I am for the time being living like a cloud or water plant, drifting

3. *Transcending realization: shutsuro* 出路: As long as one remains within realization after transcending the realm of differentiation, complete liberation is unachieved. Complete liberation requires transcending realization as well and reentering the realm of differentiation in order to work for the salvation of others. “Total reality” 一如 (*ichinyo*) indicates the absolute oneness of reality or suchness, contrasted here with “myriad dharmas.”

4. Butsujubō Myōzen, 1184–1225, studied on Mount Hiei, later becoming Eisai's disciple in Kennin-ji. In 1223, he went to China with Dōgen and others and remained until his death a little over two years later at the T'ien-t'ung shan monastery.

5. Myōan Eisai (also Yōsai), 1141–1215, is regarded as the founder of Rinzai Zen in Japan.

6. Liang-che 兩浙: A circuit division that included what is now Chekiang province and adjacent areas. In Tang and Sung times, the “Five Mountains” or principal monasteries of Chinese Zen were located in this area on both sides of the Chien-tang River and Hangzhou Bay. T'ien-t'ung shan was on the eastern side.

7. T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching 天童如淨, 1163–1228.

8. T'ai-pai Peak (T'ai-pai feng 太白峰), another name for the monastery-complex at T'ien-t'ung shan.

9. *Isshō sangaku no daiji* 一生參學の大事; “The greatest matter of religious life.” Enlightenment, the ultimate attainment for which Dōgen had devoted himself to a life of Buddhist practice. Dōgen's religious awakening came as he was sitting in the meditation hall of the T'ien-t'ung monastery. According to the biographical record *Kenzeiki*, it occurred when he heard his teacher Ju-ching shout at a sleepy monk, “Zen practice must be casting off body and mind! What can you accomplish by sleeping your time away!”

10. Dōgen actually reached Kyūshū on his way home in the autumn of the previous year, 1227. In 1228, the first year of the She-ting era, he was back home in Kyoto.

without any fixed abode, attempting to transmit through my actions the way of life followed by outstanding Zen masters of the past.

But there will be those who have no concern for gain or glory, authentic religious seekers whose desire for the Way takes precedence over all else. They will be led vainly astray by mistaken teachers, and the right understanding will be arbitrarily obscured from them. They will become needlessly drunk with their own delusions and immersed forever in the world of illusion. How can the true seed of *prajna* be expected to quicken and grow within such seekers? How will they ever reach the moment of attainment? As I am now committed to a wandering life, to what mountain or river can they proceed to find me? It is a sense of pity for the plight of such people that now makes me write down for those who would learn to practice the Way, the customs and standards of the Zen monasteries of great Sung China that I saw with own eyes and have learned and the profound teachings of their masters that I have succeeded to and follow and transmit. I want such seekers to know the right Buddha Dharma. Here are its true essentials.

At an assembly on Vulture Peak, the great teacher Shakyamuni Buddha imparted to Mahakashyapa the Dharma that was subsequently transmitted from patriarch to patriarch down to Bodhidharma.¹¹ Bodhidharma traveled to China and conveyed the Dharma to Hui-k'e,¹² marking the initial transmission of the Buddha Dharma to eastern lands. It then made its way in direct, personal transmission to the Sixth Patriarch, Ta-chien.¹³ By that time, the genuine Buddha Dharma had beyond doubt spread extensively in China. It appeared there with its essence unaffected by any ramifying doctrinal accretions. The Sixth Patriarch had two superior disciples, Huai-jang of Nan-yüeh and Hsing-ssu of Ch'ing-yüan.¹⁴ As possessors and transmitters of the Buddha-seal,¹⁵ they were

11. During an assembly on Vulture Peak (Skt: Gṛdhrakūṭa), Brahma, King of the gods, came and implored the Buddha to preach for the benefit of sentient beings. The Buddha held out a lotus flower before the assembly. None of those present could understand his meaning, except Mahakashyapa, who smiled. The Buddha exclaimed, "I have the right Dharma eye, the wondrous Mind of nirvana . . . this I entrust to you Kashyapa." According to the Zen school, this marked the beginning of the Zen transmission.

12. Hui-k'e, the Second Patriarch of Chinese Zen.

13. Ta-chien is one of Hui-neng's posthumous titles.

14. The Five Schools (or Gates) of Chinese Zen, enumerated below, are all offshoots of the teaching lines that stem from Nan-yüeh Huai-jang and Ch'ing-yüan Hsing-ssu.

15. The Zen school, which is also referred to as the "Buddha-mind sect," is said to transmit its essence from mind to mind. A master gives a disciple his *inka* 印可 ("seal of confirmation") when he finds the disciple's mind in complete accord with his own. The Buddha-seal 佛印 (also mind-seal 心印 or Buddha-mind seal 佛心印) signifies the authentic transmission of the Buddha-mind, and in Sōtō Zen is usually explained as the act of zazen itself, which in all Buddhas is invariably the same.

masters for men and devas alike. Their two schools spread and branched into Five Houses: the Fa-yen, Kuei-yang, Ts'ao-tung, Yün-men, and Lin-chi schools. At present in the great Sung, the Lin-chi school alone is found throughout the country. Although among these Five Houses there are differences to be found, they are all equally based on the one Buddha-mind seal.

Scriptural writings were transmitted to China from the western lands during the Latter Han dynasty.¹⁶ They spread over the empire. But even in China, no determination was reached about which of the various teachings was superior. Following the arrival of Bodhidharma from the west, these entangling complications were cut away at their source, and the one Buddha Dharma, free from all impurity, began to spread. We must pray that this will take place in our country as well.

It is said that all the patriarchs and Buddhas who have maintained the Buddha Dharma have without question considered practice based upon proper sitting in *jijuyū* samadhi as the right path that led to their enlightenment. All those who have gained enlightenment in India and China have followed in this way of practice as well. It is a matter of rightly transmitting the wonderful means in personal encounter from master to disciple, and on the disciple's sustaining the true essence thus received.

According to the authentic tradition of Buddhism, this personally and directly transmitted Buddha Dharma is the supreme of the supreme. From the first time you go before your master and receive his teaching, you no longer have need for incense-offerings, homage-paying, nembutsu, penance disciplines, or sutra reading. Just cast off your body and mind in the practice of zazen.¹⁷

When even for a short period of time you sit properly in samadhi, imprinting the Buddha-seal in your three activities of deed, word, and thought,¹⁸ then each and every thing throughout the dharma world is the Buddha-seal, and all space without exception is enlightenment. Accordingly, it makes Buddha-tathagatas increase the Dharma-joy welling from their original source¹⁹ and renews the adornments of the Way of enlightenment. Then, when all classes of

16. Latter Han dynasty, A.D. 25–220. In 67, the Indian monks Kashyapa-matanga and Gobharana (Dharmaraksas) arrived in the Chinese capital of Lo-yang, and there translated (or wrote) the *Ssu-shih-erh chang-ching* (Sutra of Forty-Two Sections).

17. In *Hōkyō-ki*, Dōgen noted a similar teaching he received from his teacher Ju-ching: "Commitment to Zen is casting off body and mind. You have no need for incense-offerings, homage-paying, nembutsu recitation, penance disciplines, or sutra readings. Just sit single-mindedly." *Hōkyō-ki*, Ikeda Rosan, ed. section 15.

18. *Sangō* 三業. The three categories of activity, by body, mouth, and mind, that determine karma.

19. The fundamental ground from which Buddha-tathagatas appear; here, the spiritual realm of the *jijuyū* samadhi.

all beings in the ten directions of the universe²⁰—hell-dwellers, craving spirits, and animals; fighting demons, humans, and devas—being all together at one time bright and pure in body and mind, realize the stage of absolute emancipation and reveal their original aspects, at that time all things together realize in themselves the true enlightenment of the Buddhas. Utilizing the Buddha-body and immediately leaping beyond the confines of this personal enlightenment, they sit erect beneath the kingly tree of enlightenment, turn simultaneously the great and utterly incomparable Dharma wheel, and expound the ultimate and profound *prajna* free from all human agency.

Since, moreover, these enlightened ones in their turn enter directly into the way of imperceptible mutual assistance,²¹ the person seated in *zazen* without fail casts off body and mind, severs all the heretofore disordered and defiled thoughts and views emanating from his discriminating consciousness, conforms totally with the genuine Buddha Dharma, and assists universally in performing Buddha-work far and wide, at each of the various places the Buddha-tathagatas teach, that are as infinitely numberless as the smallest atom particles—imparting universally the *ki* transcending Buddha, vigorously promoting the Dharma (*hō*) transcending Buddha.²² Then, with land, trees and grasses, fence and wall, tile and pebble, and all the things in the ten directions performing the work of Buddhas, the persons who share in the benefits thus produced from this wind and water²³ all are imparted unperceived the wonderful and incomprehensible teaching and guidance of the Buddhas, and all manifest their own immediate and familiar enlightenment close at hand. Since those receiving and employing this fire and water all turn round and round the Buddha-making activity of original enlightenment, those who dwell and converse with them also join

20. The text has “the ten-direction universe, three paths and six ways,” that is, all beings of the universe in all directions (the eight points of the compass, above and below). The *three paths* (*sanzu* 三途) are the Buddhist hells (*jigoku*), the realms of animals (*chikushō*) and craving spirits (*gaki*). The *six ways* (*rokudō* 六道) consist of the above three paths and the realms of the fighting demons (*ashura*), humans, and devas.

21. That is, it is unknowable to human consciousness. The previous paragraph describes the merits one *zazen* sitting imparts to others. Those merits return to the *zazen* practitioner himself. Dōgen expresses this elsewhere as *dōji jōdō* 同時成道, simultaneous attainment of the Way.

22. Buddhahood means not abiding in Buddhahood but rising beyond the concept and consciousness of Buddha to save others; it does not exist apart from this transcendence. Almost untranslatable, the term *ki* 機, with dictionary equivalents that include spring, trigger, motive principle, potentiality, occasion, and opportunity, is often used with *hō* 法, *ki* referring to the *zazen* practitioner, and *hō* to the changeless Dharma. *Ki* indicates the dynamic Zen function at work in the *zazen* described in this passage as it turns upon the person sitting, who in doing *zazen* imparts the *ki* to all things. The Dharma is unchanging, and manifests itself dynamically only when occasion and conditions are ripe.

23. *Wind and water* (and the following *water and fire*) represent the four constituent elements of the material world (*shidai*): earth, water, fire, and wind (or air), which are being spontaneously manifested throughout the phenomenal universe.

with one another in possessing inexhaustible Buddha-virtue, spreading it ever wider, circulating the inexhaustible, unceasing, incomprehensible, and immeasurable Buddha Dharma inside and outside throughout the universe.

Yet such things²⁴ are not mingled in the perceptions of the person sitting in *zazen* because, occurring in the stillness of *samadhi* beyond human agency or artifice, they are, directly and immediately, realization. If practice and realization were two different stages, as ordinary people consider them to be, they should perceive each other.²⁵ Any such mingling with perceptions is not the mark of realization, for the mark of true realization is to be altogether beyond such illusion.

Moreover, although both the mind of the person seated in *zazen* and its environment enter realization and leave realization within the stillness of *samadhi*, as it occurs in the sphere of *jijuyū*, it does not disturb a single mote of dust, or obstruct a single phenomenon,²⁶ but performs great and wide-ranging Buddha-work and carries on the exceedingly profound, recondite activities of preaching and enlightening. The trees, grasses, and land involved in this all emit a bright and shining light, preaching the profound and incomprehensible Dharma; and it is endless. Trees and grasses, wall and fence expound and exalt the Dharma for the sake of ordinary people, sages, and all living beings. Ordinary people, sages, and all living beings in turn preach and exalt the Dharma for the sake of trees, grasses, wall and fence. The realm of self-enlightenment *qua* enlightening others is originally filled with the characteristics of realization with no lack whatsoever, and the ways of realization continue on unceasingly.

Because of this, when just one person does *zazen* even one time, he becomes, imperceptibly, one with each and all of the myriad things and permeates completely all time, so that within the limitless universe, throughout past, future, and present, he is performing the eternal and ceaseless work of guiding beings to enlightenment. It is, for each and every thing, one and the same

24. That is, the relationships of “imperceptible mutual assistance” described above.

25. The text has “each should perceive the other” (*ono-ono aikakuchi subekinari*), which most commentaries take as a reference to the practice and realization in the previous clause. Since the main concern in the present paragraph is with the functioning of “imperceptible mutual assistance” and the circulation of the Dharma between the *zazen* practitioner and the enlightened things around him, it seems more appropriate to interpret the word *ono-ono* (each . . . the other) as a reference to the Zen practitioner and his “Dharma sphere,” the things of the universe. Dōgen mentions the view that practice and realization are two different stages in order to emphasize the contrasting view of “direct realization,” in which “imperceptible mutual assistance” occurs without things being “mingled in the perceptions of the one sitting in *zazen*.”

26. *Samadhi* is not dead stillness without perceptions or consciousness; the mind (perceptions and consciousness) of the *zazen* practitioner and its environment (the sphere of the mind) arise and subside, but do so within the realm of the *jijuyū* *samadhi*, in which the practitioner is one with all things, so this does not result in any disturbance. Cf. *Shōbōgenzō keitēki* I, pp. 86–87.

undifferentiated practice, one and the same undifferentiated realization. Only this is not limited to the practice of sitting alone: the sound that issues from the striking of emptiness is an endless and wondrous voice that resounds before and after the fall of the hammer.²⁷ And this is not limited to the side of the practitioner alone. Each and every thing is, in its original aspect, endowed with original practice—it cannot be measured or comprehended. You must understand that even if all the numberless Buddhas in the ten directions, as countless as the sands of the Ganges, mustered all their might together and by means of Buddha-wisdom attempted to measure and totally know the merit of the zazen of a single person, they could not know the whole of its measure.

[QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS]

Question 1: You have told us all about the sublime merits of zazen. But an ordinary person might ask you this: “There are many entrances to the Buddha Dharma. What is it that makes you advocate zazen alone?”

Answer 1: Because it is the right entrance to the Buddha Dharma.

Question 2: But why single out zazen alone as the right entrance?

Answer 2: The great teacher Shakyamuni Buddha rightly transmitted zazen as the wonderful means for attaining the Way; all the tathagatas of the three periods attain the Way through zazen as well—which is why they transmit it from one to another as the true entrance. Besides, zazen is how all patriarchs, from India in the west to China in the east, have gained the Way. That is why I now teach it to men and devas as the right entrance.

Question 3: The reason you give, that zazen transmits the Tathagata’s wonderful means, which you base upon evidence you trace to the patriarchal teachers, may well be correct—such matters are really beyond an ordinary person’s ability to ascertain. For all that, however, surely one can reach enlightenment by reciting sutras and repeating the nembutsu. How can you be certain that if you pass your time sitting idly in zazen, enlightenment will result?

Answer 3: When you characterize the unsurpassingly great Dharma and the samadhi of the Buddhas as merely “sitting idly,” you are guilty of maligning the Great Vehicle. It is as profound an illusion as to declare there is no water when you are sitting in the midst of the ocean. Fortunately, the Buddhas are already seated firmly established in *jijuyū* samadhi. Does that not produce immense

27. The merits of enlightenment are realized not only during zazen but also before and after. While zazen is essential for realizing *shunyata* or emptiness, the fundamental reality of the universe, the working of emptiness is beyond zazen and not affected or produced by it.

merit? It is a pity that your eyes are not opened yet, that intoxication still fogs your mind.

The realm of Buddhas is utterly incomprehensible, not to be reached by the workings of the mind. How could it ever be known to a man of disbelief or inferior intelligence? Only a person of great capacity and true faith is able to enter here. A person who does not believe, even if he is told about such a realm, will find it impossible to comprehend. Even on Vulture Peak, the Buddha told some in the assembly that they might leave.²⁸ If right faith arises in your mind, you should practice under a master. If it does not, you should cease your efforts for the time being and reflect with regret that you have not been favored with Dharma benefits from the past.²⁹

Besides, what do you really know of the merits brought by such practices as sutra-recitation and nembutsu? It is utterly futile to imagine that merely moving your tongue or raising your voice has the merit of Buddha-work. Any attempt to equate those practices with the Buddha Dharma only makes it more remote. Moreover, when you open a sutra to read, it should be for the purpose of clarifying the teachings the Buddha set forth about the rules and regulations for practicing sudden and gradual enlightenment,³⁰ to convince you that you will attain realization if you follow them. It is not done in order to waste yourself in useless speculation and discrimination, and to suppose that you are thereby gaining merit that will bring you to enlightenment. Intending to attain the Buddha Way by foolishly working your lips, repeating some words incessantly a thousand or ten thousand times, is like pointing the thills of a cart northward when you want to go south, or like trying to fit a square piece of wood into a round hole. To read the Buddha’s words while still unaware of the way of practice is as worthless a pastime as perusing a medical prescription and overlooking to mix the compounds for it. If you merely raise your voice in endless recitation, you are in no way different from a frog in a spring field—although you croak from morning to nightfall, it will bring you no benefit at all. Such practices are difficult to relinquish for those who are deeply deluded by fame or profit—this because of the depth of their covetousness. Such people were to be found in ancient times; there is no reason they should not be around today. They deserve our special pity.

28. According to the *Lotus Sutra* (Skillful Means chapter), as Shakyamuni was about to preach the difficult and most sublime Dharma teaching at the request of his disciple, Shariputra, an assembly of nuns and monks and lay men and women, 5,000 strong, said they did not wish to hear a teaching different from the one they had hitherto understood, and they began to leave. Shakyamuni did not attempt to stop them, saying that those who wished to leave might do so.

29. That is, from a previous existence.

30. The Buddha is said to have taught two kinds of practice by which people could attain enlightenment quickly or gradually, according to their differing spiritual capacities.

Only make no mistake about this: if a student working under the constant guidance of a clear-minded, truly enlightened teacher realizes his original mind and rightly transmits his Dharma, the wondrous Dharma of the Seven Buddhas³¹ is then fully manifested and fully maintained. There is no way for this to be known or even to be approached by a priest who merely studies words. So you should have done with all these uncertainties and illusions; instead, negotiate the Way in zazen under the guidance of a true teacher and gain complete realization of the Buddhas' *jijuyū* samadhi.

Question 4: The teachings that are transmitted today in our own Hokke and Kegon schools represent the ultimate Mahayana teaching.³² Not to mention the teachings of Shingon, which were transmitted personally by Vairochana Buddha to Vajrasattva—they have not been handed down from master to disciple without good reason.³³ Centered in the sayings “the mind in itself is Buddha,”³⁴ and “this very mind attains Buddhahood,” Shingon teaches that the genuine enlightenment of the Five Buddhas³⁵ is attainable in a single sitting, without having to pass through long kalpas of religious practice. It could perhaps be termed the most sublime point the Buddha Dharma has yet reached. In view of that, what are the advantages of the practice you advocate that you advance it alone and ignore all these others?

Answer 4: Be well assured that for a Buddhist the issue is not to debate the superiority or inferiority of one teaching or another, or to establish their respective depths. All he needs to know is whether the practice is authentic or not. Men have flowed into the Way drawn by grasses and flowers, mountains and

31. The Seven Buddhas of the Past: Shakyamuni and the six Buddhas that appeared prior to him in the remote past.

32. The Hokke or Lotus school refers to the Japanese Tendai school established by Saichō; in his youth, Dōgen studied at the Tendai monastery on Mount Hiei. Kegon Buddhism, introduced to Japan by Chinese and Korean monks during the Nara period (646–794), was prominent during the Nara and Heian periods.

33. Kūkai, 774–835, also known as Kōbō Daishi, went to China, where he studied under the fourth patriarch of the Chen-yen (真言: Japanese, Shingon) sect, and upon returning to Japan, he founded the Japanese Shingon school. Shingon's chief object of worship is Vairochana, the Great Sun Buddha (Japanese, Dainichi Nyorai, 大日如来). The first Dharma transmission, according to Shingon tradition, was from Vairochana to the Shingon patriarch Vajrasattva, and later through Nagarjuna to Kōbō Daishi.

34. Although our reading, “the mind in itself is Buddha,” follows *Ōkubo*, the earlier “Honzanban” text uses the word *body* (*shin* 身) in place of *mind* (*shin* 心), which would seem more appropriate here, since Shingon asserts that attainment of Buddhahood is achieved “in this body” (*sokuishin jōbutsu* 即身成佛).

35. In Shingon Buddhism, Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 is surrounded at the four quarters by four other Buddhas, of which there are two sets, one in the Vajradhātu (Diamond World), another in the Garbhadhātu (Womb-store World).

running water. They have received the lasting impression of the Buddha-seal by holding soil, rocks, sand, and pebbles. Indeed, its vast and great signature is imprinted on all the things in nature, and even then remains in great abundance. A single mote of dust suffices to turn the great Dharma wheel. Because of this, words like “the mind in itself is Buddha” are no more than the moon reflected on the water. The meaning of “sitting itself is attainment of Buddhahood” is a reflection in a mirror. Do not get caught up in skillfully turned words and phrases. In encouraging you now to practice the immediate realization of enlightenment, I am showing you the wondrous Way by which the Buddha-patriarchs transmit the Dharma from one to another. I do this in the hope that you will become real men of the Way.

Moreover, in receiving and transmitting the Buddha Dharma, it is absolutely essential to have as a teacher a person who is stamped with realization. Word-counting scholars will not do—that would be a case of the blind leading the blind. Today, all who follow the right transmission of the Buddha-patriarchs preserve and maintain the Buddha Dharma by following with reverence a clear-sighted master who has attained the Way and is in accord with realization. Because of that, the spirits of the realms of light and darkness³⁶ come to him and take refuge; enlightened Arhats³⁷ also seek him out to beg his teaching. None are excluded from acquiring the means of illuminating the mind-ground. This is something unheard of in other teachings. Followers of Buddha should simply learn the Buddha Dharma.

You should also know that basically we lack nothing of highest enlightenment. We are fully furnished with it at all times. But because we are unable to come to complete agreement with it, we learn to give rise to random intellections and, by chasing them, supposing them to be real,³⁸ we stumble vainly in the midst of the great Way. From these mistaken views appear flowers in the air of various kinds:³⁹ thoughts of a twelve-link chain of transmigration, realms of twenty-five forms of existence, notions of three vehicles, five vehicles, Buddha, no-Buddha⁴⁰—they are endless. You must not think that learning such notions is the proper path of Buddhist practice.

36. The “spirit realms” (*shindō* 神道) are the transmigratory realms of devas, fighting demons, and craving spirits. The “spirits of light” are the devas; the “dark spirits” those of the latter two realms.

37. Saints who have attained the fourth and highest stage in Theravada Buddhism.

38. *Ōkubo* has “thinking” (*omou* 思う) for “chasing” (*ou* 追う). Here we follow the emendation in the first printed text of *Bendōwa*, published in 1788 by Gentō Sokuchū.

39. These are flakes seen by those with eye disease; used in Buddhism to express what is imaginary and without basis in reality.

40. The *twelve-link chain of transmigration* includes twelve causal links that cause transmigration through the three worlds of past, present, and future. The *twenty-five forms of existence*—including

But now, when you cast everything aside by singlemindedly performing *zazen* in exact accordance with the Buddha-seal, at that moment you outstep the confines of illusion and enlightenment, sentiment and calculation and, unbothered by alternatives of unenlightened and enlightened, you stroll at ease beyond the world of forms and regulations enjoying the function of great enlightenment. How can those enmeshed in the traps and snares of words and letters begin to measure up to you?

Question 5: Samadhi is one of the three learnings.⁴¹ Dhyana is one of the six paramitas.⁴² Both are learned by all Bodhisattvas from the beginning of their religious life and practiced irrespective of a person's mental capacity. The *zazen* you speak of would seem to be included in these categories. What grounds do you have for stating that the right Dharma of the Buddha is concentrated solely in *zazen*?

Answer 5: Your question arises because the incomparable truth of the right Dharma eye that is the Buddha's great and central concern⁴³ has come to be called the "Zen sect." Bear this well in mind: the appellation "Zen sect" is found in China and the lands east of China; it was unknown in India. During the nine years that the great teacher Bodhidharma performed *zazen* facing a wall at the Shao-lin monastery on Mount Sung, the priests and laymen of the time did not yet know the right Dharma of the Buddha. They said Bodhidharma was an Indian monk whose religion consisted of doing *zazen*. In generations after that all Buddhist patriarchs invariably devoted themselves to *zazen*. Unthinking people outside of the priesthood, observing this and not knowing the true circumstances, began to speak loosely of a "Zazen sect." At present, the word *za* has been dropped, and people speak of the Zen sect. The essence of the school is made clear throughout the recorded sayings of the Zen patriarchs. It is not to be equated with the samadhi or dhyana included among the six paramitas or three learnings.

Never has there been anything unclear or ambiguous about it. The Buddha himself wanted this Dharma to be his legitimate transmission. Some among

fourteen realms of desire, seven realms of form, and four formless realms—are those through which unenlightened sentient beings transmigrate. The *three vehicles* (teachings that bring people to various stages of enlightenment) carry living beings across samsara (birth-and-death) to the shores of nirvana: the shravaka (the hearer), the pratyeka-buddha (the self-enlightened), and the bodhisattva. The *five vehicles* are the three vehicles, plus the human and deva realms.

41. *Sangaku*: the three forms of Buddhist learning: discipline (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*), thought to be the fundamental "studies" every Buddhist practitioner must undertake.

42. The six "perfections" (*paramitā*) are practices by which enlightenment is attained: donation, precept-keeping, perseverance, assiduity, meditation, and wisdom.

43. The reason tathagatas appear in the world is to help sentient beings attain salvation.

the deva multitude now present in the heavens actually witnessed the ceremony that took place many years ago during the assembly on Vulture Peak,⁴⁴ when the Tathagata entrusted his right Dharma eye, his wondrous mind of nirvana, to Mahakashyapa alone. So there is no reason for any doubt. Without ever ceasing or diminishing their efforts, those deva hosts devote themselves to protecting and maintaining the Buddha Dharma throughout all eternity.

You should just know without any doubt or uncertainty whatever that this Dharma [*zazen*] is, in its entirety, the all-inclusive Way of the Buddha's Dharma. There is nothing else even to compare with it.

Question 6: What grounds are there for Buddhists to emphasize Zen meditation and place so much weight on sitting alone among the four attitudes (moving, standing, sitting, lying)? To say this is the path to entering realization?

Answer 6: It is not possible to exhaustively survey the way in which Buddhas, one after another from ages past, have practiced and entered realization. If you must have a reason, you should simply know that this is the way that Buddhists use. Further reasons are unnecessary. Haven't patriarchs extolled *zazen* as the "Dharma gate of repose and joy," because among the four bodily attitudes it is sitting that affords repose and joy? Remember, this is the way of practice employed not by one Buddha or two, but by all Buddhas and all patriarchs.

Question 7: So those who have not yet realized the Buddha Dharma can, by negotiating the Way in the practice of *zazen*, attain that realization. But what about those who have already achieved realization—what can they expect to gain by doing *zazen*?

Answer 7: Proverbs caution against relating one's dreams to the foolish, or placing boat-poles in the hands of woodsmen. Nevertheless, I will try to explain matters once again.

To think practice and realization are not one is a non-Buddhist view. In the Buddha Dharma, practice and realization are one and the same. As your present practice is practice within realization, your initial negotiation of the Way is in itself the whole of original realization. That is why from the time you are instructed in the way of practice, you are told not to anticipate realization apart from practice. It is because practice points directly to original realization. As it is from the very first realization in practice, realization is endless. As it is the practice of realization, practice is beginningless. Hence both Shakyamuni and Mahakashyapa were brought into the great functioning by practice within realization. Bodhidharma and patriarch Hui-neng were also drawn into the

44. The Buddha transmitted his teaching to Mahakashyapa in the presence of a congregation of humans and devas. For the devas known as *trāyastriṃśa* (Japanese, *tōriten*) one year is equal to 500 years in the human realm, making it possible that they are still alive.

functioning by practice within realization. And it has been the same for all those who have maintained the Buddha's Dharma.

It is practice inseparable from the outset from realization, and since fortunately we [practicers] all transmit a portion of wondrous practice ourselves, even our negotiation of the Way as beginners obtains a portion of original realization at a ground that is utterly free of human agency. You should know that in order to keep from defiling this realization that is inseparable from practice Buddhas and patriarchs teach unceasingly that we must not allow our practice to diminish. When we cast off the wondrous practice, original realization fills our hands; when we transcend original realization, wondrous practice permeates our bodies.

When I was in Sung China, everywhere I went I saw that the Zen monasteries were all built to include a special hall for zazen. Five hundred or 600 monks, sometimes even up to 2,000 monks, were housed in these halls and encouraged to devote themselves to zazen day and night. When I asked the head priests of these monasteries, teachers who transmit the authentic seal of the Buddha-mind, about the essence of the Buddha's Dharma, they told me that practice and realization are not two stages.

For that reason, I urge not only those who come here to practice with me, but all high-minded seekers who aspire to the truth that is found in the Buddha Dharma—whether beginners or experienced practicers, wise sages or just ordinary people—to conform to the teachings of the Buddha-patriarchs, to follow the Way of the true masters, and negotiate the Way in zazen.

Do you know the words of one of those patriarchs? "It is not that there is no practice or realization, only that we must not contaminate them [by attaching to them]."⁴⁵ Another said: "Those who are able to see the Way, practice the Way."⁴⁶ What you must understand is that your practice takes place within realization.

Question 8: In former times, when teachers traveled to China and returned as Dharma-transmitters to spread Buddhism in our country,⁴⁷ why did they ignore zazen and transmit only the doctrines?

Answer 8: Teachers in the past did not transmit zazen because the circumstances were not yet ripe for it.

Question 9: Did the teachers of earlier times understand this Dharma (zazen)?

Answer 9: If they had, they would have made it known.

45. Nan-yüeh Huai-jang. *CTL*, ch. 5.

46. Pen-ching of Ssu-k'ung shan, 667–761. *CTL*, ch. 5.

47. This probably refers to such teachers as Kūkai and Saichō, mentioned before.

Question 10: Some have said: "Do not concern yourself about birth-and-death. There is a way to promptly rid yourself of birth-and-death. It is by grasping the reason for the eternal immutability of the 'mind-nature.' The gist of it is this: although once the body is born it proceeds inevitably to death, the mind-nature never perishes. Once you can realize that the mind-nature, which does not transmigrate in birth-and-death, exists in your own body, you make it your fundamental nature. Hence the body, being only a temporary form, dies here and is reborn there without end, yet the mind is immutable, unchanging throughout past, present, and future. To know this is to be free from birth-and-death. By realizing this truth, you put a final end to the transmigratory cycle in which you have been turning. When your body dies, you enter the ocean of the original nature."⁴⁸ When you return to your origin in this ocean, you become endowed with the wondrous virtue of the Buddha-patriarchs. But even if you are able to grasp this in your present life, because your present physical existence embodies erroneous karma from prior lives, you are not the same as the sages.

"Those who fail to grasp this truth are destined to turn forever in the cycle of birth-and-death. What is necessary, then, is simply to know without delay the meaning of the mind-nature's immutability. What can you expect to gain from idling your entire life away in purposeless sitting?"

What do you think of this statement? Is it essentially in accord with the Way of the Buddhas and patriarchs?

Answer 10: You have just expounded the view of the Senika heresy. It is certainly not the Buddha Dharma.⁴⁹

According to this heresy, there is in the body a spiritual intelligence. As occasions arise this intelligence readily discriminates likes and dislikes and pros and cons, feels pain and irritation, and experiences suffering and pleasure—it is all owing to this spiritual intelligence. But when the body perishes, this spiritual intelligence separates from the body and is reborn in another place. While it seems to perish here, it has life elsewhere, and thus is immutable and imperishable. Such is the standpoint of the Senika heresy.

But to learn this view and try to pass it off as the Buddha Dharma is more foolish than clutching a piece of broken roof tile supposing it to be a golden jewel. Nothing could compare with such a foolish, lamentable delusion. Hui-chung of the T'ang dynasty warned strongly against it.⁵⁰ Is it not senseless to

48. *Shōkai* 性海, the essential realm of the true nature, the original source of all phenomena, termed an ocean because it is universal and all-embracing.

49. The Senika heresy (*senni-gedō* 先尼外道), which appeared during the Buddha's lifetime, emphasized the concept of a permanent self. See *Nirvana Sutra*, ch. 39.

50. Nan-yang Hui-chung, 683–769. In *CTL*, ch. 8, Hui-chung cautions a monk against this heresy. The Senika heresy also appears in *SBGZ Sokushinzebutsu*.

take this false view—that the mind abides and the form perishes—and equate it to the wondrous Dharma of the Buddhas; to think, while thus creating the fundamental cause of birth-and-death, that you are freed from birth-and-death? How deplorable! Just know it for a false, non-Buddhist view, and do not lend an ear to it.

I am compelled by the nature of the matter, and more by a sense of compassion, to try to deliver you from this false view. You must know that the Buddha Dharma preaches as a matter of course that body and mind are one and the same, that the essence and the form are not two. This is understood both in India and in China, so there can be no doubt about it. Need I add that the Buddhist doctrine of immutability teaches that all things are immutable, without any differentiation between body and mind. The Buddhist teaching of mutability states that all things are mutable, without any differentiation between essence and form.⁵¹ In view of this, how can anyone state that the body perishes and the mind abides? It would be contrary to the true Dharma.

Beyond this, you must also come to fully realize that birth-and-death is in and of itself nirvana. Buddhism never speaks of nirvana apart from birth-and-death. Indeed, when someone thinks that the mind, apart from the body, is immutable, not only does he mistake it for the Buddha-wisdom, which is free from birth-and-death, but the very mind that makes such a discrimination is not immutable, is in fact even then turning in birth-and-death. A hopeless situation, is it not?

You should ponder this deeply: since the Buddha Dharma has always maintained the oneness of body and mind, why, if the body is born and perishes, would the mind alone, separated from the body, not be born and die as well? If at one time body and mind were one, and at another time not one, the preachings of the Buddha would be empty and untrue. Moreover, in thinking that birth-and-death is something we should turn from, you make the mistake of rejecting the Buddha Dharma itself.⁵² You must guard against such thinking.

Understand that what Buddhists call the Buddhist doctrine of the mind-nature, the great and universal aspect encompassing all phenomena, embraces the entire universe, without differentiating between essence and form, or concerning itself with birth or death.⁵³ There is nothing—enlightenment and

51. Immutability and perishability are not separate attributes in the true nature of things. Viewed from the standpoint of immutability, everything is immutable; viewed from the standpoint of perishability, everything is perishable. There is no difference in this respect between mind and body, essence 性 and form 相.

52. Cf. a similar statement below in *SBGZ Shōji*, p. 106.

53. A similar statement, with slightly different wording, appears in the *Daijō-kishinron* [*Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*].

nirvana included—that is not the mind-nature. All dharmas—the “myriad forms dense and close” of the universe—are alike in being this one Mind. All are included without exception. All those dharmas, which serve as “gates” or entrances to the Way, are the same one Mind. For a Buddhist to preach that there is no disparity between these dharma-gates indicates that he understands the mind-nature.

In this one Dharma [one Mind], how could there be any differentiation between body and mind, any separation of birth-and-death and nirvana? We are all originally children of the Buddha, we should not listen to madmen who spout non-Buddhist views.

Question 11: Is it necessary for those who devote themselves to zazen to strictly observe the Buddhist precepts?

Answer 11: Observing precepts, pure conduct, is a standard of the Zen school, and a characteristic of Buddhas and patriarchs. However, those who have not yet received the precepts, and even those who break the precepts, are not deprived of the benefits that come from zazen.⁵⁴

Question 12: May those who engage in the practice of zazen combine it with the practices of mantra recitation and Tendai *shikan*?⁵⁵

Answer 12: When I was in China and had occasion to ask the masters there about the true principle of their schools, they told me they had never heard of any of the patriarchs, those who have rightly transmitted the Buddha-seal throughout the past in India and China, engaging in such combined practices. It is true. Unless you concentrate on one practice, you cannot attain the one [true] wisdom.

Question 13: Can lay men and women engage in this practice? Or is it limited to priests alone?

Answer 13: The patriarchs teach that when it comes to grasping the Buddha Dharma, no distinction must be drawn between man and woman, high and low.

Question 14: Upon entering the priesthood a person immediately sheds the various ties to secular life so there will be nothing to hinder him in his negotia-

54. The precepts are all included and present in zazen. “When you are practicing zazen, what precept cannot be observed?” (*Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*, II. 1).

55. We use the word “mantra” to render the word *shingon* 真言 (literally, “true words”), which refers to the mantras and dharanis employed in esoteric Buddhism. These magic or esoteric formulas are repeated to bring various benefits, such as unity with Buddha. *Shikan* 止觀 (Skt., *śamatha-vipaśyanā*) is a contemplation used chiefly in the Tendai sect which involves cessation of illusory thought and meditation on truth.

tion of the Way in zazen. But how amid the pressures of secular life can he devote himself single-mindedly to such practice and bring oneself into accord with the Buddha Way that is beyond human agency?

Answer 14: Buddha-patriarchs, moved by their great sense of pity for sentient beings, keep the vast gates of compassion open wide. They do this because they want to bring all living beings to realization. There is not a single being, either in the realm of the devas or among mankind, unable to enter. Throughout history we find much evidence to substantiate this. To mention just a few examples: Emperors Tai-tsung and Shun-tsung,⁵⁶ though heavily burdened with the myriad affairs of state, negotiated the Way in zazen and penetrated to an understanding of the great Way of the Buddhas and patriarchs.

As imperial counselors serving at the emperor's side, Prime Ministers Li and Fang negotiated the Way in zazen and also realized the great Way.⁵⁷ It is simply a question of whether the aspiration is there or not. It has nothing to do with whether one is a layman or a priest. What is more, those who are able to discern the true merits of things come to have faith in the Buddha Dharma naturally. Perhaps I should add that those who think mundane affairs hinder the practice of the Buddha Dharma know only that there is no Buddha Dharma in their daily life; they do not yet know that there is nothing "mundane" in the Buddha Dharma.

A recent minister of the Sung, named Feng,⁵⁸ is another high official who excelled in the Way of the patriarchs. In a verse he composed late in his life, he wrote:

When free from my duties, I practice zazen,
Rarely do I even lie down for sleep.
I may appear to be a minister of state,
But everyone calls me the "elder monk."

Although he could have had little time to spare from the duties of his office, he was possessed of a strong aspiration in the Way, and he attained realization. So you should consider your own situation in the light of others. Look at the present with an eye to the past.

56. T'ang dynasty emperors. Tai-tsung reigned in 763–79; Shun-tsung reigned 805.

57. It is unclear who these two officials are. Li may be Li Ao (d. 844), who attained enlightenment under Zen master Yüeh-shan Wei-yen while serving as Prefect of Langchou (CTL, ch. 14). Fang may refer to the official P'ei Hsiu, a student of Huang-po Hsi-yen and compiler of his Zen records.

58. Feng-chieh (d. 1153), lay Buddhist name Pu-ting, achieved enlightenment under Fo-yen Ch'ing-yüan, 1067–1120, and received Dharma sanction from Ta-hui Tsung-kao, 1089–1163.

Today in the land of the great Sung, the emperor and his ministers, those in official positions and ordinary citizens as well, men and women alike, everyone has the Way of the patriarchs constantly in their thoughts. Both soldiers and men of learning aspire to the study and practice of Zen. Many of those who so resolve are certain to awaken to an understanding of the mind-ground. Thus you can readily see that worldly affairs are no hindrance to the Buddha Dharma.

When the authentic Buddha Dharma spreads and is at work throughout a country, it is under the constant protection of the Buddhas and devas. Hence the benevolent rule of the king will be felt by his subjects, and the country will be at peace. Under a benevolent reign, with the country at peace, the influence of the Buddha Dharma is bound to increase.

Moreover, in the time of Gautama Buddha, even transgressors against the Dharma⁵⁹ and those holding false views attained the Buddha Way. Among the followers of the Zen patriarchs, there were hunters and fuel-gatherers who attained satori, so is it possible that others would be unable to? But you must seek the guidance of an authentic teacher.

Question 15: Is it possible to attain realization by practicing zazen even in this evil, degenerate age of the latter day?

Answer 15: While the doctrinal schools make much of names and forms, in authentic Mahayana teaching there is no differentiation between right, semblance, and final Dharma.⁶⁰ It preaches that all who practice attain the Way. In fact, in the right Dharma that has been passed down without deviation, you enjoy the precious treasure within your own home⁶¹ the same upon entering it as a beginner as you do when you attain deliverance. Those who practice are themselves aware of their attainment or non-attainment, just as a person knows without any doubt whether the water he is using is warm or cold.

59. Those who commit one of the ten evils: killing living beings, theft, adultery, lying, rough speech, duplicitous speech, idle talk, greed, anger, false views; or one of the five cardinal sins: killing one's father or mother, killing a saint, injuring the body of a Buddha, causing disunity in the Sangha.

60. The doctrine of the right, semblance, and final Dharma (*shō-zō-matsu* 正像末), referring to the three periods after the Buddha's death, was especially prominent during the Heian and Kamakura eras. Although there are different views as to the duration of these three periods, according to one prevalent at the time of Dōgen's writing, the first period of the right Dharma was believed to last 1,000 years, during which Buddhist doctrine, practices, and enlightenment all existed; this was followed by a second 1,000-year period of the semblance or counterfeit Dharma, during which doctrine and practices existed but not enlightenment, and a third and final period, the latter or final Dharma, of a 10,000-year duration, during which the doctrine alone remained. Since it was thought that the advent of the final or *mappō* Dharma fell during late Heian times (1052, according to one contemporary estimate), there was a general feeling of pessimism abroad in society that influenced the teachings of evangelists such as Hōnen, Nichiren, and Shinran.

61. The "precious treasure" is the Buddha-nature.

Question 16: Some say that if you penetrate fully the meaning of "the mind in itself is Buddha," even though you do not recite scriptures or actually engage in religious practice, you are lacking nothing of the Buddha Dharma. The mere knowledge that the Buddha Dharma inheres within you is the perfect, total attainment of the Way. You should not seek it elsewhere, in any other person. Then what need is there to trouble yourself with negotiating the Way in zazen?

Answer 16: Such words are especially meaningless. Were things as you portray them, would not all spiritually perceptive persons be able to arrive at understanding merely by being taught such words?

Understand that the Buddha Dharma consists above all in practice that strives to eliminate views that distinguish self and other. Were the Way attained by knowing your self is Buddha, Shakyamuni would not have troubled himself as he did long ago to lead others to enlightenment. Let me corroborate this with some examples of worthy priests of the past.

A monk of former times named Hsüan-tse was temple steward in the brotherhood of Zen master Fa-yen.⁶² Fa-yen said to him, "Tse, how long is it that you've been with me?" "It's been three years now," he answered. "As a member of the next generation, why is it you never ask me about the Buddha Dharma?" Tse replied, "I must not deceive you. Formerly, when I was with Zen master Ch'ing-feng, I attained the Dharma realm of blissful peace." Fa-yen asked, "By what words did you attain that realm?" Tse replied, "I once asked Ch'ing-feng, 'What is the self of a Buddhist disciple?' He answered, 'Ping-ting t'ung-tzu comes for fire.'⁶³ "Those are fine words," said Fa-yen. "But you probably didn't understand them." Tse said, "I understand them to mean this: Ping-ting is associated with fire. To look for fire with fire is like looking for the self with the self." "You see," said the master, "you didn't understand. If that were the extent of the Buddha Dharma, it would not have been transmitted to the present day."

Hsüan-tse, indignant, promptly left the monastery. As he was leaving, he reflected, "The master is known throughout the land. He is a great teacher with over 500 disciples. There must be some merit in his admonishment."

He returned penitently to the monastery, performed his bows before Fa-yen, and asked, "What is the self of a Buddhist disciple?" "Ping-ting t'ung-tzu comes for fire," the master replied. On hearing these words, Hsüan-tse attained great enlightenment.

62. Fa-yen Wen-i, 885–958, founder of the Fa-yen "House" of Chinese Zen; Hsüan-tse was an heir of Fa-yen.

63. This dialogue appears in *CTL*, ch. 17. There are no dates for Zen master Ch'ing-feng. *Ping-ting t'ung-tzu* 丙丁童子 (Japanese, *hyōjō dōji*), the "fire boy," is a personification of fire.

It is obvious the Buddha Dharma cannot be realized by understanding that "the self is the Buddha." If that were the extent of the Buddha Dharma, the master would not have said what he did to guide Hsüan-tse. He would not have admonished him as he did.

When you encounter a good master for the first time, just inquire about the rules and regulations with regard to practice, and then devote yourself wholeheartedly to negotiating the Way in zazen. Do not let your mind dwell upon superficial or partial knowledge. If you follow this advice, you will not find the Buddha Dharma's wonderful means unavailing.

Question 17: In scanning the past and present in India and China, we find that one person was enlightened upon hearing a pebble strike against a bamboo; another's mind was cleared at the sight of blossoming flowers.⁶⁴ Indeed, Shakyamuni himself realized the Way when he saw the morning star; and Ananda discerned the truth when a banner-pole fell.⁶⁵ From the time of the Sixth Patriarch, a great many other people filiated to the Five Houses of Zen were enlightened by a single word or phrase. Yet did all of those people, to a man, negotiate the Way in zazen?

Answer 17: It should be clearly understood that those of the past and the present whose minds were enlightened by seeing things or hearing things all negotiated the Way without any preconceptions whatever; and that for each of them, right at that instant, no "other person" existed.

Question 18: In India and China people possess a natural intelligence and uprightness. When people in these centers of culture are taught the Buddha Dharma they are unusually quick to reach understanding and realization. In our country, however, benevolence and wisdom have not existed in abundance. It has been difficult for the right seeds to accumulate. It is indeed regrettable that our backwardness has produced this state of affairs. The priests in our country are inferior to even the laymen in those great lands. A general obtuseness pervades our entire culture, and the minds of our countrymen are small and narrow. People are deeply attached to worldly, material gain, partial to goodness and virtue of a very superficial kind. Even were such people to engage in the practice of zazen, would it really be possible for them to realize the Buddha Dharma?

64. This is a reference to the enlightenment experiences of Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien and Ling-yün Chih-ch'in. Hsiang-yen's came when he heard a pebble strike against a bamboo, Ling-yün's upon seeing a flowering peach tree.

65. Shakyamuni is said to have attained enlightenment upon looking up and seeing the morning star. His disciple Ananda was enlightened when Mahakashyapa asked him to take down the banner-pole at the gate.

Answer 18: As you say, benevolence and wisdom are still not widespread among our countrymen. Their dispositions are narrow and perverse. Even if the right Dharma, undistorted, were given to them, its ambrosial nectar would likely turn to poison. They are easily moved to seek fame and profit, and so they find it difficult to free themselves from attachment and illusion.

All that is true, and yet in entering into realization of the Buddha Dharma, the ordinary commonsense knowledge of men and devas is not necessarily the vehicle by which the world of illusion is transcended. Even in the Buddha's time, one man realized the four stages to sainthood because of a bouncing ball.⁶⁶ The great Way was illuminated for another when she put on a surplice (*kesa*).⁶⁷ Both were ignorant, dull-witted people, no more enlightened than beasts, but by virtue of right faith the path of deliverance from illusion opened for them. A laywoman experienced satori while watching a foolish old monk sitting silently as she was serving his meal.⁶⁸ It was not the result of wisdom or of culture, and it did not depend upon the spoken word or upon the relating of a story. It was right faith alone that saved her.

Moreover, the spread of Shakyamuni's teaching through the 3,000 world universe took only about 2,000 years. The lands making up this universe are diverse. Not all of them are countries of benevolence and wisdom. Certainly their inhabitants are not all astute and sagacious. Yet the Tathagata's right

66. This story is found in the *Tsa-pao-tsang-ching*, ch. 9. An old monk, muddled by age, heard some young monks discussing the four stages to Arhatship and was carried away by the desire to attain them himself. He asked them for instruction, and they jestingly replied that they would oblige him if he treated them to a feast. Having finished their meal, they directed the old man to sit upright in a corner. He joyfully acquiesced, whereupon they began to bounce a ball against his head, saying, "That's the first stage." But with that, the old monk actually did attain the first stage toward his goal. They continued to bounce the ball against his head, each time in a different corner, each time assuring him that he had reached the second, third, and fourth stages, and the monk, each time the ball bounced from his head, did attain each of the stages, including the fourth and highest.

67. The Buddhist nun Utpalavarna (Japanese, Rengeshiki bikuni 蓮華色比丘尼), a disciple of the Buddha, always praised the virtues of the priesthood to everyone she met. She told them of her former life as a courtesan, when she would don various costumes and dance for her customers. One day, running out of ideas, she decided to put on a Buddhist surplice. This led to her entrance into Buddhist life and subsequent attainment of highest enlightenment. The story is found in the *Ta-chih-tu-lun*, ch. 13.

68. A sharp-witted woman who was deeply devoted to Buddhism used to provide food for monks in return for some words on the Dharma. One day a feeble-minded old monk came and partook of a fine meal. The woman expected to receive a sermon as usual, but the witless monk could think of nothing to say, and when she sat down and closed her eyes in anticipation, he grabbed the opportunity and fled. But as she sat waiting, she attained the first stage of Arhatship. Overjoyed, she opened her eyes to find the old monk gone, so she searched him out and thanked him deeply. The monk was so repentant that he too attained the first stage. See the *Tsa-pao-tsang ching*, ch. 9.

Dharma is originally endowed with the strength of incomprehensibly great merit and virtue. When the time comes, the Dharma will spread in a land. If people just practice with right faith, they will all attain the Way, irrespective of the amount of intelligence they possess. Do not think because ours is not a land of great benevolence and wisdom, or because the people's knowledge is small and their understanding feeble, that the Buddha's Dharma cannot be comprehended here. Besides, the right seed of prajna-wisdom exists in abundance in all people. It seems only that, having rarely been in accord with that wisdom, our countrymen have as yet been unable to enjoy its use.

[EPILOGUE]

The foregoing exchange of questions and answers is not altogether consistent. The standpoints of questioner and replier have sometimes interchanged. How many flowers have been made to blossom in the sky! But in Japan the essential principles of negotiating the Way in zazen have not yet been transmitted. We must pity those who aspire to know them. Therefore, I have collected something of what I saw and heard while I was in China. I have written down the true secrets of the enlightened masters I encountered there so that I could convey them to practitioners who might desire to know them. At this time I have not had occasion to go beyond this and describe the standards of behavior in their monasteries, or the rules and regulations I observed in their temples. Such matters do not lend themselves to hurried or casual exposition.

It is true that Japan is a remote land, lying beyond the clouds and smoke to the east of the Dragon Seas. Yet from the time of the Emperors Kimmei and Yōmei,⁶⁹ we have been blessed by the gradual west-to-east movement of the Buddha Dharma. However, a disorderly proliferation of doctrinal names and forms and ritual matters has taken place, and there have been difficulties regarding the place of practice as well.

Now as you fashion a hermitage among blue cliffs and white rocks and with mended bowl and tattered robe begin your religious discipline on your own by properly sitting in zazen, the matter transcending Buddha is immediately manifested,⁷⁰ and the great matter of a lifetime of practice is forthwith

69. Kimmei 欽明 (reigned 539–571). Buddhism is traditionally said to have been introduced into Japan from Korea in A.D. 552 when the King of Paekche presented Emperor Kimmei with a bronze image of Shakyamuni, some sutras, and other religious objects. It was during the reign of Yōmei 用明 (reigned 585–7), Kimmei's fourth son and father of Prince Shōtoku, that Buddhism began to gain favor among the ruling classes.

70. See note 22.

penetrated to ultimate fulfillment.⁷¹ This is the instruction left by Lung-ya,⁷² and the style of the teaching bequeathed by Mahakashyapa.⁷³ The manner and principles of the zazen you practice should be based on the *Fukanzazengi*, which I compiled during the preceding Karoku period.⁷⁴

Although the spread of the Buddha Dharma in a country should await the decree of the king, we need only remember the meaning of the message the Buddha delivered on Vulture Peak to recall that the kings, nobles, ministers, and generals presently ruling innumerable lands throughout the world all humbly received that message and were reborn in their present existence without forgetting the deep desire from their previous existence to protect and maintain the Buddha Dharma.⁷⁵ Are not all the regions in which their influence prevails Buddha lands? So it does not necessarily follow that in order to propagate the Way of the Buddha-patriarchs, you must choose a favorable place and wait for ideal circumstances to develop. And you must never think that you are starting new from today.

That is why I have gathered these words together to leave for the wise ones who aspire to the true Dharma, as well as for those true practitioners who seek the Way like floating clouds and drifting water-plants.

71. See note 9.

72. Lung-ya Chü-tun, 835–923. One of Lung-ya's poems describes the content of his "instruction." "Uncooked food, rude clothing, mind like the full moon; / Throughout life without a thought, without limit. If my contemporaries ask where I live, / Tell them the green waters and blue mountains are my home." Dōgen quotes Lung-ya in *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*, v, 10: "Studying the Way is above all learning poverty. Study poverty, live in poverty, and immediately you are close to the Way."

73. The text has *Keisoku* 鷄足, "Cock Leg," which refers to Mahakashyapa during the period that he lived on Kukkuṭapāda (Cock Leg Mountain) in Magadha performing austerities.

74. *Fukanzazengi* was written in 1227, immediately after Dōgen returned from China. It is translated above, pp. 2–6.

75. In the *Nirvana Sutra*, Shakyamuni entrusts the spread of the Dharma to the patronage of kings, ministers, and others of great influence. He says that the Dharma should be propagated with the help of the king, but that the Buddha's command is prior to that of kings, who have reached that rank in their present existence for the purpose of preserving and transmitting the Dharma.