

UNDERSTANDING THE SHOBOGENZO

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Why The Shobogenzo is Difficult to Understand

Most people's reaction on first reading the Shobogenzo is that it seems very difficult to see clearly what the writings mean. This is a natural reaction because when we read a sentence, we usually expect to be able to understand the meaning of what we read immediately. The first time that I picked up a copy of the Shobogenzo, I found that I could not understand any of it, although I was reading a book written in my own native language. Of course, reading the Shobogenzo in translation introduces a new set of problems related to the skill and knowledge of the translator, and to the similarities of the languages.

Attempts to elucidate the problems that the Shobogenzo presents to the reader bring me to four main reasons:

1. The Shobogenzo is written with a unique logical structure, which I have called "Four Views" or "Three Philosophies & One Reality." I explain this system of logic in a later section.
2. Master Dogen wrote using many phrases and quotations from Chinese Buddhism which are relatively unknown to the layman, and difficult to render into other languages. These phrases appear in the Shobogenzo in their original Chinese form, making some parts of the book a commentary in 13th century Japanese on Chinese phrases from even older sources. In the translated version, we have the additional problems of representing these phrases in a very different target language.
3. The concepts that Master Dogen wanted to express were profound and subtle. Even in his own language it was necessary for him to invent many new words and phrases to put over what he wanted to say. These new words were largely not adopted into the Japanese language, and so are unfamiliar to us today.
4. Master Dogen wrote the Shobogenzo in order to explain his experience of reality gained from practicing Zazen. His words are based on this experience. It is normal these days to think that anything philosophical can be understood intellectually, as an intellectual exercise. We do not have much experience of philosophies which are pointing to physical practice. We think that just reading the book should be enough to understand what is written in it.

The Problem of Contradictions

Although these four groups of problems are serious obstacles, they are not insurmountable. If the problem is known we can move towards a solution, however slowly. But in the Shobogenzo we can find an additional problem of a completely different order—the book appears to be, and in fact is, full of contradictions!

We generally feel that a book in which the writer contradicts him/herself is of little value. This is largely because our modern civilization has grown to be vast and powerful from the thousands of years over which human beings have developed logical and exact ways to process and control their environment. The intellect has become king. Human beings have used their powers of reasoning to develop a whole field of intellectual and moral studies to guide our progress through history. And in recent times, we have applied our reasoning powers to exact scientific study of our world, based on belief in causal laws. So in today's world, in both philosophy and science, anyone who puts forward contradictory propositions is soon

passed over. Writings which are not logically consistent are disregarded by scholars and serious students. They are unacceptable to our finely-tuned intellects.

It seems only fair that this criterion should be applied even to the Shobogenzo; the existence of contradictions in it should diminish its value. But the Shobogenzo is literally full of contradictions. By this measure, we must conclude that the book has no value to the serious scholar. But is our conclusion acceptable?

I would like in the following sections to look in more detail at the nature of and reason for this dearth of contradictions in a book which has been described as a major philosophical work.

Examples of Contradictions in The Shobogenzo

To illustrate the problem I intend to pick out contradictions at various levels within the Shobogenzo. I will use the 95-chapter edition, because it is the first edition to be printed with wood-block. Chapter numbers quoted refer to chapters in the 95-chapter edition.

1. Contradiction between Chapters

I will compare the two chapters (89) Shinjin Inga and (76) Dai Shugyo.

Shin means deep or profound, and *jin* (from *shin*) means to believe in. So *Shinjin Inga* means deep belief in cause and effect. *Dai* means great and *shugyo* means practice. So *Dai shugyo* means the great Buddhist practice; that is the practice of Zazen.

In both of these chapters, Master Dogen quotes the same story. It is a famous Chinese story about Master Hyakujo Ekai and a wild fox; the story concerns the relation between Buddhist practice and the law of cause and effect. This relation is explained in two ways, each totally at odds with the other.

"Usually when Master Daichi of Mt. Hyakujo in Koshu district (who succeeded Master Baso and was called Master Ekai in his lifetime) gave his informal preachings, there was an old man in the audience, who would always listen to the preaching following the rest of the audience. If the audience retired, the old man would also retire. But one day he did not leave straight away. Eventually, the Master asked, 'What person is this, standing before me?'

The old man answered: 'I am not a person. Long ago, in the time of Kasyapa Buddha, I used to live [as master] on this mountain. One day, a Buddhist student asked me whether even a person of the great Buddhist practice falls into [the restrictions of] cause and effect. In reply, I said to him, "He does not fall into cause and effect." Since then I have fallen into the body of a wild fox for five hundred lives. So I beg you, Master, to say some words that will change me. I would like to get rid of the wild fox's body.' Then he asked, 'Does someone of the great Buddhist practice also fall into cause and effect?'

The Master said, 'Do not be unclear about cause and effect.'

At these words the old man realized the great truth, and after making a prostration, he said, 'I am already free of the body of a wild fox. Now I would like to remain on the mountain behind this temple. Dare I ask you, Master, to perform a Buddhist monk's funeral ceremony for me.'¹

In both chapters, the same story is quoted almost word for word. In the story there are two expressions used to talk about cause and effect; the first one, the old man's reply to his student, is *Fu raku inga* which translates as "He does not fall into cause and effect".² The second, Master Ekai's reply to the old man, is *Fu mai inga* which translates as "Do not be unclear about cause and effect."³

In each of the two chapters, Master Dogen draws contradictory conclusions from these two expressions in the story. In (89) Shinjin Inga he says:

“[The expression of] not falling into cause and effect is just a negation of cause and effect, as a result of which people fall into bad states. [The expression of] not being unclear about cause and effect shows deep belief in cause and effect, and those who hear it can get rid of bad states. We should not wonder at this, and we should not doubt it.”

These comments suggest that Master Dogen interprets the two expressions *fu raku inga* and *fu mai inga* as having diametrically opposite meanings. He is clearly insisting on the difference between the two phrases “not falling into cause and effect” and “not being unclear about cause and effect.”

But if we look at his commentary on the story in chapter (76) *Dai Shugyo*, we find that he says this:

“By groping for what great Buddhist practice is, [we can find that] it is just great causes and effects themselves. And because these causes and effects are inevitably perfect causes and complete effects, they could never be discussed as falling or not falling, or as unclear or not unclear. If the idea of not falling into cause and effect is mistaken, the idea of not being unclear about cause and effect must also be mistaken.”

Here, Master Dogen is clearly insisting that *fu raku inga* and *fu mai inga* mean exactly the same thing. He denies any distinction between “not falling into cause and effect” and “not being unclear about cause and effect.”

So from these two chapters we can see that Master Dogen reaches opposite and contradictory conclusions from the same facts. He seems to be logically inconsistent and this is certainly true if we view the situation from an abstract viewpoint only.

2. Contradictions between Paragraphs

If we look at another chapter, (22) *Bussho*, we can find contradictions between two paragraphs in the same chapter. He quotes National Master Sai-an:

‘National Master Sai-an from Enkan in the Koshu district was a veteran master in Baso's order. He once preached to the assembly, “*All living beings have Buddhanature!*”

So minds are all just living beings, and living beings all have Buddhanature as existence. Grass, trees, and national lands are one with mind: because they are mind, they are living beings, and because they are living beings they have Buddhanature as existence. The sun, the moon and the stars are one with mind: because they are mind, they are living beings, and because they are living beings they have Buddhanature as existence.’

Here Master Dogen is clearly agreeing with Master Sai-an's insistence that all living beings have Buddhanature.

But in the very next paragraph he quotes Master Isan Reiyu:

‘Master Dai-en of Dai-I-san mountain once preached to the assembly, “*All living beings do not have Buddhanature.*”

...We should continue to grope for its meaning: How could all living beings be Buddhanature? How could they have Buddhanature? If any have Buddhanature they might be a band of demons. Bringing a demon's sheet, they would like to cover all living beings. But Buddhanature is just Buddhanature, and so living beings are just living beings. Living beings are not originally endowed with Buddhanature.’

Master Dogen affirms that all living beings have Buddhanature in the first paragraph and denies it in the second!

3. Contradictions between Sentences

Even within a single paragraph, contradictions abound. Take for example chapter (3) Genjo Koan. In the first paragraph of the chapter we can find the following sentences:

“When all things and phenomena exist as Buddhist teachings, then there are delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people. When millions of things and phenomena are all separate from ourselves, there are no delusion and no enlightenment, no buddhas and no ordinary people, no life and no death.”

In this short quotation we can find two statements; in the first, Master Dogen affirms the existence of delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people from one point of view. But in the next sentence he says that seen from another viewpoint, delusion and enlightenment, buddhas and ordinary people, life and death do not exist. He is logically inconsistent within a single paragraph because he changes his viewpoint.

4. Contradictions within a Sentence

In (14) Sansui Gyo, we find the following sentence:

‘An eternal Buddha said, “*Mountains are mountains. Rivers are rivers.*” These words do not mean that mountains are ‘mountains;’ they mean that mountains are mountains.’

Taken as it stands, the sentence makes no sense. Mountains are not mountains; they are mountains! The form of the sentence seems to contradict the rules of logic. It is an unacceptable statement to make according to the normal rules of reasoning. However, there are many similar sentences to be found in the Shobogenzo. How are we to understand them?

Can We Accept Contradiction?

Since the time of the Greeks, human beings have developed and refined a set of logical rules which we use when thinking about or discussing the problems of the world. This has been the basis of our ability to analyze and understand the world, and hence to develop our great sciences and philosophies. Without the exact system of logic which governs all analytical activities, it is inconceivable that European-American civilization could have developed.

It is, therefore, best to be somewhat prudent when discussing to what extent we can permit logical contradiction within a certain intellectual pursuit. In recent years, some have said that Buddhist thought can easily accommodate the illogical; in fact some have stated that Buddhist thought is beyond logic! The view put forward by these people seems to be that religion must be beyond reason, and negation of logic thus has a central role to play. One example of this tendency is in the modern interpretation of Chinese koan stories. Many of these stories appear illogical when we read them superficially. And so some people insist that one aim of Buddhist study is to develop a strange way of thinking which is beyond western logic.

Should we believe such strange insinuations? Master Dogen himself had strong views on this recurring problem. In (14) Sansui Gyo he says:

‘Nowadays in great Sung China there is a certain group of unreliable fellows who have now formed such a crowd that they cannot be defeated by a small group of real people. They say that this talk of the East Mountain moving over the water, and such stories as Master Nansen’s Sickle, are stories which cannot be understood rationally. Their idea is as follows: “A story that is dependent on any kind of thoughtful consideration cannot be a Zen story of the Buddhist patriarchs. But stories that cannot be understood rationally are indeed the Buddhist patriarchs’ stories. This is why such things as Master Obaku’s use of the staff and Master Rinzai’s cry of katsu, which are beyond rational understanding and unrelated to intellectual consideration, represent the great enlightenment [that existed] even before the sprouting of creation. The reason that many of the teaching methods of past masters employed words that cut through confusion

was that [their teachings] were beyond rational understanding." Those who say such things have never met a true master and they have no eyes of real Buddhist study; they are just little pups who do not deserve to be discussed. For the last two or three hundred years in China there have been many such demons, many such shavelings like the band of six. It is so pitiful that the great truth of the Buddhist Patriarch has gone to ruin. Their understanding cannot even match that of the sravaka in Hinayana Buddhism; they are even more stupid than non-Buddhists. They are not laymen, they are not monks, they are not human beings, and they are not gods in heaven; they are more stupid than animals that study Buddhism. What these shavelings call incomprehensible stories are incomprehensible only to them; the Buddhist patriarchs were not like that. We should not fail to study the concrete path by which the Buddhist patriarchs understand, just because [the path] is not understandable to those [shavelings]. If [the stories] were ultimately beyond rational understanding, their own reasoning now must also be wide of the mark.'

Master Dogen obviously doesn't think that koan stories are illogical; he is highly critical of Chinese masters who say that a koan is a sort of illogical riddle. He clearly does not accept illogicalities easily, and neither should we. We should continue to search for the reason behind the apparent wealth of contradictions in the Shobogenzo.

Here I would offer some advice. In order to study Master Dogen's Buddhism, I think that it is very important to rely on his teachings completely. We must be very exact in our study. If we only immerse ourselves half-way, accepting some of his teachings, and criticizing others, it will become impossible to gain a full understanding of the complete philosophical system which he expounds.

Existence of the Area of Reality

How do we then explain these contradictions in Master Dogen's teachings? In the philosophical area, we should not accept things easily without an explanation.

After reading the Shobogenzo repeatedly, I began to think that Master Dogen was looking at things from an area or viewpoint which was different from our accepted intellectual viewpoint. From our common intellectual viewpoint, logical contradiction can never be permitted. But Master Dogen seemed to have two viewpoints: the normal intellectual viewpoint of the philosopher, and another viewpoint; one that looked at problems based on something outside the intellectual area. Now whether philosophical thought should admit the existence of an area other than the intellectual area as a basis for debate is perhaps the crux of the problem with Buddhist philosophy and the Shobogenzo.

After I had read the Shobogenzo many many times, I began to see that with his use of contradictions, Master Dogen was pointing to an area which was outside the area of intellectual debate; he was pointing to existence outside the rational and intellectual area. When I was young it was difficult for me to believe in a world that was different both from the world of my thoughts and also from the world of my perceptions. Master Dogen talks about the ideal world of theory and the world of matter as we perceive it. But he uses these two viewpoints to point to or describe the real world, the reality in which we exist. And after reading the Shobogenzo I too began to see that the world in which I existed was neither the world of ideas nor the world of objects and perceptions, but something different from both.

This was a surprise to me. Since the beginning of my life I had been living in reality, but I had not clearly noticed that fact before. And I think that this rather simple fact is very important in understanding what Buddhism teaches. It is said that when Gautama Buddha was practicing Zazen one morning, he experienced that mountains, rivers, grass and trees were all buddhas. This is usually called the Buddha's enlightenment. We tend to think that after years of intense effort, his state changed. But after my own experience, I began to see that in fact the story of Gautama Buddha's enlightenment didn't mean that he entered some special state, but just that he saw clearly for the first time the reality in which he was living.

With this experience, I began to interpret the Shobogenzo as a book describing or pointing to that reality. I found that if we take the Shobogenzo as a handbook to reality, it makes complete sense, contradictions and all. If we take the Shobogenzo as a description of an intellectual system, we can never make sense of it. We can say that the object of Master Dogen's writings was a description of reality. But reality cannot be captured in words. From Gautama Buddha's time onwards Buddhists have made their efforts to capture reality in words, and this I feel is the basic reason for the tremendous volume and variety of Buddhist sutras that have come down to us. Master Dogen was no exception. He too tried the impossible. This is the reason why the Shobogenzo appears so difficult to explain; this is the reason for the contradictions contained therein. Master Dogen is not trying to construct a self-contained intellectual theory—he is trying to use all the tools of philosophy and logic to point to something else; something beyond them all. In the area of reason and logic alone, we cannot embrace systems of thought containing gross contradiction. But reality itself contains contradiction. We experience those contradictions for ourselves at every moment. So an intellectual description of reality must find room for those contradictions, however unacceptable that may feel to our intellectual powers.

At this point I want to make a very fundamental point about the nature of contradiction itself. We feel in the intellectual area that something called contradiction exists; that something can be illogical. But in reality, there is no such thing as a contradiction. It is just a characteristic of the real state of things. It is only with our intellect that we can detect the existence of something called contradiction.

A Bridge Between the Intellect and Reality

After studying the Shobogenzo for more than 50 years, my confidence is complete: the aim of Buddhism is to realize reality. Gautama Buddha urged us to find reality by practicing Zazen. The traditional interpretation of the Sanskrit word *dharma* is rather vague, referring to some form of teachings. But I think that dharma means not only teachings but points to three areas—principles or teachings, situation or external circumstances, and morals or behavior. These are the components of a philosophy of reality.

Can we, then, have a philosophy of reality, if reality is outside the area which philosophy deals with? Logically we must say the answer is no. Reality and intelligence are completely separate. What kind of system can we construct which will allow us to pursue a description of reality?

It was in just this state that Buddhists developed their unique method of explaining reality. The method is called *catvāry ārya satyaṇi*, or the four noble truths, and it explains the relationship between intellectual activities and reality using four viewpoints. The first two viewpoints are the traditional philosophical standpoints, the third is a philosophy of reality and the fourth is experiential reality.

This is the hypothesis that I developed forty years ago from studying the Shobogenzo, and although it did not have the backing even of Buddhist society in Japan I can find no inadequacies in my idea, no matter how hard I try.

Catvāry ārya satyaṇi, the four noble truths comprise *duhkha-satya*, *samudaya-satya*, *nirodha-satya* and *marga-satya*. The traditional interpretation goes as follows:

Duhkha-satya, or the truth of suffering says that all things and phenomena in this world are suffering.

Samudaya-satya or the truth of aggregates says that the cause of suffering is desire.

Nirodha-satya, or the truth of denial says that we should rid ourselves of desire.

Marga-satya, or the truth of the right way says that when we rid ourselves of all desire we will realize the truth.

When I read this traditional interpretation of the four noble truths, I found it so dogmatic and illogical I could not accept it. To say that all the world is suffering seems to me the height of dogmatism. Of course

the world often seems to be full of sadness, but the assertion that all is suffering in the world is pessimistic beyond words. And to say that the cause of all this suffering is desire is too dogmatic. I think that fundamentally desire is at the root of our life force. It is impossible for us to get rid of desire and continue living. If Buddhism were to insist that we should destroy all desire in ourselves, then it is urging us to do the impossible. And the last of the truths is not clear. What is the nature of the truth that will be realized? It is said that we should follow the eightfold right path, but no clear explanation of these eight paths existed in Gautama Buddha's time. What is meant by right? The four noble truths is supposedly at the center of the Buddhist teachings, but it seemed to me impossible to believe in such a dogmatic and biased set of ideas.

After I had read the Shobogenzo and become familiar with Master Dogen's thought, I found a new interpretation of the four noble truths. It is an interpretation which allows us to combine our intellectual explanations and reality. I found the unique method that Master Dogen uses to connect philosophical thought and reality. I have called that method the theory of three philosophies and one reality.

To illustrate this method I will use chapter (3) Genjo Koan, which is the third chapter in the 95-chapter edition of the Shobogenzo, but was the first chapter in the earlier 75-chapter edition. It thus has special significance in that I think here Master Dogen lays out his philosophical viewpoint for the reader. The first paragraph of Genjo Koan is:

“When all things and phenomena exist as Buddhist teachings, then there are delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people. When millions of things and phenomena are all separate from ourselves, there are no delusion and no enlightenment, no buddhas and no ordinary people, no life and no death. Buddhism is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so [in reality] there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are people and buddhas. Though all this may be true, flowers fall even if we love them, and weeds grow even if we hate them, and that is all.”

This paragraph is composed of four sentences. The first is: “When all things and phenomena exist as Buddhist teachings, then there are delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people.” What does the sentence mean? This sentence describes the situation when we think about the world on the basis of an idealistic philosophical system—a set of teachings. From this basis we can find differences between many categories; delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people. This contrasts with the second sentence which says that there are no differences if we view the world “when millions of things and phenomena are all separate from ourselves.” This second sentence tells us that if we view the world separate from our own subjective viewpoint, that is objectively, we can find no difference in value between delusion and enlightenment, buddhas and ordinary people, life and death. They are all concrete facts and have equal value as such. This is the scientific or materialistic viewpoint. Master Dogen clearly distinguishes here between the philosophical standpoints of the idealist and the materialist.

At the same time, in the third sentence he separates the Buddhist viewpoint from these first two: he says that Buddhism is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so in reality there are people and buddhas. Master Dogen is saying that Buddhism is different from relative comparisons in terms of large or small, heavy or light. Of course the meaning of the phrase “originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity” is not exact, but he seems to be saying that Buddhism does not belong to the area where we compare; where we say this is more valuable than that, this is not as important as that, and neither does it belong to the area of physical comparisons.

Here, we should pause for careful thought. Is it possible to have a “philosophy” which does not belong to the discriminating intellectual area? Is there a philosophical area in which we can transcend both subjective and objective criteria? The only tool we have to think about philosophical problems is the intellect. What does it mean to transcend philosophy in the area of philosophy?

At times our thoughts are of the nature "I think this", or "I believe in this." We use our own internal ideas and beliefs to construct a picture of the world. Our attitude is subjective. Philosophy which is constructed on the basis of our subjective thoughts is called subjectivism.

At other times we base our thoughts on our sense perceptions. We perceive the material world through the senses and make sense of what we perceive with our intellect. This is objectivism.

Subjectivism and objectivism, idealism and materialism, form the two fundamental types of philosophy. Both are pursuits of the intellect. We can also find the existence of philosophies which are mixtures of the two basic types. But can we find a philosophical system which does not fit into any of these three groups? The answer is of course no. It is impossible to construct a philosophy which is not somehow based on either idealism, materialism, or a mix of the two; this is the nature of philosophy. Philosophy is without question restricted to the area of the intellect.

But in the third sentence of Genjo Koan, we see Master Dogen insisting that Buddhism is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, over all kinds of relativistic analyses. The word "Buddhism" in the sentence is *butsu-do* in Japanese. *Butsu* means Buddha or Buddhist, and *do* means way, principle, or moral criterion. So the word translated as "Buddhism" also refers to Buddhist behavior, conduct or action. I think that in this sentence Master Dogen is saying that Buddhism is not in the same area as philosophical analysis, whether idealistic or materialistic. I think that the transcendent area that Master Dogen is referring to is the area of our behavior or conduct; that is our actions themselves.

This is a very important point in understanding Buddhist teachings. Philosophers are prone to believe that the intellect is absolute; that there is nothing that we cannot analyze with the tools of logic, nothing that we cannot describe or discuss in words. Master Dogen gives an example in (10) Shoaku Makusa of this tendency of ours to cling to the intellect as the all-powerful. He quotes a discussion between a famous Chinese poet, and Buddhist Master Choka Dorin:

'Haku Kyo-i of the Tang Dynasty was a lay disciple of Master Bukko Nyoman, and a second-generation disciple of Master Baso Do-itsu. When he was the governor of the Koshu district he studied under Master Choka Dorin. One day Kyo-i asked, "*Just what is the great intention of the Buddha's teaching?*"

Master Dorin said, "*Not doing wrong. Doing right.*"

Kyo-i said, "*If that is so, even a child of three could speak such words!*"

Master Dorin said, "*Even though a child of three can speak this truth, an old man of eighty cannot practice it.*"

At these words, Kyo-i immediately prostrated himself in thanks, and then he left.'

The story emphasizes the absolute difference between saying "don't do wrong" and actually not doing wrong. In our day to day lives we are prone to forget this difference, the difference between the idea of right conduct and right conduct itself. This is one of the most important tenets of Buddhist philosophy; the fundamental and absolute difference between thought and action. Buddhists found that the area of our actions, our conduct, our behavior in this world is completely different from the areas of intellectual analysis or sense perception. This is the meaning of Master Dogen's statement in Genjo Koan:

"Buddhism is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so [in reality] there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are people and buddhas."

Although the sentence is a statement of Master Dogen's philosophical framework, it does not lay out an intellectual concept; it refers to our real actions. And it says that our real actions are outside the philosophical area; they transcend it.

We now have a problem. Can we permit Buddhist philosophy to contain statements which are not statements of philosophy as such, but which talk about something beyond philosophy? Can we affirm such a philosophical system as valid and rational? In the tradition of western thought, this is not acceptable. But unless we accept it and move forward we will not be able to understand Master Dogen's philosophy at all. We will have to reject it as a philosophical system.

In western philosophy there is one method which reminds me of this problem. It is the method of dialectic, much valued by the German philosopher Hegel (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) and used by Karl Marx in developing the doctrine of dialectic materialism. Master Dogen uses a tool similar to dialectic in explaining the triangular relationship between subjectivism, objectivism and Buddhism.

It is clear that Master Dogen thinks that Buddhism belongs to an area outside the intellectual area; that is, it is not intellectual analysis per se. But at the same time, he puts forward Buddhism as a realistic philosophy. What does a 'realistic philosophy' mean?

The Philosophy of Action

I think that the third sentence of Genjo Koan is Master Dogen's definition of a philosophy of reality. The story about Master Choka Dorin quoted earlier reminds us that we usually miss the difference between intellectual ability and action itself. But I think that this difference is crucial: Gautama Buddha himself found the clear difference between what we think reality is and what real action is. Buddhist philosophy is a philosophy which is based on this difference. It expounds this difference, and as such is a completely new philosophy. I call it the philosophy of action.

At the level of day-to-day life we see clearly that thinking about eating is completely different from the actual experience of eating. And the taste of the food is separate and different from the action of eating. This much is clear, but we often fail to recognize such simple facts. This is of fundamental importance to a clear understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

Action is described in Buddhist theory as the contact between subject and object. It is the meeting of inside and outside. This is seen in the Buddhist insistence that mind and body are one. Action always takes place in the present moment. Time here and now is the subject of the chapter in the Shobogenzo titled Uji. In this chapter Master Dogen explains that the present moment is the stage for all action.

So action is different from thinking. Action is different from perceiving with the senses. Action does not exist without a denial of thinking. Action does not exist without a denial of sense perception—because action is outside of the area of thought and perception. At the same time, it is not possible to construct a philosophy which does not have an intellectual base. So the philosophy of action is by its very nature an anomaly. It is based on the denial of intellect and sense perception, but it relies on both. This is a true dialectic. This is also a true contradiction. It is the contradiction between intellect and reality. In the area of the intellect, we should never accept logical inconsistency, and we should never give way to the view held by some that Buddhist theory is beyond logic. As far as intellectual explanation can go, we should retain strict logical rules to developing any theoretical structure. But the philosophy of action points to something beyond an intellectual image. This is why it is so difficult to give it a place in the philosophical systems of the west. But its time has come: to move beyond the intellectual bounds of the existing philosophies of our civilization, we need the third philosophy.

Reality

Having mapped out the basis for our new philosophical viewpoint, we are prone to forget that this new philosophy is still just that. The philosophy of action can never catch the ineffable nature of reality itself—it can only point the way. And the reality which we all experience is completely different from any philosophies we may construct. It can never be fully described in words. This is why many writers attempt to catch reality with symbolic expression and poetry.

Master Dogen says in the last sentence in the paragraph in Genjo Koan, "Thought all this may be true, flowers fall even if we love them and weeds grow even if we hate them, and that is all." In this sentence he tries to express the ineffable nature of reality.

The use of symbolic expressions to capture the nature of reality itself is a step that we cannot find in the same way in western philosophical thought. It is a step beyond the three-phased thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It is a step beyond philosophy itself. Explanations of reality can never be reality. This is why I call my four-phased philosophical system three philosophies and one reality.

Three Philosophies and One Reality

There have been two main philosophical systems in the history of western thought: idealism and materialism. It is easy to find the basis for these two systems in the human thought process itself. At first, when we think about a philosophical problem, our train of thought steps forward from logical premise to logical premise. We construct a rational framework in our minds and it is this entity which becomes the object of our thoughts or beliefs. Our thoughts are based on the intellect itself. This was the way that Plato proceeded and is normally referred to as idealism; that is, a philosophy centered on ideas themselves. The effect that idealistic thought has had on the history of western philosophy can never be underestimated.

But in the history of thought we can find another distinct stream; one in which the rational framework we construct is based on perception of the external world through the senses. What we perceive through our senses gives us a mental picture of the external world. We base our thoughts and beliefs on this information from outside the mind. That substance which is outside the mind we call matter. And a rational framework based on matter is referred to as materialism.

These two basic philosophies arise from different sources and are fundamentally opposed to each other. The fact is that there are no grounds for us to decide which of these two world views is true. For thousands of years idealistic philosophers have insisted that idealism is the truth, that ideas are the true perfection, and materialistic philosophers have disagreed, insisting that the physical world is the true reality. This conflict, although when looked at from afar seems almost comical, has occupied the minds of many sincere thinkers for as long as we can find records.

Gautama Buddha noticed this conflict, as it arose in his own searchings, and was greatly concerned to find a solution. After a long and sincere search he found one day that he was living in reality, not in the area of human intelligence which is the home of both materialism and idealism. In the intellectual area there are two viewpoints only; idealism, based on a subjective view of reality, and materialism which is based on an objective view. Subject and object can be differentiated absolutely in our minds. This is in fact what Master Dogen is saying in the first paragraph of Genjo Koan. Both idealism and materialism have equal claims to be the right description of reality; we can never decide which is the better of the two.

Gautama Buddha found that the solution to the conflict between the two fundamental philosophical systems was to view things from a third area, which he called *nirodha satya*, or the philosophy of denial. By denial, we mean denial of both intellectual thinking and of sense perception. At the same time, this denial suggests a backdrop of action—which does not belong to the area of the mind or the senses. But does life include areas which are out of the area of our intellect and senses? It seems as strange insistence. My answer is yes. For example, concepts and names of objects are intellectual tags, but the entities themselves are nameless; they exist as they are—nameless—in an area with no name. This is a very important fact, but one which is prone to be overlooked in this world of ingrained intellectual habit in which we live. We tend to think that real things and phenomena surrounding us are identical to the concepts we have of them, and therefore we do not distinguish between things as we see them with the intellect or senses and things in nameless reality. This is the delusion which Gautama Buddha uncovered in the human condition.

To recap, then, there have been three basic streams of philosophical thought in history; idealism, materialism, and philosophical systems which are a mixture of the two. These mirror the two basic modes of thinking; thought based on the mind and thought based on perception. Besides these three streams, we can find no other philosophical systems which will stand up to scrutiny. Recently, however, particularly in the area of Buddhist philosophy, we have seen the emergence of a “philosophy” which is based on the concept of *sunyata* or emptiness.⁴ These thinkers propose a philosophical system which is different from idealism, materialism and their combinations, but still in the intellectual area. To me as a Buddhist monk, their standpoint is completely without foundation.

It sometimes seems, in the first paragraph of Genjo Koan, that Master Dogen may be suggesting the existence of a strange area of the intellect which is not idealistic or materialistic or a combination of the two. But I think this is a misunderstanding of what he means by transcendence of abundance and scarcity. To transcend abundance and scarcity means to get out of the areas of intellect and sense perception, it does not mean to get rid of these two areas within the intellect—it is not an intellectual denial of the intellect resulting in “Emptiness.” It is impossible for us to rid ourselves of the difference between abundance and scarcity within the areas of mind and sense perception. But Gautama Buddha and Master Dogen alike discovered that area which is not within the mind or perception—the area of action. The discovery of this area and the clarification of its nature in philosophical terms solves the problem of the conflict between idealism and materialism. This is Buddhism’s true contribution to world philosophy.

Both Hegel and Marx seemed to have noticed the need for a resolution to this conflict, and they both attempted to find a philosophy that rose above this difference. Neither was successful, because their philosophies did not in the end point to a reality beyond the areas of the intellect or sense perception. Although Hegel’s interest in world history suggests his interest in the real world outside the world of ideas, he became trapped in his concept of “world spirit” which pulled him back to intellectual conclusions. Marx’s interest in material solutions trapped him in his belief in the ultimate reality of matter, and in the end he too, failed in his attempts to transcend the conflict.

Buddhist dialectic, however, differs in important ways from Hegelian or Marxist dialectic in that Buddhist dialectic has four phases—thesis, antithesis, synthesis and reality. The Buddhist dialectic says that there are three kinds of ways to view reality, but in the end the object of our explanations does not exist in our intelligence; it exists as it is in nameless reality. So in this sense, Buddhist philosophy serves as a bridge between philosophy and reality. This is why Buddhist theory seems so difficult to grasp.

Finally, reality cannot be put into words. Buddhists use the simile of a finger pointing at the moon. The moon is a symbol for reality and the finger is symbolic of philosophical explanation. Ironically, the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics remain trapped by the excellence of their intellectual explanations. But Buddhism points to the real world in an essentially practical way.

It is a sad and yet amusing fact that we human beings have for thousands of years mistaken the picture of the world that we have constructed with our excellent intellectual abilities for the real world in which we exist. We have failed to recognize the existence of reality. Even though we are living in reality, we are largely unable to recognize the fact.

But Gautama Buddha recognized that fact after his practical efforts in pursuing the truth, and I feel that the world is now entering a new phase—a phase in which we are finding out the nature of the reality in which we live; not a world only of the mind, nor a world of material substance alone, but a real world. This, I believe, is the reason why many people are now showing an interest in Buddhist belief.

But the real world is ineffable, beyond description, and this is the reason that both Gautama Buddha and Master Dogen urged us to practice Zazen. Zazen teaches us the true nature of reality.

In the ultimate phase, then, we have to think about what is impossible to think about. This is the fundamental reason why Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo appears so difficult. But if we do study the Shobogenzo we can find a philosophical system which is based on realism—a philosophy for today.

The Structure of The Shobogenzo

The Shobogenzo exists in several versions, the three most established being the 12-chapter edition, the 75-chapter edition and the 95-chapter edition. The first two are very old editions which were never printed, but went through many hand copyings of unknown accuracy. The 95-chapter edition includes all chapters in both the other two editions with one exception: the chapter entitled Ippyaku Hachi Homyo Mon. This edition, being the most inclusive, was edited in the Genroku era (1688 – 1703) and was printed in wood-

block in 1816. This had the effect of fixing its contents at that stage, and it was this edition that became the established version in Japan from that time up until the second world war.

After the war, some young scholars of the time reasoned that the 75-chapter edition was the more genuine because it had been edited by Master Dogen himself. They found an old copy which was numbered in 75 chapters, and which they claimed to have been copied out by Master Dogen himself. Subsequent analysis of the brushwork threw doubt on this claim and it has yet to be substantiated.

A second reason for the emerging preference of the 75-chapter edition was the opinion of Dr. Kunihiko Hashida, a psychologist in pre-war Japan and a scholar of the Shobogenzo. Dr. Hashida was of the opinion that the chronological arrangement of the chapters in the 95-chapter edition made it difficult to follow the whole philosophical system, whereas the 75-chapter edition presented no such problems. When I heard this, I too read the 75-chapter edition to see if I could agree with him. Unfortunately, I found both editions equally difficult to understand. In addition, I found that in contrast to the 95-chapter edition, the chapters in the first half of the 75-chapter edition were not in chronological order, but those in the last half were. This inconsistency leads me to question any claim that the 75-chapter edition is easier to understand..

My own preference for the 95-chapter edition rests on the followings facts:

1. The 95-chapter edition was the first edition to go into print, at which time the contents became fixed.
2. The 95-chapter edition is the most inclusive collection of Master Dogen's lectures, with the exception of the chapter Ippyaku Hachi Homyo Mon.
3. The question of whether Master Dogen himself edited the 75-chapter edition is still open.
4. The chapters in the 95-chapter edition are arranged in chronological order according to the date on which each lecture was given, and this is a consistent and historically useful basis for arrangement.

Chapter Titles

The chapter titles of the 95-chapter edition are given here. My own works in Japanese—which contain the original text, translation into modern Japanese, and commentary—group the chapters into twelve volumes. These volume numbers are used to group the chapters here too.

VOLUME ONE

1. BENDOWA: A Talk about Pursuing the Truth
2. MAKA HANNYA HARAMITSU: Maha Prajna Paramita
3. GENJO KOAN: The Realized Law of the Universe
4. IKKA NO MYOJU: One Bright Pearl
5. JU-UN-DO SHIKI: Rules for the Cloud Hall
6. SOKUSHIN ZE BUTSU: Mind Here and Now is Buddha
7. SENJO: Washing
8. RAIHAI TOKUZUI: Prostration to [Whatever] Has Got the Marrow
9. KEISEI SANSHIKI: The Sound of the Valley and the Form of the Mountains

VOLUME TWO

10. SHOAKU MAKUSA: Not Doing Wrong
11. U-JI: Existence-Time
12. KESA KUDOKU: The Merit of the Kasaya
13. DEN-E: The Transmission of the Robe
14. SAN SUI GYO: Mountains and Rivers as Sutras
15. BUSSO: The Buddhist Patriarchs

VOLUME THREE

16. SHISHO: The Certificate of Transmission
17. HOKKE TEN HOKKE: The Lotus Universe Turns the Lotus Universe
18. SHIN FU-KATOKU: Mind Cannot Be Grasped (I)
19. SHIN FU-KATOKU: Mind Cannot Be Grasped (II)
20. KOKYO: The Eternal Mirror
21. KANKIN: Reading Sutras

VOLUME FOUR

22. BUSSHO: Buddhanature
23. GYOBUTSU IGI: The Dignified Behavior of an Acting Buddha
24. BUKKYO: Buddhist Teaching
25. JINZU: Mystical Powers
26. DAIGO: Great Realization

VOLUME FIVE

27. ZAZEN SHIN: A Maxim of Zazen
28. BUTSU KOJO NO JI: The Fact of Ascending Buddha
29. INMO: The Ineffable
30. GYOJI: Moral Action and Observance (I)
30. GYOJI: Moral Action and Observance (II)

VOLUME SIX

31. KAI-IN ZANMAI: Sagara Mudra Samadhi, State Like the Sea
32. JUKI: Affirmation

33. KAN-NON: Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara
34. ARAKAN: Arhat
35. HAKUJUSHI: Cedar Trees
36. KOMYO: Brightness
37. SHINJIN GAKUDO: Pursuing the State of Truth through Body and Mind
38. MUCHU SETSUMU: Preaching a Dream in a Dream
39. DOTOKU: Expressing the State of Truth
40. GABYO: Painted Rice Cakes
41. ZENKI: All Functions

VOLUME SEVEN

42. TSUKI: The Moon
43. KUGE: Flowers in the Sky
44. KOBUSSHIN: The Mind of Eternal Buddhas
45. BODAISATTA SHI-SHO-BO: The Four Ways of the Bodhisattva in Human Relations
46. KATTO: The Complicated
47. SANGAI YUISHIN: The Triple-World is Just Mind
48. SESSHIN SESSHO: Preaching Mind, Preaching the Nature of Things
49. BUTSUDO: Buddhism
50. SHOHO JISSO: All Things and Phenomena are Real Form

VOLUME EIGHT

51. MITSU GO: Mystical Whispers
52. BUKKYO: Buddhist Sutras
53. MUJO SEPPO: The State without Emotion preaches Dharma
54. HOSSHO: Dharmanature
55. DHARANI: Darani
56. SENMEN: Washing the Face
57. MENJU: The Face-to-Face Transmission
58. ZAZEN GI: The Standard Method of Zazen
59. BAIKE: Plum Blossoms

VOLUME NINE

60. JUPPO: The Ten Directions
61. KENBUTSU: Meeting Buddha
62. HENSAN: Completing Buddhist Study
63. GANZEI: Eyeballs
64. KAJO: Daily Life
65. RYUGIN: Whispers of Dragons
66. SHUNJU: Spring and Autumn
67. SOSHI SAIRAI NO I: The First Patriarch's Intention in Coming from the West
68. UDONGE: The Udumbara Flower
69. HOTSU MUJOSHIN: The Establishment of the Supreme Mind
70. HOTSU BODAI SHIN: The Establishment of the Bodhi Mind
71. NYORAI ZENSHIN: The Tathagata's Whole Body.
72. ZANMAI O ZANMAI: The Samadhi which is King of Samadhis

VOLUME TEN

73. SANJU-SHICHI-BON BODAI BUNBO: The Thirty-Seven Classes of Ways to Practice the Truth
74. TENBORIN: Turning the Dharma Wheel
75. JISHO ZANMAI: Samadhi, State of Experiencing Self
76. DAI SHUGYO: The Great Practice
77. KOKU: Space
78. HATSU-U: The Patra
79. ANGO: The Retreat
80. TASHINTSU: Knowing Others' Minds
81. O SAKU SENDABA: The King's Request of Saindhava

VOLUME ELEVEN

82. JI KU-IN MON: Rules for the Kitchen
83. SHUKKE: Transcending Family Life
84. SANJI NO GO: Karmic Action in the Three Times
85. SHIME: The Four Horses
86. SHUKKE KUDOKU: The Merit of Transcending Family Life
87. KUYO SHOBUTSU: Serving Offerings to Buddhas

88. KI-E SANBO: Devotion to the Three Treasures

VOLUME TWELVE

89. SHINJIN INGA: Deep Belief in Cause and Effect

90. SHIZEN BIKU: The Bhiksu [who Mistook] the Fourth Dhyana

91. YUI-BUTSU YO-BUTSU: Only Buddhas-and-Buddhas

92. SHOJI: Life and Death

93. DOSHIN: Bodhi-Mind

94. JUKAI: Receiving the Precepts

95. HACHI DAI NINGAKU: Eight Great Human Truths

APPENDIX

My works contain the following additional chapters:

BUTSUKOJO NO JI: The Fact of a Buddha's Progress (from the Restricted Version of the Shobogenzo)

IPPYAKU HACHI HO MYO MON: The One Hundred and Eight Gates that Clarify Dharma (from the 12-chapter edition)

Grouping the Chapters

As I have already indicated, I believe that Master Dogen constructed his philosophical system based on Three Philosophies and One Reality. This means that we can put the chapters of the Shobogenzo into four corresponding groups.

I have divided the chapters into these four groups according to the following four criteria:

1. Idealistic or subjective viewpoint
2. Materialistic or objective viewpoint
3. Realistic or actual viewpoint
4. Reality itself

The first group contains chapters which relate to mind, spirit, theory, thought, meaning, religious value. The second group contains chapters which relate to things, matter, nature, the external world, space. The third group contains chapters which relate to oneness of body and mind, oneness of mind and matter, the present moment, action. The last group contains chapters related to the ineffable, the complicated, reality, symbolic expression of reality.

The first group contains 23 chapters, the second 26 chapters, the third 27 chapters and the last 19 chapters.

Categorizing Chapters

I then further subdivided each group according to the following categories:

G (S). Subjective view—Mind, Buddhism, Theory, Intuition, Buddha

- G (O). Objective view—The Universe, Revelation of the Universe, Nature, Revelation of Nature, Cause and Effect, Tradition
- G (A). Actual view—Establishment of Belief, Precepts, Day-to-day Life, Action, Buddhist Practice, Time
- G (R). Reality itself—Aims, the Buddhist State, What Exists, Zazen, the State in Zazen

Arranging the chapters into these four categories gives me the following list:

G (S)

Mind

- (S) HOTSU MUJO SHIN: The Establishment of the Supreme Mind (69)
 HOTSU BODAI SHIN: The Establishment of the Bodhi Mind (70)
 DOSHIN: Bodhi Mind (93)
- (O) SESSHIN SESSHO: Preaching Mind, Preaching the Nature of Things (48)
- (A) KOBUSSHIN: The Mind of Eternal Buddhas (44)
- (R) SHIN FU-KATOKU: Mind Cannot Be Grasped (18)
 SHIN FU-KATOKU: Mind Cannot Be Grasped (19)

Buddhism

- (S) BUKKYO: Buddhist Teaching (24)
- (O) KANKIN: Reading Sutras (21)
- (A) TENBORIN: Turning the Dharma Wheel (74)
- (R) KI-E SANBO: Devotion to the Three Treasures (88)

Theory

- (S) GABYO: Painted Rice Cakes (40)
- (O) KUGE: Flowers in the Sky (43)
- (A) MUCHU SETSUMU: Preaching a Dream in a Dream (38)
- (R) DOTOKU: Expressing the State of Truth (39)

Buddha

- (S) YUIBUTSU YOBUTSU: Only Buddhas-and-Buddhas (91)
- (O) SOKUSHIN ZE BUTSU: Mind Here and Now is Buddha (6)
- (A) BUSSHO: Buddhanature (22)
- (R) BUSSO: The Buddhist Patriarchs (15)

G (O)**The Universe**

- (S) GENJO KOAN: The Realized Law of the Universe (3)
- (O) JUPPO: The Ten Directions (60)
- (A) NYORAI ZENSHIN: The Tathagata's Whole Body (71)
- (R) IKKA NO MYOJU: One Bright Pearl (4)

Revelation of the Universe

- (S) BUKKYO: Buddhist Sutras (52)
- (O) MUJO SEPPU: The State without Emotion Preaches Dharma (53)
- (A) SHOHO JISSO: All Things and Phenomena are Real Form (50)
- (R) HOKKE TEN HOKKE: The Lotus Universe Turns the Lotus Universe (17)

Nature

- (S) KEISEI SANSHIKI: The Sounds of the Valley and the Form of the Mountains (9)
- (O) SAN SUI GYO: Mountains and Rivers as Sutras (14)
- (A) TSUKI: The Moon (42)
- (R) BAIKE: Plum Blossoms (59)

Revelation of Nature

- (S) SANGAI YUISHIN: The Triple-World is Just Mind (47)
- (O) KOKU: Space (77)
- (A) GANZEI: Eyeballs (63)
- (R) RYUGIN: Whispers of Dragons (65)

Cause and Effect

- (S) SHINJIN INGA: Deep Belief in Cause and Effect (89)
- (O) SHIZEN BIKU: The Bhiksu [who Mistook] the Fourth Dhyana (90)
- (A) SANJI NO GO: Karmic Action in the Three Times (84)
- (R) DAI SHUGYO: The Great Practice (76)

Tradition

- (S) SHIME: The Four Horses (85)
- (O) HAKUJUSHI: Cedar Trees (35)
- (A) KESA KUDOKU: The Merit of the Kasaya (12)

DEN-E: The Transmission of the Robe (13)

HATSU-U: Patra (78)

(R) SHISHO: The Certificate of Transmission (16)

G (A)

Establishment of Belief

(S) SHUKKE: Transcending Family Life (83)

SHUKKE KUDOKU: The Merit of Transcending Family Life (86)

JUKAI: Receiving the Precepts (94)

(O) JU-UN-DO SHIKI: Rules for the Cloud Hall (5)

(A) KAJO: Daily Life (64)

(R) RAIHAI TOKUZUI: Prostration to [Whatever] Has Got the Marrow (8)

Precepts

(S) SANJU-SHICHI-BON BODAI BUNBO: The Thirty-Seven Methods to the Truth (73)

(O) JI KU-IN MON: Rules for the Kitchen (82)

(A) BODAISATTA SHI-SHO-BO: The Four Ways of the Bodhisattva (45)

(R) HACHI DAI NINGAKU: Eight Great Human Truth (95)

Day-to-Day Life

(S) KUYO SHOBUTSU: Serving Offerings to Buddha (87)

(O) SENJO: Washing (7)

SENMEN: Washing the Face (56)

(A) JINZU: Mystical Abilities (25)

(R) DARANI: Dharani (55)

Action

(S) SHOAKU MAKUSA: Not Doing Wrong (10)

(O) GYOBUTSU IGI: The Dignified Behavior of an Acting Buddha (23)

(A) SHIJIN GAKUDO: Pursuing the State of Truth through Body and Mind (37)

(R) GYOJI (I,II): Moral Action and Observance (30)

Buddhist Practice

(S) HENSAN: Completing Buddhist Study (62)

- (O) SOSHI SAIRAI NO I: The First Patriarch's Intention in Coming from the West (67)
- (A) MENJU: The Face-to-Face Transmission (57)
- (R) KENBUTSU: Meeting Buddha (61)

Time

- (S) SHUNJU: Spring and Autumn (66)
- (O) ANGO: The Retreat (79)
- (A) UJI: Existence-Time (11)
- (R) SHOJI: Life-and-Death (92)

G (R)

Aim

- (S) DAIGO: Great Realization (26)
- (O) JUKI: Affirmation (32)
- (A) BUTSUDO: Buddhism (49)
- (R) BUTSU KOJO NO JI: The Fact of a Buddha's Progress (28)

The Buddhist State

- (S) MITSU GO: Mystical Whispers (51)
- (O) UDONGE: The Udumbara Flower (68)
- (A) KATTO: Arrowroot and Wisteria (46)
- (R) KOMYO: Brightness (36)

What Exists

- (S) ARAKAN: Arhat (34)
- (O) IPPIAKU HACHI HOMYO MON: One Hundred-and-Eight Gates that Clarify Dharma (Appendix)
- (A) ZENKI: All Functions (41)
- (R) O SAKU SENDABA: The King's Request of Saindhava (81)

Zazen

- (S) BENDOWA: A Talk about Pursuing the Truth (1)
- (O) ZAZEN GI: The Standard Method of Zazen (58)
- (A) ZAZEN SHIN: A Maxim of Zazen (27)
- (R) ZANMAI O ZANMAI: The Samadhi which is King of Samadhis (72)

The State in Zazen

- (S) JISHO ZANMAI: Samadhi, State of Experiencing Self (75)
- (O) HOSSHO: Dharmanature (54)
- (A) KAI-IN ZANMAI: Sagara Mudra Samadhi, State Like the Sea (31)
- (R) INMO: The Ineffable (29)

I am not claiming that this is the only way of categorizing the chapters in the Shobogenzo, but it does give us a way of positioning each chapter in the total structure of the work.

Construction of Individual Chapters

Within chapters we can find a similar structure at paragraph level. I would like to illustrate this in concrete terms by looking at the chapter Genjo Koan from which I quoted earlier. This chapter serves as a good overall introduction to the Shobogenzo, and I quote it here in full.

(3) Genjo Koan

The Realized Law of the Universe

Genjo means "realized." And koan is an abbreviation of ko-fu no an-toku, which was a notice board on which a new law was announced to the public in ancient China. So koan expresses a law, or a universal principle. In the Shobogenzo, genjo koan means the realized law of the Universe, that is Dharma, or the real Universe itself. In this chapter, Master Dogen preaches to us the realized Dharma, or the real Universe itself. Buddhism is intrinsically a belief in the real Universe. So this chapter relates the fundamental basis of Buddhism. And this is why, when the seventy-five chapter edition of the Shobogenzo was compiled, this chapter was placed first. From this fact, we can recognize the importance of this chapter.

- [83] **When all things and phenomena**⁵ exist as Buddhist teachings,⁶ then there are delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people. When millions of things and phenomena⁷ are all separate from ourselves, there are no delusion and no enlightenment, no buddhas and no ordinary people, no life and no death. Buddhism is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so [in reality] there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are people and buddhas. Though all this may be true, flowers fall even if we love them, and weeds grow even if we hate them, and that is all.
- [84] Driving ourselves to practice and experience millions of things and phenomena is delusion. When millions of things and phenomena actively practice and experience ourselves, that is realization. Those who totally realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are totally deluded about realization are ordinary people. There are people who attain further realization on the basis of realization. There are people who increase their delusion in the midst of delusion. When buddhas are really buddhas, they do not need to recognize themselves as buddhas. Nevertheless, they experience the state of buddha, and they go on experiencing the state of buddha.
- [85] Even if we use our whole body and mind to look at forms, and even if we use our whole body and mind to listen to sounds, perceiving them directly, [our human perception] can never be like the reflection

of an image in a mirror, or like the water and the moon. When we affirm one side, we are blind to the other side.

[86] To learn Buddhism is to learn ourselves. To learn ourselves is to forget ourselves. To forget ourselves is to be experienced by millions of things and phenomena. To be experienced by millions of things and phenomena is to let our own body and mind, and the body and mind of the external world, fall away. [Then] we can forget the [mental] trace of realization, and show the [real] signs of forgotten realization continually, moment by moment.⁸

[87] When a person first seeks the Dharma, he is far removed from the borders of Dharma. But as soon as the Dharma is authentically transmitted to the person himself, he is a human being in his own true place. When a man is sailing along in a boat and he moves his eyes to the shore, he misapprehends that the shore is moving. But if he keeps his eyes on the boat, he can recognize that it is the boat that is moving forward. [Similarly,] when we observe millions of things and phenomena with a disturbed body and mind, we mistakenly think that our own mind or our own spirit may be permanent. But if we familiarize ourselves with our actual conduct and come back to this concrete place, it becomes clear that the millions of things and phenomena are different from ourselves. Firewood becomes ash; it can never go back to being firewood. Nevertheless, we should not take the view that ash is its future and firewood is its past. We should recognize that firewood occupies its place in the Universe as firewood, and it has its past moment and its future moment. And although we can say that it has its past and its future, the past moment and the future moment are cut off. Ash exists in its place in the Universe as ash, and it has its past moment and its future moment. Just as firewood can never again be firewood after becoming ash, human beings cannot live again after their death. So it is a rule in Buddhism not to say that life turns into death. This is why we speak of "no appearance."⁹ And it is Buddhist teaching as established in the preaching of Gautama Buddha that death does not turn into life. This is why we speak of "no disappearance."⁵ Life is an instantaneous situation, and death is also an instantaneous situation. It is the same, for example, with winter and spring. We do not think that winter becomes spring, and we do not say that spring becomes summer.

[89] A person getting realization is like the moon reflected¹⁰ in water: the moon does not get wet, and the water is not broken. Though the light [of the moon] is wide and great, it can be reflected in a foot or an inch of water. The whole moon and the whole sky can be reflected in a dew-drop on a blade of grass or in a single drop of rain. Realization does not reshape¹¹ a man, just as the moon does not pierce the water. A man does not hinder realization,¹² just as a dew-drop does not hinder the sky and moon. The depth [of realization] may be the same as the concrete height [of the moon]. [To understand] its duration, we should examine large and small bodies of water, and notice the different widths of the sky and moon [when reflected in water].¹³

[90] When the Dharma has not completely filled our body and mind, we feel that the Dharma is abundantly present in us. When the Dharma fills our body and mind, we feel as if something¹⁴ is missing. For example, sailing out into the ocean, beyond sight of the mountains, when we look around in the four directions, [the ocean] appears only to be round; it does not appear to have any other form at all. Nevertheless, the great ocean is not round and it is not square, and there are so many other characteristics of the ocean that they could never be counted. [To fishes] it is like a palace and [to gods in heaven] it is like a necklace of pearls.¹⁵ But as far as our human eyes can see, it only appears to be round. The same applies to everything in the world.¹⁶ The secular world and the Buddhist world¹⁷ include a great many situations, but we can view them and understand them only as far as our eyes of Buddhist study allow. So if we want to know the way things naturally are,¹⁸ we should remember that the oceans and mountains have innumerable many characteristics besides the appearance of squareness or roundness, and we should remember that there are [other] worlds in [all] four directions. This applies not only to the periphery; we should remember that the same applies to this place here and now, and to a single drop of water.

[91] When fish swim in water, though they keep swimming, there is no end to the water. When birds fly in the sky, though they keep flying, there is no end to the sky. At the same time, fish and birds have

never left the water or the sky. The more [water or sky] they use, the more useful it is; the less [water or sky] they need, the less useful it is. Acting like this, each one realizes its limitations at every moment and each one somersaults [in complete freedom] at every place;¹⁹ but if a bird leaves the sky it will die at once, and if a fish leaves the water it will die at once. So we can conclude that water is life and the sky is life; at the same time, birds are life, and fish are life; it may be that life is birds and life is fish. There may be other expressions that go even further. The existence of practice and experience, the existence of their age itself and life itself can also be [explained] like this. However, a bird or fish that tried to understand the water or the sky completely, before swimming or flying, could never find²⁰ its way or find its place in the water or the sky. But when we find this place here and now, it naturally follows that our actual behavior realizes the Universe. And when we find a concrete way here and now, it naturally follows that our actual behavior realizes the Universe. This way and this place exist as reality because they are not great or small, because they are not related to ourselves or to the external world, and because they do not exist already and they do appear in the present. Similarly, if someone is practicing and experiencing Buddhism, when he receives one teaching, he just realizes that one teaching, and when he meets one [opportunity to] act, he just performs that one action. This is the state in which the place exists and the way is realized, and this is why we cannot clearly recognize where [the place and the way] are—because such recognition and the perfect realization of Buddhism appear together and are experienced together. Do not think that what you have attained will inevitably enter your own consciousness and be recognized by your intellect. The experience of the ultimate state is realized at once, but a mystical something does not always manifest itself. Realization is not always definite.²¹

[94] Master Ho-tetsu²² of Mt. Mayoku was using a fan. At that time, a monk came in and asked him, "[It is said that] the nature of air is to be ever-present, and there is no place that air cannot reach. Why then does the Master use a fan?"

The Master said, "*You only know [the abstract idea] that the nature of air is to be ever-present, but you have not understood the fact²³ that there is no place the air cannot reach.*"

The monk said, "*What is the meaning of the principle²³ 'There is no place the air cannot reach'?*"

At this, the Master just [carried on] using the fan. The monk prostrated himself.²⁴ The real experience of Buddhism, the vivid behavior²⁵ of the Buddhist tradition,²⁶ is like this. Someone who says that because [the air] is ever-present we need not use a fan, or that even when we do not use [a fan] we can still feel the air, does not know ever-presence, and does not know the nature of air. Because the nature of air is to be ever-present, the behavior of Buddhists makes the Earth manifest itself as gold, and ripens the Milky Way into delicious cheese.²⁷

Shobogenzo Genjo Koan

This chapter was written around August 15th²⁸ [in the lunar calendar] in the first year of the Tenpuku era [1233], and was presented to the lay disciple Yo Koshu of the Kyushu district.

It was edited in the fourth year of the Kencho era [1252].

* * *

The chapter is divided into nine paragraphs, and the eighth paragraph is more consistent if divided into two sub-paragraphs. This gives ten paragraphs to the chapter, and these ten paragraphs can be divided into four groups as before.

I will refer to each paragraph using the number in square brackets which refers to the corresponding page in my work "The Shobogenzo in Modern Japanese." Paragraph [83] is the first paragraph in which Master

Dogen lays out the fundamental principles which govern the whole structure of the Shobogenzo. This first paragraph lays out the theoretical framework and as such belongs to the subjective viewpoint.

Paragraphs [84], [85], [86] and [87] are descriptions of concrete situations relevant to someone who is pursuing the Buddhist truth. These descriptions thus belong to the second group; the objective viewpoint.

But within this second objective grouping, we can further subdivide. Paragraph [84] relates to personal intention or volition, and is therefore subjective in nature within the larger objective group.

Paragraph [85] relates to sense perception and the external world, and is thus in the second phase or objective sub-group.

Paragraph [86] relates to concrete personal practice and belongs to the third phase.

Paragraph [87] relates to concrete reality because it explains the mutual relationship between subject and object, and the basic Buddhist idea of instantaneous time in the present.

So within the second group containing paragraphs [84], [85], [86], and [87] we find the (S), (O), (A), (R) structure, although the four paragraphs belong to Group (O).

Paragraphs [89], [90], the first part of [91], and the second part of [91], are descriptions of actual Buddhist efforts, Buddhist facts or Buddhist behavior.

Paragraph [89] is an explanation of getting enlightenment, and enlightenment is the mental side of realizing the truth. So this paragraph belongs to the first phase of Buddhist practice: paragraph [89] is an (S) paragraph in Group (A).

Paragraph [90] describes the concrete situation of a person who has got enlightenment So it belongs to the objective phase, and paragraph [90] is an (O) paragraph in Group (A).

I think that it is consistent to divide paragraph [91] into two paragraphs, because from the beginning of the paragraph to the sentence on the ninth and tenth lines: "it may be that life is birds and life is fish," Master Dogen represents the idea of oneness between a doer and the action. But from the sentence "there may be other expression that go even further" to the end of the paragraph relates to concrete matter, that is practice, experience, age. So it seems natural for the paragraph to be divided into two.

Paragraph ([94] is the last paragraph in the chapter, and it belongs to Group (R). Master Dogen quotes a Chinese Buddhist story about Master Mayoku Ho-tetsu and his disciple. Fundamentally, the Buddhist truth, that is reality, cannot be described with words. When Master Dogen wants to talk about reality, he sometimes quotes a Buddhist story or Koan. This paragraph is one such example where he uses the Chinese story to symbolize reality.

Now we can summarize the overall structure of the chapter:

1. [83] — Expression of principle. Para (S) including (S), (O), (A), and (R).
2. [84] — Theoretical side of objective Buddhist facts. Para (S) in Group (O).
3. [85] — Perceptive side of objective Buddhist facts. Para (O) in Group (O).
4. [86] — Actual concrete Buddhist facts. Para (A) in Group (O).
5. [87] — Realization of Dharma in concrete Buddhist facts. Para (R) in Group (O).
6. [89] — Subjective description of actual Buddhist efforts. Para (S) in Group (A).
7. [90] — Objective description of actual Buddhist efforts. Para (O) in Group (A).

- 8. [91]i — Description of action with simile. Para (A) in Group (A).
- 9. [91]ii — Description of action in the ultimate. Para (R) in Group (A).
- 10.[94] — Symbolic expression of Dharma or reality using Koan. Para (R) in Group (R).

The SOAR Structure

I have outlined how the Shobogenzo follows the unique SOAR structure, based on the principle of Three Philosophies and One Reality. The SOAR structure leads us from (S)ubjective to (O)bjective, and on to (A)ction and (R)eality.

SOAR Structure at the Paragraph Level

Within each paragraph in Genjo Koan we can still trace the SOAR structure. I have analyzed the structure of the first paragraph earlier in this paper.

The first sentence of the second paragraph describes delusion arising from subjective intention. It says “Driving ourselves to practice and experience millions of things and phenomena is delusion.” This is a subjective expression of the difference between realization and delusion and so this sentence belongs to the subjective phase.

Then the next sentence says “When millions of things and phenomena actively practice and experience ourselves, that is realization.” This sentence describes objective circumstances which influence a person who acts, and so belongs to the objective phase.

From the third sentence the paragraph says “Those who totally realize delusion are Buddhas. Those who are totally deluded about realization are ordinary people. There are people who attain further realization on the basis of realization. There are people who increase their delusion in the midst of delusion.” These sentences describe the actual situations of people who attain realization and who are deluded by realization. So these sentences belong to the action phase.

The next sentences say “When buddhas are really buddhas, they do not need to recognize themselves as buddhas. Nevertheless, they experience the state of buddha, and they go on experiencing the state of buddha.” These two sentences express the state of realized buddha, and so belong to the ultimate phase.

Thus in the second paragraph [84], the first sentence belongs to (S), the second sentence to (O), the next four sentences to (A), and the last two sentences to (R).

Another example appears in the next paragraph [85]. This paragraph relates to direct perception, and so the whole paragraph belongs to (O). But at the same time the first sentence, “to use our mind to look at forms and to use our mind to listen to sounds” relates to the subject, and so this part of the sentence belongs to (S).

Further, “to use our body to look at forms and to use our body to listen to sounds” is related with perception of the external world or objects through the senses, and so this part of the sentence belongs to (O).

The last part of the sentence, “[our human perception] can never be like the reflection of an image in a mirror, or like the water and the moon” describes the actual situation of human sense perception and so belongs to (A).

And the next sentence is “When we affirm one side, we are blind to the other side.” This sentence expresses the reality of our ability to perceive with the senses and so belongs to (R).

In a similar way, we can trace the SOAR structure at paragraph level through almost all the paragraphs in the Shobogenzo.

SOAR Structure at the Sentence Level

At the beginning of Genjo Koan we can find the following sentence: “When all things and phenomena exist as Buddhist teachings, then there are delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, buddhas and ordinary people.” The sentence comprises four pairs of words: delusion and realization, practice and experience, life and death, and buddhas and ordinary people. The first pair of words, delusion and realization, are distinctions of state of mind and are (S) type. The second pair, practice and experience, are concrete and factual and are thus (O) type. Life and death are directly related to existence and so are (A) type, and buddhas and ordinary people are distinctions we make in real life and are (R) type. So even within a single sentence we can find the SOAR structure in operation. This is a clear indication that Master Dogen used this four-phased structure all through his philosophical writings.

SOAR Structure at the Compound-Word Level

Because all Master Dogen’s thoughts were four-phased, we can find the SOAR structure even at the compound-word level. For example, there are four particular compounds which are used frequently throughout the Shobogenzo. They are *chonei*, *ganzei*, *kento* and *biku*. The compound *chonei* means a head. It is often used as a symbol for intellectual thought. *Ganzei* means eyeballs and is often used to indicate the objective or material viewpoint. *Kento* means a fist and is often used as a symbol for action. And *biku* means nostrils, used as a symbol for life itself, from the ancient Indian symbolism of the air we breathe in being the basis of life.

So these four compounds carry the SOAR structure. *Chonei* or intellect is (S), *ganzei* or sense perception is (O), *kento* or action is (A) and *biku* or life itself is (R). Without understanding the symbolism carried by these four important compounds in the Shobogenzo, it is extremely difficult to fathom the real meaning.

Another example is shown by the four compounds *hoshin*, *shugyo*, *bodai*, and *nehan*. *Hoshin* is an abbreviation of *hotsu bodaishin*, establishment of the will to the truth. *Shugyo* means concrete efforts in pursuing Buddhism. *Bodai* means arrive at the truth, and *nehan* is the serene and peaceful state itself.

Hoshin is will and thus (S), *shugyo* is concrete effort and thus (O), *bodai* is action (A) and *nehan* is truth (R). Only by recognizing the SOAR structure can we meaningfully interpret these groups of compounds in the Shobogenzo.

SOAR Structure at the Character-Word Level

If we postulate that the SOAR structure runs through the whole of Master Dogen’s thoughts and writings, then we should be able to trace it even at the character-word level. And we can in fact!

The central Buddhist concept of *dharma* is translated into Japanese as *ho*. As I began to grasp the overall organization of thought in the Shobogenzo, I began to recognize *ho* used in several different ways according to context. These several ways were easily classifiable into four groups.

The first meaning of *ho* is as Gautama Buddha’s teachings. Gautama Buddha taught us the ultimate philosophical truth which we call *dharma*. So here *ho* can be translated as teaching, philosophy, theory, principle. The first sentence of Genjo Koan contains the compound *buppo*, a combination of *butsu* and *ho*. Here *butsu* means buddha and in this context *ho* means teachings, so *buppo* means Buddhist teachings which is group (S).

But in the same sentence we can find the compound *shoho*, a combination of *sho* and *ho*, which translates to all things and phenomena. Here *sho* means multiple and *ho* means external world, material substance, environment. So *ho* also has this concrete interpretation (O).

In paragraph [91] in Genjo Koan we can find this sentence: “But when we find this place here and now, it naturally follows that our actual behavior realizes the Universe.” The Japanese translated as “here and now” is *ippo*, a combination of *ichi*, one and *ho*, dharma. In this context, *ho* suggests our conduct at the moment of the present (A).

And in the last paragraph [94] the words “The real experience of Buddhism” is *buppo* in Japanese. In this context the *ho* of *buppo* suggests *dharma* or the ultimate ineffable reality (R).

So even at character-word level, the SOAR grouping can be seen to be an integral part of the structure of the Shobogenzo.

The SOAR Structure and its Relevance in the History of World Thought

To conclude, I will position the SOAR structure firmly in the stream of world thought.

One of the most important differences between human beings and apes is found in the difference in their brain weights. This fact allows us to believe that humans are much more intelligent than apes. Indeed no-one can seriously deny that the intellect is the one central characteristic that sets humans apart from the other species.

Greco-Roman civilization represents perhaps one of the highlights in the development of our world, and it is here that we can first see the division of thought into two distinct streams. We can see why this happened in the very nature of thought itself: we look inwards and become subjective, or outwards and become objective. We have no other choice at the intellectual level.

Plato was clearly an inward-looker: an idealist, who based his philosophy around the truth of ideas. But this same civilization produced Demokritos, who insisted that the world is an accumulation of molecules. He was a materialist. These two philosophical standpoints are always in conflict; the beliefs of one contradict those of the other. Idealists believe in human freedom; materialists are deterministic. The two concepts are mutually exclusive.

In the closing days of the Roman Empire, platonic philosophy, basically idealistic, met the growing religion of Christianity. Platonic philosophy, the power of ideas and the supremacy of the spirit gave Christianity a strong philosophical base from which to explain its beliefs, and it was this that enabled Christianity to spread and gain in power as it moved into mediaeval Europe.

The mediaeval ages in Europe were ruled by Christian beliefs; mind, spirit and faith were revered whereas the physical body, matter and the secular world were cast aside. From this standpoint, mediaeval Europe was at the age of idealism (S).

During the Renaissance, people rediscovered their physicality and sense perceptions. Belief slowly centered on what could be perceived with the senses, and doubt arose in those areas which could not. This marked the beginning of the age of science. Sometime in the period from 1500 to 1700, that is, at the beginning of the scientific revolution, an irreversible move towards science and away from religion took place. Subsequently, as science became stronger, so the strength of idealistic religion decreased until reaching a culmination sometime in the middle of the 19th century. Marx’s materialistic philosophy marked, perhaps, the high point of materialist thought, leading Nietzsche to proclaim that our gods had died. The period from the Renaissance to the end of the 19th century, then, mark a strongly materialistic phase (O) in the development of our civilization.

When it became apparent that the scientific view of the world left no room for gods, religion, spirit, this in itself gave rise to a feeling of unease, of anxiety. And this anxiety was the driving force in the search

for a new philosophy to transcend materialism. Existentialism, pragmatism, phenomenology are all philosophies of life which aim to recover the value of human conduct, ethics and the notion of being. In this sense they are concerned with our actions (A) in this world.

From this rather bold and sweeping sketch of the flow of western civilization, we can see the origins of idealism (S) in ancient Greece, the rediscovery of matter and the external world (O) in the Renaissance, the culmination of the materialistic view in the mid 19th century, and the move to search for some philosophy which transcends the two (A) in modern times. But if we limit ourselves in our search to the area of the intellect, that is, the area where we analyze and understand the world only rationally, the area where the mind rains supreme, it is impossible to find a new philosophy which allows us to regain human value in the midst of our materialistic societies.

To guide our civilization into a new age, an age where our real conduct has value, as well as our thoughts about our conduct, then we have to realize the meaning and limitations of human intelligence. This is because our actual conduct on this earth is not an intellectual activity. In the area of intellectual activity, we can find two fundamental approaches or philosophies; the philosophy of the subject, and the philosophy of the object. But our conduct, our actions, do not belong to the same area as philosophy. This is a very simple but very important fact to realize. The body of knowledge which describes this fact is also just a philosophy—I have called it the Philosophy of Action.

Using the SOAR structure which I have outlined here, we can put idealistic philosophy and materialistic philosophy into their rightful places. And we can move on to see that the philosophy of action, although a body of knowledge, is not limited to discussion in the intellectual area—it is pointing to a way to enter the area of action itself. That way is the ageless practice of Zazen. In the state in Zazen we are sitting in reality and can realize that fact clearly. And the experience of being in reality rather than living in the world of the intellect needs its own new philosophy. So the SOAR structure becomes a bridge between traditional philosophy and reality—a bridge from the materialist world of modern society to a new age of human civilization based on conduct or action itself. This is the value in the Shobogenzo and this is Master Dogen's message.

I sincerely hope that the many scholars of religion throughout the world will be drawn to the message that the Shobogenzo carries. I hope that the SOAR structure I have outlined here will help Master Dogen's works to find their rightful place in the history of world thought.

* * *

Notes

¹. This and all subsequent quotations from the Shobogenzo in this paper are from the translation by G.W. Nishijima and Mike Cross.

². *Fu* is a negating word, *raku* means to fall, *in* means cause and *ka* means effect. So the literal translation is “[does] not fall [into] cause and effect.”

³. *Fu* is a negating word, *mai* means unclear or ignorant, and *inga* means cause and effect. So the literal translation is “[do] not [be] unclear [about] cause and effect.”

⁴. I have addressed this problem in detail in my article “A Buddhist Monk's View of the Theological Encounter III” submitted for publication in *The Journal of Buddhist-Christian Studies*.

⁵. “All things and phenomena” is originally *sho-ho* (all *dharmas*). The Sanskrit word *dharma* has many meanings, for example, law, teachings, substance, entity, thing, practice, etc.

- ⁶. "Buddhist teachings" is originally *buppo* (Buddhist *dharma*).
- ⁷. "Millions of things and phenomena" is originally *banpo* (tens of thousands of *dharmas*).
- ⁸. "Trace" and "signs" are originally the same word—*seki*. "Continually, moment by moment" is originally *cho-cho* (long-long).
- ⁹. "No appearance" is *fu-sho*. *Fu* expresses negation. *Sho* means "to appear" or "appearance," and also "to live" or "life." According to the Buddhist theory of instantaneousness, the Universe appears and disappears at every moment. That is, the Universe exists momentarily. And because it exists momentarily, it is not possible to say that it appears or disappears from one moment to the next. So "no appearance" expresses the instantaneousness of the Universe, and "no disappearance" also expresses the instantaneousness of the Universe.
- ¹⁰. Throughout this paragraph, "to be reflected in" is originally *yadoru*, to dwell.
- ¹¹. Lit. "does not break." In other words, realization does not change the man himself.
- ¹². In other words, a man does not change the state of realization.
- ¹³. Lit. "As for the length and shortness of time, we should examine big water and small water, and we should discern the width and narrowness of the sky and moon."
- ¹⁴. Lit. "one side."
- ¹⁵. "Necklace of pearls" is originally *yo-raku*, from the Sanskrit *muktahara*. This sentence is a reference to an idea quoted in the commentary called *Sho Dai Jo Ron Shaku Ryaku Jo*. The idea is that different subjects see the same ocean in different ways. To fish it is a palace, to gods it is like a necklace of pearls, to humans it is water, and to demons it is blood or pus.
- ¹⁶. *Banpo*. See note 7.
- ¹⁷. Lit. "Inside dust" (the secular world) and "beyond the framework" (the transcendent Buddhist world).
- ¹⁸. *Banpo no kafu*. Lit. "the usual style of tens of thousands of things and phenomena." *Ka* means home, daily life or usual life. *Fu* means wind, atmosphere, or style.
- ¹⁹. The original sentence is in the style of a double negative: "There is no case of not realizing limitations at every head, and there is no case of not somersaulting at every place."
- ²⁰. Lit. "get" or "attain."
- ²¹. "Not always definite" is originally two characters, *ka* and *hitsu*. These characters were used in Chinese to express the questions "How is it necessary to...?" or "How can it be decided that...?"
- ²². A successor of Master Baso Do-itsu.
- ²³. "Fact" and "principle" are originally the same word *dori*.
- ²⁴. Shinji Shobogenzo pt.2, no.23. According to the story in Shinji Shobogenzo, after the monk's prostration, the Master says, "*Useless master of monks! If you got a thousand students, what gain would there be?*"
- ²⁵. "Behavior" is originally "air" (*fu*). *Fu* means "wind," "air" or "atmosphere," and therefore "style," "customs," "ways" or "behavior." It is used very frequently in Shobogenzo in the latter meaning, for example, para.[90] of this chapter in the phrase *banpo no ka-fu*, "the way things naturally are."
- ²⁶. Lit. "the authentically-transmitted vigorous road."
- ²⁷. Master Goso Ho-en said in his formal preaching, "*To change the Earth into gold, and to churn the Milky Way into cheese.*" Cheese is *so-raku*, which was a milk product like yoghurt or cheese. The metaphor is even more suitable in English than it is in its original form, because the galaxy that we call "the Milky Way" is called "the Long River" in Chinese.
- ²⁸. Lit. "around the middle of autumn." In the lunar calendar, autumn is July, August, and September. August 15th would always be a full moon. As the autumn sky is usually very clear, this was

said to be the best day to view the moon. Master Dogen liked looking at the moon, so August 15th was a favorite day for him.

Three Philosophies and One Reality

A collection of talks by
Master Gudo Wafu Nishijima

edited by Michael Luetchford

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Introduction

This small booklet is an edited collection of seven talks given on Buddhism by the Reverend Gudo Wafu Nishijima to the weekly seminar he has held in Tokyo for the last fifteen years. Reverend Nishijima bases his explanations of Buddhist theory on the *Shobogenzo*, the central work of the Buddhist priest and philosopher known as Master Dogen. Though a brilliant and original thinker adept with words and the complexities of Buddhist logic, Master Dogen never lost sight of the gulf that separates ideas and reality. He found the true foundation of Buddhist life not in theories but in the simple sitting practice called zazen. His thought is thus entirely practical and realistic, and his insight remains as fresh and pertinent today as it was seven hundred years ago.

It was from his lifelong study of the *Shobogenzo* that Reverend Nishijima found the basis of the theory which he calls *The Four Philosophies* or *The Four Views*. In these seven lectures, he explains each of the four stages in terms of modern philosophical thought. Reverend Nishijima believes that Buddhist theory, the theory which Master Dogen recorded in the *Shobogenzo*, is always logical and understandable. But without understanding the four-phased structure which Master Dogen uses, the poetic images, complex structure, and seemingly contradictory statements about reality contained in the *Shobogenzo* become virtually incomprehensible to the modern reader.

Words and their meanings present problems to the reader and translator alike; each language has its own unique characteristics which reflect the culture of that society. Sanskrit is an elegant, complex and highly inflected language. Japanese is a rather feeling-oriented language which lacks the rigid logical structure of English. The Chinese characters which were chosen by the early translators of Buddhist literature to express the Sanskrit words *catvary aryasatyani* are pronounced *Shi Sho Tai* in Japanese. *Shi* means four, *Sho* means sacred or noble, and *Tai* means truth or philosophy. Often, however, they are referred to as *Shi Tai Ron*, where *Ron* means theory. Thus the phrase *The Theory of Four Philosophies* is quite a close English translation from the Japanese. The word *satya* in Sanskrit has arrived in Japanese as *Tai*. Both *satya* and *tai* can be interpreted in several ways; although the prime meaning of both is undoubtedly *truth*, *philosophy* is also an accurate rendering from the Japanese.

The Reverend Nishijima has used a variety of translations for the words *Shi Tai Ron* over the years, in an attempt to find the most suitable and accurate phrase in English to transmit the system of thought which he has found in Master Dogen's work. Because the structure of the *Shobogenzo* is a theoretical structure, a philosophical system, Reverend Nishijima has chosen to use the words philosophy or view rather than truth. And of the *Four Philosophies* or *Four Views*, the fourth view points, not to an abstract philosophy, but to reality itself. Thus the title of this booklet - *Three Philosophies and One Reality*.

Through continuing discussion and open exchange of opinion between priests, laypersons and scholars we hope that a realistic solution can be found to the problem of which words, which phrase, best describe each facet of Buddhist thought. For we cannot avoid interpreting what we read according to our own beliefs and experiences. Words sometimes mean very different things to different people. And yet the reality which Buddhist theory is attempting to describe is only one; we can hope that everyone will reach the same understanding, a common understanding, of the reality in which we live. This was Master Dogen's hope. We too hope that these essays will stimulate this exchange, and as such, contribute to a true understanding of Master Dogen's Buddhist thought.

The Reverend Nishijima has come to believe that the *Four Philosophies*, or more correctly, *Three Philosophies and One Reality*, may be the true interpretation of the Four Noble Truths. In the first talk, he introduces this discovery, and some of the reasons why he feels that the original Sanskrit words *catvary aryasatyani* refer to the same *Four Philosophies* which Master Dogen uses in the *Shobogenzo*. He hopes that discussion on the best choice of words to explain Buddhist concepts will continue, and he welcomes the help and advice of all who are committed to studying and spreading Buddhism.

The Theory of Four Views

[This essay was originally written in preparation for a series of talks given by Rev.G.Nishijima in San Francisco in the Fall of 1986]

The Central Theory of Buddhism

Buddhist theory is a vast philosophical system. For this reason it is impossible to give a complete overview of the many theories in only a single lecture. However, I would like to start by explaining the most important of these theories, and one which is central to all Buddhist thought. This is the *Theory of Four Views*; my interpretation of the Sanskrit words *catvāry āryasatyāni*. This phrase is usually translated as the *Four Noble Truths*.

The Four Noble Truths

Buddhist Scriptures tell us that after Gautama Buddha attained the truth, he wanted to teach others what he had learned. But he also had some doubt as to whether people would be able to understand his theory, because of its complexity. Tradition says that a god from heaven gave him great encouragement to give his first sermon, and so he went ahead. His first sermon was preached to his five former companions with whom he studied asceticism. We are told that in this first sermon he preached the *Four Noble Truths*, or in my translation, the *Theory of Four Views*, and the *Middle Way*. This is why we think of these two teachings as the central theories of Buddhism. To understand these theories is to understand the core of the Buddhist philosophical system. Unfortunately, people studying Buddhism in the present age have not had the chance to do so, especially in western countries.

The Traditional Interpretation

Traditionally, *catvāry āryasatyāni*, or the *Four Noble Truths* are:

Duhkha-satya - The Truth of Suffering

Samudaya-satya -The Truth of Aggregates
(The Origin of Suffering)

Nirodha-satya - The Truth of Enclosure or Subjection
(The Destruction of Suffering)

Marga-satya - The Truth of the Right Way

When I was a teenager, I read about the *Four Noble Truths* in Buddhist books, but I could not understand what they were referring to at all. So these four truths, which were said to be the core of Buddhism itself, became a hindrance, or stumbling block in my efforts to study Buddhism. If we look in old scriptures, the Theravada Buddhist Scriptures for example, we can find traditional explanations of the meaning of these *Four Noble Truths*. They explain that the *Truth of Suffering* means that all things and events in this world are suffering; that the *Truth of Aggregates* means that all suffering derives from human desire; that the *Truth of Enclosure or Subjection* means that we must destroy our desire; and the *Truth of the Right Way* means that, having destroyed our desire, we can find the right way.

But I can find no real meaning in these explanations, no matter how hard I try. If all things and events in this world are suffering, then Buddhism can be at best a dogmatic and pessimistic religion. If all suffering results from human desire, then Buddhism can be no more than asceticism. If the idea of destroying all our desires was a Buddhist idea, then Buddhism must be a religion which advocates what is impossible; for it is utterly impossible for us to destroy our desires. Desire is the basis of our human existence itself.

The *Truth of the Right Way* is further explained as the *Eightfold Noble Path*; right view, right thinking, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right state of body, and right state of mind. But I cannot find any relationship between this fourth truth and the first three.

The *Shobogenzo* and The Four Views

When I was eighteen, I found a book called the *Shobogenzo*. It was written in the thirteenth century by the founder of the sect of Buddhism in Japan which is based on the practice of Zazen. His name is Master Dogen. I found the *Shobogenzo* almost impossible to read at that time, and I was amazed that there could be a book written in Japanese which I was unable to understand at all. But although I could not understand it, I had the feeling that the book might contain important and valuable things. This was the start of what was to become forty years of study. And when at last I could understand the meaning of the *Shobogenzo*, it also became clear to me why I had found it so difficult for so long. The book itself is composed of many contradictory statements, and this made it appear illogical. But after reading and re-reading many times, I found that the *Shobogenzo* is in fact constructed in a very special way; using a unique pattern of expression.

Master Dogen expresses his ideas in the *Shobogenzo* based on a pattern of four phases. First, he explains a problem from the idealistic point of view; that is, as an idea using abstract concepts. Then, immediately after this first phase, he explains the same problem, but this time from the objective, or material point of view. In other words, he gives concrete examples and facts. Then, in the next phase, he explains the problem yet a third time as a real problem; that is, realistically thinking. Of course, he cannot explain the reality surrounding the problem with words in a book, but he does so by bringing together the subjective viewpoint which he presents first, and the second objective viewpoint. He synthesizes the two viewpoints into a realistic appraisal of the problem; a synthesis of the self and the external world. And in the final phase, he tries to suggest the subtle ineffable nature of reality itself by using symbolic, poetic, or figurative forms of speech.

The *Shobogenzo* is full of these four-phased explanations. The chapters themselves fall into four groups: theoretical, objective, realistic, and symbolic, figurative or poetic. The contents of the chapters are also divided in the same way, and even the content of individual paragraphs follows the same pattern. In general, a theoretical or subjective explanation and a materialistic or objective explanation of the same problem will always be contradictory. Again, a realistic explanation will seemingly be in contradiction to both the subjective and objective points of view. And the real situation itself is different again from the realistic explanation given. So when we first read the *Shobogenzo*, we are astounded by what appear to be gross contradictions in logic. This is one of the reasons why the book is so difficult to understand. It appears full of opposing ideas.

However, after I had read and re-read Master Dogen's book, I got used to this unique way of thinking about things. He discusses all problems from three points of view, subjective and theoretical, objective and material, and realistic. He then insists on the difference between his three viewpoints and the real situation itself. Using this method, he is able to explain the reality of a situation very clearly and logically. He believes that the most important thing is to see what the reality itself is; and at the same time, he realizes how impossible this is using the medium of the written word.

So this unique pattern or logical system is Master Dogen's way of suggesting what reality is. And I believe that Master Dogen's method is in fact a very realistic way of explaining reality. I found that Master Dogen's ideas were very realistic, and I found too that Buddhism is a religion of reality.

Then I remembered the *Four Noble Truths* which had defeated me so completely. I could not but help seeing a link between the four-phased pattern in Master Dogen's works and the *Four Noble Truths*. Then I started to think that possibly the biggest contradiction which Gautama Buddha must have faced in his thinking would have been between the subjective, idealistic thought of traditional Indian religion and the objective, materialist philosophies of the six great philosophers who were popular in India at that time.

I thought that Gautama Buddha's solution to this contradiction was his discovery that we are in fact living in reality; not, as idealists tend to think, in the world of ideas, or as materialists tend to think, in a world of objective matter alone. Gautama Buddha established his own philosophy based on the fact that we live in the vivid world of momentary existence, in the real world itself. But to express this real world in words is impossible. So he used a method which brought together the two fundamental philosophical viewpoints into a synthesized whole. And the philosophical system he constructed in this way is the Buddhist philosophical system. But at the same time, he realized that philosophy is not reality; it is only discussion of the nature of reality. He needed some method with which people could see directly what the nature of reality is. This method is Zazen, a practice which was already traditional in India from ancient times. Gautama Buddha found that when we sit in this traditional posture in quietness, we can see directly what reality is. So he recommended his disciples to practice Zazen every day.

This is the way in which I found my new interpretation of the *Four Noble Truths*. I thought that *duhkha-satya*, or the *Truth of Suffering*, was the ancient Indian way of expressing idealistic philosophy. When we are full of ideals and anxious to realize those ideals, we invariably suffer from being unable to realize them.

I thought that *samudaya-satya* or the *Truth of Aggregates* might in fact refer to aggregates of *paramanu*, the Sanskrit word for the smallest particle of matter in existence - the modern atom. The *Truth of Aggregates* would thus refer to a primitive science of matter, to the philosophy of materialism as it existed at that time.

Then I interpreted *nirodha-satya*, the *Truth of Enclosure*, to mean a dialectic synthesis; a negation of idealism and materialism.

In the ultimate stage, philosophies can never be reality itself. Gautama Buddha found this fact. And so *marga-satya*, the *Truth of the Right Way* is his recommendation to practice Zazen.

So my new interpretation gave four truths: idealism, materialism, realism and reality itself. This fundamental four-fold structure is of great importance in understanding Buddhist theory. Gautama Buddha thought that idealism is human thought in its first stage, based on a subjective viewpoint. But as a reaction to this first stage, materialistic thought arises naturally. These two viewpoints are always in conflict; a fact which can be seen in every country in the civilized world. Gautama Buddha established the religion of Buddhism to transcend both idealistic and materialistic thought. Buddhism synthesizes the idealist's point of view with the materialist's point of view to give a realistic viewpoint. To achieve this synthesis and to realize Buddhism, he recommended us to practice Zazen.

I believe that this series of philosophical viewpoints; that is, idealism, materialism, realism and reality represents Buddhism's most important theory, a theory which can be used by people everywhere as a way to look at and regulate their life and their role in society.

A concrete example of an idealist is a person who is always suffering from the frustration of being unable to reach his ideals. A materialist suffers from being unable to find any meaning in his life beyond the pleasures of the senses. We can say that the idealist would do well to study the world around him through his senses, and the materialist would benefit from becoming a little idealistic. In this way, both of them can find a synthesis between the two states, and this is the Buddhist state. When people find the realistic attitude to living which Buddhism advocates, they can think, feel, act and live in a realistic way themselves. This will make their lives more satisfying than the life of an idealist or a materialist.

In the area of science, Buddhism believes in harmony between science and religion. Until the end of the Middle Ages, spiritual religions had a very powerful hold. But in modern times, belief in spiritual religions has become weaker and weaker, defeated by the discoveries of modern science. This is not a stable situation. Of course, scientific knowledge is vital to our lives. But it should not lead us to deny what has yet to be discovered by science. Most people do not appreciate this fact; they think that it is not consistent to believe in both science and religion.

Buddhism gives us a very good solution to this problem: in the Buddhist *Theory of Four Views*, spiritual religion is the first step in the progress of human thought, and science is the second step. In the area of intellectual thought, these two stages are fundamentally contradictory. But Buddhism says that these two stages are only different faces of one and the same reality. There is no fundamental reason why a scientist cannot believe in a religion too. The Buddhist viewpoint is that people should search for a new religion which is not contradictory to the beliefs of science. Considered realistically, it is possible to find a belief which synthesizes spiritual religion and scientific truth. This belief is a new religion. To establish this new religion, we practice Zazen.

In our everyday life, the *Four Views* can be of great help in solving real problems. For example, supposing as a businessman we want to build a new factory. If we first study the project on a theoretical basis, from other people's reports and reference books, we will get an image, an ideal image of our factory as we want it to be. If we were to go straight ahead and build our factory based only on our idea, we would very probably fail. This is because our ideal image of what we want does not fit the real situation.

We should move on to a more objective and practical consideration of the problems involved. How much will the land cost? What about water and electricity supplies? What is the labor situation in the area? What is the average wage in the area? How can sufficient capital be raised? The answers to these practical questions will give us a more realistic picture of our project.

With our image we can now move on to make a realistic plan of action; a synthesis of our original idea and our concrete research. Our action plan may be far from our original idea. But it is probably the most practical plan which has a chance of working in practice. At the same time, it is only a plan; it is not the factory itself.

In the end, we have to make a move; we have to step forward and start to build our factory. When we do this, we find that the real day-by-day work is completely different from our plans, and presents many unforeseen problems. This is because even our carefully researched plan still belongs to the area of thinking. The factory we are building belongs to the real world. In the real world we have to go through many trials and troubles. And it is through these trials and errors that the real factory is slowly constructed. The series of phases in the project; the idealistic phase, the objective phase, the planning phase, and the practical phase itself always exist in our daily living.

When we have recognized the necessity of this series of stages in our thinking, we can usually be successful. Without being aware of this progression through the four stages, those who are very idealistic will sometimes fail because of their strong and often brave ideals. And those who are too objective with no ideals will also fail because their objective analysis of all possible pitfalls will make them too cautious. They may hesitate through fear of failure. Some people then, are too brave, too idealistic. And others are too cautious, too objective. To avoid being too brave or too cautious we practice Zazen.

In the *Shobogenzo* Master Dogen says, "*To practice Zazen is the whole of Buddhism, and Buddhism is just the practice of Zazen.*" So from the ultimate viewpoint, practicing Zazen is the aim of our lives. Zazen is not just a way of finding success in our life, it is enlightenment itself. To practice Zazen is our salvation. Zazen is our resting place. It is life. It is the Truth itself. The practice of Zazen allows us to bring our ideals, objectives and realistic plans together into one synthesized whole.

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Spirit in Buddhism I

Buddhists believe in the Universe. The Universe is, according to philosophers who base their beliefs on idealism, a place of the spirit. Other philosophers whose beliefs are based on a materialistic view, say that the Universe is composed of the matter we see in front of our eyes. Buddhist philosophy takes a view which is neither idealistic nor materialistic; Buddhists do not believe that the Universe is composed of only matter. They believe that there is something else other than matter. But there is a difficulty here; if we use a concept like *spirit* to describe that *something else other than matter*, people are prone to interpret Buddhism as some form of spiritualistic religion and think that Buddhists must therefore believe in the actual existence of spirit. So it becomes very important to understand the Buddhist view of the concept *spirit*.

I am careful to refer to spirit as a concept here because in fact Buddhism does not believe in the actual existence of spirit. So what is this *something else other than matter* which exists in this Universe? If we think that there is a *something* which actually exists other than matter, our understanding will not be correct; nothing physical exists outside of matter.

Buddhists believe in the existence of the Universe. Some people explain the Universe as a universe based on matter. But there also exists something which we call *value* or *meaning*. A Universe consisting only of matter leaves no room for value or meaning in civilizations and cultures. Matter alone has no value. We can say that the Universe is constructed with matter, but we must also say that matter works for some purpose.

So in our understanding of the Universe we should recognize the existence of something other than matter. We can call that something *spirit*, but if we do we should remember that in Buddhism, the word *spirit* is a figurative expression for value or meaning. We do not say that spirit exists in reality; we use the concept only figuratively.

Are there any questions?

Are value and meaning the same?

Yes. I use them to express almost the same meaning. *Spirit* is used as a figurative expression for value or meaning. Idealistic philosophies support a belief in the existence of spirit. Buddhist philosophy examines the Universe from two sides; the idealistic side and the materialistic side. So the two concepts of spirit and matter are convenient concepts to use when explaining the Universe from these two viewpoints. The word *spirit* is used to mean value or meaning.

How is spirit manifested in Buddhism?

The straight answer is that Buddhism does not believe in the existence of spirit. The Universe is usually thought of as being composed of matter. But it is not only matter; there is also the value in our civilizations and cultures which arises from matter. Matter is one concept to explain what the Universe consists of. But Buddhists consider that the Universe is ultimately ineffable; that is, beyond description.

What do you mean by the value of matter?

Matter has physical or economic value, but this is not the ultimate value that matter has. The ultimate value of matter is its value to human beings. For humans, eating is very important. But it can never become the ultimate aim of living; we cannot live just for the purpose of eating. Although we eat every day, we are not satisfied with just eating. Our life depends on another value which is not economic or physical in nature. Although economic or physical value is the basis of all civilizations and cultures, matter gives rise to another value besides its physical value.

You mean human beings cannot be satisfied with just physical value every day, so there must be some other value?

A rather nice way to explore the meaning of *value* is to look at the history of human civilizations. For thousands of years, human beings have made their efforts to build something. It is extremely difficult for us to describe clearly what that something which we have been striving to create is. But looking back at the history of the last few thousand years, we can see that the something which we have made can be called *value*.

You say that Buddhists don't believe in spirit as something different from matter. But what is the difference between what you call 'something' and what someone else calls 'spirit'?

My *something* is included in the Universe. When we look at the Universe from one side, we see its spiritual face. When we look at it from the other side we find its material face. So it is not possible to prove that spirit really exists or that matter really exists. And those who insist that the Universe is only matter lose one face of the Universe. Idealists who say that the Universe is spirit do too. Both these ideas are incomplete. And in that respect they are wrong. In Buddhist philosophy we believe in something other than matter; matter is only one face of the Universe. We have another side with no name. This is the situation. The existence of this other, nameless, face of the Universe can never be denied.

Is the reason that we do not call it 'spirit' or the spiritual face of the Universe because that belongs to the realm of metaphysics?

It is because the Universe is a unity. If we insist that spirit exists separate from matter, we easily fall into a wrong understanding of the Universe. So we avoid adopting that way of thinking. Buddhist philosophy says that the Universe is ultimately ineffable. Of course, we use the concepts of *matter* and *spirit* in our explanations. But they are only a means of explaining. They are not the ultimate nature of the Universe. Buddhism says we can believe in the existence of the Universe itself. This is fundamental to Buddhist thought.

Dogen uses the word 'mind' in the sense of spirit, doesn't he? Don't you think that mind is almost identical with spirit?

Well, mind is another concept used in explaining; Master Dogen said in the *Shobogenzo* that mind is one eye with which to view the Universe, so he used the word in his explanations. But mind does not exist as a separate entity in itself. So Master Dogen said: "*The mind of eternal Buddhas is just fences, walls, tiles and pebbles.*" This is a very important concept, and the words themselves are very well known. He did not affirm the existence of mind in itself. Mind only exists when placed against the external world. Mind and the external world can never exist as separate entities. This is the fundamental stance of Buddhist philosophy. So we can find the word mind used in the *Shobogenzo* as an explanatory concept.

Fundamentally, Buddhism believes in the unity of body and mind. When our body dies, we can find no trace of the mind. This idea is quite different from the Brahmanist ideas which were flourishing in India before Gautama Buddha. Many people find it difficult to distinguish between Brahmanism and Buddhism.

There is so much in the Universe that we cannot understand at the moment. But we will understand one day if we are able to change our way of thinking. This seems to me to be the basic problem...

I agree with you. We all have our own beliefs and our own religions. But religious ideas can never be absolute, because our ideas progress and change over thousands of years. But we can believe in some truth - we can believe in our own truth.

But isn't it possible that ideas in Buddhism will also change? As a religion gets older, it must change...

Well, I think that there are three kinds of religious beliefs; spiritual, material, and ultimately Buddhist. This is what I believe. I believe in this idea, and that is why I lecture on Buddhist philosophy. Everyone has the freedom to believe in their own religion. At the same time, however, we can find in history an evolutionary stream of religious development. In the early ages and in medieval

times, people believed in spiritual religions. In modern times, we have come to believe in materialistic religions and science. But in the middle of the nineteenth century the history of religion entered a new phase. I think we are now looking for a third religion; one that is neither idealistic nor materialistic; a religion in the middle way; a religion of reality itself.

We are free to choose which religion we believe in from these three kinds. I selected Buddhism. I have no way of proving its absolute truth or otherwise, but I believe it is the ultimate truth. So I explain my beliefs to you. The situation relies upon belief. And the problem of belief is beyond the scope of discussion: I believe this - you believe this - another person believes that. This is the situation. If you say that you cannot believe my ideas, I cannot insist that you do. You have a right to your own opinion. Religious beliefs are bound by these factors. But I believe in Master Dogen's ideas.

But that was seven centuries ago! That's a long time...

Yes. But think of the light that we see from the stars: the light itself left the star billions of years ago. Compared to that scale of time, the difference in time between Master Dogen and ourselves is not so very long.

Yes, but sometimes the light we see is from a star that no longer exists...

So time is indeed very relative. But Master Dogen's ideas are very modern ideas. When I read the *Shobogenzo* for the first time, when I was a still a boy, I was astonished to find that it contained ideas which were almost too modern. After reading more, I began to believe in his ideas. And I have now studied those ideas continuously for more than forty years. And now I have no doubts about his ideas at all. So I think that the truth can overcome differences in time. The truth deserves to be studied.

If we believe in the Ineffable, can you explain why it is necessary to study the intellectual and material face of reality?

In the history of philosophy, two systems of thought have emerged; idealism and materialism. Idealists base their thoughts on the existence of spirit, and materialists base their thoughts on matter. To explain the third system of thought that Buddhism uses, we can make use of these two existing systems. So we study these two faces of reality.

Is it a process which must continue? For example, if someone believes in Buddhism, they read the words of Buddhism and decide that they will become a Buddhist. Is it then necessary for them to study the spiritual and material faces of the Universe?

Yes. It is a method of explanation. It is not essential to be able to explain, but the two philosophical systems allow us to understand and explain Buddhist theory. So we use the two systems as phases in our Theory of Four Views.

Did Master Dogen write the Shobogenzo in order to convert people to Buddhism, or for Buddhists who already believe in the Ineffable to read? Was he preaching to Buddhists or to convert people to Buddhism?

Master Dogen said that Buddhism is belief in the Universe, and that the Universe or Dharma includes all. Therefore Buddhism embraces the whole Universe. Thus Master Dogen believed that no-one can deny the truth of Buddhist philosophy. This was his belief. He did not try hard to convert other people to Buddhism. He believed that, because Buddhism is belief in the Universe, belief in everything, it is natural for us to believe in Buddhism, to believe in reality. This is the situation.

When I started to study Buddhism, I read a book by Shunryu Suzuki, a Soto priest. He seemed to be saying that the important thing to do was just to practice Zazen, and that to study idealism and materialism was not important. When I said this to you, you said that you disagreed with his opinion. I still don't understand why.

The reason we get involved in idealistic and materialistic thoughts about the world is because human beings like thinking. For thousands of years we have made great efforts to find the truth

through intellectual thought. This is fact. Human history has produced many philosophical systems. When we look at a problem, our tendency is to think about it. So the best way is to make use of our tendency to think in studying Buddhism. The use of philosophical ideas is only a means.

It isn't necessary, then?

No, it isn't necessary. That's true. If we practice Zazen every day, we need no philosophies; we need no theories. When we attain the truth, we can find how to live. Then we can find the aim of our own life, and make our efforts to reach that aim. So finding the fundamental basis of life is the most important task we have. That is why I urge you to practice Zazen and attain the truth.

But I think that we tend to think about the problem first, before finding that Zazen can help us.....

Well, I'll explain the situation in this way: Thinking, feeling and practicing Zazen all exist inside the Universe. And when we are practicing Zazen, we are experiencing the Universe from inside it. In comparison, intellectual thought looks at the Universe from outside it, as if distanced from it. And feeling is perceiving or receiving stimuli from the world outside us. So we have these three modes or attitudes in which we experience something which we call the Universe. But in fact it is impossible to say *the mind exists here*; it is even impossible to say *I am here* with any final certainty. *Something* is in existence, and so people say *this is my mind* or *this is me*. But these are only ways of explaining the existence of...*something*. We can never prove these ideas true or false. This is the real situation. In order to discover this fact, we practice Zazen. During Zazen, we are unable to find *mind* or *body*. We are just sitting - or rather, *something* is just sitting. In Buddhism situations of this type are called ineffable. So we say that the *something* is the Ineffable. We can say that practicing Zazen is looking for the Ineffable. It is certainly a very strange state of affairs, but it is the real situation in our life.

In Buddhism there is no self, so of course there is no mind. But you said that the Universe includes something which is not matter. At the moment of death, does that something also cease to exist?

No, I think that after my death the Universe continues its existence. I do not believe that after my death the Universe will end.

What about life before birth?

Buddhism affirms the situation in the present moment. According to Buddhist philosophy, it is impossible to discover the origins of this world. This is the fundamental attitude of Buddhism. So when Gautama Buddha was asked by his disciples whether there was a beginning to this world, he did not answer. He just smiled. This was his attitude, because he knew that such problems are beyond the intellectual ability of humans. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant also confirmed the same fact. He concluded that such metaphysical questions are beyond the ability of the intellect. Gautama Buddha knew this fact, and this was why he did not answer these questions. It is a very interesting attitude.

Do you think that Master Dogen was also very intellectual?

Yes, he was. But at the same time, he recognized the existence of another world than that of the intellect. The value of Buddhism is in the fact that it discovered a world separate from the world of the intellect. People in modern times are very intelligent. They usually think that they live in the world in which their thoughts exist. But Buddhism suggests that another world exists beside the world of our thoughts. This is a very important point. So Master Dogen was very clever, very intellectual. But he had found another world. I think it may have been that because he was so intellectual he had to find another world in order to survive. In the same way, modern man is very intellectual. And so he needs to find the existence of a world beside the world of the intellect. This is the situation in today's world, I think.

If we don't practice Zazen, it's so difficult for us to find a standard isn't it?

Yes. Zazen teaches us everything. This is the situation. So to understand Buddhist theory is not the most important thing; to taste Buddhism is the important thing. Would you like to have a Zafu?

There are different kinds of people; some are calm, and some are nervous. Would you suggest different things; for example, different lengths of time to practice for these different people?

The unfortunate fact is that only people who believe in Buddhism practice Zazen. This is the real situation. I urge you to practice Zazen, but you are free to decide whether you will or not. I sincerely recommend that you do.

Thank you.

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Spirit in Buddhism II

In my last lecture, I explained the Buddhist idea of *spirit*. I feel there was some ambiguity in my explanation and so I would like to explain the concept again. I think that the ambiguity arose from two points; one was that I said that Buddhists did not believe in the existence of spirit itself, but at the same time, I used the word *spirit* frequently. The second is that I did not make use of the Buddhist system of the four philosophies in my explanation. I think that it is impossible to fully explain Buddhist theory without making use of the logic of the four philosophies. So today I would like to explain the problem of the concept *spirit* using the four philosophies.

From the idealistic viewpoint, people believe that mind really exists. This is basic to idealistic philosophies. Idealists also tend to believe that spirit exists as an entity in itself. We can say that the concept *spirit* forms the center of idealistic philosophies. In Buddhism, the concept *mind* is used in explanations without any belief in the existence of mind, or spirit, as a separate entity. The concepts are used purely as a means of explaining the philosophical problems of this world. People who believe in the existence of spirit are not Buddhists. In the first stage of the logic of the four philosophies, the idealistic approach, Buddhism employs concepts like *mind* and *spirit* for the purpose of explanation, but denies the existence of spirit as a real entity.

From the materialistic point of view, people believe in the existence of matter. Materialistic philosophies are based on matter. But in Buddhism, matter is used as a concept to explain the world; Buddhists do not believe in the existence of matter as a separate entity in itself. Materialists explain *mind* as part of the physical world. But they do not support the existence of spirit. In the second, materialistic step of the logic of the four philosophies, Buddhists, too, do not believe that spirit exists.

From the third point of view, we consider the problem on the basis of real action and experience. Here, action is explained as contact between mind and the external world. Action cannot be divided into mind and matter. When we are acting, there is no time for us to consider whether action is divided into mind and matter or not. Thus in the third phase, there is no room for belief in the existence of spirit.

The ultimate viewpoint transcends all philosophies. We are living in the reality, and we rely on the practice of Zazen to keep us aware of this fact. By practicing Zazen, we experience the state in reality itself. And this experience of what reality is forms the basis of Buddhist belief. So in the ultimate phase, we believe in reality in this Universe. We can never prove that what we experience is reality; no words can explain the experience. Our only attitude to the existence of reality is simple belief. From this ultimate viewpoint, Buddhism is a kind of metaphysics, a kind of religion. To have this belief in the reality of the Universe is to be a Buddhist. We believe in the existence of reality, but we do not divide it into two parts; mind and matter, or spirit and form. Thus, in the ultimate phase, Buddhists cannot believe in the existence of spirit; we deny the existence of spirit.

Are there any questions?

The reality that forms the basis of your belief; does that reality form the basis of your belief after you experience it in Zazen, or is there belief before that?

The belief comes from Zazen, from the reality as experienced in Zazen. So practicing Zazen is the origin of the Buddhist's belief in reality.

Can you explain what psychologically or spiritually draws someone towards Zazen?

Yes. The original motivation for someone to start practicing Zazen is often a feeling that there is nothing of value in their life; nothing that can be relied upon. Such a mood in someone's life is one of the reasons why they may start to believe in Buddhism and start to practice Zazen. From that point, the experience of Zazen itself begins to provide the motivation.

I usually use the theory of the autonomic nervous system to explain the action of Zazen on our body and mind. The autonomic nervous system has two sub-systems; the sympathetic system and the

parasympathetic system. These two systems are constructed to work in opposition. When there is a balance between the two systems, we feel peaceful. That is our natural state. But we usually live with some level of tension as the result of an imbalance in favor of the sympathetic nervous system. When we are working, we are usually in a state of tension. But that tension is not our natural state. If we want to live naturally, we should come back to our natural state. Practicing Zazen does this; it allows the two systems to balance, and so we return to our natural state. When we are sitting in this natural state, we can feel the whole Universe or reality with our whole body and mind. This is the meaning of Zazen.

Is the reality that one person perceives through practicing Zazen the same reality that another person perceives?

Yes. We can say that reality is universal. So we can call reality the Universe.

Then it is not relative to the human spirit?

I sometimes use the word mind to explain our experience, but, as I said, I don't like using the word spirit because it suggests that I believe in the existence of spirit itself. In Buddhist philosophy, mind is used to explain; some people use spirit with a similar meaning to mind, but I think the word mind is better in discussions of Buddhist philosophy.

Can you tell us something about the meaning of mind in Buddhism?

Mind is a kind of mirror which reflects the external world. In the third phase of Buddhist philosophy, the *philosophy of action*, mind is seen as identical with the external world itself. In other words, mind and the external world are one inseparable unity. But in the first phase of Buddhist philosophy, where we consider the problem from the subjective viewpoint, the concept of mind is used as a means to explain this world from the side of the subject. Sometimes mind refers to our consciousness, too. This is the Buddhist view.

Would you tell us about your experiences in Zazen?

Oh, do you want to know about so-called enlightenment?

Well, can you share your experience of Zazen with us?

OK. I will tell you what happens in my own case when I practice Zazen. At the beginning, I am usually thinking without being consciously aware that I am doing so. Then, after several minutes, I recognize that I have been thinking about something, ruminating if you like. I then start to make my efforts to stop my thinking. In this state, I am sometimes thinking, and sometimes not. These two states interchange again and again. Then, usually after about thirty minutes, I enter another state; in this state I do not need to make any effort to stop thinking. I am just sitting. It is a very comfortable, peaceful and natural state.

So first I am unconsciously thinking. Then I recognize that I am thinking. Then I start making an effort to stop thinking. Then, finally, I enter a state where I need not make any effort to stop thinking. These are the four usual states in my Zazen.

When you enter the final state, do you have any desire to return to the ordinary state?

The ultimate state is a very ordinary state. Coming back to this natural state is the aim of Zazen. The state we are in when we are thinking about something is not always our natural state. The fact is, the state in which we are acting is our natural state. This is the fundamental basis of Buddhist philosophy. We revere action itself.

In our daily life, our action saves us; when we are worrying about something, our state is not peaceful; when we are receiving stimuli from the world around us, we are not always happy. But when we are immersed in our action we are happy and at peace. This is a basic fact of life. So Buddhist philosophy says we should devote ourselves to action; it is the basis of Buddhism.

How does one translate one's experience in Zazen into one's daily life?

Do you mean, how can we enter the natural state when we are not practicing Zazen?

Well, if someone is very conscientious about practicing Zazen, both at home and at a temple, if we want to translate that experience as much as possible to times when we are not practicing.....

Yes. In practicing Zazen, the most important thing is regular daily practice. To practice Zazen every day, even for a short time, is the best way to make real the beliefs of Buddhism. Even when we are very busy, we should find some brief period when we can practice Zazen. It is the fundamental starting point of Buddhist life.

But when we practice every day, is there anything we can do when we are not practicing Zazen to.....

Let me illustrate the situation with an example. When we practice Zazen first thing in the morning, our body and mind enter the natural state. So we eat our breakfast in the natural state. We work in the office in the natural state. We study and read in the natural state. After practicing Zazen, we can do everything in the natural state; it is the effect of practicing Zazen. So I urge you to practice Zazen regularly, every day.

You described your own experience in Zazen, and talked about realizing that you are thinking and starting to make efforts to stop. I think that, for someone new to Zazen, that effort sounds a bit mysterious. We don't know how to make efforts to stop thinking. How do we do it?

Do you need to make efforts to stop thinking in your Zazen?

I think so, but the technique.... we usually think that there must be some way to do it. When you say "make an effort", we don't know exactly what kind of effort you mean. How do we not think?

During Zazen, I usually have some images in my mind, and these are a kind of thinking. So when I recognize that there are images in my mind, I make efforts to get rid of them. Do you have images when practicing Zazen?

Yes I do. But it's not the images which are the problem, it's that sometimes we don't understand how to get rid of them. Is there some particular method to get rid of them?

Well, I think that your state during Zazen is very natural and peaceful. You have the natural state from the beginning of your practice.

But when you speak of making efforts to stop thinking, usually, if I make efforts to stop thinking, I think of something else. I think about making an effort, or my mind just flits from one thought to another. And actually I don't stop thinking at all. I just get involved in a different kind of thinking.

Well, in that case, I usually focus my consciousness on keeping my lower spine straight and vertical. I concentrate my mind on making my spine straight. This effort stops my thoughts.

So, in a sense, this is your method, your technique?

Yes, that's right.

I find that, if I don't remain conscious of the position of my body all the time, I become conscious later that my body has moved into the wrong position. So is it possible, after many years of practice, to no longer have to think about your body?

After practicing Zazen for many years, our muscles become more perfect. So we don't need to concentrate continually on keeping our posture right. But usually we need to focus our consciousness into keeping our spine straight vertically.

At the beginning, are we intentionally making an effort not to think? Is it possible to make an effort not to think at the same time as keeping your body in the right posture?

I think that concentrating on keeping our spine straight and vertical is the best way to get rid of our thoughts. This is my method.

I often hear people recommend us to concentrate on our breathing. If I concentrate on my back, my back starts to hurt. If I concentrate on my breathing, the body becomes more controlled.

Yes, some people recommend us to concentrate on our breathing; to watch closely how we are breathing. But none of my experience shows me that I need to regulate my breathing. My breathing is fortunately always smooth during Zazen, so I have no need to regulate my breathing. I do not know what the basis of the theory about regulating breathing is.

Some people recommend, in the same way that you say you are conscious of your spine, to be conscious of breathing. So it's not to regulate breathing, but just to focus the mind on breathing.

I do not recommend the method where you count your breaths. This is a kind of thinking, and such thoughts disturb our practice of Zazen. When I need a deep breath during my practice, I take a deep breath. Once or twice is enough.

I do not understand what the third phase, the philosophy of action is.

The *philosophy of action* is unique to Buddhism. It cannot be found anywhere else in the history of philosophy. European philosophies embrace many splendid ideas on materialistic and idealistic bases, but there is no *philosophy of action*.

Gautama Buddha found that we are living in reality. Reality is not only the mental side of life, but also the material side. So he considered that to think about the basis of the world from only one side, whether it be the idealistic side or the materialistic side, was not sufficient. He found another viewpoint, another philosophical position; the *philosophy of action*. Action is contact between the mind and the external world. Using the concepts *mind* and *external world* we can explain the world, or reality. But reality is not only how it seems from the inside, and not only how it seems from the outside. To explain the real situation we need a third point of view, a third philosophical standpoint.

This third point of view is Buddhism's secret; it is the valuable thing about Buddhism. To find this third point of view, we need to study Buddhism, But the third point of view is still not the reality itself; it is still a philosophy. So at the final, or fourth phase, we have reality itself. Not theory, but fact. It is, for example the practice of Zazen.

The third stage is explainable but the fourth stage is inexplicable then?

Yes. It is the nature of reality itself. Reality is ineffable. Recognition of the ineffability of reality is an important wisdom in Buddhism. People usually think that all things can be understood with the brain, but this is not true. Reality can never be explained in words. This is the fact and this is the wisdom of Gautama Buddha's teachings; to recognize that there is something which can never be explained in words. To understand this is to put philosophy in its true perspective. Philosophy and fact are different. Recognition of the difference is of great importance.

When we are struggling with our thoughts during Zazen, as we relax, we get different thoughts, different insights than when we keep struggling intensively. Do you get different insights into the things that you have been teaching about the previous day?

No. In Zazen we have no understanding. We experience the reality. We feel something through our whole body and mind. It is not thinking; it is not understanding. It is a kind of feeling. It is experience itself. We are always conscious during Zazen, but that consciousness is not thinking, not perception. This is the ultimate state in Zazen. The state of mind during Zazen is difficult to describe; it is not consciousness, neither is it unconsciousness. It is the state of pure action. We cannot be sure if we are conscious or unconscious. This is the fact.

So let's practice Zazen again now. Thank you very much.

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Matter in Buddhism

Today I would like to talk about the Buddhist view of matter. I explained the Buddhist view of spirit in my last lecture, and so I would like to move on to the second phase and explain matter from the Buddhist standpoint.

It is said that modern philosophy was founded by the French philosopher, Descartes. At the beginning of his studies, he took the position of doubting all theories and propositions. But in that position, he found one simple fact; he found that he was thinking. His philosophy starts from that one simple fact. His famous words, quoted in Latin, *'Cogito ergo sum'*, say *'I think, therefore I am'*. So according to Descartes' theory, thinking forms the basis of our lives. But at the same time, he believed in the existence of matter. His philosophy is based on mind or thinking but he also believed in the existence of matter. Thus his philosophy is known as *dualism*. And these tendencies in Descartes' philosophical thought have continued through to modern idealistic philosophies. For example, the efforts of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who is known for his work - Critique of Pure Reason, were concentrated on investigating the basis of reason or mind. He was an idealist. He posited the existence of matter, which he called *ding an sich* - or things in themselves, but concluded that it is impossible for human beings to prove the existence of matter. Therefore his philosophy was also a kind of dualism, although he is commonly called an idealist.

We can find another stream in modern Western philosophical thought; that is, English empiricism. Empiricists believe only in what they perceive with the senses, which they call *matter*. The idea was taken up by the German philosopher Feuerbach, who went on to assert that the world consists only of matter, and that nothing other than matter exists. For this, he is called a materialist. After him came perhaps the most famous of all the materialists, Karl Marx. He explained all problems and events on the basis of materialistic philosophy.

I think a very nice method of looking at the Buddhist view of matter is to compare it with matter as seen by the materialists, and then to compare the two views. Materialists believe that the world consists of matter alone. But Buddhists believe in the Universe. If the Universe consisted of matter alone, then the materialists' theory would be right. But Buddhists do not believe that the Universe contains only matter; they believe that it has another face. For example, the many people we can find in this world are involved in the activity called work. And human beings normally work for an aim. To work for an aim is a human value. The value is not purely materialistic; it is also cultural. It is a particularly human value. So in addition to matter, the Universe also contains human value, or cultural value. Materialists, however, deny this fact, and insist that the world consists only of matter and material value. This belief is very misleading when we come to consider the meaning of our lives. So Buddhists insist that the world is not only matter; it contains something other than matter - human value.

In the book *Shobogenzo*, Master Dogen says that nature is Gautama Buddha speaking, and that the mountains are his body. He says that the sounds of water in the valleys are Gautama Buddha's voice. What he is saying here is that nature is not only matter; it also has some human value. This is the Buddhist viewpoint. Buddhists believe that matter is only one face of the Universe. Matter is one method we use to explain the Universe. So Buddhism insists that to say that the world consists only of matter is wrong.

Are there any questions?

Do I understand correctly then, that Buddhists believe that there is a positive value to human life?

Yes. Buddhists believe that there is value as distinct from matter. Buddhists say, for instance, that what sort of food we eat is not of the ultimate importance; rather our interest in eating is our effort to create something of value. Considering what sort of food to eat is not the aim of our life. To work for something is the aim of human life.

Then materialists are perhaps confusing the method with the goal?

Materialists base their thinking about the problems of life on logical analysis of matter. But their ideas limit all things within their concept of matter. Their analyses are very clear and rational, but from the Buddhist point of view, they have forgotten something very important in our lives.

When you say human value, when we start thinking of the opposite of matter, we think of cultural value like listening to beautiful music and things like that. What is the difference between that sort of cultural value and what you mean by human value?

I use human value and cultural value with the same meaning. I don't know which is the more suitable to describe the expression of value. I intend both phrases to have the same meaning.

What about intellectual value?

Intellectual value is one small part of cultural or human value.

My question is very similar to the first one. But I still can't understand what you meant in your reply. I cannot understand why Buddhism is different from materialism just because human beings have value or values. Is it because those values are associated with something spiritual?

No, I don't mean that. I mean that value is a result of some sort of mental effort. But I do not think that it is spiritual. Buddhism believes in the existence of the Universe, and materialists look at that Universe from one side only. They look at only one face of the Universe, and they call that face matter. They then conclude that the Universe must consist only of matter. But Buddhists believe that matter is only one face of the Universe. It is impossible to describe the whole of the content of the Universe with words, so in Buddhist philosophy we express the Universe with the word *ineffable*. Materialists make the mistake of limiting the Universe within the boundaries of matter. But matter is only one of the faces of the Universe. The mistake that materialists make is to take part of the Universe and mistake it for the whole.

What is the other side?

According to Buddhist theory, the other side cannot be put into words. This is why we practice Zazen. While we are practicing Zazen, we can feel something. And that something is the other part of the Universe. So the Universe is sometimes simply called reality. And reality includes impossibly many facets. So we are unable to explain this other face of the Universe with words. This is the Buddhist view of the situation.

The word *immo*, from the Chinese, is used to express the ineffable. This word has a very ambiguous meaning, because reality is very difficult to put into words. In Buddhist theory it is said to be impossible to explain the Universe itself in words. But by practicing Zazen we can experience this Universe. And this real experience is the only way we have of recognizing what the Universe is. We can explain it in philosophical terms, and in scientific terms, but these explanations are always one-sided. So if we want to grasp the Universe totally, we need to experience it with our action. This is why we practice Zazen.

Do materialists deny the possibility of any kind of human value, or do they just evaluate that value on the basis of materialism?

Materialists believe in material value. That is; energy, power, calories, and so on. But these are only material values. We cannot say that to get these kinds of value can be our life's aim. We make use of that which we perceive to be matter in our everyday life, but we make use of it in order to get some value which is not material. This is the fact. If we believe that getting material values like money, power in society and so on, are the aims of life, then we will lose the ability to see the real aim of life. This is the Buddhist standpoint. For example, take those people who put all their effort into getting rich, who love eating, and so forth. Even if they live in a gorgeous house and are surrounded by everything they want materially, they will find that sometimes they feel unsatisfied. This is simply because the things which they made the aim of their life - money, food, sensual pleasures - can never provide an ultimate aim for living. This is life's secret. And so Buddhism insists that although we need material things as a means to attain our ultimate aim, those things in themselves can never become that

aim. Materialistic philosophies recognize only material values. They say that to make our societies better we need political power and to get political power we need revolution. This is their theory of society. But the Materialist's view of value and the Buddhist's view of value are different.

I get a little confused because you talk of materialists, but those materialists are being idealistic, and if the materialist has a philosophy, then that philosophy itself is an idea.

Yes. We can say that philosophy is ideas. But materialistic philosophies are based on matter - they analyze societies from a basis in matter. Their conclusion is that in order to govern a society it is imperative to control the means of production. So they strive to wrestle power over the means of production from the ruling classes, the bourgeois. Of course, their theories are ideas, but those ideas are rooted in matter.

Then, when a materialist is looking at the world, in reality, that person must experience human value, even though they may not realize it. When they do something, they must get some human value from their action.

Materialists do not generally believe that human societies can improve gradually. They believe that the situation is always controlled by the class with the greater power. They think that in order to improve society, we must defeat the ruling class. They insist on the absolute necessity of revolution. But Buddhist philosophy says that situations are changing at every moment, and so to live our best at the moment of the present is actually the best way to improve our societies. Buddhists believe that living our lives sincerely each day is gradual revolution. We do not need drastic revolution, because when we live our lives sincerely at every moment, our societies must be improving at every moment. This is the theory of Buddhism, and it is different from the insinuations of materialists.

Generally materialists believe that the Universe is predictable, and Buddhists believe that the Universe is unpredictable. Can you explain what Buddhists believe causes this unpredictability?

In the second phase, Buddhism affirms materialistic ideas, and so Buddhists also believe in the rule of cause and effect. So we also believe that the future is predictable. But at the same time, Buddhists believe that life is instantaneous - that time between present and future is discontinuous. So even though Buddhists believe that the future is predictable, we also believe that these predictions are only predictions, not fact. So Buddhists believe that the future is knowable, but they do not rely on this knowledge as absolute fact.

I can never understand how, if you believe in cause and effect, you can at the same time believe in human freedom.

To solve that problem, you need to understand the Buddhist view of time. In Buddhist philosophy we think about time in two ways. In one way, we say that time forms a continuous line from past to future. But at the same time, Buddhism is a very practical philosophy, which is based on action - action which takes place at the moment of the present. So even though we can imagine a long line of time from past to future, we believe that real time is just the moment of the present. This is the fundamental Buddhist theory about time. Buddhists believe in the rule of cause and effect; when we think of time as a long line, we can find the rule of cause and effect operating.

But if we believe solely in the rule of cause and effect, we must become determinists; we can never believe that human beings can be free. Buddhism also believes that the only real time is the present moment. This moment has no length; and in the present moment with its zero length, we can find our freedom. A rather good simile is a pea balanced on a razor blade: because the blade is very thin, the pea has an equal chance of falling either side of the blade. Human freedom has the same basic character. Because our action is at the infinitely short moment of the present, it sometimes goes one way, sometimes the other.

This is the Buddhist view of human freedom. And this theory allows us to reconcile the rule of cause and effect with belief in human freedom. In western philosophical thought, belief in the rule of cause and effect does not allow for simultaneous belief in human freedom, and vice versa. This is a well-known and unresolved contradiction in western philosophy. No-one has found a solution to this

problem through the thousands of years of philosophical development. But Buddhism has a theory which can reconcile these two: belief in cause and effect and belief in free-will. So the Buddhist theory of time is very important; we call it *The Instantaneousness of the Universe*. Buddhist theory states that the Universe appears and disappears at every moment; time is fragmented or discontinuous. Only the moment of the present really exists. And it is this theory of time which allows the contradiction between free-will and cause and effect to be resolved.

If we believe in the instantaneousness of the present moment, and we are acting sincerely, why is it necessary for us to believe in a rule of cause and effect?

It is because we have the ability to think about our predicament with our intellect. When we consider problems on the intellectual level, we must acknowledge that there is a law governing our actions, the rule of cause and effect. This rule enables us to understand and make sense of the real situations in our lives. But at the same time, this rule can never explain the whole story; we need to look at life from another point of view besides the deterministic viewpoint of causality. Buddhism encourages us to look at life and the way the Universe works in many different ways. The rule of cause and effect is one of these ways; one way to explain the Universe.

I think that Zen is not definite about the validity of causal law; there is a part of the Shobogenzo where a priest asks which is correct, causal law or freedom.....

To fully understand the relationship between human freedom and the rule of cause and effect, we should use the *Theory of Four Views*. From the first viewpoint, we can believe that human beings have complete freedom, because this viewpoint looks at reality with the mind's powers. The second view is that the Universe is governed by cause and effect, because this view looks at reality from the external, objective, and material point of view. These two viewpoints - freedom and causality - are contradictory. To solve the contradiction, Buddhism has a third viewpoint - the *philosophy of action*. This is the philosophy of the present moment. The Buddhist theory of time states that the Universe is instantaneous. This theory enables us to say both that we are free at the moment of the present and that we are bound by cause and effect. To realize these three viewpoints, we practice Zazen, because during Zazen we can experience what reality is actually like by sitting quietly. So to realize the validity of the *Theory of Four Views*, we need to act, to experience something real. And practicing Zazen gives us this experience in a very simple and straightforward way. So now its time to practice Zazen once again. Thank-you.

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Action in Buddhism I

Today I would like to talk about the *philosophy of action*. I imagine that when people hear this phrase, they must wonder what it means!

In previous lectures, I have explained the meaning of mind and matter in Buddhism, and the Buddhist attitude towards idealistic and materialistic philosophies. When we hear about idealism and materialism, we can understand what they are quite readily because we can find so many examples of idealistic and materialistic philosophies in Western thought. In ancient Greece, we can find the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, who are said to belong to the idealist school of thought. At the same time, we can find the philosopher Democritus, who was a typical materialist.

In medieval times, we can find theologies of Christian origin dividing into two distinct streams; realism and nominalism. In modern terms, nominalism belongs to the materialist school, and realism belongs to idealism.

In the recent history of Western thought, we can find many examples of both idealist and materialist philosophers; the idealists, Kant and Hegel, for example. Or Feuerbach and Marx, who are materialists. When we think about why these two philosophical schools dominated all else in Western thought, we must reach the conclusion that, when we consider the human condition with the intellect alone, we have to be either an idealist or a materialist; there is no other choice. We can say that human beings are able to think about philosophical problems only from one of these two viewpoints. This seems a natural conclusion when we remember that we normally think about a problem in our minds first, as a mental proposition, before examining it in relation to the external world of matter. The human tendency to give value to the intellect usually means that we consider problems first idealistically, then materially.

When we experience an area outside of the area of thought or intellect, a whole new world appears. This is the external world, or the world of matter. So we can classify two distinct worlds; the world of the mind, and the world of matter. This is the way we tend to view the world from our mind; we feel that there is a mental world inside our heads, and a physical world outside. Western civilizations are highly intellectual and there have emerged two distinct and excellent philosophical systems based on these two views; idealism, and materialism.

But at the same time, these two philosophical systems are doomed to always be in conflict with one another. And the human race has been searching for an answer to this conflict for thousands of years. But it has proven impossible for philosophers to find a way separate from either idealism or materialism which would enable them to consider the problems of our lives from another non-conflicting point of view. So the human race has been suffering the effects of the conflict between idealism and materialism and has been unable to find a solution.

This very same conflict existed in ancient India. The idealistic religion of Brahmanism and the materialistic teachings of the Six Non-Buddhist Teachers were at war constantly. This situation became clear to Gautama Buddha, and he worried. He worried how human beings could ever find a solution to the constant conflict - how they could ever find a peaceful state in which to live their lives. The fundamental problem is that inside our heads, we can be convinced that our ideas are the truth - or conversely, that our perceptions are the truth. It is impossible to prove which of these two positions is true; whether our ideas are always right, or whether our perceptions of the world are the reality.

Gautama Buddha found the solution to this age-old problem. He found the *philosophy of action*. The only clear explanation of the *philosophy of action* is to be found in a book written by the 13th century Buddhist priest, Master Dogen. I started to study the *Shobogenzo* as a young man, and at first could understand practically nothing. But after many years, having come to understand the *Shobogenzo* completely, I have also found out why it appears so difficult to understand - it is written about the *philosophy of action*. The *philosophy of action* cannot be understood following our usual habits of thought, and so seems impossibly difficult. But if we understand what the *philosophy of*

action is, we can solve the conflict between idealism and materialism. So today I would like to outline the *philosophy of action* for you.

In Western thought, we can find a specific method of reasoning known as dialectic. The Greek philosopher Plato used the method in many of his books by having a discussion between two people on the problem he wanted to expound. He found this method - this dialectic - very useful in presenting complex philosophical problems, as have many others right up to the modern philosopher Hegel. Hegel's use of dialectic is known as dialectic idealism. Karl Marx also used dialectic to explain materialism. His philosophical method is known as dialectic materialism.

Thus, dialectic reasoning has been employed to buttress the conclusions of both idealistic and materialistic philosophers. But I found in reading the *Shobogenzo* that dialectic can also be used to point to a solution to the idealism-materialism conflict. In the *Shobogenzo*, Master Dogen puts great emphasis and value on our actions - on what our real conduct is. Both idealistic and materialistic philosophies belong to the area of the intellect; they exist in our brains. But life itself does not exist as intellectual thought - it is very real. So to truly find what the meaning of our life is, we must leave the intellectual area. This is the secret of Buddhist philosophy. If we want to study Buddhism, we must leave intellectual thought behind.

To consider what our actions themselves really are, to consider practice and conduct, is very important in solving this conflict between idealism and materialism. This is the philosophy which Master Dogen lays out in the *Shobogenzo*. It is a philosophy based on our actions. Action is the meeting between mind and the external world. So in this sense, action is both subjective and objective at the same time. Idealism is the philosophy of the subject, materialism is the philosophy of the object and the *philosophy of action* is the philosophy of both subject and object. Action is the contact between mental world and physical world and so it exists instantaneously, always in the present moment.

We have a mental image of time as a line extending from past through present to future. But when we study what action is, we are always dealing in the present moment. So the time of action is *now* and its location is simply the place where we are at this moment - *here*. In the *Shobogenzo* Master Dogen uses the Chinese word *shali* to suggest this place, and the Japanese word *nikon* to express the present moment. He constructs his *philosophy of action* on the basis of the here and now. He explains that our life is not only a mental experience, not only a physical experience, but something real in itself.

When we examine philosophical problems from an intellectual point of view, we find it impossible to find any solution to the conflict existing between the idealistic or spiritual point of view and the materialistic or scientific point of view. But Master Dogen uses dialectic method to synthesize these two differing viewpoints. Without using both of these opposing viewpoints, it becomes impossible to explain the *philosophy of action*; we need both idealism and materialism. We also need dialectic method.

In short, if we look at problems from both the idealist's and the materialist's point of view, and then use dialectic method to synthesize the two opposing views, we can find the *philosophy of action*. Then we can understand the true meaning of our life. So if we want to understand the *philosophy of action*, and if we want to realize the Buddhist state, studying idealism and materialism in Western thought becomes of central importance. To understand the real meaning of life, we need the *philosophy of action*. To find what this philosophy is, we need to use dialectic method to unite the opposing views of the idealist and the materialist. This is the reason we study the *Shobogenzo*; to study what the *philosophy of action* is, and to use it to solve the problems of our lives as Buddhists.

The *philosophy of action* seems a strange concept to people in the modern world, but understanding it can help us to understand the true meaning of our lives.

Are there any questions?

What do you mean by the method of dialectic?

Some idealists believe that *spirit* really exists; that if our spiritual being is cared for, we will always be happy. But in the real world, although we may take care of our spiritual side, if we do not have food to eat, we will not be happy. Others find that they cannot believe in the supremacy of the spirit; they take a materialistic view of reality; they believe that *matter* is the basis of the real world. So some believe in the supremacy of the spirit, and others believe that matter is the root of everything. These two viewpoints can never meet. There is no compromise between the two.

But if we think about the problem from the realist's point of view, if we have nothing to eat, we cannot continue to live. But when we eat something to satisfy our hunger, we feel better, and we may then feel something which people call *spirit*. So considered purely from the academic point of view, there is no answer, but considered realistically we find that the dilemma is resolved in the course of our day-to-day lives. We have to work to eat. At the same time, eating of itself cannot become the aim of living. We look for value in what we are doing. Eating will not give us that value, that aim. But unless we eat, we can never arrive at our aim of achieving something of value. Reality is not wholly spiritual, neither is it wholly material. In living, the most important thing is neither spiritual in nature nor material. The most important thing is the reality in which we live itself.

The supposition that there is something called *spirit* is a thesis. The denial of the thesis that there is something called *spirit* is antithesis. A realistic viewpoint is the synthesis of these two viewpoints. We can make a similar supposition, denial, and synthesis about the existence of *matter*. The triangular relationship between thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is dialectic. In western philosophy, Plato, Hegel and Marx all used dialectic method. The method is very useful in looking at philosophical problems.

For example, everyone has a conflict over morals in their life; what is good and what is bad. Morals are at the thesis stage. They are ideals which we should try to attain to make life good. But morality alone cannot make societies good. In real societies, people are not always good. The conduct of many people is bad, and so societies make laws. People who break the laws are punished. Laws are the antithesis to morals; they bind us with no freedom. But if societies are governed too rigidly by laws, we lose our human dignity; we have no freedom in which to follow our moral code. The policy of a society synthesizes morals and laws. Individuals are free to select their own representatives, and those representatives make the laws. So social policy allows people freedom while at the same time allowing society to be maintained in a peaceful manner.

We can use this triangular dialectic method to look at all philosophical problems. And using it allows us to solve the conflict between the opposing views of idealists and materialists. Idealism constructs the thesis. Materialism puts the antithesis. And the *philosophy of action* explains how to synthesize the two sides. This is the relationship between the three viewpoints, and the meaning of dialectic method.

How do we find that third viewpoint? Why can't I put another philosophy in the third place?

In order to get rid of intellectual thinking, we need to act, to experience something. Buddhism tells us to practice, to experience. This is why Buddhism recommends the practice of Zazen. With practice and experience, we can find another area besides the intellectual area. This is the secret that Buddhism holds. This is why we practice Zazen.

You say that dialectic method is a triangular method of thinking. But it is difficult for me to understand where the third point emerges. Is dialectic method the process to arrive at the third point, or.....?

We need four viewpoints. We can illustrate this with a diagram. First we have idealistic philosophies. And existing on the same level we have materialistic philosophies. We use the dialectic method to reach the third philosophy, *the philosophy of action*. But all three of these philosophies belong to the intellectual area. We need idealism and materialism to arrive at the *philosophy of action*. This is because the *philosophy of action* comes out of the conflict between idealism and materialism, using dialectic method.

But reality itself exists outside of the area of the intellect, in a different area from any of these three philosophies. But using the three viewpoints, the three philosophies, we can suggest the existence of the world itself which is outside of the intellectual area. This is why Buddhism uses the four viewpoints to explain reality. So, in summary, we can use the two fundamental philosophies of idealism and materialism to enter into the *philosophy of action* with the help of dialectic method. Then using these three viewpoints, we can reflect something which is different from any of those three viewpoints; that is, reality itself. We can never with our intellects, capture reality completely. But we can suggest reality with the three viewpoints.

However, that suggestion is still not reality itself. This is why we need to practice Zazen. When we are practicing Zazen, we are sitting in reality itself. This experience is very important in realizing the meaning of our life. This is the relationship between the four viewpoints.

In your explanation you say we move to the third stage by action, or more completely, by Zazen. You also called it reality. So haven't you moved to the fourth stage?

Yes. Zazen belongs to the fourth stage. The *philosophy of action* is an explanation of Zazen; it is not Zazen itself. Zazen belongs to reality itself. This is the relationship between the *philosophy of action* and reality.

I still cannot understand, because you said that we reach the third stage by action.

I said that the *philosophy of action* can be explained with dialectic thinking using the two fundamental philosophies. But this explanation still belongs to the area of the intellect; even the *philosophy of action* is only a philosophy - it is not reality. But it can suggest the existence of reality and so, by studying the *philosophy of action* we can find the will to practice Zazen.

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Action in Buddhism II

Today I would like once more to give my talk on the *philosophy of action* and its relationship with the two fundamental philosophies of idealism and materialism. I explained the relationship between the three philosophies with dialectic method in my last lecture, but as the theory of dialectic is rather difficult to understand, and some of you could not understand my explanations, I would like to explain the *philosophy of action* again today.

The method of dialectic is indispensable in explaining the *philosophy of action*, so let me first give a more detailed explanation of what dialectic method actually is. The word *dialectic* comes from the Greek words *dia* meaning two and *lect* meaning discussion or argument. So *dialectic* originally meant a discussion between two people. It suggests that the result of a discussion between two people gives a conclusion which is neither wholly the opinion of one of the participants, nor wholly the opinion of the other. Because of this simple fact, philosophers think that discussion allows the participants to reach new ideas which were not previously held by either party.

Dialectic method existed in Greek philosophy. The most famous of the Greek philosophers using dialectic method was Plato. He wrote many books containing discussions of philosophical problems. Plato used discussion as a way of presenting his own ideas. In this he was the first philosopher to use dialectic method. Then in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the famous German philosopher, Freiderich Hegel, used dialectic method very powerfully in explaining his theories. His philosophy is sometimes called dialectic idealism or dialectic spiritualism, because his ideas were based on mind or spirit. We can say he was an idealist.

Karl Marx, the famous materialistic philosopher also used dialectic method. His philosophy is known as dialectic materialism.

I would like to use the example of a discussion between two people to illustrate dialectic method for you. One party in the discussion is an idealist and the other is a materialist; let's call them Mr. I and Mr. M. When Mr. I and Mr. M discuss something, their opinions are always contradictory. For example, when they discuss the problem of morality, Mr. I explains morals on the basis of the conscience. This is the normal position of idealists. They say that if we listen to our conscience, our conduct will be right, and so they say that the existence of our conscience determines our morality or lack of it.

Mr. M on the other hand, does not agree that morals are a matter of conscience; he explains morals on the basis of circumstances and history. Materialists usually think that our conduct is determined by historical circumstance.

When we listen to the discussion between the two, we sometimes feel that Mr. I is right, and sometimes we think that Mr. M's opinion is the true one. In order to look at the discussion between the two people we really need a third person present. This third person will be able to reach a conclusion which is different from either of the two opinions being offered by Mr. I or Mr. M. This is how we reach the realistic viewpoint of Buddhism.

When Buddhists consider the problem of morals, they see the problem on the basis of our actions. Our actions are often led by our conscience, but at the same time, our actions are ruled to some extent by historical circumstance. So from the Buddhist point of view, the problem of morals is always a problem of how to act. Mr. I's opinion is partly true, but at the same time, Mr. M's standpoint is also true too because action contains two factors; one is our conscience or our intention, and the other is the circumstances. Action is always a synthesis of conscience and circumstance.

Buddhists give value to both these factors, because the way we act in reality is determined by both factors. For a Buddhist, morals are our actions themselves. The way that we act determines our morality or lack of it; not the way that we think alone, nor the external circumstances alone.

The method used in this short discussion above is dialectic method - a method which synthesizes opposing viewpoints to reach a third point of view. The *philosophy of action* is constructed based on this method of thinking. It is a method which relies on two opposing opinions to form a synthesis of the two as a third and radically new viewpoint.

In ancient India, there was a typical idealistic philosophy called Brahmanism, and existing in opposition to it there was also a materialistic school of thought based on the teachings of six non-Buddhist teachers. Gautama Buddha was able to synthesize these two opposing philosophical systems into the *philosophy of action*. And so the *philosophy of action* became the center of Buddhist philosophy; to understand Buddhism it is necessary to understand the *philosophy of action*. I would like to discuss with you the *philosophy of action* and its explanation on the basis of dialectic method.

Are there any questions?

If we understand the philosophy of action, does that change our actions?

Yes. It can change our actions because when we understand the *philosophy of action* we can transcend idealistic and materialistic philosophies and follow the *philosophy of action* in our everyday lives. Understanding the *philosophy of action* has the power to change our conduct. At the same time, we should be clearly aware of the difference between ideas about action and action itself. The *philosophy of action* is an idea, and although we may understand the idea, sometimes our physical body is unable to move following the *philosophy of action* because we fail to realize that the *philosophy of action* is not action itself. So we can say that it is important for us to understand the *philosophy of action* in living a daily life based on Buddhism, but at the same time, we also need the practical ability to act following the *philosophy of action*. To get this ability to act, we practice Zazen. By practicing Zazen, we can get the ability to act following the *philosophy of action*. This is the relationship between our conduct in daily life and the *philosophy of action*.

If we don't study the philosophy of action, but simply practice Zazen, is our action different?

In practicing Zazen, we can experience action itself. So although our ideas are not formulated into a philosophy as such, we also experience the *philosophy of action*. With our modern life based on intellectual analysis, it is important to also have some systematic process by which to explain our experiences. But even though we may have no formal understanding of the *philosophy of action*, we can lead a Buddhist life. At the same time, when we also understand the *philosophy of action*, it is easier for us to follow the theoretical teachings of Buddhism.

The discussion between Mr. I and Mr. M is very familiar; the situation in which we sometimes feel Mr. I is right and sometimes Mr. M is right, such a feeling of uncertainty is familiar to me. But I rarely go beyond such a feeling of uncertainty and I can't find the point of synthesis in my own thinking. So I wonder, in our usual life, when we come to such situations, do you have any advice?

Yes. We should recognize that these two ideas belong to the intellect and that action is real. We are usually disturbed by the conflict between the two ideas, but in our real life, when we act, we throw away the disturbance. We can transcend the contradiction between the two ideas in real life by acting. This is the secret of our lives, and this is the secret of Buddhism itself. So acting saves us. This is Gautama Buddha's wisdom. When we transcend intellectual conflict by acting, we enter into a different world from the area of the intellect. In this situation, we can find a philosophy which is different from idealism and materialism. Synthesizing two intellectual philosophies means acting; that is, entering another world than that of the intellect. We can transcend the intellectual world by acting.

I said that the *philosophy of action* is the center of Buddhism; of course the real center of Buddhism is the practice of Zazen itself, because Zazen is the standard form of action. But the center of Buddhist philosophy is the *philosophy of action*. So Gautama Buddha told us to act. Action can save us. This is Gautama Buddha's teaching.

Can we understand that action is reached, not by rational thinking but by Zazen? How did Buddhists reach the third stage, action? By reasoning?

No. Practicing Zazen teaches us what action is. Practicing Zazen is studying action itself. The true meaning of action does not come from our rational thinking process; the experience of action can come only from acting.

In that case, there is no difference between the fourth phase and action?

We can say that the *philosophy of action* comes in the third of the four phases, and action itself belongs to the fourth phase.

I find that the word action is very difficult to think about. I tend to think that action means a certain type of action. Does action means just doing something? Could you explain it again?

Yes. It's a difficult problem so I don't mind explaining it again and again. We can describe the structure of the four philosophies as a triangular pyramid. First we can consider the starting point of our thinking to represent one point on the base of the pyramid. That is mind. With our mind, we enter the area of idealism. We usually think about philosophical problems intellectually.

But we can find that we are not only mind; we also have a physical body - we eat, we look at the world, we see colors, images; we hear the world. This area of perception - the realm of our physical body - can be represented by a second point on the base of the pyramid, giving us a line. The usual situation of our thought process finds us moving to and fro along this line as we consider problems from the contradictory viewpoints of idealism and materialism.

This line, and the two viewpoints which occur on it belong to the area of the intellect. Our civilization is based on the human intellect. This is the reality of the modern world. Human beings progress and regress along this line between the two viewpoints. And in the same way, our civilizations also move to and fro; from idealism to materialism and back. These movements have created our civilizations. So the existence of these two contradictory points is very important. But for human beings, contradictory situations give rise to great suffering. This is because we have not been able to find a satisfactory solution to the contradiction. We have developed wonderful civilizations, but at the same time, the great suffering of the human race arises directly from these contradictory situations.

Sometimes, however, in our day-to-day life, we transcend this mental conflict by acting. For example, we may be reflecting on the misery of human life. But if we act - have a bath, eat something, go for a walk - we can rid ourselves of those painful thoughts. Acting enables us to transcend the contradictions in our minds. Action can help us. This is a very simple and obvious fact.

Gautama Buddha recommended us to practice a form of action; that is, Zazen. Because Zazen is a form of action, we can say that, just as Buddhism is based on the practice of Zazen, so Buddhist theory is based on the *philosophy of action*. Using the *philosophy of action* to think about a problem is to take our philosophical analysis out of the line on which the idealism - materialism conflict exists, and to add a third point to form a two-dimensional plane; one on which we consider realistic solutions. But even a realistic philosophy cannot save us, because in the end it is only the movement of electrical currents in our cerebral tissue!

Philosophy can never be action. To realize what action is we have to transcend these three philosophies. And to do this we practice Zazen. The practice of Zazen enables us to find a solid, three-dimensional world. The three philosophies exist on a flat plane; Zazen, which is the standard of action itself makes our plane into a pyramid. To study real life, to study real action, we practice Zazen.

If we take someone like Hegel, did his philosophical position and his real life fit together?

Hegel started his philosophical exposition from sensory perception, which he explained from the point of view of the human mind. So his philosophical standpoint starts with the mind, travels to sensory perception and back again. His point of view oscillates along this line. He thought that he was using dialectic method, but in fact he was only moving to and fro between the opposing points. This means that his philosophical thoughts and conclusions always remained in the intellectual area; he was unable to synthesize his views into a third realistic viewpoint. But people do not think it strange that

his conclusions are in the area of the intellect. They think that it is perfectly natural for the conclusions to our thoughts to be thoughts themselves.

On the other hand, Marx starts his philosophical analysis from a materialistic standpoint. He explains the human mind on the basis of matter. This is diametrically opposite to Hegel, but nevertheless, Marx is also merely moving to and fro on the line between mind and matter. He also thought that he was using dialectic method. Because Marx's conclusions were scientific and objective; based on the world of matter which we all perceive in front of our eyes, people feel that Marx's conclusions have a practicality which Hegel's conclusions lack - that Marx is objective. But in fact both Hegel and Marx left their philosophical conclusions in the intellectual area. Their conclusions were worked out theoretically, intellectually.

Gautama Buddha found a solid area; he found that action itself is the solution to the conflict. And the *philosophy of action* is the theoretical basis which suggests to us that the solution is out of the area of the intellect. So Gautama Buddha's ideas differ from Marx's and Hegel's; Gautama Buddha constructed a solid where Marx and Hegel had built only a line on a plane. Using the four philosophies, we can create this solid construction for ourselves, and transcend the intellectual area in finding real solutions. To transcend the intellect is fundamentally important in Buddhism; without this transcendence, we will always remain caught in the solutions in our minds, even if we use dialectic method. We stay on the two-dimensional plane.

But we are in reality living in a three-dimensional solid area. This is a very simple fact which is very important to realize. We are living in the real world, which is not the same as the world of either our subjective or objective thoughts. To recognize this fact, we practice Zazen.

The theory I have discussed here is the *philosophy of action*. It is rather difficult to grasp, but it is the center of Buddhism. So to understand Buddhism, we must understand this fundamental theory. We should transcend the area of the intellect and enter the world of action.

We should act.

* * * *

Reality

In the last few lectures, I have talked about the three philosophical systems; idealism, materialism, and the elusive *philosophy of action*. Today I would like to go on to talk about the ultimate phase of Buddhism. Of course there is a link between the three philosophies so far discussed, and the ultimate phase, and it is this link that I would like to explain first.

I have explained that idealism is the first viewpoint in Buddhism, and that materialism is the second. I then went on to explain how these two opposing viewpoints can be synthesized into a third viewpoint, a realistic viewpoint. The *philosophy of action* deals with this synthesis. These three basic philosophical standpoints include all the philosophical systems in existence; any philosophical system can fit into one or other of those three basic categories.

Gautama Buddha was the first person to insist on a very simple but very important fact; that we do not live according to philosophical systems; we live in the real world itself. Although this is a very simple and apparently self-evident conclusion, many people in fact believe that the real world in which we live is the same world as that world which we build up in our heads, or that world which we perceive directly with our senses. The vast majority of people living on the face of the earth take either one or the other of these two positions; that is, they either believe in idealism, or they believe in materialism. This situation is actually rather strange, but it is the fact.

The same situation exactly existed in ancient India. Gautama Buddha saw that this was the case, and he was able to recognize one simple fact clearly; that all people are actually living in the *real* world. He saw that people are prone to mistake the representation of the world that they build up in their brains for the *real* world itself, or they think that the world that they perceive with their senses is the only world that exists. Although this may seem obvious, people do actually believe that the philosophical systems they use to view the world are the world itself. Materialists believe that the world of matter which we perceive around us is the only world; idealists believe that the world is governed by ideas.

Gautama Buddha urged us to see the *real* world in which we are living; he said it was very important for us to realize this, and he dedicated his life to teaching people this simple truth. He said that to recognize that we are living in reality, it is necessary for us to transcend intellectual thought, whether it is based on pure ideas or on scientific theory, because both in fact belong to the intellect. Even the *philosophy of action* belongs to the area of the intellect.

Gautama Buddha used the Sanskrit word *Dharma* to describe the reality in which we all live. But he said that this reality is in the end impossible to put into words completely. We can give a good explanation of idealism or materialism in words, and we can even explain the *philosophy of action*. But reality itself defies description. This presents quite a problem. Gautama Buddha recognized this fact. He gave us the practice of Zazen, saying that when we are practicing Zazen, we can recognize the reality that we are sitting in with our whole body and mind. He said that people who believe that the word of their thoughts is the real world are deluded. To free ourselves from those delusions is the aim of Buddhist practice.

When I show you how to practice Zazen, I usually say that there is no need to think about anything, and no need to feel any particular sensation during Zazen. When we are sitting in reality without thinking or feeling, we can recognize that very simple, primitive fact. And it is this experience that forms the basis of Buddhist philosophy. So to study Buddhism means to study reality; to practice Zazen is to study reality directly.

Such a direct and simple philosophy is very hard to find in this world. Usually, we try to solve the problems of life with our intellect alone. Almost all modern-day civilizations are based on the supremacy of the intellect. People are trying to live in the world of their ideas or the world of their senses. Buddhism teaches us the *philosophy of action*, which is itself a construction of the intellect. So to really know and experience the reality of this world, we need to practice Zazen. This is why Master

Dogen said, “*Just practice Zazen. Practicing Zazen is Buddhism; Buddhism is practicing Zazen.*” This is his teaching, and the center of Buddhism itself. When we recognize the nature of the real world, we can be Buddhas. To become Buddha means to recognize reality. This is the ultimate phase of Buddhism.

I would like to hear your questions, now. Are there any questions?

You said that materialism is also intellectual thinking. How is that?

Many people think that materialism is a realistic philosophy. But I do not agree. Materialism is a philosophy - and it is based on the concept *matter*. Materialists analyze all their problems from the basis of the concept *matter*. Although materialists think that matter is reality itself, it is only a concept invented by the intellect to explain that *something* we see out there. So their thoughts about the world spring from an intellectual conception of the world. That intellectual conception is not the real world itself.

When you say that most people think that the world of their thoughts, or the world of matter, is the real world, it sounds a long way from everyday life. The word ‘philosophy’ suggests a very grand and special sort of thinking. Can you give us a practical example? When we think that the world of our senses is the real world, what might we be doing?

The center of idealism is the mind. The center of materialism is matter. Matter is a concept which comes from the negation of mind. When we think about philosophical problems, we usually think about them either from a viewpoint based on mind, or one based on matter. People who consider themselves materialists have the concept of the real existence of matter as the basis to their thoughts. They are always conscious of the physical world around them. That’s what I mean when I say that a materialist is living in the world of matter. But the idea that the world we are living in is composed only of matter as we perceive it directly with our senses is a kind of illusion; it is just an idea in our brain.

But when you say that someone thinks that they are living in a material world, as for instance, if I want to go and buy a new car or a new suit, what kind of thought is that?

In fact, we are all living in reality. But when we use our intellectual powers to make sense of our life, we usually become either an idealist or a materialist in our point of view. We all live in the same reality, but people tend to think about the meaning of their life. We usually find that our consciousness is attuned to one of two worlds; the world of our thoughts, or the world of our perceptions. The world which we perceive with our senses is not reality itself; it is a world viewed through a kind of conceptual framework. And in that way, it is a kind of illusion. This is true equally of the world of our thoughts.

I understand your explanation on idealism and materialism. Plato was an idealistic philosopher. He stated that behind every building there must be the thought that produced the building first, in the architect’s mind, for instance. This is not of matter. It is outside time and space and therefore holds a different reality to the materialistic world. My mind is fundamentally dualistic. I cannot conceive of unity with my mind. We think of something as black or white. That’s one thing. The second thing is that my mind is conditioned by my past experiences. As reality must lie outside both time and space, and as my mind cannot conceive of anything outside time or space, I can only think of things in terms of past, present and future. Next, the conditioning. I, as a conditioned person, think with a conditioned mind. How can I be free from my conditioned mind? How can my conditioned mind understand reality? How will I get beyond my mind?

I would like to answer your first question. It concerns the dualistic nature of our understanding. Our dualistic understanding is a product of our intellectual processes; the intellectual faculty always divides and discriminates. This is its fundamental function. Without this fundamental capacity for discrimination, we are unable to think. So in considering philosophical problems, it is natural to divide; to discriminate. Our thoughts are always dualistic by nature. It is the fundamental nature of thinking. This is the first problem.

Your second question is about cause and effect. We need to understand the Buddhist theory of *Four Philosophies*. Gautama Buddha taught us that we are living in reality, and he said that in order to recognize this fact, we need to be free from the world of the intellect. To do this, Gautama Buddha said we should act. He said that we should act right. And to act right, he told us to practice Zazen. So his teachings are about morals or ethics; not moral or ethical problems as philosophy, but as problems of how to act, how to live practically. He said that to practice Zazen is the best way to be free from the world of our intellect and to act right.

By practicing Zazen, do you get an intuitive understanding of reality, rather than an intellectual one?

Yes. When we begin to practice, we enter reality itself at once. This is the situation. So Buddhist practice is a very easy way.

As a Catholic, I believe that the world was created by God. But at the same time, I believe in the existence of matter. I think that Buddhism is a kind of religion and a kind of philosophy too. But without a god. I think that the intellect is very important in Buddhism, not only in the sense of idealistic or materialistic thought. The intellect provides us with a kind of food; we must think, study and learn. Because we cannot realize reality without the intellect too. We cannot do it only by practicing Zazen. If you were to teach a little child only to practice Zazen without teaching it to do other things, the child would not grow. I think the practice of Zazen gives us one thing. We learn something new every day of our lives in this reality. But practicing Zazen is a kind of - how shall I say - our brain is a kind of computer which receives a lot of information every day. We are not able to use all the information in our computer without practicing Zazen. Without this practice, our computer does not work very well. It seems as if someone or something puts all the information in our brain's computer into the right place. And then, at the moment when we must act, we know how to act without thinking. It doesn't mean that we don't think; we think unconsciously. The practice of Zazen and enlightenment give us this possibility of realizing reality in the right way, without conscious thought.

In answer to what you have said, I would like to say something about the relationship between God and the Universe. As I have said, Buddhism realizes the imperfect nature of the intellect. Many people believe that the intellect is absolute. But Gautama Buddha criticized this idea. He said that intellectual ability is not absolute. He urged us to recognize that we are living in reality. In Christianity, God governs the Universe. In Marxism, there is no god. Buddhists say that the Universe is God. This is a situation that we cannot recognize with our intellect. We experience this truth in our right action. Buddhists practice Zazen to experience that the Universe is God himself; God is the Universe. Buddhists do not believe that God exists outside the Universe. Furthermore, Buddhists deny the materialistic idea that there is no God. This is the relationship between the three religions of the world today; Christianity, Marxism, and Buddhism. Which of these three religions we should select is an important problem for people today. But why must this be so?

Human beings have an inherent tendency to want to sacrifice their lives fighting for their beliefs. So idealists feel that it is worthwhile to lose their lives fighting against materialists. Materialists feel that to lose their lives fighting against idealists is worthwhile, too. This is the real situation in the world today. This tendency is inherent in the human psyche. It is a somewhat sad, but true, fact.

You said that our intellect is dualistic in nature. So why don't you include dualism along with idealism and materialism?

When we look at problems intellectually, our conclusion may sometimes be idealistic and sometimes materialistic. This is the unavoidable consequence of intellectual analysis. The intellect divides all things into black or white, good or bad, right or wrong. It is the way that our brain discriminates. So our thinking is inherently dualistic. But the Buddhist *philosophy of action* is able to synthesize these two sides, these two philosophical viewpoints. This philosophy of synthesis, however, is only itself a system of thought. Gautama Buddha told us to practice Zazen so that we could recognize the reality in which we live every moment. So in the area of the intellect, we are always dualistic. This is why there is no need to include dualism. The philosophy of dualism says that reality

consists of two parts: mind and matter. But this suggests that both mind and matter really exist. The Buddhist viewpoint is that both mind and matter are concepts which exist in our brain; that reality is undivided. People who believe that mind and matter both exist as real entities are, from the Buddhist standpoint, deluded. Buddhists recognize the existence of a single undivided reality, a belief which comes directly from the experience of Zazen.

However, we need the idealistic and materialistic viewpoints in order to construct a philosophical system. Without both a right leg and a left leg, Buddhist theory cannot stand. Idealism and materialism are the legs of Buddhist theory. Reality itself cannot be explained in words, but because we human beings have the capacity and inclination to think about our lives and the reality around us, we need a philosophical system. The Buddhist philosophical system allows idealistic thought and materialistic thought to co-exist. But it does not believe that mind and matter are two real entities.

You said that the fundamental difference between Christianity and Buddhism is that in Christianity, we have one God who is outside the Universe, and in Buddhism, the creator and the created are one. So since God is everything, he is also you and me.....

I said that God and the Universe are united, but this itself is only a method of explanation. Buddhists do not therefore feel it necessary to believe in the existence of some definite spirit or essence as an object. In Buddhist theory, we say that there is something which cannot be explained with words: the *Ineffable*. Some call it the Universe, others call it God, still others call it matter, spirit or soul. But in Buddhism, we say that the something which exists cannot be explained with words.

So what you mean is that we cannot know what the truth is because knowing is of the mind. We can only be the truth?

Yes. And we can experience it; we can act. We can practice Zazen.

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