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# Dōgen's Primer on the Nonmoral Virtues of the Good Person

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# Dōgen's Primer on the Nonmoral Virtues of the Good Person

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## Abstract

The *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* provides a good introduction to Dōgen's ideas about the virtues possessed by "the good person." His depiction includes, but extends beyond, the conception of a "morally good" human being. This is evident by the number of "nonmoral" virtues that are manifest in the text. Edmund Pincoffs presents a schematization of numerous virtues based on his conception of virtues and vices as dispositional properties that provide ground for preference or avoidance of persons. This schematization seems especially well suited for an exploration and description of the nonmoral virtues that appear in the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*.

In the last fifty years, the Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253) has attracted substantial attention. This is true not only of those who seek to better

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understand Japanese religions, but also those who pursue comparative studies in the history and philosophy of Asian and Western thought. Toward these ends students exploring Dōgen's thought have often turned to Western traditions as avenues of discovery.<sup>2</sup> Recent decades have seen a renewed philosophical and religious interest in "the virtues"; this has begun to influence the study of Dōgen, albeit in a small way so far, and this article is intended as a contribution to that effort.

The range and complexity of Dōgen's writings present a challenge for anyone seeking to understand him, but some texts provide a good, accessible introduction. A case in point is the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (hereinafter *SZ*), which has been labeled a "primer" of Sōtō Zen.<sup>3</sup> Dōgen's teachings therein cover numerous topics; a significant amount of space is devoted to describing the characteristics of a good person. At one point Dōgen remarks:

A man of old has said: "Do not talk about the conduct of others if you don't resemble them." This means that, without knowing or studying a person's virtues, one should not, upon seeing his weaknesses, conclude that he is a good person but suffers certain defects and does bad things. Look at just his virtues, not his shortcomings. This

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<sup>2</sup> Examples include the diverse philosophical and religious applications of the Kyoto School and the phenomenological studies of T. P. Kasulis and David Edward Shaner. For examples of the former see Franck (1982); for the latter, see Kasulis (1981) and Shaner (1985).

<sup>3</sup> Masunaga (1978). I am indebted to this work for the translated passages of the *SZ* appearing in this article, though I have made a few minor changes for which I must take full responsibility. Following scholarly convention and for the sake of accessibility for those referring to other texts, citations of the text provide the chapter and section of the *SZ* wherein a passage appears.

is the meaning of the saying: “The gentleman sees the virtues but not the shortcomings of others.” (SZ 3.8)

As with the *junzi* of Confucius, “the good person” expressed in the SZ includes, but also extends beyond, the conception of a moral human being.<sup>4</sup> We must note that the virtues of Dōgen’s good person are not systematically expounded in the text. This is not surprising, because it is not a formal treatise but a collection of Dōgen’s teachings delivered at Kōshōji and recorded by his disciple Ejō (1198-1280). But if we can identify and schematize some of the virtues manifest in the text, we will gain insight into the picture of the good person it presents.

Virtues are widely distributed across Dōgen’s writings, and we can get a sense of this, albeit a limited one, by looking at the table of contents of his massive *Shōbōgenzō*. For example, we find the chapter on “*Bodaisatta Shishōbō*,” translated by some as “The Cardinal Virtues of the Bodhisattva.” In addition to the few instances where Dōgen devotes a chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* to virtues, we also see lists of virtues incorporated into various chapters, often appearing more than once. For example, in the *Ippyaku-hachi Hōmyō-mon* (“One Hundred and Eight Ways to Enlightenment”) we find the aforementioned four virtues of the bodhisattva and the six *pāramitās* both of which appear in the *Makahannayaharamitsu* chapter and elsewhere. (The *pāramitās*, typically translated as “excellences” or “perfections,” are often described as those virtues perfected by the bodhisattva in the course of his/her development.)

One could subsequently demonstrate the presence of the *pāramitās* in the SZ, proceed to identify other virtues in the *Shōbōgenzō*, and repeat the process with other virtues discovered. Thus, this meth-

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<sup>4</sup> For a good discussion of Confucius’s conception of the *junzi* see Waley, 1938, 34-38.

odology could help to identify the virtues of a good person in our chosen text, and organize them via the various virtue lists one finds in the *Shōbōgenzō*. To the extent that this project would succeed, it would also strengthen the position of those who argue that across the range of Dōgen's writings one finds overall a continuity and unity in viewpoint.

But if this approach is useful for identifying and organizing for review many of the virtues of the SZ, it does not suffice as a holistic description of them. For that we need a schematization of the virtues in the text. Granted, it might be possible to develop a schematization wherein virtue lists like the *bodaisatta shishōbō* and *pāramitās* and others were components. But this is a daunting task, and in any event it would not necessarily be the most effective one. Perhaps we could better accomplish this task by appropriating a good template deriving from a source other than Dōgen's writings and applying it to the text.

I think we find a serviceable template in Edmund L. Pincoffs's book *Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics*. Pincoffs's book contributes to the debates generated by the revived interest in the subject of the virtues in recent decades. To this end he provides a schematization of the virtues (85). To what degree Pincoffs achieves his objective is outside our purview; the intention here is simply to employ his schematization as a helpful aid in attempting to describe some of the virtues one encounters within the SZ.

In the course of his analysis, Pincoffs notes a distinction between moral and nonmoral virtues. He does not offer a hard and fast definition distinguishing the two, inasmuch as it is not necessary for his agenda—and neither is it necessary here. But generally speaking nonmoral virtues have to do with those good dispositions that, whether a person possesses or lacks them, do not subject the person to moral judgment (86–87). For example, we may avoid a person who lacks the virtue of cheerfulness not because she is “bad” in a moral sense but because the lack of

this virtue simply makes her less desirable, someone we don't find "good" to be around, or at least less so because of this lack. Granted, there may be times when a lack of cheerfulness may play a factor in a moral judgment of a person, but this is not an inherent aspect of the virtue, as it seems to be with honesty or sincerity or other qualities we readily recognize as moral virtues. Virtues and their opposites, vices, are "dispositional properties that provide ground for preference or avoidance of persons," according to Pincoffs. Though Dōgen does not offer a precise definition of the virtues, nonetheless Pincoffs's perspective is useful for understanding Dōgen's view of the good person, inasmuch as the latter stresses the importance of choosing an association with such individuals:

According to an old Master: "If you develop a close relationship with a good man, it is like walking in the fog or dew." Although you do not actually wet your garment, it gradually becomes damp. What he is saying is that if you are close to a good person, you unconsciously become good yourself. (SZ 4.4)

That there is a preponderance of moral virtues in the SZ is evident from even a cursory review of the text, and not surprising when read in light of Dōgen's moral thinking. For Dōgen, the heart of Zen is *zazen*; *zazen* is nondual with enlightenment; ultimately, morality proceeds from *zazen*/enlightenment. "When doing *zazen*, what precepts are not upheld, what merits not produced?" remarks Dōgen in SZ 1.2, and among the "merits" he means are positive manifestations we call virtues. Thus the text is saturated with references to good dispositions we normally think of as moral virtues, such as compassion, honesty, sincerity, loyalty, benevolence, altruism, selflessness and so forth.

Exploring these and other moral virtues in the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* would tell us much about what Dōgen understands a good per-

son to be, but this is outside the parameters of this discussion, and in any event has been treated elsewhere (Mikkelsen). Relevant for our purposes here is that nonmoral virtues can also be identified in the text. If we can identify, describe, and categorize these virtues, we can gain a fuller understanding of what Dōgen means by a good person, extending the discussion beyond his conception of moral goodness. Thus what follows is limited to a consideration of the nonmoral virtues present in the good person.

Of the nonmoral virtues we can distinguish between “instrumental” versus “noninstrumental” virtues (Pincoffs 86-87). Instrumental virtues increase the probability that a person will successfully pursue various goals, ends, or objectives. Virtues adhering especially to persons in their own individual undertakings can be specifically labeled “agent instrumental”: examples are persistence, courage, alertness, carefulness, resourcefulness, prudence, energy, strength, and determination. Virtues that adhere to persons in joint or communal undertakings are labeled “group instrumental”: examples are cooperativeness, “practical wisdom,” and “the virtues of leaders and followers” (Pincoffs 86-87).

Let us begin with the agent instrumental virtues. In the SZ, these virtues typically arise in the context of the theme of following the Buddhist path. For example, Dōgen repeatedly invokes “determination” when discussing the goal of achieving the Way. Arousing determination is necessary for the beginner: “Although you may be base and inept now, if you arouse the determination to seek the Way and practice, you will succeed. Knowing this, you should immediately give rise to this determination” (SZ 4.6). Having aroused determination, it must be cultivated if one is to persist in the Way:

Therefore, unifying your minds and concentrating your determination, study under a teacher and seek the Way. Jewels become objects of beauty by polishing; man be-



comes a true man by training. What jewel is lustrous from  
 the beginning; what person is superior from the outset?  
 You must always keep polishing and always keep training.  
 (SZ 4.5)

In SZ 2.25 Dōgen recounts a lecture by his master Ju-ching, who attributed the decline of Buddhism to the decline of *zazen* practice. When advised to reduce the meditation periods because monks were falling asleep, Ju-ching was infuriated, and flatly refused. Those who don't have the mind that seeks the Way, he maintained, would still fall asleep in the meditation hall; furthermore, "for those who practice with determination, the longer the sitting period, the more they enjoy their sitting." Similar to this is another discussion of *zazen* practice wherein Dōgen acknowledges that students have different capacities, but nonetheless "each of you should practice with utmost determination. Out of ten of you, all ten should gain enlightenment. My late Zen Master, Ju-ching, encouraged his monks in this way" (SZ 1.14). Arousing the determination to seek the way is not only necessary, but imperative, given that "impermanence is a fact before our very eyes" (SZ 2.14); therefore, "if you can spur and arouse your determination with the thought that you might die tonight or tomorrow, or that at any time you might meet with some terrible misfortune, you can expect to gain enlightenment" (SZ 2.20).

Other agent instrumental virtues also appear in Dōgen's development of this theme, such as that of single-mindedness: "Just don't let your mind cling to worldly affairs but study the Way with single-mindedness" (SZ 1.16), a point reiterated in SZ 6.17. Furthermore, we might read SZ 2.2 as praise of the virtue of resourcefulness. Eisai, the abbot of Kenninji, received a petition for help from a man who seeks to save himself and his family from starvation. The temple itself was poor, and at first Eisai was stymied, but eventually the Master found a solu-

tion: he took a copper halo planned for a statue of the Buddha and gave it to the poor man to sell. Dōgen praises the “excellence” of Eisai’s attitude and counsels his students to learn from it.

Present also in the text are group instrumental virtues. What Pincoffs describes loosely and no more specifically than “virtues of leaders” (Pincoffs 84-85) can be discerned in some instances wherein Dōgen draws upon political and military leaders as exemplars. In SZ 1.8 we read of General Minamoto Yoritomo, who refused to carry out an illegal order to arrest a man. Dōgen praises Yoritomo, adding “with such a mind he later governed the land. Students of the present day should also have this mind; if you are not such a man yourself, do not criticize others” (SZ 1.8). What we might label the virtue of “juridic tenacity” seems to express one of the good dispositions. The next section begins as follows:

There once was once a general named Lu Chung-lien who served P’ing-yuan Chun and subdued the enemies of the Court. When P’ing-yuan praised his skill and sought to reward him with much gold and silver, Lu declined, saying, “A general’s duty is to subdue the enemy; it is not to obtain rewards or things.”

Lu Chung-lien is famous for his straightforwardness. Even in the ordinary worlds, those who are wise simply are what they are and accomplish their own way. (SZ 1.9)

A close reading of the passage suggests Dōgen offers up at least three group instrumental virtues that a leader possesses: (1) the “martial dutifulness” that prioritizes subduing the enemy; (2) the “selfless restraint” that acts without consideration of self-reward; and (3) the “straightforwardness” in dealing with others. Perhaps the passage could also be read as extolling a fourth group instrumental virtue, namely the “practical

wisdom” need to carry out an accomplish some goal being sought, the wisdom that has to do with effective use of social structures, effective delegation of authority, and so forth. In any event, we note that once again Dōgen subsequently tells his students to emulate a general; elsewhere Dōgen offers as virtuous exemplars leaders like kings and ministers, as in SZ 4.10.

We should observe how Dōgen exhorts the students to emulate the virtues of leaders, though of course they are themselves followers inasmuch as they participate in a master-disciple relationship. Regarding the virtues of followers, we can note that Dōgen often stresses the importance of receiving the guidance of one’s teacher, and this includes the becoming a good person: “if you follow a good Zen teacher, you come to resemble a good man, and your mind naturally becomes so” (SZ 5.15). Students are counseled to drop their preconceptions and follow the words of the teacher (see, for example, SZ 5.13); at times this instruction is advanced in an extreme fashion, so much so that “you must believe it if the Zen Master tells you that the Buddha is a toad or an earthworm” (SZ 1.13). However, statements of this nature must be balanced against other instances where Dōgen emphasizes the importance of not always accepting and clinging to the words of ancient Zen masters (as we read in SZ 4.1 and 4.3). Inasmuch as the sections of the text are records of teachings which arise out of Dōgen’s interactions with his listeners, and it is not always clear to whom Dōgen is speaking at any given moment, it is unclear whether these differences in teaching reflect outright contradictions, different contexts, or the pedagogical use of *upāya* (“skillful means”) in order to tailor the message to the perceived spiritual capacity of the listeners. In any event, what Dōgen has to say to monks includes remarks like the following:

Students who have been moved to study the Way should  
merely follow the rest of the assembly in their conduct . . .

If you practice by doing what the assembly does, you should be able to attain the Way. It is like riding in a boat without knowing how to row. If you leave everything up to the sailor, you will reach the other shore, irrespective of whether you know how to row or not. If you follow a good teacher and practice together with the assembly and have no concepts of the Self, you will naturally become a man of the Way. (SZ 6.7)

Here we see Dōgen promoting a disposition of reliance on the *sangha* as the forum for seeking enlightenment. As with the agent instrumental virtues, the group instrumental virtues of the SZ typically arise in the context of teachings about following the Way.

Over against the instrumental virtues are noninstrumental virtues, a much larger group than the former. They are so-named because they are not primarily valued for how they contribute to the successful execution of an undertaking, though they may do so at times. Pincoffs describes these virtues as a varied lot, and he divides them up into three major subdivisions: aesthetic, meliorating, and moral. The third subdivision, of course, is outside the scope of this article; we can look at the other two in turn and see if they assist us in our descriptive task.

Aesthetic virtues “are appreciated for what they are, for the vision themselves; we are grateful for their presence; they are exemplars of what humans can be; their absence is impoverished because it impoverishes life” (Pincoffs 86). These can be further broken down into two groups: noble and charming. Noble aesthetic virtues include dispositions like dignity, virility, magnanimity, serenity, and nobility itself. Charming aesthetic virtues include gracefulness, wittiness, vivaciousness, imaginativeness, whimsicality, liveliness, and so forth.

When we discuss the noble aesthetic virtues in the text, we can begin with a return to the quote presented in the second paragraph of this article. Therein we saw Dōgen counsel his listeners to look only at a person's virtues, not his/her shortcomings (SZ 3.8). What we see here is the promotion of cultivating magnanimity, a virtue somewhat overlapping with other noble aesthetic virtues inasmuch as it is closely associated with dignity, nobility, and so forth. Elsewhere we see Dōgen counsel monks that "they must conduct themselves with mutual dignity, correcting mistakes, and practicing Buddhism in the same way" (SZ 4.13); conducting oneself with dignity of a monk is part of the conduct of the Buddhas and Patriarchs (SZ 3.10).

Noble aesthetic virtues are concentrated in a passage towards the end of SZ 2.24:

Once you realize that for each of the four dignified attitudes there are established precedents and that you must just practice in the manner of your predecessors, then you cannot help but gain the Way. Ordinary people think of conforming to the Will of Heaven; Zen monks think of conforming to the will of the Buddha. While each must approach his labors in the same way, what is gained differs, for the monk gains something far better, something once gained lasts forever. For the sake of this great serenity, the practitioner must only determine in his own heart to undergo the temporary hardships that befall this illusory body during one lifetime and to follow the will of the Buddha.

The "four dignified attitudes" of the above passage refer to walking, standing, sitting, and lying down which, when conducted properly, inspire respect in others and convey a noble deportment. Accompanying this virtuous demeanor of dignity and nobility is serenity, a true serenity

transcending the “egoistic view of bodily tranquility” arising from ideas of bodily comfort, as Dōgen subsequently tells us at the very end of the same section; this serenity is a function of Buddhist practice, as he notes in SZ 2.23.

But Dōgen warns against what philosophers would call the semblance of a virtue, that is, the mere outward appearance of virtue that does not reveal one's true inner disposition. In SZ 2.10 Dōgen asserts, “the people of Japan respect and esteem others for their outward appearance, without knowing the true inner virtues.” The following example specifically addresses the noble aesthetic virtues in this context:

When you look at a person, he should be seen from the standpoint of his true virtue. Don't judge by his outward appearance or his supposed virtue.

In ancient times, a man came to Confucius wishing to receive his teaching. Confucius asked him: “Why do you want to become my disciple?”

The man answered, “When I saw you at Court, you displayed nobility and dignity. This made me want to receive your teaching.”

At this Confucius ordered his disciples to bring out vehicles, luxurious costumes, gold, silver, and other treasures. These he gave to the man, saying, “You did not come to learn from me,” and he sent him away. (SZ 6.11)

Dōgen follows this story with a similar one about Uji no Kampaku, who hung a magnificent robe on a pole and paid honor to it; when asked why, he replied, “Others do not respect me for my virtue. It is only this fine robe they respect.” (The relationship between true nobility and respect is partially reflected in SZ 5.19, wherein we see Dōgen quote a proverb:

“If a man’s actions are noble, others will respect him, but if a man’s learning is great, others will overtake him.”)

As noted previously, SZ 2.24 contains a passage that manifests a concentration of noble aesthetic virtues; immediately afterward we see the following words: “If you observe the rules and precepts, your body naturally feels at ease, your actions take on grace, and your appearance attracts others.” Perhaps this statement would encapsulate what Dōgen ultimately has to say about the aesthetic charming virtues. (That virtues in general attract others to pursue the Way is a point made in SZ 2.3.) Beyond the specific reference to gracefulness, however, it is difficult to discover manifestations of individual, aesthetic charming virtues in the text. True, we might detect a few in passing, such as Dōgen’s comment about the famous story of Nan-ch’uan killing a cat: “Later, when Nan-ch’uan told this story to Chao-chou, the latter put his straw sandal on his head and went out, an excellent performance” (SZ 1.6). The story calls to mind the kind of liveliness and whimsicality attributed to some Zen masters as evidenced by the accounts of the *Mumonkan* and *Hekiganroku*. Yet the overall tenor of the text leads one to suspect that Dōgen would not wholeheartedly embrace these or other charming aesthetic virtues such as wittiness and vivaciousness. In SZ 1.17, for example, Dōgen states:

When ordinary men and women get together, whether young or old, they very often chat about things of a most improper nature. This diverts their minds and makes for lively conversation. It gives them enjoyment and serves to alleviate boredom, but this kind of talk is expressly forbidden for monks. Even among laypersons, it rarely occurs when good, sober, and courteous people gather to discuss serious problems.

Indeed, perhaps it is telling to see how in his observations about lively conversation Dōgen extols the virtues of sobriety and courteousness.

Pincoffs identifies these two virtues not with charming aesthetic virtues but noninstrumental meliorating formal virtues, discussed below.

Later in the same passage Dōgen notes that violent words sometimes lead people to enlightenment—and we can note that the cat-killing story mentioned provides an example of this—but worthless conversation obstructs the Way. (SZ 5.10 also counsels avoiding idle gossip in favor of practicing *zazen*.) “Worthless” would seem to be the judgment that Dōgen would decree for most of the charming aesthetic virtues, essentially because they do not assist—and may even hinder—true Buddhist practice, given that life is short and actualizing enlightenment is critical. Indeed, if we search the SZ for an aesthetic theory, we discover that Dōgen regards literary attainments as a hindrance to practice, and he counsels disregard for style when attempting to set down in writing Buddhist truth (SZ 2.11); furthermore, “grammatical niceties do not matter if you just express the teachings of the Buddha” (SZ 2.8).

Noninstrumental meliorating virtues are those that can be said to make common life more tolerable. Pincoffs sees these virtues as adhering to those involved in a communal endeavor structured for a common goal (such as monks in a monastery), though not limited to such an enterprise. Meliorating virtues are of three kinds: mediating, temperamental, and formal. Regarding the first of these, mediating meliorating virtues are valued in a world where peacemaking, negotiating, and appeasement are a necessary aspect of existence. Virtues of this sort include tolerance, reasonableness, and tactfulness.

That Dōgen promotes the virtue of tactfulness is evident in the following passage:

Because monks have no personal property, they make wisdom and virtue their treasures. If someone who is without the mind that seeks the Way does something bad,



do not let your expression show your displeasure; nor condemn him for doing evil. Just explain things to him in such a way that he does not become angry. It is said that something that encourages violence does not last long. Although you may be correct in your censure of someone, your very correctness does not last long if you use harsh words. (SZ 4.16)

Dōgen's words in this passage also reflect another virtue, one we can label "verbal skillfulness." Verbal skillfulness is a logical extension of the Buddhist concept of *upāya* ("skillful means"), and it seems best characterized as a mediating meliorating virtue as Pincoffs identifies the term. Tactfulness and verbal skillfulness appear together at other points in the text. For example, SZ 1.7 begins with the observation that "monks must not be scolded and castigated with harsh words; nor should they be held up to scorn by having their faults pointed out" and ends with the instruction that if one wishes to compassionately address the weaknesses of others "you must do so without speaking directly of their errors so that you do not arouse their anger."

Temperamental meliorating virtues are numerous. They are the virtues that make people easier to live with amid the challenges of communal life. Gentleness, humorousness, amiability, cheerfulness, warmth, appreciativeness, openness, even-temperedness, noncomplainingness, and nonvindictiveness are some examples. These virtues are often best identified and appreciated via the recognition of their corresponding vices, as exemplified in the last two virtues of the above list.

Temperamental meliorating virtues would certainly seem to be valuable in monastic life, and we can discern some of them in the SZ, such as the mention of the Buddha's gentleness amidst a discussion of how to treat one's fellow students (SZ 3.5), the exhortation to noncomplainingness when dealing with the stress of administering to the *sangha*

(SZ 2.6), and so forth. Yet these virtues are not prominent in the text overall. Possibly this is partly explained by the fact that the text addresses a range of people, not all of them active as monks or nuns; possibly the value of these virtues for monastics are so obvious as not to merit any great degree of attention. Perhaps we would be more likely to find evidence of these virtues in a text like Dōgen's *Eihei Shingi*, which directly addressed monastic practice. Therein we find the following passage:

The whole pure assembly should abide in mindfulness that everyone in the study hall is each other's parent, sibling, relative, teacher, and friend. With mutual affection take care of each other sympathetically, and if you harbor some idea that it is very difficult to encounter each other like this, nevertheless display an expression of harmony and accommodation. (Leighton and Okumura 109-110)

Promotion of good dispositions such as affinity, appreciativeness, adaptability, even-temperedness, and so forth seem to be intended here, and maybe we would see evidence of more temporal meliorating virtues if we perused the *Eihei Shingi* further—but that task is outside the scope of this article.

In addition to courteousness and sobriety mentioned earlier, meliorating formal virtues include politeness, decency, modesty, hospitableness, and unpretentiousness. "Their common characteristic is that they meliorate by adhering to customs, common understandings, or practices that themselves meliorate" (Pincoffs 89). Often these can be implied from context and the mention of related virtues in the text, though we can point to places in the text where their presence is clear. For example, we saw mention of courtesy in SZ 1.17 quoted above; elsewhere, Dōgen praises the Zen Master Tan-hsia T'ien-jan and others for their courtesy and politeness:

From the records of his life we learn that he always observed the proprieties, whether sitting or standing; when a guest was present, he always made sure to face him . . . Furthermore, from what I have seen and heard, all the other enlightened Masters and Patriarchs who attained the Way observed the precepts and the proprieties and esteemed highly even the slightest good. I have never heard of an enlightened Zen Master who made light of good capacities. (SZ 3.9)

The myriad meanings of modesty are intertwined with some other virtues in this list, and we can display this with the help of Dōgen's text. First of all, there is the modesty of observing decency in dress. Dōgen contends that observance of community mores on this point is appropriate for those seeking the Way:

Even by the standards of ordinary society, the lack of propriety—such as changing your clothing improperly even when you are where people cannot see you or are in a darkened room; or sitting or lying indecently so that parts that should be hidden are exposed—is an insult to heaven and to ghosts. Hide what should be hidden; and be ashamed of what is shameful, just as if you were always in the presence of others. (SZ 2.13)

There is also modesty in the sense of showing a moderate estimation of one's own abilities. We see Dōgen's emphasis on this by his warning against its opposing vice:

Of the shortcomings people have, the greatest is arrogance . . . Students and monks these days think that they excel others because of their knowledge of the teachings. Never take pride in such a thing. It is the height of arro-

gance to call attention to the errors of those beneath you  
or to criticize your seniors and colleagues for their mis-  
takes. (SZ 5.22)

Finally, that modesty we mean by unpretentiousness is also addressed in Dōgen's caution against arrogance; in the same section we read that "Those who consider their wealth as a just reward and who pay no attention to the envy of the poor are called arrogant . . . even though a person can afford to ride in a fine carriage, he should use discretion in front of the poor."

From the above discussion we can begin to construct a picture of what Dōgen conceived a good person to be, at least insofar as such a person can be said to possess certain virtues. As noted before, obviously he/she is a moral person. But he/she also possesses certain dispositional qualities and concomitant external characteristics that assist in the pursuit and attainment of the Way in the achievement of enlightenment, especially a single-minded determination to practice Buddhism unceasingly. He/she pursues this goal with an effort and skill comparable to a great leader, but within the context of, and mutually contributing to, the Buddhist community under the guidance of a Zen master as befits a good follower. He/she is observant of the proprieties of group behavior and personal deportment; he/she possesses a dignified and magnanimous personality; his/her appearance is noble, serene, and modest; and though his/her actions are graceful and gentle, nonetheless they convey a seriousness of purpose.

This picture of a good person according to Dōgen's understanding is necessarily general in character, because it does not take into account differences in station of life, most notably between the laity and those leading the religious life. Certainly Dōgen was primarily interested in presenting the picture of a good monk or nun, and if we were to specifically address the matter here, we would need to take other textual refer-

ences specifically directed to them into account. That is beyond the scope of this discussion, but SZ 3.3 gives us a good idea of how such an inquiry might proceed. In the course of a discussion of virtues, Dōgen notes, “the truly good man does things for others, even if now or in the future they are in no way aware of it. How much better must the attitude of the Zen monk be!” Repeatedly in the text we see references to the virtuous behavior of lay people and Dōgen’s subsequent comment to the effect that “if even lay persons have this attitude, how much more so should a monk” (SZ 2.3). This would seemingly lead us to consider not only whether those leading the religious life must cultivate “super” levels of the virtues (super honesty, super conscientiousness, and so forth, but also whether there are virtues especially attuned to the religious state itself, such as the aforementioned *bodaisatta shishōbō*, the “cardinal virtues of the bodhisattva,” because monks and nuns are, in a sense, bodhisattvas-in-training, or better yet, bodhisattvas unfolding.

In any event, we must remember that what Dōgen had to say about becoming a good person is not exhausted by a discussion of the cultivation of the virtues. We must specifically note the Buddhist precepts, which are both prescriptions for becoming the good person and, ultimately speaking, descriptions of a good person as well. In some places in the text virtues and precepts converge in the description of a good person, as in the discussion of the Zen Master Tan-hsia T’ien-jan mentioned previously, a man who “observed the precepts and the proprieties” (SZ 3.10); elsewhere Dōgen speaks of the monk who “knows the Buddhist precepts, and follows the Buddhist Way . . . is following the Buddhist teachings and has a better chance of developing both the inner and outer virtues” (SZ 2.10).

Earlier in this article we noted how in SZ 4.4 Dōgen stresses the importance of associating with a good person. Later in the text Dōgen

reiterates this point, and what he has to say serves as a good concluding quote for the above analysis:

Therefore, the student, even though he may not possess the mind that seeks the Way, should associate with a good person, become involved in good circumstances, and hear and see the same thing a number of times . . . For those who have already aroused the mind that seeks the Way, each hearing serves to polish the mind and make for progress, even though the subject may be the same. Those who do not have this mind may not gain very much on the first or second hearing, but if they keep listening steadily, it will slowly soak in, as a garment that gradually gets damp from walking through the fog and dew. If they hear the words of a good person many times, shame naturally arises for not having the mind that seeks the Way, and that mind will truly arise of itself . . . Do not repeatedly draw near to anything that hinders the practice of the Way. No matter how painful or difficult it may be, draw near to a good friend and practice the Way. (SZ 5.15)

Becoming a good person is inextricably linked with attaining the Way. This helps to explain why Dōgen's discussion of the virtues is so often articulated in the context of following the Way, be they instrumental virtues or noninstrumental in character, nonmoral or moral, as we have seen in the course of this discussion.

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