



# **DOGEN ZENJI GOROKU**

Sayings of Zen Master Dogen

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## Introduction

Zen is traditionally called “a separate transmission outside doctrine, pointing directly to the human mind to see its essential nature and realize enlightenment.” The distinction between experience and doctrine is emphasized in the *Lankavatara sutra*, a scripture associated with the founding of Zen in China, which says that Buddhism is not a set of doctrines, but doctrines are expedients of Buddhism, like specific remedies for particular ailments.

The essential nature of mind, the central initiatory experience of Zen, refers to the mind untrammelled by acquired mental habits, opinions, and prejudices ingrained by personal history and cultural conditioning. A classic illustration of this likens mind and essential nature to ice and water; the ice represents mind “frozen” into habitual patterns of thought and feeling molded by circumstances, water represents the original fluid nature of the essence of awareness.

The initial disentanglement and awakening of pristine awareness is followed by what is called “nurturing the sacred embryo,” maturing the ability to remain unfettered while mastering deliberate use of mind, so that one becomes “free to go or stay,” able to “let go or hold fast,” to “go against the current or go along,” adapting to conditions independently.

Zen arose in China (where it is pronounced Chan) several centuries after the introduction of Buddhist scriptures from India and Central Asia, but Zen lore envisions its “special transmission outside doctrine” continuing from the time of the historical Buddha a thousand years before its introduction to China. Zen was likewise established in Japan as an independent movement hundreds of years after the introduction of the scriptural Buddhist teachings from Korea and China. This pattern of preparation was also recapitulated in the lives of many distinguished Zen masters, who entered into Zen after many years of study and practice of the scriptural teachings. One of the outstanding Japanese masters who went to China after long study of doctrine and returned to establish a Zen school in the thirteenth century was the famous Dogen Zenji, whose *goroku*, “record of sayings” is presented here in English for the first time.

Born into an aristocratic family in the year 1200, Dogen was taught literary Chinese at an early age and groomed to become a courtier in the old imperial system of Japan. At that time the dominant political authority in Japan had been usurped by military clans, and Dogen abandoned the path to court service in his thirteenth year, on the eve of his debut. Taking refuge with an uncle in Buddhist orders, he eventually became a monk in the powerful

Tendai school, where he studied both exoteric and esoteric systems. After some years he was directed to a master of a newly established school combining Tendai with Zen, and was eventually given recognition as a master of Zen. Subsequently he traveled to China with his Zen teacher to seek further enlightenment from Chan masters on the continent.

At that time northern China was ruled by Mongolian warlords, limiting Dogen's access to traditional Chan centers, but he met several masters of the residual Southern Song dynasty. Chinese Chan records of the time abound in laments over the degenerate state of the school, which was already over six hundred years old, and Dogen too was not satisfied with the teachers he met, until he was finally directed to master Rujing (pronounced Nyojo in Japanese) on Mt. Tiantong (Tendo). Rujing impressed Dogen greatly and accepted him as a disciple.

According to the Japanese Zen classic *Denkoroku*, "Records of Transmission of Light," a collection of enlightenment stories tracing a succession of masters from India to China to Japan, "Dogen studied with Zen master Rujing. Once during meditation sitting late at night Rujing said to the assembly, 'Zen study is the shedding of mind and body.' Hearing this, suddenly Dogen was

greatly enlightened. He went right to the abbot's room and lit incense. Rujing asked him, 'Why are you burning incense?' Dogen said, 'My body and mind have been shed.' Rujing said, 'Body and mind shed, shed body and mind.' Dogen said, 'This is a temporary byway—don't approve me arbitrarily.' Rujing said, 'I'm not.' Dogen said, 'What is that which isn't given arbitrary approval?' Rujing said, 'Shedding body and mind.' Dogen bowed. Rujing said, 'The shedding is shed.'"

The author of *Denkoroku*, Keizan, a master in the fourth generation of Dogen's lineage, explains, "Comprehend thoroughly, investigate and penetrate completely, and you will know there is a body that has no skin, flesh, bones, or marrow. This body cannot be shed even if one tries to shed it; it cannot be abandoned even if one tries to abandon it. Therefore this realm is referred to by the expression, 'when all is exhausted, there is a place that cannot be emptied.' If you can understand thoroughly, you won't doubt what the Zen masters and Buddhas say. What is the principle? Clear as pure light, no inside or outside—is there any body or mind to be shed?"

In *Keiso Dokuyaku*, "Poison from a Thorny Thicket," Zen master Hakuin gives a more detailed story of Dogen's meeting with

Rujing and the practice of “shedding body and mind.” According to this account, “On the second day of the seventh month of the year 1225, Zen master Dogen of Eihei went far away to China along with Dharma master Myozen on a merchant ship. Meeting Zen master Rujing on Mt. Tiantong, he made three prostrations and said, ‘This insignificant person from a distant region has been fortunate enough to be able to sit in on your teaching; please be so very kind and so very compassionate as to point out what is most essential.’ Rujing lit incense, joined his palms, and said, ‘This Chan school of ours, ever since it has been accurately transmitted, has been rooted in not leaving the meditation hall, considering just sitting to be genuine practice. Now in many places it often happens that even though they concentrate on long sitting without lying down, they don’t meet enlightened teachers and do not learn the right way to enter absorption, so theirs is no different from the sitting meditation of outsiders. How can they ever, ever manage to enter the great absorption of the Buddhas?’ Dogen then made three prostrations and said, ‘Please be so very kind and so very compassionate as to point out the right way to enter absorption.’ Rujing lit incense, joined his palms, and said, ‘When you sit meditating you should put your mind in your left palm.’ Dogen then made three prostrations and

left. One day Dogen went to Rujing's room, made three prostrations, and said, 'Following your directions, I put my mind in my left palm; now both hands have disappeared, and there's no place to put my mind.' Rujing lit incense, joined his palms, and said, 'You should make your mind fill your whole body, not leaving a single point empty in your three hundred and sixty joints and eighty-four thousand pores.' One day Dogen went into Rujing's room, made three prostrations, and said, 'Following your directions, I put my mind in my whole body. Now my mind and body have both dropped off, and it's like the disk of the sun shining in an endless sky, with not even the form of a disk being seen.' Rujing lit incense, joined his palms, and said smiling, 'Having flowed around in birth and death for countless eons, today you have finally entered genuine untainted great meditation absorption. Keep it real, and don't lose it.' Dogen prostrated himself three times, and three times again, then left weeping. This is the secret of the Soto sect."

Another exchange between Dogen and his teacher Rujing symbolically illustrating the Zen process is related in the record of sayings of Rujing, reported by Dogen himself. Dogen asked Rujing, "When there is not a fleck of cloud in the blue sky, how is that?" Rujing said, "Still only half the issue." Dogen asked, "How is it when



the whole issue is brought up?” Rujing said, “After the accomplishment of clear sky is consummated, one step, then another.” Dogen said, “The autumn is somber, the mountains denuded, the moon descends in the deep sky.” Rujing said, “This still has congealment.” Dogen bowed. Rujing said, “Go.”

Zen master Dogen’s sayings and Chinese writings were collected by disciples and compiled into a ten-volume *Eihei Koroku*, “Extensive Record of Eihei.” About ten years after Dogen’s death, this collection was taken to China by Gi-in, a successor of Dogen’s lineage, and shown to Yiyuan, another successor of Rujing, with a request to edit it. In the process, Yiyuan made a selection of the sayings and writings he considered most essential; this selection became *Dogen Zenji Goroku*, the book translated here. Published in 1358, this work became the most widely circulated record of Dogen’s teachings until modern times. The notes to this translation are extracted from commentaries collected and composed by Zen masters of the Edo period (1603-1867), illustrating the experiential meanings of the traditional Zen language used in Dogen’s sayings.

## Sayings at Kosho-ji

1. The monasteries I passed through were not many, but I happened to meet my late teacher at Tendo, and directly found that my eyes are horizontal and my nose is vertical; I couldn't be fooled by anyone. Then I returned to my native country with empty hands. That is why I don't have a hair of Buddhism—I just pass the time along with the flow: every morning the sun rises in the east, every night the moon sets in the west; when the clouds withdraw, the bones of the mountains are bared, after the rain has passed the hills on all sides loom near. Ultimately, how is it? (silence) A leap year after every three; the rooster cries at dawn.

### Notes

*The monasteries I passed through were not many*—"Never being apart from the temple all your life" is the studying everywhere which he calls 'not passing through many.' True study has nothing to do with going to many places. Though it seems like he is being modest in saying he didn't go to many places, the inner meaning is that of the saying, "Bodhidharma didn't come to China, the Second Patriarch didn't go to India." Traveling around to study is only to find an enlightened teacher.

*I directly found that my eyes are horizontal and my nose is vertical—*

This means Buddhism has nothing special or separate. As for this ‘eyes are horizontal, the nose is vertical,’ “what is it that comes this way?” The point is to find out where it comes from. It means that there is just learning to find one’s real face. This is communing with the source of one’s inherent nature.

*I couldn’t be fooled by anyone/I returned with empty hands—*Since it’s just a matter of finding that one’s eyes are horizontal and nose is vertical, there’s nothing to take along. After master Seppo became an abbot, a monk asked him, “When you saw Tokusan, what did you attain, that you came to rest?” Seppo said, “I went with empty hands and returned with empty hands.” Actually nothing is gained, nothing is grasped.

*Therefore I don’t have a hair of Buddhism—*It means the total Buddhism of nonattachment in daily life. Inside, no barrier, not even so much as would block an ant; outside, no stickiness, not even so much as would catch flies: clean and naked, bare and free.

*I just pass the time along with the flow—*Living peacefully.

*Every morning the sun rises in the east, every night the moon sets in the west—*The Timeless Book says, “Don’t seek enlightenment, for there is originally no delusion; the sun rises in the east and sets in

the west.” This east and west is equally the entire universe. It means everyday life. This means there’s nothing attained from outside.

*When the clouds withdraw, the bones of the mountains are bared; after the rain has passed, the hills on all sides loom near*—This represents being ‘washed clean.’ The ‘bones’ are the body of reality. That is to say, seeing reality without the clouds of illusion, being intimately close to reality after having been washed clean by the practice of Buddhism.

*Ultimately, how is it?*—It does not stop at the question “How is it?”—it means the ultimate of all things—nothing can exactly match.

*A leap year after every three; the rooster cries at dawn*—It is *This*.

The entanglements of delusion and enlightenment are cleared. “Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha” is right *now*. That is, as the warm skin and flesh of the enlightened ones, don’t waste it.

2. Nansen asked Obaku, “Where are you going?” Obaku said, “To pick vegetables.” Nansen sad, “What will you pick them with?” Obaku held up a knife. Nansen said, “You only know how to be a guest; you don’t know how to be a host.”

Nansen and Obaku certainly were adepts meeting each other; if it were me, I'd deal with it differently. When Obaku held up the knife, in Nansen's place I'd say to Obaku, "In my royal storehouse there is no such knife." Investigate!

## Notes

*What are you going to pick them with?*—This is the method of using an object to clarify the Way. When the function reaches its effect, the whole potential manifests.

*You only know how to be a guest; you don't know how to be a host*—This refers to functioning with the whole being: being a guest refers to the wandering mendicant; being a host means being the master and returning the function to the essence.

*In my royal storehouse there is no such knife*—when the function is returned to the essence, there is no more form or name. *Where are you going* refers to whole life. *Going to pick vegetables* means whole life is living daily life. *What are you going to pick them with* means "How do you live your life?" Obaku shows function, Nansen and Dogen warn not to get stuck on forms.

3. I humbly enjoin you brethren that wherever you see one another, whether it be in the building or the halls, by the stream or under the

trees, each join palms and bow your heads to one another, greeting each other according to the norm; let this be a constant rule.

In the meetings of the Buddhas and Founders, were they without proper manners? When the Buddha was in the world, they would burn incense and scatter fragrance, or some would rain flowers and offer parasols, and ask about his physical condition and how he was faring in liberating beings. When Yoka came to Sokei, he shook his staff and stood there. All of these were proper manners of meeting Buddhas and Founders—diligently follow and maintain this, and please don't becloud the school of the Founders.

I remember that a monk asked Bokushu, "How is it when saying all with one word?" Bokushu said, "I am in your bowl pouch." Also a monk asked Ummon how it is when saying all in one word; Ummon said, "Breaking through past and present." If someone asked me how it is when one says it all in one word...(he threw down his whisk; everybody raised their heads) Whoops—the whisk.

Notes

*How is it when saying all in one word? "I am in your pouch."*—There is no distinction between self and other; it means that things and oneself are one.

*Breaking through past and present*—Passing through beyond dualistic views, past and present are the same. The two faces of ‘that’ and ‘this’ are broken through.

*He threw down the whisk*—If you hesitate, you’ve lost your whole potential. He throws down the whole universe.

4. Body and mind liberated, sound and form are both not It. Herein there is no enlightenment—where can you put illusion? Whoever in the assembly is a traveler from South of the Lake, listen to the words outside the partridges’ voices.

#### Notes

*Body and mind liberated, sound and form are both not It*—This refers to nonattachment, being aloof of body, mind, senses and sense data.

*Herein there is no enlightenment—where can you put illusion?*—Enlightenment is in contrast to delusion; if you are aloof of body and mind and unattached to anything, there can be no delusion, so there is also no ‘enlightenment.’ In Zen, it is said that clinging to detachment is the delusion of enlightenment; it is not real nonattachment, not real liberation.

*Listen to the words outside the partridges' voices*—The partridges are the voice of the South, the old home of the 'traveler from South of the Lake'—having left the old 'home' of our former views and conceptions, sentiments and attachments, we must experience the greater reality which is beyond our conceptions. Thus transcending oneself, nonattachment, does not mean there is an eternal narrowing and exclusion—though 'contraction' and 'detachment' may be part of the process—rather, by emerging from the nest of views and concerns which had formed the bounds of consciousness, one finds an infinitely wider world. Another line of Dogen's sayings reads, "If you want to know the traveler from South of the Lake, know him in the singing of the partridges." This means that we should observe the times and seasons, causes and conditions of everyday life. Still this is impossible to do truthfully and objectively as long as we remain within the bounds of our habitual conditioned ways of thinking.

5. Suddenly hearing the two words 'Buddha Dharma,' this is already defiling my ears and eyes; before you people came to the teaching hall, you had already been hit thirty times with the stick. Even so,



today I am using all my strength for you people. Ka! (shouting once, he got down from the seat)

#### Notes

*Suddenly hearing the two words 'Buddha Dharma,' this is already defiling my ears and eyes*—This points to the wonder in one's own being, and warns against seeking outside.

*Before you people came to the teaching hall, you had already been hit thirty times with the stick*—As soon as you stir your mind, error fills the skies.

*Ka!*—By this shout the previous attainment is shattered.

6. Do you people want to know the founding teacher Bodhidharma? 'He overturned oceans and mountains seeking one who knows himself.' Do you want to know his successor? 'Quelling disturbance in the world, he established great peace.' With a single shoe, gone who knows where; the way of the school transmits a good name for a thousand ages.

#### Notes

*Do you want to know the founding teacher Bodhidharma?*—The Zen founder Bodhidharma came from far away India, like overturning oceans and mountains, just to find a vessel of the teaching of the

great vehicle, one who knows the self. The universe of the original teacher seeking one who knows the self is none other than *overturning oceans and mountains*—there's no unused space left over.

*Quelling disturbance in the world, he established great peace—* Quelling the clamorous afflictions and passions of the world, mind at rest, he established great peace. There's no smoke and dust left. *With a single shoe, gone who knows where; the way of the school transmits a good name for a thousand ages*—In the thirty-eighth essay of the Shobogenzo it says, “They say the founder returned West. We learn that this is wrong. The story that someone saw him returning to India with one shoe is not necessarily true—how could he see the actions of the founder? After the founder returned to silence, he was buried on Bear Ear Mountain—this is the correct way to study it.” Though this passage seems to wonder where the founder went carrying one shoe after he passed away, when we see it in terms of the meaning in the Shobogenzo, it simply means the founder, carrying one shoe, is gone, who knows where—that's all. The way of the school, from antiquity till now, has emanated a good name, which is unbroken throughout—he is pointing out the unending living teacher which is not involved in coming or going.

7. Shakyamuni Buddha said, “When the morning star appeared, I and the sentient beings of the earth simultaneously realized the Way.” But tell me, what is the Way they realized? If someone can understand, old Shakyamuni will have no place to put his shame. Why is it so? Say it quickly!

Notes

*When the morning star appeared*—Not a single thought arising.  
*I and the sentient beings of the earth simultaneously realized the Way*—Because it is the whole dynamic, in which things and self are one suchness. Person and environment, self and other, are all united in the whole dynamic. Essence and phenomena are one body of reality, totally complete.

*Old Shakyamuni will have no place to put his shame*—To say he has now realized Buddhahood is to fall into third and fourth: because past and present are one continuity, if he says he has just now become a Buddha, he has no place to put his shame. When everybody awakens to the Way, Shakyamuni’s saying “I alone am the sole honored one” is shameful—there’s no place to hide the shame.

*Why is it so?*—It is not something that can be known by stopping to think and discriminate. The process of becoming enlightened is a skillful device where there is no such thing; in the fundamental source there is no Buddha in the world, and no nirvana—the nature and characteristics of Buddhahood are permanent, always there. When you look at it from the original point which has nothing to do with delusion or enlightenment, you should know that there's no place to hide the shame of Shakyamuni's speaking as if he alone were enlightened, saying he alone attained Buddhahood, or saying he attained Buddhahood simultaneously with all beings, or his saying "In the heavens above and on earth below I alone am the sole honored one." Also, though he was one with the eternal realization of thusness, for the sake of expedient means to teach he said he had attained enlightenment and thus fooled people—there is nowhere to hide this shame.

Another version says, "Shakyamuni Budha said, 'When the morning star appeared, I and all the sentient beings on earth simultaneously realized the Way.' What is the principle underlying attainment of the Way? The Great Way is originally nonexistent, but today it now exists. What is Shakyamuni calling 'sentient beings,' and what does he consider the Way he has realized? Speak

quickly!” Shakyamuni’s famous saying “I alone am the sole honored one” is understood in Zen to refer to realizing the unity of being, merging with the universe. Because this unity is always so, it does not become so upon our realization of it—hence ‘enlightenment’ as an attainment is an illusion: once reality is realized, there is no demarcation of before and after. An old Zen saying goes, “After enlightenment it’s the same as before—the truth has always been there.”

8. Just saying, ‘Fundamentally there’s not a single thing,’ who would have known that the whole world has never concealed it? (he got down from the seat)

## Notes

“Fundamentally there’s not a single thing” is a famous saying of the Sixth Founding Teacher of Zen. Emptiness, no-thing-ness, is described in as many as twenty-one different ways in the Buddhist scriptures, to deal with different kinds of fixation. One of these twenty-one kinds of ‘emptiness’ is the emptiness of emptiness, presented to those who grasp ‘emptiness’ as an object, or as the opposite of existence. In Buddhism, ‘emptiness’ is not nothingness, it is the fluidity of existence. It may be defined as the relativity of

things, the transience of things, the totality of things, the ultimate ungraspability of things: emptiness is identical to existence—that is why *the whole world has never concealed it*. Clinging to the psychological experience of nonbeing or extinction is what is called the ‘lesser way,’ lacking the unity with the world that is the basis of the ‘greater way.’

9. (On the occasion of the ‘opening the hearth’ ceremony at Kosho monastery)

The furnace of Kosho is open, the bellows distended—even the Buddhas and Founders cannot leap out of it. If anyone asks about the meaning in this, today is the first day of the tenth month.

Notes

*The furnace is open, the bellows distended—even the Buddhas and Founders cannot leap out of it*—This describes the extent of the ‘hearth.’ The Buddhas of all times have transcendent wisdom as their body, and oneself is also wisdom.

*If anyone asks about the meaning in this, today is the first day of the tenth month*—“If anyone asks” is just “the meaning of this.” There is no “who” and no “self”—it’s just “today is the first day of the tenth month.” When the mind-flower opens, mountains, rivers and all

beings are the manifestation of mind only. The “forge and bellows” in which the “gold” of the true mind is smelted, in which the “sword” of wisdom is fired, is everything, it is the real world, the actual universal reality itself. Therefore nothing and no one can leap out of it.

10. A king of eastern India invited the saint Prajnātara to a communal meal, in the course of which the king asked him, “Everyone else recites scriptures—why don’t you do so?” The saint said, “This poor wayfarer, breathing out, does not pursue various objects; breathing in, I do not dwell in material or mental realms of sense and consciousness—I always repeat such a scripture, hundreds of thousands of millions of scrolls.” Try to further explain the principle.

## Notes

*I always recite such a scripture*—One’s self is a scripture. The hundredth volume of the Source Mirror Collection says, “If you speak of the basic true knowledge of the Great Vehicle of Buddhism, it is not learned from mind, it is not in ideation or thought; its complete, clear, and comprehensive knowing is not based on thoughts: therefore the Tiantai teaching says, ‘Without taking a book in hand,, I

always read this scripture; without uttering a sound I recite all the scriptures.” The essay in Shobogenzo on Reading Scripture says, “It is not only that the outgoing breath does not follow myriad objects—myriad objects do not follow the outgoing breath. Even if myriad objects be the head and eyes, even if myriad objects be the whole body, even if myriad objects be the whole mind, carried here, carried away, and carried forth again, it is just a matter of not following myriad objects. Not following is total following: therefore we encounter them everywhere. Though the outgoing breath is myriad objects, it is not following myriad objects. Though for countless eons we have not known the condition of the outgoing and incoming breath, because right now the time has finally arrived when we can know, we hear of not dwelling in the material and mental realms of sense and consciousness, we hear of not following myriad objects. This is the time when myriad objects first investigate the breathing. This time has never been before, and it will not be after—it is just now. The material and mental realms refers to the five clusters of form, sensation, perception, conception, and consciousness. Not dwelling in these five clusters is because it is the world which the five clusters have never reached.”



11. Only seeing that the green mountains are always moving, who would know that the white stones bear children by night? (he got down from the seat)

## Notes

When you reach the fundamental and set eyes on it, there is a sense in which the green mountains also are directly walking, never resting day and night. Since people walk onward, why shouldn't mountains walk? Also, even though they are plain white stones, there is a sense in which there are male stones and female stones, always giving birth to children, ceaselessly. This refers to the unbroken continuity of everything. The green mountains always walking refers to uniformity. The green mountains always walking means the mountains travel in the immutable. Both movement and immobility are transcended. The white stones bearing children by night refers to transcending oneness and difference. These sayings refer to continuity. These sayings refer to inconceivable evolutionary function.

Dogen's essay Scripture of Mountains and Rivers in the Shobogenzo says, "Master Kai of Mt. Dayo said, 'The green mountains are always moving; stone women bear children by night.' Mountains do not lack any of the qualities they must have. You

should carefully and closely investigate this quality of movement. Because the movement of the mountains must be the same as the movement of people, don't doubt that the mountains move just because it doesn't look the same as people walking. .... If you doubt the mountains' movement, that means you still don't know your own movement. It's not that you're not moving, it's that you don't know or understand your movement. If you know your own movement, you should know the movement of the mountains too. .... You should clearly examine the movement of the mountains as well as your own movement. .... If the movement ever stopped, the Buddhas wouldn't appear; if the movement ever came to an end, Buddhism wouldn't have come down to the present day. The forward movement has never stopped, the backward movement has never stopped. When moving forward, it does not oppose moving backward, and vice versa. This quality is called the flow of the mountains, it is called the flowing mountains. .... Do we only learn that children becoming parents is the actualization of the birth of children? We must learn and thoroughly discover that the time when parents become children is the practice and realization of the actualization of the birth of children."

These lines refer to what is known as the conditional origination of the universe, or universal relativity. Everything is always in flux, everything is moving, and everything is at once giving birth to everything else, as everything is relative to everything else and depends on everything else for its definition. Thus everything is both parent and child of everything else. Mountains and stones refer to all phenomena; night refers to the inner emptiness, or lack of independence, of outward forms. The emptiness in which flux takes place is constantly filled by our memory and thoughts, and this is why things seem solid and constant to us. In reality, our own movement is intimately enmeshed with the movement and change of things, but by always filling the void with the same conceptions, we become imprisoned in a static view of the world and lose the flexibility and openness needed to perceive the ceaseless flux of reality as is. Nansen said, “As soon as you call it *thus*, it has already changed.”

12. In ancient times once when saint Kashyapa was walking on mud, a novice asked, “How can the venerable one do it by himself?” The saint replied, “If I don’t do it, who will do it for me?” Mind like a fan in winter, body like a cloud in a cold valley—if you can see “I do,”

then you can see “who does.” Not going on either road, the iron wall is steep.

## Notes

*Walking on mud*--This refers to the inconceivable developmental function. He is doing a chore, plastering a wall; the mud is clay for the wall.

*I, myself*—In Zen there are two selves, the self and the true self of the reality body. Here the reality body is referred to. .

*Mind like a fan in winter*—Yunju said, “The mind of one with thorough realization is like a fan in winter.” A fan is something that is needed in summertime—it is unused in winter. Kashyapa’s mind was like a fan in winter, completely abandoned and of no use.

*Body like a cloud in a cold valley*—The cloud is mindless. It means no contrivance. There is not a spot of affliction.

*If you can see “I do,” then you can see “who does”*—If you can just see what you’re doing, then you can see who’s doing it. This is the course where self and others are not divided. “Who does” refers to the one who has been the host all along.

*Not going on either road*—The two roads are ‘self’ and ‘other,’ ‘I’ and ‘who.’

*The iron wall is steep*—This refers to the one great precipice, where reason ends and one is at a loss for words. Even the Buddhas cannot do anything about it.

13. I haven't spoken to you for a long time—the Buddha shrine and the monks' hall, the sounds of the stream and the shadows of the trees have all thoroughly explained for you. Have you heard yet, or not? If you say you've heard them, what do they say? If you say you haven't heard, you contradict yourself.

#### Notes

This speech expounds the teaching of the inanimate.

*I haven't spoken to you for a long time*—That is, not with the mouth born of father and mother.

*The Buddha shrine, etc. have all thoroughly explained for you*—The teaching of the inanimate goes on twenty-four hours a day, concealing nothing.

*If you say you haven't heard, you contradict yourself*—This is the fault of people not paying attention to where they are.

14. There is someone who can speak a single phrase and the bounds of the universe disappear; yet he has still not escaped

speaking of luck and calamity in a springtime dream. If he can go on to say a phrase breaking open an atom to produce a scripture, still this is putting makeup on a beauty. If you can directly illumine and realize the true awareness that is not a dream, then you will see that the universe is not large and an atom is not small. Since neither is real, what can a statement be based on?

The frog in the well having swallowed the moon,  
The jade rabbit on the edge of the sky sleeps by itself in the clouds.

## Notes

*The bounds of the universe disappear*—The ‘universe’ is described in Kegon philosophy in terms of four reality spheres—noumenon, phenomena, noumenon and phenomena merging, and phenomena in harmony. The obliteration of these distinctions, all vanishing in one real universe, is called the disappearance of the bounds of the universe. It also means that the natural qualities of the universe, each complete, are boundless; and it means realization of the infinity of the universe. Here this is still not considered enough. Breaking open an atom to produce a scripture is an image of the Kegon scripture. In essence it means the principle of universal relativity is fully exposed in a single particle, which depends on the whole

universe for its existence, just as the whole universe depends on every single particle. In practice, *Breaking open an atom* refers to the passions in the heart; *producing a scripture* refers to enlightenment in the mind. If you reject passions and crave enlightenment, this is like putting makeup on a beauty—natural simplicity is better. Even if you plumb the great matter, when you look at it from the point of view of the original source, it is still painting a beauty. These lines are intended to break down dualistic views.

*The universe is not large, an atom is not small*—It's a matter of relativity; any viewpoint we take cannot be absolute, it must be relative.

*The frog in the well*—The frog was believed to absorb the energy of the moon, and so its form is reflected on the moon. There is a sense in which the moon swallows the frog, and the frog swallows the moon. This refers to being absorbed in reality, symbolized by the moon; the frog in the well is our own individual existence. By forgetting self and merging with reality, the bounds of self disappear; “A sage has no self—there is nothing that is not oneself.”

*The jade rabbit* is another term for the moon. The pattern in the moon was seen as a rabbit. *Sleeping in the clouds* means being

unminding in the midst of the ordinary world of folly. Objectively, it means that underlying all our delusions there is only one true reality, which is 'dormant,' so to speak, latent, awaiting discovery. In this sense, the frog in the well swallowing the moon can refer to our own insistence on thinking the world is as we think it is, confining our perceptions to our own narrow views, in which the moon of reality lies dormant, hidden in the clouds of illusion. To uncover reality requires introspection, self-criticism, and stripping away of mental habits and opinions. Even the feeling of enlightenment or sense of understanding is ultimately a delusion. Even if you can speak in such a way as to encompass the entire universe, you still have not escaped speaking of luck and misfortune in a spring dream. Even if you can speak in such a way as to go in and out of an atom, you still haven't escaped making up a woman to look like a beauty. If you really see into a single atom, you'll see infinity, and suddenly realize how you have hitherto wasted effort. Why do you consider the universe large? Why do you consider an atom small? Since neither is true, how can any statement be really fitting? Breaking up your old nest of what you considered the universe, and shedding your old shoes of its elements, how do you speak? The frog on the bottom of



the sea eats gruel, the jade rabbit on the edge of the sky washes the bowl.

15. When the essential subtleties are brought up, the pillars wrinkle their brows; when there's mystic conversation beyond conventions, a turtle heads toward the fire. With ordinary reality, no concerns, praising and censuring past and present, how could one be able to save oneself, let alone presume to rescue others? People, apart from these, how can you deal? Is it not that leap year comes after every three years, that the ninth month is when the chrysanthemum blooms? Is it not 'a long month is thirty days, a short month twenty-nine'? Views like this are what is called being in front of an ass but behind a horse. I dare say that even if one is like this one is still in front of an ass but behind a horse.

#### Notes

*When the essential subtleties are brought up, the pillars wrinkle their brows*—The 'essential subtleties' refer to such teaching designs as the three mysteries, three essentials, four propositions, and five ranks, which were devised by classical masters. Since these are only devices, definitions, and not absolutes, from the viewpoint of the most fundamental, they are not fitting, and hence even pillars

“frown.” Such definitions or devices may be seen as crimps, or “wrinkles” imposed on the mindless absolute, represented by inanimate objects. Similarly, from the same fundamental perspective, even mystic talk beyond convention is still inappropriate to describe reality, and is as unnatural as a turtle heading for fire instead of water.

Another interpretation takes these in a positive sense, viewing the teachings as manifestations of the inconceivable function of the absolute, like waves indicating the presence of water, even though the configurations of the waves are not what water is. In this sense, the essential subtleties are all things, and all the enlightening teachings, as dynamic manifestations of an eternally peaceful equanimous reality. The turtle in the fire then represents great freedom, using expedient means to express the inexpressible.

A further interpretation says the state beyond convention is extremely rare; because it is rare, there is the face of the pillars wrinkling their brows.

The turtle also means that all things have no such forms; because ‘what place is this?’ he speaks of turning to the fire and wrinkling the brow. All our formal knowledge is just mental projection—whatever we may think we know, ultimately we don’t know.

*Ordinary reality, no concerns*—These are derogatory terms for ‘no-thing Zen,’ in which one presumes upon the doctrine that ‘delusion and enlightenment are one’ and considers oneself to be complete just as one is, making no effort to purify the self. These expressions are also sometimes used in a positive sense to contrast with attachment to doctrine and practice.

*Praising and censuring past and present*—Here this means judging Zen lore on the basis of one’s own conceptions and presumptions.

*How could none be able to save oneself, let alone presume to rescue others?*—The unregenerate individual, deluded by laissez-faire Zen through a confusion of process and order, cannot even save oneself from confusion. It is axiomatic in Zen that one who is not clear cannot really help others, regardless of appearances created by formal setups.

*Leap year after every three, the ninth month is when the chrysanthemum blooms; a long month is thirty days, a short month is twenty-nine*—These stock sayings represent ‘ordinary reality.’

*In front of an ass but behind a horse*—Seeing things as they are on the surface, without personal distortion, is better than the confusion and delusion of the ordinary “ass,” but still has not transcended cognition and feeling, hence is not as good as the enlightened

“horse,” who can see beyond the appearances of the ordinary world as conventionally described.

*Even if one is like this, one has still fallen in front of an ass but behind a horse*—Even if one can say this, one is still in the same fix.

Another version says, “Even if one is not like this”—here, “not like this” means one has gone beyond the view of ordinary reality; yet even then, having transcended form, one has still not attained the realm of the truly enlightened, who transcend form while in the midst of form, who are “in the world but not of it.” In the Zen proverb, “Before mastering Zen, one sees mountains as mountains and rivers as rivers; while practicing Zen, one sees that mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers; after realizing Zen, one again sees mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers.”

16. A monk asked, “What is the mind of the ancient Buddhas?”

The teacher said, “The orioles’ crying is the same everywhere.”

The monk asked, “What is the original human?”

The teacher replied, “Someone whose forehead covers his eyes,” and then said, “Where there are questions and answers, a mess of shit and piss; with no questions and no answers, thunderclaps boom—the earth is leveled in all directions, all of space is shattered.

Outwardly not letting in, inwardly not letting out, with one telling blow of the mallet all affairs are finished. Then as before the nose hangs down, the pupils of the eyes are black.”

## Notes

*What is the mind of the ancient Buddhas?*—The ancient who is not involved in coming and going.

*The orioles’ crying is the same everywhere*—There is no subject, no object—it is just the crying of the orioles, the same everywhere. This refers to the total dynamic which is eternally one suchness.

*Someone whose forehead covers his eyes*—this is someone of extraordinary appearance—it means you should break through ordinary views to see. This is not describing a particular person’s appearance. The whole body is an eye; the eye is the whole body.

*When there are questions and answers, a mess of shit and piss*—This refers to the defilement of tracks and traces.

*With no questions and answers, thunderclaps boom*—This doesn’t mean that silence is thunder—it is the essential message which is not hidden, without any questions or answers. This refers to cutting off all hesitation. If you thus speak or are silent, what about the state where both are effaced?

*The earth is leveled in all directions, all of space is shattered*—There is nothing outside of mind. “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, all of space collapses”—even space is shattered into nonexistence; this is the manifestation of reality. Even space cannot be grasped. These lines refer to the obliteration of the traces of ideation. Sky and earth have no fixed form; it’s a case of ‘Where does the rain come from? What color is the wind?’

*Outwardly not letting in, inwardly not letting out*—The Great Collection scripture says, “How does a bodhisattva practice the awareness of mind? Observing the nature of this mind, one doesn’t see it inside entering the mind, nor does one see it outside entering the mind.” This is the principle of inside and outside being one.

*With one telling blow of the mallet, all affairs are finished*—It is necessary to smash and get rid of the whole body of historically conditioned consciousness with one telling blow. Myriad things being myriad things is being finished.

17. Among these brethren of clouds and streams, is there anyone who has attained? (a monk came forward and bowed; the teacher said,) “Having it, one has it inherently, but you’re not there yet.” The monk asked, “Attain what?” The teacher said, “Don’t you believe

what I say?” Then he said, “Do you want to know someone who has attained? ‘If one does not oppose people in one’s heart, there will be no color of shame on one’s face.’”

*A monk came forward and bowed*—When the successor to the founder of Zen was asked to present his understanding, he just bowed and stood there. In this case, it was not certain whether the monk was genuine or an imitator; Dogen’s response is not necessarily to be seen as a peremptory final judgment, but a way to test further.

*Having it, one has it inherently*—This refers to natural reality, inherent nature, which is revealed in everything, every act. Dogen wanted to see if the monk understood this only on a conceptual level, imitating a form to represent this truth, or whether he had really penetrated to the marrow of his own being.

*The monk asked, “Attain what?”*—This monk had a dragon’s head but a snake’s tail. If he was a true man of attainment, he would have acted, but he stuck to the words. Attain what? Attain the truth of non-attainment. The monk obviously hadn’t really penetrated to the inherent reality that is not ‘attained,’ as he was drawn into thinking there was actually something to attain.

*Don't you believe what I say?*—That is, it is already there; it's not a matter of dressing up and imitating the acts of others.

*If one does not oppose people...*—The obvious surface meaning of this should be contemplated. More deeply, it means the state where inside and outside are one.

18. The true heart, wholly revealed, who could know? They laugh at the child on the road of Huangmei.

#### Notes

*The true heart, wholly revealed*—This means becoming 'naked,' stripping the mind of accretions; then everything becomes clear, no longer clouded by subjective distortions. This means there is no self or other—this was transmitted to the fifth founding teacher.

*Who could know?*—Those who know the unconcealed essence of things are rare.

*The child on the road of Huangmei*—This refers to the fifth founding teacher of Zen, who is said to have been born at the side of a road. People laughed at him, calling him the "road kid."

*They laugh at the child*—Only those who know know.



19. If you advance a step, you don't avoid encroaching on the water and grasses of the king of another country; if you retreat a step, you don't avoid trampling your grandfather's garden. If you don't advance and don't retreat, is there still a way to get out, or not? (after a silence, he said,) When temporarily wearing a dirty robe, you say 'This is Buddha'—but when putting on fine regalia, who do you think it is then?

### Notes

*If you advance a step*—Even if you advance a step and come forth in the world, yet this is like encroaching on and using the water and grasses of the king of another country without permission; the meaning is “When you try to approach [enlightenment] you are turning away from it.”

*If you retreat a step*—If you say that advancing is not right and so you retreat, this is like trampling your grandfather's garden—if you retreat and don't cultivate Zen practice, you lay to waste your ancestral original state.

*If you don't advance and don't retreat*—Advancing or retreating, it is one and the same person; here, he points to someone who is free, who has found the way out and doesn't fall into either side.

*Temporarily wearing a dirty robe*—This refers to Buddha in the guise of a mendicant.

*Putting on fine regalia*—This refers to the reality body of the Buddha, adorned by all things.

20. When the advanced monk Sokai was about to die, he composed a verse saying,

Twenty-seven years—  
My old debt is not yet repaid.  
Overturning space as I trample it,  
I'm shooting to hell like an arrow.

(After quoting this, Dogen said,) Last night Sokai faded away. The mendicants are all expressing their sorrow. Piercing the bottom, then you will see—do you still fear the thorns of views or not? Having died wholly once, now return to life.

#### Notes

Sokai was an enlightened disciple of Dogen, and managed temple affairs until he died. When he first came to Dogen, he asked, “What is the great meaning of Buddhism?” Dogen put the whisk he was holding across his chest, and Sokai was suddenly liberated.

*My old debt is not yet repaid*—This debt refers to his life, which he was then about to return to the universe.

*Overturning space as I trample it*—It is trampling of space which is the immediate present in which before and after are cut off.

*I'm shooting to hell like an arrow*—For an enlightened person, being in hell is a good time. For a great person, hell and heaven are equally a visitation of the cosmic Buddha.

*Piercing the bottom, then you will see*—This points to the true aspect which doesn't have anything to do with birth or death. It is just clearly realizing the state of complete death. If people see through the real face of death, they'll see Sokai.

*Do you fear the thorns of views*—Views are called thorns in the eyes, obstructing clear vision.

*Having died wholly once, now return to life*—Another version says, "You still haven't glimpsed him in the whisk across my chest." This alludes to the story of Sokai's sudden enlightenment. The whisk represents "what is," so Dogen enjoins the people not to think of Sokai the enlightened one as the man who has just died, but to see him in the aspect of eternal life in objective reality.

21. Everyone has the will to reach the heavens—don't go where the Buddha went. (he got down from the seat)

Notes

*Everyone has the will to reach the heavens*—Everyone who would be complete must have the will to pierce the heavens. So don't go around counting the footprints of the Buddha. You must bring forth your own power, transcending even the Buddhas and Founders.

You should realize one can only do it oneself. Everybody has within them the complete potential to fully live. Don't follow others' persuasions. Don't base yourself on the twin views of right and wrong, or the concepts of Buddhas and Founders.

*Don't go where the Buddha went*—Another version says, "Don't go where the Buddha went; just realize what the Buddha realized."

22. One phrase and ice melts and tiles crumble; another phrase fills the gullies and ditches. Tell me, in which phrase do the Buddhas of past present and future and the six generations of founding teachers help people?

Here I have a phrase that the Buddhas have never spoken and the founding teachers have never brought up. I will tell you.  
(silence) Clear.

## Notes

*Ice melts, tiles crumble*—This refers to the dissolution of frozen structures of conception, the vanishing of tracks and traces. In the words of scripture, it means “form is empty.”

*Fills gullies and ditches*—this means “emptiness is form.” Nothing is hidden, everything is revealed, the universe is full of itself. In the whole body of present being, there is nothing above the head, nothing below the feet.

## Sayings at Eihei-ji

1. Subsisting alone, independent, free and at ease, wholly real.

Undifferentiated yet clearly apparent in the midst of myriad forms; standing out lively and active on the doubt-free ground. It's like the moon embossing the water yet leaving no traces, like the wind going through space without moving. If you can comprehend this way, you don't ride a golden horse down skid row; on the way back instead you wear a tattered shirt.

### Notes

*Subsisting alone, independent, free and at ease, wholly real*—When you just keep this essence alone and don't depend on things, body and mind are liberated and the whole being is revealed. These phrases represent the original being, the fundamental substance. This Buddha-nature subsists independently.

*Undifferentiated yet clearly apparent in the midst of myriad forms*—Subsisting alone and independent in the non-differentiation of the myriad images; “undifferentiated” refers to the totality of all things, everything as a whole—myriad forms, though different, are all in one totality; the one totality is manifest in the manifold, the manifold is one in the totality.

*Standing out lively and active on the doubt-free ground*—The liberated whole being is standing up doubt free. It is freedom to go any way. The doubt-free ground is absence of erroneous ideas and illusions. It is being alone and independent.

*It's like the moon embossing the water yet leaving no traces*—

Another version says, “Flowing yet not flowing.” *Like the wind going through space without moving*—Another version says, “moving yet not moving.” Though the water flows, the moon doesn’t flow; in the same way, though you respond to things, no tracks remain, and you are not moved by things. Though the wind blows in the sky, the wind moves but the sky doesn’t—in the same way, though you act and work in the midst of all kinds of upsets and confusion, you don’t give rise to any thoughts. These phrases illustrate going along with conditions yet not changing. Like the moon means the solitary moon; embossing the water means reflecting in myriad forms. Throughout the four seasons, it does not wither or fall; the one original thing responds to things without leaving any traces.

*You don't ride a golden horse down skid row; on the way back, instead you wear a tattered shirt*—This refers to coming back into the world after enlightenment, “softening the light to merge with the dusts” to help people.

2. Everyone holds the pearl that lights the night, each embraces the gem of Thorn Mountain; if you do not turn awareness around and reverse attention, you will willingly be lost from your homeland, unknowingly bearing a jewel. Have you not heard it said, 'In the ears it is like an empty valley, all sounds great and small filling it; in the eyes it is like a thousand suns, where myriad forms cannot avoid casting shadows.' If you deny sound and form and seek outside, even though Bodhidharma came from the West it's still a dead end.

## Notes

*The pearl that lights the night* symbolizes the enlightenment that removes the darkness of ignorance. *The gem of Thorn Mountain* alludes to a famous jade; while still in its matrix, it was not recognized by two kings; finally a third king had the rock broken open and the jade polished. This symbolizes latent enlightenment; the potential of enlightenment is inherent in everyone, but it is not recognized by everyone. Everyone *is* the pearl that lights the night; because they all hold it, they are all people.

*Turn awareness around and reverse attention*—Keiho defined this as stopping outward pursuit and turning back your effort to illumining



yourself. To see through your own nature wherever you are is called turning awareness around and reversing attention.

*Lost from your homeland, unknowingly bearing a jewel*—This means being estranged from one's original nature, unaware of one's inherent potential.

*if you deny sound and form and seek outside, even though*

*Bodhidharma came from the West, it's still a dead end*—If you say this isn't in sound and form and seek outside sound and form, you have disgraced the Zen school brought by Bodhidharma from India. The meaning of Bodhidharma's coming is that what is valuable is the freedom to 'sleep in peace in the midst of sound and form.'

3. In the past, in Jimyo's assembly there was talk about a great monastery and a small monastery; now tell me, what is a great monastery, and what do you call a small monastery? If you consider the number of the community and the size of the buildings to be the measure of a monastery, this is nonsense—even if there are many people there, if there are none who embrace the Way, then this is a small monastery. And even if the buildings are small, if there is someone who embraces the Way, this is a great monastery. It is the same as not considering a large population and vast lands as the

criteria of a great nation; rather it is having a sage for a ruler and wise people for ministers that make a great country.

In Funyo Zensho's group there were only seven or eight people; Joshu had less than twenty, while Yakusan barely had ten: yet all of them had evening meetings. Therefore at Eihei now as I am entering this temple, we are having an evening meeting, carrying out the ancient standard. Even with five hundred or a thousand monks, which might well be called a great monastery, if it has no one who embraces the Way serving as leader, then how can it compare to those elders Yakusan, Joshu, and Funyo?

So it is that in recent times there is no evening meeting, and no more lectures either. The late abbot of Tendo was someone you meet once in a thousand years: even though the times were shallow and decadent, his standards were most strict; whether in the middle of the night, or during the evening or after the noon supper, without being confined by the time of day at all, he would call for individual meetings and then give general talks. This is an excellent example, rare in the world.

Now at Eihei, as his heir, I therefore do not neglect the evening meeting; this is its inception in our country.

I remember that master Tanka Shijun quoted Tokusan saying to the assembly, 'My school has no verbal expressions, and hasn't a single thing to give to anyone,' and said, "In speaking this way, Tokusan was just going into the weeds to look for people, unmindful of the mud and water all over his body. When you look closely, he has one eye. Tanka's case is different; my school has a verbal expression, which a golden knife cannot cut open, a deeply mysterious subtle message about a jade woman conceiving a child by night." Tanka, in speaking this way, managed to see through that crude old Tokusan with his eyes, but even so I do not concur. My school has no verbal expression; mind and mouth differ. Where it's brought out for people, a donkey's womb and a horse's womb.

#### Notes

*A great monastery and a small monastery*—Essentially the point is that what makes a monastery great is the quality, not the quantity, of the people there. A Zen master once said "Finding people is not a matter of there being many around. Communities which simply try to attract a lot of followers are not really spreading Buddhism. Funyo Zensho, the great master whom Dogen cites as having only seven or eight in his group, had quite a reputation, and many people came, wishing to be able to call themselves his disciples. Finally he

employed a stratagem to weed out the pious frauds from the true perceivers. According to Confucian Chinese custom, he once set up memorial tablets for his deceased parents, and set out offerings of meat and wine. Buddhists consider everything their parents, so in China monks did not follow the lay custom of commemorating the deaths of their parents; nor did they eat meat or drink wine, as a rule. Funyo invited everyone to partake of the feast he set out, but no one did; so Funyo sat there alone, eating meat and drinking wine with apparent gusto. Most of the followers, disgusted at this display of worldliness, left the next day; only a few remained, and from these few, who saw his real purpose, came the true successors of Funyo.

Joshu and Yakusan were also distinguished Zen masters of ancient times. Joshu, who did not begin to teach until he was eighty years old, was known for his austerity, and he discouraged haste in seeking and questioning; he never failed to break down and defeat those who came showing their cleverness. Yakusan is known for having prohibited reading in his group. Once, when he hadn't given any talks for a long time, he was especially requested by the temple superintendent to speak to the monks; he agreed, and then went up to the front of the teaching hall, remained there silently for a while, then left.

Dogen's teacher sometimes called for private meetings with students and then gave general talks, sometimes he would call assembly at odd times, give a talk, and then have private meetings. He used to call for assembly in different places, and his private meetings were not held in a closed room, but behind a curtain, where the monks lined up waiting for their turn could hear what was said in each meeting.

*A jade woman conceiving a child by night*—the jade woman symbolizes the absolute, nirvana, total quiescence, mindlessness; the child symbolizes the relative, life, activity. This expression refers to the integration of the absolute and the relative; transcending the world to realize peace and quiescence, then transcending detachment to emerge into action in the world.

*A donkey's womb, a horse's womb*—According to one interpretation, this means falling into the concepts of Buddha and Dharma. Then again, the donkey's womb and horse's womb refer to life in the world; "no verbal expression" refers to the absolute—it cannot be directly expressed in words, so "mind and mouth differ." Yet in order to communicate this experience of transcendence it must be brought forth in perceptible form.

The point of Tokusan's saying, in the words of scripture, is "there is no fixed doctrine"—that is, the Buddhist teachings are like prescriptions for illnesses; "there is nothing to give" means the "medicines" of the teachings are given to restore the original human being—enlightenment is not "added on" or overlaid, it is awakening from within.

Tanka's saying that Tokusan has only one eye, typical of Zen commentary, is not a final judgment of Tokusan, but a description of the method of this saying, dealing with halting external seeking—Tanka is actually admonishing those who cling to Tokusan's statement in a one-sided way. "Going into the weeds to look for people" means expressing the inexpressible to draw out others; the "mud and water all over his body" means bringing the absolute into the relative by putting it in words. In the terminology of esoteric Buddhism, Tokusan's statement is the aspect of "stopping sentiments," whereas Tanka's statement includes both this and the complimentary aspect of "revealing qualities."

#### 4. (beginning summer retreat)

Describing a circle with the whisk, he said, "Forming a session, living in retreat, transcend this." Describing another circle with the whisk,

he said, “For ninety days not going out, investigate and clarify this.”

He continued,

This is why it is said that the prehistoric Buddhas were provisionally called “Buddha” because of their endowment with *this*, and the successive generations of founding teachers were called commanders of humans and deities due to *this*. Everywhere is the retreat, all times are the session. But even though it is so, don’t take this as the ultimate rule, don’t take this as the absolute. Sweep away the ultimate rule, walk over the absolute; at Eihei only such a retreat can be a model for a monastery.

## Notes

The circle is a symbol for the beginningless endless reality body, with no lack and no excess. It is also a symbol of the Buddha-nature, and of nirvana, and of the pure mind. *Transcend this* is interpreted in different ways. With the circle understood as a symbol of the reality body in its formless aspect, it means “Don’t stick to formlessness.”

With the circle as the inherent Buddha-nature, it means “Don’t presume upon the inherence of the Buddha-nature and fall into unconcern.” With the circle as nirvana, it means “Transcend even the state of tranquil dispassion.” With the circle as the pure mind, it means “Go beyond clarification of mind to bring forth its living

qualities in action.” *Investigate this, clarify this* hence means “Find out the inherent complete nature, intrinsic enlightenment; discover the whole body of reality, clarify the originally pure mind and realize its inherently perfect nature.”

*Sweep away the ultimate rule, walk on the absolute*—Have no fixations at all; the ancient masters Rinzai and Joshu said, “Enlightenment and nirvana are just clothes.”

5. I remember a monk asked Joshu, “Before the world existed, there already was this nature; when the world disintegrates, this nature doesn’t decay—what is this indestructible nature?” Joshu said, “Body and mind.” The monk said, “These are still things that disintegrate. What is the indestructible nature?” Joshu said, “Body and mind.” That ancient Buddha Joshu only knew how to hold fast; he couldn’t let go. Here at Eihei I dare say, ‘When the river is big the boat rides high, when the clay is plentiful the Buddha is big.’

## Notes

According to the *Source Mirror Collection*, “the second founding teacher of Zen said, ‘Ordinary people think the past is different from the present, and think the present is different from the past, and also that there is the reality body apart from the physical body. When you



understand, then the present body-mind itself is the all-inclusive pure nirvanic mind.”

*What is the indestructible nature?—The body and mind—*Because past and present are one suchness. There’s no indestructible nature besides this; ‘The mountain flowers bloom like brocade, the pond water is blue as indigo.’ Seen as distinct individuals, the body-mind seems to disintegrate, but when you transcend individuality, the elements themselves are the indestructible nature.

*Joshu only knew how to hold fast, he couldn’t let go—*This means that in this story Joshu didn’t change his tune to accommodate the student.

*When the river is big, the boat rides high; when the clay is plentiful, the Buddha is big—*When passions arise, nirvana appears; when afflictions are born, enlightenment comes to be. “If you want to know the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe causes and conditions.”

6. Creation activates the loom of evolution, without a hair being stirred; stones bring up the whole mind seal, the pattern already manifest. When you arrive here, even the eye of a Buddha cannot see you, delusion and enlightenment cannot accompany you. Gautama’s nostrils are the mountain monk’s eyes, the mountain

monk's eyes are Gautama's nostrils. That is why 'when you see smoke on the other side of the mountain, you immediately know there's a fire there; when you see horns on the other side of the fence, you know for sure there's an ox there.' (raising the whisk) Just *this* is not a hairsbreadth away; what do you people ultimately call it?

Dawn in the sky is answered by the chatter of myriad birds;  
In the autumn setting the plum trees are already fragrant.

## Notes

*Creation activates the loom of evolution, without a hair being stirred*

—The four seasons interchange, turning freely; the willows are green, the flowers red. The peace of the land, the processes of nature, the manner of a sage's government, are all manifestation of reality—there's no thought construction involved. It's the perfect harmony of nature operating according to its inherent laws.

*Stones bring up the whole mind seal*—The thorough mindlessness of the stones is the whole potential of the mind seal. This is a metaphor for the realm of the "great ignoramus."

*The pattern already manifest*—The full record says "not showing." The stones involve mindlessness, so a pattern isn't manifest. But

since he says they bring up the whole mind seal, the pattern must be manifest. Manifest and not manifest are both patterns.

*Delusion and enlightenment cannot accompany you*—A variant reading says, “Human eyes and divine eyes cannot see this”—neither deluded knowledge nor enlightened knowledge can clearly fathom the source.

*Gautama’s nostrils are the mountain monk’s eyes, the mountain monk’s eyes are Gautama’s nostrils*—Gautama is Buddha; nostrils stand for the life-line. Gautama’s nostrils are the life-line of enlightenment. A variant reading says, “Gautama’s eyes are in the mountain monk’s hands, like wooden beads; the mountain monk’s nostrils are in Gautama’s hands, like bamboo tubes.”

*Dawn in the sky*—The spring colors of the empty eon, the sublime realm of natural reality—all time is one suchness. There’s nothing else—being present becoming, there’s not a hairsbreadth gap or separation. ‘The sky does not speak, but the four seasons pass therein.’

## 7. (on the anniversary of Buddha’s demise)

When Gautama Buddha entered nirvana, the banner pole of the Dharma snapped and the river of the Dharma dried up. Once

the meeting on Spiritual Mountain was complete, suddenly the twin Shala trees were cold. (he then got down from the seat)

## Notes

Here “entering nirvana” means physical death.

The meeting on Spiritual Mountain refers to the scene of the Buddha’s transmission of Zen by direct pointing to thusness, or being as is.

The twin Shala trees are the trees under which Buddha lay as he passed away.

## 8. (on the anniversary of the death of Zen master Eisai)

My late teacher’s teacher Eisai asked master Kyo-an, “How is it when the student doesn’t think good and doesn’t think bad?” Kyo-an said, “Your original birth-star is lucky.” Eisai said, “Then it doesn’t depart from the present day.” Kyo-an said, “If you’re thus, nothing prevents you from going from today.” Eisai bowed. Kyo-an said, “Facing south you see the North Star.” (after a long pause of silence, Dogen said) “The founding teacher’s star of birth is lucky; the breaking into a smile is renewed. Without depending on the yellow flowers and green bamboo, the sun of Japan emerges, meeting the spring.”

## Notes

*My late teacher's teacher Eisai*—Eisai (1141-1215) was the first founder of Rinzai Zen in Japan. Kyo-an is the Japanese pronunciation of the name of his teacher in China. Dogen studied for many years with Eisai's successor Myozen.

*How is it when the student doesn't think good and doesn't think bad?*

—In one of the most famous tales of the sixth founding teacher of Zen in China, he said to a monk, “Don't think good, don't think bad—what is your original face?” To “think good and bad” refers to the mental habits and dispositions of a lifetime. To see the “original face,” the true mind before it was bound up in habitual conceptions, it is useful to halt the compulsive flow of the thoughts.

*Your birth star is lucky*—the original nature is inherently complete; enlightenment is not added from outside. As the proverb says, “What comes in the door is not the family treasure.” What is needed is to unmask the original face to free the original mind from the bondage and fixations of mental habits; on this basis its evolution can proceed on the true basis without distorting influences.

*Then it doesn't depart from the present day*—If you realize the original mind, you are free to go.

*Facing south, you see the North Star*—When you realize the original mind, mind and things are not opposite—you see the original mind not separately, but in all things; you see the North Star (the original mind) facing south (in all things). What seemed opposite (mind and things) are one.

*Breaking into a smile is renewed*—This refers to elder Kasyapa, Buddha's disciple, who broke into a smile as the Buddha silently held up a flower, indicating being itself. This is how Buddha recognized Kasyapa as his successor. This is likened to Eisai succeeding to Kyo-an, without depending on the yellow flowers and green bamboo—this means being free, not depending on anything; this is what the enlightened mind is like.

*The sun of Japan emerges, meeting the spring*—The sun is a metaphor for enlightenment; “the sun of Japan emerges” refers to Eisai being the first Zen founder in Japan. “Spring” is a metaphor for life after enlightenment, and it is also the time of growth, as Eisai's return to Japan heralded a new era in Japanese Buddhism.

9. Going into the ocean to count the grains of sand is just a waste of your own strength; polishing a tile to make a mirror is a misuse of effort. Don't you see—atop the high high mountain, the clouds come

and go by themselves; in the brimming deep, the water can follow curves and go straight. Sentient beings' daily activities are like clouds and water; clouds and water are free, but people are not. If you can get to be so, where can the routine cycles of the world arise?

## Notes

*Going into the ocean to count the grains of sand*—This is a metaphor for trying to learn all the written teachings and doctrines of Buddhism, which are extremely numerous.

*Polishing a tile to make a mirror*—This refers to doing zazen. An ancient master said that trying to become a Buddha by doing zazen is like trying to make a mirror by polishing a piece of tile.

Enlightenment is not achieved by literary studies or postures or mechanical procedures. The Buddhist teachings are so numerous because they are relics of prescriptions for many different types of people; not all of them are applicable to everyone. Too much information in this regard can be as much of a hindrance to practical application as too little information. “Polishing a tile” refers to the formal aspect of zazen. In his Shobogenzo, Dogen advises his students to “polish a tile to make a mirror,” referring to the continuous refinement of the human being and the taming of the passions. In

this passage of Dogen's sayings, however, he is referring to the original reality, not to the estranged condition of humanity which necessitates teachings and practices to restore it to its basic wholeness. In this sense, polishing a tile to make a mirror is a fine thing, but when you look on it with the open eye of the natural inherent nature, it is a misuse of effort.

*The clouds come and go by themselves...the water can follow curves and go straight*—These lines refer to naturalness, being as is. *Sentient beings' activities are like clouds and water*—This means activities are changing and flowing, impermanent.

*Clouds and water are free, but people are not*—People do not realize their freedom because they form attachments and fixations and do not admit the changing and flowing quality of life.

*If you can get to be so*—If you can realize your original freedom.

*Where can the routine cycles of the world arise?*—The routine cycles arise from attachments and comparisons. When we latch on to something, we are “born,” and when we can no longer hold on, we “die.” Thus as we keep grasping impermanent things, as long as we continue to grasp we continue to be born and die. If we don't cling, every moment is complete. Even the birth and death of this body is



not really birth and death if seen from the perspective of the whole body of the universe.

10. A monk came to call on Bokushu. Bokushu said to him, “Aren’t you a pilgrim?” The monk said, “Yes.” Bokushu said, “Have you bowed before the Buddha yet?” The monk said, “Why should I bow to that clay?” Bokushu said, “Take what’s yours and get out.”

Bokushu let go exceedingly extravagantly and gathered in exceedingly strictly. Although the monk revealed his guts when meeting someone and Bokushu mixed with the mud and water, why didn’t he give him some of his own fodder? I dare say that if this monk goes on this way, he is just throwing lots listening to their empty sound.

#### Notes

Bokushu was a Chinese Zen master. He lived for nearly one hundred years and was known for his abstruse manner.

*Aren’t you a pilgrim?*—A pilgrim is a monk traveling for study. In Zen parlance this was used to connote one engaged in practical application rather than doctrinal studies.

*Have you bowed before the Buddha yet?*—Bokushu is alluding to the Buddha within.

*Why should I bow to that clay?*—This monk had some insight. An ancient said, “I don’t seek to emulate the sages, I don’t esteem my own spirit.”

*Take what’s yours and get out*—This means the monk has only enough insight for himself alone.

*Bokushu let go exceedingly extravagantly* refers to “Aren’t you a pilgrim?” *and gathered in exceedingly strictly* refers to “Take what’s yours and get out.”

*Bokushu mixed with the mud and water*—Bokushu met the monk on the monk’s terms.

*Why didn’t he give some of his own fodder?*—Why didn’t Bokushu give the monk any further indications? This statement is not a criticism of Bokushu; it means we should perceive Bokushu’s technique.

*If the monk goes on this way, he is just throwing lots listening to their empty sound*—If the monk defines his freedom negatively, he still has not fully transcended the objects from which he has detached himself; hence “emptiness” remains an object for him.

11. Cutting off affirmation and negation, transcending detachment and subtlety—this is the mold of Buddhas and Founders, the

guideline of practice and realization. A dead skull—still a living eye under the brow. The empty eon—still a mysterious capacity within a phrase. The red unicorn of the green field walks at leisure, the golden haired lion of medicine mountain stands in full majesty: meeting each other, they join hands; the great Way originally has the same destination.

## Notes

*Cutting off affirmation and negation*—The world of conventional thinking, the customary frame of mind, the realm of affirmation and negation.

*Transcending detachment and subtlety*—The Jewel Mine Treatise says, “Its entry is detached, its exit subtle. If you know the detachment of entry, then outside objects have no basis; if you know the subtlety of exit, the inner mind has no striving.” This represents the mystic world of detachment. The first two phrases together mean transcending both the ordinary world of discriminations and the mystic world of occult experience.

*A dead skull—still a living eye under the brow; the empty eon—still a mysterious capacity within a phrase*—These lines refer to being in the world but not of it: “A Buddha is always in the world, but is not defiled by things of the world.” Looking at it from the other side,

detachment, transcendence, dispassion, nirvana, represented by the dead skull and empty eon, are not ends in themselves, but means to find what is called the life beyond. This is also called finding life in the midst of death. Simultaneous realization of both sides is called being at peace yet functioning responsively.

*The red unicorn of the green field...the golden lion of medicine mountain*—These images refer to great Chinese Zen masters of old, ancestors of Dogen's Soto lineage. The red unicorn is Sekito (700-790), the green field is his teacher Seigen (d. 740); the golden lion is Ungan (781-841), the medicine mountain is his teacher Yakusan (750-834).

## 12. (at the end of summer session)

On the fifteenth day of the fourth month the hand is clenched into a fist, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month the fist is opened into a palm: the one phrase in between transcends both sides. What is the transcending phrase?

As soon as the eyelids open, the nose soars to the skies.

## Notes

On the fifteenth day of the fourth month is the beginning of the summer session of special concentration. On the fifteenth day of the

seventh month the session ends. This is likened to the hand, which remains one and the same, being closed into a fist and opened into a palm. What is Buddha? Like a closed fist. What is the Way? Like an open hand.

*As soon as the eyelids open, the nose soars to the skies*—When the eye of truth opens, the original face appears, which embraces the whole universe.

13. (on the first day of the eighth lunar month)

A monk asked Joshu, “How is it when people of the Way meet?” Joshu said, “Show me your bowl.”

Even though that ancient Buddha Joshu had extraordinary ability, he still had no desire to come out even. If someone asked me how it is when people of the Way meet, I would just say, ‘The eighth lunar month is the middle of autumn—where is it hot?’

Notes

*Show me your bowl*—this means the realm where there is no discrimination. It means the fundamental essence which doesn’t fall within the province of speech or speechlessness.

*Extraordinary ability*—This refers to holding fast.

*Coming out even*—This refers to letting go.

This is a comment on Joshu's reply in this situation—he cut off all discrimination and speculation, not answering on the monk's own terms.

14. Sometimes I enter into profound talk of noumenon, just wanting your state to be peaceful. Sometimes I set up teaching devices, just wanting you to be able to use your mental powers freely. Sometimes I run away and cut off sense objects, just wanting your bodies and minds to be free and at ease. Sometimes I enter self-experienced absorption, just wanting you to take freely what you may. If someone comes forth to ask about what is beyond all this, I would just say, 'The morning breeze clears away the dark haze; faintly the mountains unfold a picture.'

#### Notes

*Sometimes I enter into profound talk of noumenon*—This is 'going'—it means entering from the conditional into emptiness, returning to the essence.

*Sometimes I set up teaching devices*—This is 'coming back'—it means entering from emptiness into the conditional world, arousing function, freely employing mental powers, functioning responsively in the midst of differences.

*Sometimes I run away and cut off sense objects*—This means transcending the world of the senses.

*Sometimes I enter self-experienced absorption*—This means the inner experience of nonattachment and freedom.

*Take freely what you may* means the experience of the great function.

*Morning breeze*—the relative—*clears away*—this means not falling into the relative—*the dark haze*—this means all traces disappear.

*Faintly the mountains unfold a picture*—This means not sitting in the absolute either, being in the world but not of it.

15. (holding up his staff) Holding it up sideways, using it upside down, it opens up the eyes of the Buddhas; going in darkness, coming to light, it knocks off the noses of the founding teachers. At such a time, Maudgalyayana and Shariputra gulp down their breath and swallow their voices; Rinzai and Tokusan laugh aloud. But tell me, what are they laughing at? (leaning the staff against the wall) Idly leaning against the wall, as before it's black and gnarled.

Notes

*Holding it up sideways...knocks off the noses of the founding teachers*—these two phrases speak of the manifestation of the great

function. With his staff he has dug open the eyes of the Buddhas of all times, free and independent. The staff, the companion and aid of the traveling mendicant, is often used as a metaphor for the physical being itself, by means of which one travels through the world. It is through and with the whole being that enlightenment is realized, actualized in the present, transcending the formulations of the past. Holding it up sideways and using it upside down refers to freedom and adaptability in action; going in darkness, coming to light, means the ability to both transcend the world and to integrate with it.

*Maudgalyayana and Shariputra* were two saints among the foremost disciples of Buddha. The former was greatest in psychic powers, the latter greatest in wisdom. They *gulp down their breath and swallow their voices* means that the complete freedom of action is beyond the reach of those who have only saved themselves, represented by Buddha's saintly disciples. Psychic powers are referred to in Zen as lesser powers, not comparable to the 'true miracle' of living awake in freedom and peace in everyday life in the ordinary world; wisdom in the sense of intuitive knowledge of emptiness still cannot reach integration in the world of form.

*Rinzai and Tokusan laugh aloud*—Rinzai and Tokusan were ancient masters known for shouting and beating people to stop their



thoughts from racing. This is why they only laugh at the free play of the staff. Also, they laugh because of the realization of inconceivable action. Gulping the breath and swallowing the voice is 'standing alone,' laughing out loud is 'traveling everywhere.'

*Leaning the staff against the wall*—This means returning the function to the essence.

16. A monk asked Joshu, "Does a dog also have Buddha-nature?" Joshu said, "No." The monk said, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature; why doesn't a dog?" Joshu said, "Because he still has karmic consciousness."

In helping the man this way, Joshu was sure kind, but I would do otherwise: if someone asked me whether a dog has Buddha-nature or not, I would just tell him that to say yes or no is in either case slander; if he still asked how so, I'd hit him even as he spoke.

*Karmic consciousness* means consciousness conditioned, bound, and impelled by habit energy. Don't assume he's not talking about you. As long as one has impulsive consciousness and is in the grip of mental habit, one cannot realize the enlightened nature.

*To say yes or no is in either case slander*—To say yes is slander because it denies or ignores the need for effort and cultivation to clarify the mind and reveal the Buddha-nature. To say no is slander because it denies or ignores the possibility of enlightenment inherent in everyone.

*If he still asked how so, I'd hit him even as he spoke*—this 'hit' is to stop the speculating mind that rambles on with questions and doubts, in order to draw the attention to the immediate mind itself.

17. Outwardly not letting in, inwardly not letting out, with one direct thrust the great matter is finished, with no need for 'what' and 'how.'

*Mahaprajnaparamita.*

## Notes

*Outwardly not letting in, inwardly not letting out*—The Great Collection scripture says, "When you observe the mind, you do not see any inner mind channel, you do not see any outer mind channel, you do not see any inner or outer mind channel." Do not allow any confusion by outward influences into the mind, and do not project any mental delusions on the outside world.

*One direct thrust*—"Shedding body and mind." Detaching from body and mind.

*Mahaprajnaparamita*—A Sanskrit word meaning the great crossing of transcendent wisdom; this is the insight into emptiness that comprehends the essence of all things at once.

18. Birth is not coming from anywhere; it is like putting on a shirt. Death is not going anywhere; it is like taking off pants. Myriad things are fundamentally empty; where does the one return? Wherever you go, birth and death do not involve you; sin and virtue are all empty, without any place of abode.

### Notes

This address was given at the request of the nun Ekai on behalf of her dead mother. Dogen's Chinese Zen teacher said, "Myriad things return to one. Birth is like putting on a shirt; where does the one return? Death is like taking off pants. Birth and death, detachment and attachment, do not affect it—the single spiritual light is always manifest, unique." The transmission verse of the prehistoric Buddha Vipasyin says, "The mind and consciousness of phantom beings are basically nonexistent; sin and virtue are both empty, without any place of abode."

19. Harmonious, with no edges or gaps; clear, without concealment—on Vulture Peak it was falsely transmitted to Kasyapa; how could Bodhidharma have given it to Jinko at Shorin? Manifest in becoming, in every place an appropriate word; fully replete, everyone's perfume of perception: empty space speaks, myriad forms listen—without use of mouth and lips it is able to preach. As for you people, throughout the twenty-four hours of the day it fills your eyes and ears, transcending past and present; who is self, who other, what is delusion, what enlightenment? Do you comprehend? (a long pause) Bringing up the turnips of Chen province, how do they compare to the price of rice in Luling?

#### Notes

*Harmonious, no edges or gaps; clear, without concealment—* fundamentally this truth is in harmonious accord with all things; it is complete, round truth with no edge or gaps. Clearly obvious, it appears everywhere, without concealment.

*On Vulture Peak it was falsely transmitted to Kasyapa; how could Bodhidharma have given it to Jinko at Shorin?*—Kasyapa was Buddha's great disciple who is said to have received the transmission of Zen on Vulture Peak; Jinko was the second founding teacher of Zen, who received the teaching from Bodhidharma at

Shorin temple. Since Zen is not a 'thing,' strictly speaking there is nothing transmitted; in the transmission of Zen there is just the establishment of true communication, by way of mutual awareness of reality, direct contact with being.

*Manifest in becoming, in every place an appropriate word, fully replete with everyone's perfume of perception*—When one has realized this directly indicated message, it immediately becomes manifest; the truth is spoken everywhere, by appropriate words, all corresponding to verity, like the joining of a tally. These appropriate words adorn the body of reality with the perfume of perception inherent in everyone.

*The turnips of Chen province*—A monk asked Joshu, "I hear you saw master Nansen—is it true?" Joshu said, "Chen province produces big turnips."

*The price of rice in Luling*—A monk asked Seigen, "What is the meaning of Buddhism?" Seigen said, "What is the price of rice in Luling?"

20. (thanking the new and old duty-distributor and guest prefect)  
Having the eye on the forehead is whereby one shines through the ten directions. Direct pointing without anything personal is whereby

one does not cover up any crookedness. Opening up the lock of Magadha, casting out the mysterious device of Shorin, dealing with guests you let your natural capacity flow; when you raise the gavel, Buddhas and Founders beg for their lives. This is not the wondrous function of supernatural powers, nor is it the order of nature that makes it thus. So what principle does it depend on? (a pause) Up till now you've shown pure simplicity; a powerful person should be independent.

#### Notes

*Having the eye on the forehead*—One who is to be a guest prefect must have opened the eye on the forehead and be able to shine through all directions and all times; entering into the realms of Buddhas and demons as well, meeting all kinds of people, he must deal with each of them individually.

*Direct pointing without anything personal*—Since the duty distributor is the one who oversees the order, he must have the power of direct pointing. This person has attained the essence which is directly pointed to, and has no personal selfishness; therefore he does not hide any crookedness, and openly and obviously distinguishes what is right and what is not.

*Magadha*—The Buddha once secluded himself in silence in Magadha.

*Shorin*—The Zen Founder Bodhidharma sat for nine years at Shorin (Shaolin).

Opening the lock of Magadha means speaking forth, casting out the mysterious device of Shorin means acting forth.

21.                “On the peak of Mt. Wutai clouds are steaming rice;  
                      On the steps to the Buddha-shrine a dog is pissing skyward.  
                      On top of a flagpole, steaming buns;  
                      Three monkeys pitch pennies at night.”

If you can command a view here, the black dragon rouses clouds and rain wherever it goes; if not, then wait until the pond blooms with lotuses in December. Investigate!

## Notes

The opening verse was composed by an ancient Chinese Zen master on the subject of the body of reality. Mt. Wutai is a holy mountain; on the ‘peak,’ it is not nothingness, nor some special holy state, but nature itself, the being which gives life. Humans enshrine ideals and at times attempt to attain them, but from the point of view

of reality, humanity trying to reach a higher state through its unregenerate state is merely a dog pissing skyward.

Atop a flagpole is a metaphor for higher states of consciousness; these may be called a kind of 'food,' but from the viewpoint of the summit of mystic experience the whole universe becomes a form of nutrition.

Three monkeys represent the three vehicles of Buddhism—human beings in the 'dark night' of ignorance and the absolute unknown may try to seek enlightenment, but from the perspective of reality itself, this seeking is like pitching pennies.

The black dragon is the enlightened mind; clouds and rain refer to its sphere or realm. The mind, unknowable ('black') of itself, is one with the world; the enlightened mind is aware of reality wherever it may be.

*When lotuses bloom in December* means 'never,' and it also means coming to life from the midst of death. Human seeking based on the unregenerate self must die away before the mind, returning to its pristine purity, can be receptive to reality.

22. Having profit or no profit is not apart from the market place; leaving aside old Nansen selling his body, how can the rice of Luling



be paid for? If no one can pay the price, I will buy and sell by myself. (suddenly raising his staff, he thumped it once and got down from the seat)

## Notes

*Having profit or no profit is not apart from the market place*—The market place stands for the interaction of the teacher and student, through which the student may realize a great ‘profit’—enlightenment—or, if not properly attuned, no profit at all.

*Nansen selling his body*—The ancient Zen master Nansen said to his students, “I want to sell my body—who wants to buy it?” A monk came forward and said he wanted to buy it. Nansen said, “It’s not expensive and not cheap—how will you buy it?” The monk had no reply.

*How can the rice of Luling be paid for?*—Someone asked master Seigen, “What is the meaning of Buddhism?” Seigen said, “What is the price of rice in Luling?”

*He thumped the staff*—This is to call the attention to immediate reality. “Just this.” There is really nothing more to say. The version in Eihei Koroku has instead, after a pause, “Even if wish-fulfilling jewels fill the universe, how can that compare to sitting alone

beneath a bright window? I don't know how much time has been wasted; those who know don't cultivate—what do they rely on?"

23. The clouds open, a cake hangs on the edge of the sky; this is called the full moon of a mid-autumn night. Rising from sleep, there is nowhere to look for it—raising my head, suddenly I see the blue sky.

#### Notes

*There is nowhere to look for it*—If you fixate on the moon, you don't know where it is. Dogen does not crave the moon; this is the conduct of an uncontrived wayfarer, the realm of penetrating the reality body to freedom.

24. In ancient times the Zen master Daigi asked master Gacho, "If there is no meditation in the realm of desire, how can one cultivate meditation concentration?" Gacho said, "You only know that there is no meditation in the realm of desire—you don't know there is no desire in the realm of meditation." Daigi had no reply.

Seven upsets, eight downfalls, bringing it into use; no desire, no meditation—neither are real. Perceive that falsehood and

reality are both false, and deep in the night you will then see the one holding the needle.

## Notes

*Seven upsets, eight downfalls*—this refers to the ordinary world.

*The one holding the needle*—The original being, the source.

*Deep in the night*—This refers to transcendent insight, non-discursive knowledge.

The various states of meditation are in the realm of form and the formless realm. How can one proceed from the realm of desire to the meditations beyond the realm of desire? Daigi says that the very desire to attain the realms of meditation keeps one bound to the realm of desire and inhibits the entry into true meditation. Dogen concludes that living in the ordinary world without attachment is true meditation—habitual desires as well as cultivated meditation states are both conditional and not absolutely real; what we conceive as falsehood and reality are relative, so neither has absolute existence. Therefore to see the non-dual source we must be able to see beyond conceptual discrimination and discursive knowledge.

25. Eihei has a phrase transmitted alone: in the snow the plum flower blooms on one shoot. Middling and lesser people with much learning mostly don't believe; bodhisattvas of the supreme vehicle believe without doubt.

### Notes

The plum which blooms in early spring/late winter, is a classic symbol of awakening, which blossoms forth from the 'cold' of the death of the ego, that occult 'death' being symbolized by winter. The 'snow' also stands for purity of mind. People of middling to lesser capacities with much learning mostly remain in the grip of intellectualization and cannot 'die' cleanly away. Bodhisattvas are eternally enlightening themselves and others; the supreme vehicle is the sphere of complete reality, with which one merges by becoming as naught. This is like a contraction ('winter') followed by expansion (the 'blooming of the flower').

26. A monk asked Zen master Kyujo of Kegon monastery in Chang-an, "How is it when someone with great enlightenment returns to delusion?" Kyujo said, "A broken mirror doesn't reflect any more; fallen flowers can hardly go back up on the branches." Today at Eihei I enter the realm of Kegon, open up the bounds of Kegon; I

cannot help but drum my lips. If someone asks how it is when someone who is greatly enlightened returns to delusion, I would just say to him, 'If the ocean were ever filled, the hundred rivers would flow backwards.'

## Notes

*When someone with great enlightenment returns to delusion—*

Buddhas first transcend the world, but are not attached to transcendence, and return to the world out of compassion; this is great transcendence. An ancient master said, "Buddhas do not remain in the realm of Buddhahood; this is called the true field of blessings."

*A broken mirror doesn't reflect anymore—*Small enlightenment, the initial entry, is a mirror; breaking through that and detaching from the enlightened state is called 'breaking the mirror'—this is great enlightenment. 'Does not reflect anymore' refers to the return to delusion. In this realm there is no sense of enlightenment or illumination.

*Fallen flowers can hardly go back up on the branches—*The mind-flower opens in enlightenment; it falls as this enlightenment is transcended in great enlightenment. 'Can hardly go back up on the branches' is the return to delusion.

*If the ocean were ever filled, the hundred rivers would flow backwards*—The realm of great enlightenment is like the depth and breadth of the ocean; admitting all the rivers without ever being filled is the return to delusion.

Tozan said, “Who can presume to join with one who is neither in being nor nonbeing? Everyone wants to leave the ordinary flow, but this one after all comes back to sit in the ashes.”

27. (on the anniversary of his foster father’s death)

Requiting the benevolence of our fathers and mothers is an excellent example set by the World Honored One. But tell me, how can you speak the expression of knowing benevolence and requiting it? Giving up sentiments and entering directly into the village of no contrivance, the fruits ripen in the frosty forest, the sun of wisdom shines. If you want to ask where the spirits of the dead are, on the lotus pedestals forming pairs.

As Yakusan was sitting, a monk asked, “So still and intent there, what are you thinking about?” Yakusan said, “Thinking of the unthinking.” The monk said, “How can you think of the unthinking?” Yakusan said, “It’s not thought.” Today at Eihei I will produce this story in verse to ornament the state of reward of my parents.

Where it is not thought there is no thought;

Just don't say the dusky is yellow.

When suddenly discriminating consciousness and feelings  
both burst asunder,

Even cauldrons of boiling water and coals of furnaces are  
cool.

### Notes

*An excellent example set by the World Honored One*—The Buddha preached the Flower of Compassion sutra for his mother, and is said to have personally carried his father's coffin.

*Giving up sentiment and entering into the village of no contrivance*—The 'head-shaving verse' says, "Giving up sentiment and entering non-contrivance is the true requital of benevolence." No contrivance means that ambition and self striving are ended; this makes for non-contention and true felicity in the world.

*The fruits ripen in the frosty forest*—Here 'frost' refers to the hardships through which one is refined. Another version says, "How can the frosty dew not be evaporated by the sun of wisdom?"—here, "frosty dew" represents faults and errors. The Universal Wisdom sutra says, "All sins are like dew on the grass; the sun of wisdom can evaporate them."

*On the lotus petals forming pairs*—This refers to the ‘pure land’ of the afterlife, in which spirits which had close affinity in life are said to be reunited. Another version says, “Nine generations of relatives born in heaven is gladdening—could the state of reward of the two parents be in vain?” This refers to the old belief that if one person leaves home to become a Buddhist mendicant, nine generations of relatives will be born in heaven.

*Thinking of the unthinking*—A monk asked Isan, “What is the Way?” Isan said, “Mindlessness is the Way.” The monk said, “I don’t understand.” Isan said, “You should realize that which doesn’t understand.” The monk said, “What is that which doesn’t understand?” Isan said, “Just you—nobody else.” He also said, “People of the present should just directly realize that which doesn’t understand. This is your mind, this is your Buddha. If you outwardly gain a bit of knowledge or a bit of understanding and call that Zen or the Way, you’re out of touch.”

*Don’t say the dusky is yellow*—Don’t be misled by the expression “thinking of the unthinking” into imagining that there is any discursive thought in this practice.

*Even boiling water and coals are cool*—“When the mind is extinguished, fire is of itself cool.”



28. The saying that mindlessness is Buddhahood began in India; the saying that mind is Buddha started in China. If you understand thus, you're as far away as the sky is from the earth; if you don't understand thus, you're just a common sort. Ultimately, how is it?

In the three months of spring the fruits ripen on the tree of enlightenment;

One night it flowers, and the whole world is fragrant.

#### Notes

*If you understand thus, you're as far away as the sky is from the earth*—If you just have a superficial literal understanding, you're far from actually realizing the inner meaning in experience.

*If you don't understand thus, you're a common sort*—If you ignore the words in their capacity of pointing a direction, you don't go beyond your accustomed state.

*In the three months of spring the fruits ripen on the tree of enlightenment*—This refers to the “three eons” of gradual development through which the potential of enlightenment is developed and matured; it also stands for the “three phases” of detachment, not dwelling in detachment, and not making an understanding of not dwelling.

*One night it flowers*—This refers to the sudden opening of awakening, made possible by the preparatory development.

*The whole world is fragrant*—“When Chang drinks wine, Lee gets drunk.” The enlightened mind finds enlightenment in everything.

29. A patchrobed monk’s staff is black as lacquer; it is not the same as the ordinary wood of the world. Smashing the mountain ghost cave of before, the mountain plum suddenly blooms on the branch.

Notes

*Black* is used in Soto Zen tradition to symbolize the absolute, contrasted with the relative, here represented by the terms ‘ordinary’ and ‘world.’

*Smashing the mountain ghost cave of before*—Breaking through the ignorance of time immemorial.

*The plum suddenly blooms on the branch*—The enlightened mind awakes. A variant reading says, “Smashing the cage, the public matter appears; the plum in the snow suddenly buds on the branch.”

30. A monk asked Joshu, “What is the meaning of the Founder’s coming from the West?” Joshu said, “The cypress tree in the yard.” The monk said, “Master don’t use an object to instruct people.”

Joshu said, "I'm not using an object to instruct anyone." The monk said, "What is the meaning of the Founder's coming from the West?" Joshu said, "The cypress tree in the yard."

Hail to old Buddha Joshu! He brings out the essential meaning of the coming from the West. What is the meaning of the coming from the West—the cypress tree in the yard. He doesn't use an object to teach the man, he just uses the cypress in the yard to bring it up. I dare ask you Zen worthies, how do you understand this principle? (slapping his knee once) Don't take the tangerines of the south for the mandarins of the north.

#### Notes

*What is the meaning of the Founder's coming from the West?*—That is, the living meaning of Zen. The written teachings had already been imported—why should Bodhidharma have come in person? What this means is "What is the personal experiential meaning of Buddhism?"

*The cypress tree in the garden*—Zen master Munan said, "There is nothing to Buddhism—just see directly, hear directly. When seeing directly, there is no seer; when hearing directly, there is no hearer."

*I'm not using an object to instruct anyone*—In his Shobogenzo, Dogen explains that this means the cypress tree is not an object,

and it is not the self. When one has realized unity, there is no hard and fast distinction of ‘objects’ and ‘self.’

*Don't take the tangerines of the south for the mandarins of the north*—the tangerines of the south and mandarin oranges of the north came from the same seed, but developed differently in the northern and southern regions of China. This is usually used for a metaphor for different names for the same essence. Here Dogen warns us not to focus exclusively on the oneness of all things to the point where we are not aware of distinction of characteristics. Awareness of essential oneness and knowledge of functional distinction must be harmonized in complete enlightenment. The Hekiganroku says, “The ancients would use one moment, one object, to help you enter, but ultimately it becomes a nest or a den.”

31. (He called to the assembly and said) Not only in Sokei—even in India there is no one who understands Buddhism. If anyone should come forth and say to me, ‘In speaking this way you incur the laughter of the pillars and lamps,’ I would just say to him, ‘This is what you learned on the bench—what about the transcendent?’ (a long pause of silence) I had thought that foreigners’ beards could be

described as red; it turns out there's even a red-bearded foreigner here.

## Notes

The version in the Koroku reads, "Not only in Sokei; it doesn't even exist in India. One who understands Buddhism gets it—the master doesn't get it. [Sokei refers to the sixth founding teacher of Zen in China. A monk asked him, "Who got the message of (the fifth founding teacher)?" The sixth founding teacher said, "Those who understand Buddhism get it." The monk asked, "Did you get it?" The teacher said, "No." The monk asked, "Why?" The teacher said, "I don't understand Buddhism."] The lamps are ancient Buddhas, the lamps are new Buddhas." The rest is much the same.

*On the bench* means in zazen, zen sitting.

*Foreigners' beards are red*—Even the transcendent principle is nothing special—foreigners' beards are red, a red bearded foreigner; the whisk, the pillars, the lamps.

32. It says in the teachings that all saints and sages realize the uncreated, yet there are distinctions. What do you people call distinctions, what do you point to as the uncreated? I would just tell them, 'The differentiated one is this.' If you can understand this way,

you can be an unconcerned monk. If not, on the bench there is gruel, there is rice.

## Notes

The Abbreviated Commentary on the Diamond Sutra says, “As for the uncreated truth, its subtle essence is profoundly peaceful and fundamentally has no names or characteristics. It has nothing to do with words and speech, and it is unconnected to all discrimination and fabricated things. It is that which all sages and saints realize—it’s just that there are differences among them in terms of shallow and deep, great and small.”

The Eihei Koroku version says, “If someone asked, ‘What is the differentiated?’ I’d say, ‘As soon as you get into differentiation, you haven’t comprehended it.’ ‘What is the uncreated?’ I’d say, ‘The knowledge of differentiation is hard to clarify.’ Ultimately, what is this principle? On the bench there is gruel, there is rice.”

*The uncreated*—This means going from the conditional into emptiness; it is the equal, uncreated truth.

*Knowledge of differentiation*—This means producing the conditional from emptiness; this is provisional knowledge for teaching others.

One emptiness is the same as both, equally including myriad forms.

*On the bench there is gruel, there is rice*—Knowledge of differentiation is in everyday life.

33. (on the anniversary of Gautama Buddha's enlightenment)  
Gautama, that old bandit, entered among the demons, disturbing human and heavenly beings no end. Losing his eyes, there's no place to look for them—the plum flower blooms anew on the branch of yesteryear.

#### Notes

Gautama Buddha is called a bandit because he took away treasured illusions. He “entered among the demons” of delusions and “disturbed human and heavenly beings” by undermining arbitrary social and religious conventions.

*Losing his eyes* means dropping former views.

*There's no place to look for them*—views do not apply to the real world.

*The plum flower blooms anew on the branch of yesteryear*—The branch of yesteryear refers to eternal enlightenment, eternal buddhahood, the ever-present truth; the plum flower blooming refers to the individual realization of that eternal truth in historical time.

34. Coming out of India into the eastern lands, clouds follow dragons, wind follows tigers; let everyone nod their heads—(raising the whisk)—what about when going along for three thousand, going against for eight hundred; how do you understand? If you can understand, you pierce the nostrils of the seven Buddhas and melt down the eyes of all the people. If you don't understand, you only have the bottomless bowl of a monk—as before you fill it with rice and fill it with soup.

#### Notes

*Coming out of India into the eastern lands* refers to the transmission of Buddhism from India into the Far East by Bodhidharma.

*Clouds follow dragons, wind follows tigers*--this refers to those who follow the way of the founding teacher Bodhidharma. This means all Zen teachers follow the goalless founding teacher. The path cannot be deviated from for even an instant. Those of the same spirit seek each other; those of the same voice echo each other.

*Let everyone nod their heads*—Eihei is also one of the followers of the tradition of Bodhidharma. This continues the idea of acquiescence to the Way of Zen, which admits of no conceptualization; it is useless to argue.



*Going along for three thousand*—This is the time of acting freely and independently. Going along is letting go the self right before your eyes.

*Going against for eight hundred*—Going against is holding still—even gold loses its color.

*You pierce the nostrils of the seven Buddhas*—The seven Buddhas are the seven Buddhas of antiquity; piercing their nostrils means you arrive directly at the one reality and are at the source of all Buddhas.

*You melt down the eyes of all the people*—You dissolve ordinary views and see with free, naked eyes.

*As before you fill the bowl with rice and soup*—Everyone has enough—there is no lack in everyday life. ‘As before’ depicts no change. There is nothing different from before—it’s just daily life, just as is.

35. Swallowing the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, I use another’s nostrils to breathe. In the past Kasyapa broke into a smile—up till now, still not a glimpse.

## Notes

The great T’ien-t’ai meditation master said, “The Buddhas of all times have been swallowed by me in one gulp.” The famous Middle Way master Sengzhao said, “Heaven, earth, and I are one body.”

*I use another's nostrils to breathe*—there is no idea of self. This means using the Buddhas' nostrils to breathe.

*Kasyapa broke into a smile*—Seeing the Buddha simply raise a flower, Kasyapa broke into a smile, whereupon the Buddha said that Kasyapa understood his message.

*Up till now, still not a glimpse*—because wisdom and ignorance are one suchness.

36. If I approximate Buddhism to human sentiments; I won't avoid my eyebrows and beard falling out; if I get rid of 'Buddhism' and just uphold the transcendent, I'll enter hell like an arrow shot. Do you want to see how I help people? Just get the snow to melt, and naturally spring will arrive.

## Notes

A variant in Eihei Koroku says, "If I expound Buddhism as an offering to you brethren, I won't avoid having my eyebrows and beard fall out; if I don't, I'll enter hell like an arrow shot. Transcending these two courses, today what will I use to help you? (pause) There is no Maitreya in heaven, there is no Maitreya on earth. Seeing the face is better than hearing the name—when you meet the person, you can't be fooled."

37. Buddha after Buddha handed it on, Founder after Founder passed on the transmission. Transmitted what? Handed on what? O people, do you want to know what it comes down to? The Buddhas of past, present, and future, and the six generations of Founders—what worn out sandals are they worth, what broken wooden ladle? If you hesitate, I am under your feet.

#### Notes

A variant in Eihei Koroku says, “If you know where it’s at right now, then even the Buddhas of past, present, and future, the six generations of Founders, worn out sandals and broken wooden ladles, cannot hold you back using all their might. But if you still hesitate, I am under your feet.” Anyone who knows what this comes down to would not be stopped even if everything in the world used its power to hold such a one back—this person is trackless. If you hesitate and ponder here, your eyes are unopened; you won’t even see the truth right under your feet.

38. This mountain monk has a technique, clearly transmitted to you personally: resting on the cushion and meditation brace, brightly blooms the lotus in the fire.

## Notes

The lotus in the fire means enlightenment in the world.

39. The World Honored One said “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions vanishes.” Master Goso Hoen said, “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions nudges and bumps.” Zen master Engo said, “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions adds flowers to brocade.” Zen master Bussho Tai said, “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions is just space in all directions.” My late teacher at Tendo said, “When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions vanishes—this was said by the World Honored One; he has not escaped extraordinary discussion. I would say otherwise: when one person discovers reality and returns to the source, a beggar breaks his bowl.”

These five venerable ones are like this, I am not: when one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions discovers reality and returns to the source.

## Notes

*When one person discovers reality and returns to the source, space in all directions vanishes*—This means all things return to oneself.

Space in all directions means the forms of ignorance.

*Space in all directions nudges and bumps*—this means all things are identical to reality. It's all one single path. This is when all things are Buddhism.

*Space in all directions adds flower to brocade*—This means all things are not defiling. Because it expounds the truth and saves people.

*Space in all directions is just space in all directions*—This refers to the non-interdependent absolute. “This truth dwells in the normal state; the features of the world are permanent, yet do not disturb the transmundane.”

*A beggar breaks his bowl*—This is when the root of life is cut off.

“Last year I hadn't a patch of ground to stick an awl; this year I'm so poor I don't even have an awl.”

*Space in all directions discovers reality and returns to the source*—

This refers to the liberation in which the objective world and the mind are not two. Sentient and inanimate beings are simultaneously enlightened—all is one.

40. (on the anniversary of the death of master Nyojo of Tendo)

Going to China to learn to walk, I forgot how to step as before. Nose vertical, eyes horizontal, there is no two kinds. Don't say that Tendo fooled me—Tendo was fooled by me.

#### Notes

*Going to China to learn to walk, I forgot how to step as before—*

When Dogen studied with master Tendo in China, he dropped what he had learned in Japan.

*Tendo was fooled by me*—This is a way of saying that Dogen saw through Tendo and thus inherited his way.

41. Everywhere in the land is great peace, in bowls everywhere rice is eaten, the people are peaceful and happy, and the pillars bloom with flowers time and again; this is why Kasyapa broke into a smile, Eka bowed and attained the marrow. But even if you reach this realm, study for thirty more years yet. This is what it is said, if you don't climb an enormous mountain, you won't know how high the sky is; if you don't cross the blue deep, you won't know how wide the ocean is.

If you are such a person, you put heaven and earth in a grain of millet, and put the ocean on the tip of a hair; the land of eternal quiescent light and the flower treasury universe are all on

your eyelashes. But tell me, where does this person live? (slapping his knee once) Mountains and rivers wear out the bottoms of your sandals; only when you get there do you realize you were fooled by your eyes.

## Notes

*Everywhere in the land is great peace*—this is the originally existing place. If there are no thoughts of delusion or enlightenment or so on, the world is at peace; in the heaven of the heart there is no striving.

*In bowls everywhere rice is eaten*—This is doing without doing. This point is the immutable body. The body of reality, the nature of things, is where the Zen monk gets his nourishment.

*The people are peaceful and happy*—The work of accomplishing peace is the way of life of old rustics. If thoughts don't fly around in confusion in the mind, the mind is peaceful and happy.

*The pillars bloom with flowers time and again*—This is non-striving action. This is immutability: 'time and again' refers to the Great Way in which the four seasons are clear. The pillars symbolize non-discrimination, Zen 'mindlessness,' which 'blooms' into true awakening.

*This is why Kasyapa broke into a smile, Eka bowed and attained the marrow*—reaching the realm of this inherent original peace, without any need for expedients or instruction, Kasyapa broke into a smile, Eka bowed and attained the marrow—thus they continued the succession of Zen.

*Even if you reach this realm, study for thirty more years*—Buddha said that truth is like an ocean; the further you go into it, the deeper it is.

*You put heaven and earth in a grain of millet, and put the ocean on the tip of a hair*—As it is said, “The large is not large, the small is not small.” It is possible to overcome the fixed bounds of relative assessments. The Surangama sutra says, “Space is born within great awareness like a bubble in the ocean.” The union of mind and environment permits one to expand the infinitesimal to encompass the universe by concentration of attention, or to reduce the universe to a mere point, the point of attention. By loosing the attention from objects, even sky and earth or the ocean have no “size.”

*The land of eternal quiescent light* is the pure land where the reality body of Buddha abides; the flower treasury universe is a universe of worlds described in the Kegon sutra. *On your eyelashes* means right before your very eyes; the whole universe is within your great



awareness. For someone who has scaled the heights of the highest mountain and plumbed the depths of the deepest sea, the vastness of heaven and earth, the depth and breadth of the ocean, the flower treasury and eternal light worlds do not stick in the eye—they are not worth grasping. Cultivating practice, one plumbs the heights and depths; having arrived, one reaches the unexcelled. Fundamentally complete, it is not within cultivation—non-attachment, non-defilement, is where such a person lives.

*Mountains and rivers wear out the bottoms of your sandals; only when you get here do you realize you were fooled by your eyes—you wear out your sandals traveling over so many mountains and rivers on study pilgrimage; then when you arrive and awaken to truth, only then do you know you were fooled by your views and struggled for naught. But even someone who knows this is nothing different—since the truth is originally inherent in everyone, it is not something cultivated, nor can it be sought from another.*

42. A monk asked Tosu, “What are the conditions of the one great matter?” Tosu said, “The minister of public works invited me to open the hall.” If it had been me, I would have answered differently: if someone asked me the conditions of the one great matter, I would

just say, 'Eating gruel in the morning, eating rice at noon; when fresh, walking around, when exhausted, then sleeping.'

## Notes

*The conditions of the one great matter*—The Lotus sutra says, "The Buddhas appear in the world only for one great matter." The sutra defines this one great matter as the awakening of enlightened knowledge and perception.

*The minister of public works*—This official metaphorically represents the function of a boundless world.

*Invited me to open the hall*—This is inviting the old monk to appear in the world; 'opening the hall' [to teach] is the condition of the one great matter. The family of Buddhas comes from conditions.

*Gruel in the morning, rice at noon*—Natural daily activities. But even if you know this, you should see how one who penetrates heavens and earth is like a lotus to which no water clings.

43. Digging out the earth looking for the sky—sun face, moon face. Searching through waves seeking fire—all the way through to the bottom is red. Overturn the naked lump of flesh of Rinzai, check out the width of Seppo's ancient mirror, burn Tanka's wooden Buddha, forge the iron ox of Shanxi a hundred times; watch over the cold

ashes as they burst into flame again, then return to where it's warm to discuss.

## Notes

*Digging out the earth looking for the sky*—The mind is likened to earth, essential nature to sky.

*Searching through waves looking for fire*—the waves symbolize passions and afflictions, fire symbolizes wisdom. Digging out and searching refer to training and cultivating the mind.

*Sun face, moon face*—When Baso was ill, the temple superintendent asked him, “How are you today?” Baso said, “Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha.”

*All the way through to the bottom is red*—Afflictions are one with enlightenment.

*The lump of naked flesh*—Rinzai said, “In the naked mass of flesh there is the true human being, which has no rank or position.”

*The width of Seppo's ancient mirror*—Seppo said “When the world is a foot wide, the ancient mirror is a foot wide; when the world is ten feet wide, the ancient mirror is ten feet wide.”

*Tanka's wooden Buddha*—One cold day master Tanka burned a wooden Buddha image in the temple where he was stopping. The abbot complained, “Why are you burning our wood Buddha?” Tanka

poked through the ashes and said, “I’m looking for relics.” The abbot said, “How can a wooden Buddha have any relics?” Tanka said, “Since there are no relics, bring a couple more icons to burn!”

*The iron ox of Shanxi*—a colossus straddling the Yellow River, used in Zen to symbolize imperturbability.

*Cold ashes* symbolize dispassion and extreme tranquility, or nirvana. *Bursting into flame again* refers to ‘gaining life from the midst of death,’ the awakening of the original mind after subduing afflictions.

*Return to where it is warm to discuss*—The enlightened life is carried on in the world; a Buddha, having rooted out passion and realized the ‘cool’ of nirvana, returns to the world, ‘where it’s warm,’ to teach for the benefit of all beings.

44. A monk asked an ancient worthy, “Deep in the mountains, on the crags and cliffs, is there any Buddhism?” The worthy said, “The big rocks are big, the small ones are small.” My late teacher said, “A question about the deep mountains, crags and cliffs, an answer about the size of the rocks; cliffs crumble and boulders shatter, space is in an uproar.” I would add yet another road: if suddenly someone asked if there is any Buddhism even in the cliffs and crags

of the deep mountains, I would say that space vanishes and the rocks nod. But even so, this is still something pertaining to Buddhism; what about the ultimate? (throwing down the whisk, he got down from the seat)

## Notes

*Cliffs crumble...space is in an uproar*—In this question and answer there is a living dynamic power, like cliffs crumbling and boulders shattered. In this dynamic, space vanishes and everywhere has become one single formless body of transcendental knowledge; therefore even the mindless, like stones, ‘nod’ in agreement and realize the essence of enlightenment. ‘Cliffs crumble’ and ‘space is in an uproar’ represent the shedding of both form and void, as neither being nor nonbeing can reach it.

*This is still something pertaining to Buddhism*—Because ‘space vanishes’ and mindless ‘rocks understand,’ is ‘one suchness,’ or uniformity.

*Throwing down the whisk* is the total dynamic. Look, look!

## 45. (New Year’s Day)

Seeing form, awakening the mind—old Shakyamuni turns a flip;  
hearing sound, realizing the Way—Bodhidharma presents his bowl.

Before the fifteenth day, on Spiritual Mountain there's talk of the moon; after the fifteenth day, flowers are spread on brocade.

Leaving *this* aside for the moment, if pure gold is not smelted a hundred times, how can you see its light shine? If the finest jewel is not paid for, how can you know if it's real or false? At just such a time, what do you do? (silence) Early spring is still cold; I hope everyone is well.

### Notes

*Seeing form, awakening the mind*—The ancient Chinese Zen master Reiun meditated for thirty years before he finally awakened one day when he happened to see some peach blossoms. Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened on seeing the morning star. 'Turn a flip' is an expression sometimes used for the mental transformation that takes place in enlightenment.

*Hearing sound, realizing the Way*—The ancient Chinese Zen master Kyogen was suddenly enlightened one day on hearing the sound of some rubble hit bamboo as he was sweeping. The image of the Zen founder Bodhidharma presenting his bowl represents the transmission of Zen.

*Before the fifteenth day*—Zen master Ummon said to his disciples, "I don't ask you about before the fifteenth—what about after the

fifteenth?” The fifteenth day of a lunar month is the time of the full moon, a symbol of enlightenment. Nobody answered Ummon, so he answered himself, “Every day is a good day.”

*On Spiritual Mountain there's talk of the moon*—Spiritual Mountain was a site of Buddha's teaching, especially referred to in Zen as the place of the first transmission of Zen, the teaching without doctrine, from Buddha to Kasyapa, by silently holding up a flower. The Zen master Gensha said, “As regards the saying of Buddha that he had the treasury of the eye of truth and bequeathed it to Kasyapa, I say it was like talking about the moon.”

*Flowers spread on brocade*—This refers to turning a flip in the enlightenment of mind on seeing form, to presenting the bowl in realizing the Way on hearing sound—it is the whole skin and flesh of the enlightened ones, twenty-four hours a day. After all Buddhism is nothing separate—it is understood from pointing out or mentioning the moon, the sun, the flowers.

*If pure gold is not smelted...if the finest jewel is not paid for*—These two sentences refer to thorough and careful study. Pure gold is the teacher, the jewel is the student. Remove the dross of ignorant habit-ridden consciousness to bring out the light of the real self. As

a jewel is assessed, so the genuineness or falsity of good or bad in a student is to be determined.

*At just such a time, what do you do? Early spring is still cold; I hope everyone is well*—when you see the light and distinguish true from false, how is it? It's nothing different—just use the time wisely and hope for the best. In the light of daily life there is no lack, no excess.

46. (on the fifteenth day of the first month)

Snow covers the reed flowers, not smirched by dust; to get through this state is up to the person involved. At one point the cold plum's fragrant heart blooms, stirring with its call the spring in the emptiness of the cauldron of the eons.

Notes

*Snow covers the reed flowers*—Both the snow and the flowers are white; this represents equality. This is the realm of the great accomplishment of equality. A monk asked Tosu, “How is it when snow covers the reed flowers?” He said, “Clear white, without boundaries.”

*Not smirched by dust*—Oneself and the absolute are one; there is no dust, no objects. One color, one fragrance; nothing is not the Middle



Way. Not smirched by dust represents not being attached to this state. This is the state of the Great Death.

*To get through this state is up to the person involved*—In our school, at this point we cut off and finish the experience of the state of the absolute, where there is no effort. Here others are not aware of this at all—it is entirely within the person concerned. This means not tarrying in the state of uniform equality. ‘This state’ means the boundlessness described above; ‘get through’ means to consummate and be done with; ‘up to the person involved’ means it all rests with oneself. It is in the individual and is not apparent to others; being a matter in the realm of the absolute state, only a person in the absolute state can know.

*The cold plum’s fragrant heart blooms*—This is coming to life from the midst of death.

*Stirring with its call the spring in the emptiness of the cauldron of the eons*—at this time, the eternally unchanging colors of spring are called forth—the realm of ordinary people is forever transcended.

47. The venerable Pindola went to a great congregation gathered by King Ashoka. After the king burnt incense he bowed and asked Pindola, “I heard that you personally saw the Buddha; is this true?”

Pindola pulled aside his eyebrows with his hands and said, “Do you understand?” The king said, “I don’t understand.” Pindola said, “When the dragon king of Lake Anavatapta invited the Buddha to a meal, I was also in the group.” Today at Eihei I will proffer a little verse:

Having personally seen the Buddha, he pulls aside his eyebrows;

In the king’s storehouses there has never been such a sword.

The king of Lake Anavatapta invited the Buddha—

Again he tries to strain the moon from the water.

## Notes

A variant in Eihei Koroku says, “King Prasenajit asked venerable Pindola, ‘I’ve heard that your reverence has seen the Buddha in person—is it true?’ The venerable one flicked up his eyebrows with his hands to show him. My late teacher at Tendo made a verse on this story:

He raises his eyebrows to answer the question:

Having seen the Buddha in person, he does not deceive.

Now he is worthy of offerings all over the world;

The spring is in the plum branches, laden with snow, cold.

“Now today at Eihei I will respectfully continue the rhyme for you. Do you want to hear? (a pause)

Did you see the Buddha? The words are to the point:

Holding up his eyebrows, he desires not to deceive.

In the spring of the field of blessings, the flowers haven’t yet fallen;

In the luxuriant grove, the old crane’s wings are still cold.”

Commentary: The venerable one, lifting his eyebrows, answered the king’s question with a picture of meeting the Buddha. He directly showed his experience of having seen the Buddha in person, and didn’t fool the king at all. This sage, having received the directive of the Buddha, didn’t enter into nirvana, and is even now honored in all quarters. Do you want to pay respects to the true likeness of the venerable one now?

*The spring is in the plum branches, laden with snow, cold*—This is the true likeness of the venerable one, clearly revealed. The spring is compared to the venerable one’s humanity and kindness; the plum branches are compared to all beings. ‘Laden with snow’ means that though he is in the lower world he isn’t stained by the dust.

*Did you see the Buddha?*—Since he was a disciple of the Buddha, this is a question that should properly be asked.

*In the spring of the field of blessings*—This venerable one is a saint and a worthy for the sake of all people, becoming a field of blessings; this is like the livingness of spring—even now the flowers have not fallen. So in bespeaking the sanctified state of the venerable one, it is like an old crane in a luxurious grove creating a breeze with his feathers, spreading his wings as though dancing in the cold—utterly unminding, yet still ably responding, to this very day he is walking the earth. In the spring of the field of blessings of people, spring is benevolence and compassion. ‘The flowers haven’t fallen’ means the blessing of transmitting the truth hasn’t waned away. ‘In the luxuriant grove, the old crane’s wings are still cold’ means Pindola does not stick to transcendence, but is born and dies along with people.

48. A monk asked Hyakujo, “What is the special thing?” Hyakujo said, “Sitting alone on the mountain.” Today, if someone asked me what is special, I would just say, ‘Today the drum is sounded to go up into the hall.’

## Notes

Hyakujo had realized oneness with the universe—there was no ‘other,’ so he could say, in this sense, he was ‘alone.’ This ‘being

alone,' the one being, can be called that which is special. In the original story, the monk bowed after getting the answer, whereat Hyakujo hit him—the monk had created duality; the master hit him to bring his attention back to the immediate present of total being.

Dogen gives the same answer, being one with the present. By putting it as he does, he avoids 'sticking to the zero point of the scale' in dealing with the story of Hyakujo. He didn't mean that sitting by oneself on a mountain is in itself what his teaching is all about; he wanted the student to stop seeking something outside and realize 'the one body revealed in myriad things.'

49. (on the occasion of a Buddha-bathing ceremony)

He didn't come down from the Tushita heaven—how could he have used Maya for the holy womb? Bursting forth with an infinity of virtues, one branch of the Udumbara blooms in the fire. But do you know old Shakyamuni's failure? The family belongings have all been lost, a bragging little baby.

Notes

*Tushita heaven*—the Heaven of Satisfaction, said to be the celestial realm in which a Buddha lives before appearing in this world.

Buddhist mythology is veiled psychology, and here Dogen forestalls useless literalism.

*Maya*—In Buddhist mythology, Maya, another wife of King Suddhodana, was the woman who gave birth to Buddha. In Sanskrit, Maya means Illusion—because there is illusion, there is enlightenment. The ‘Buddha’ is thus born of illusion. That is why it is sometimes said there really is no Buddha, and also why it is said the Buddha is always in the world. This is another reason for Dogen’s saying that Buddha didn’t descend from heaven and didn’t take birth in a womb.

*Bursting forth with an infinity of virtue*—The ‘body’ of Buddha is a ‘mass’ of virtues developed over infinite ages. In the Kegon sutra, the whole universe and its features are seen as products of the vows of the Buddhas, for the purpose of enlightening all beings.

*Udumbara flower*—A flower that blooms but once in a long time, a common symbol of a Buddha.

*Blooming in the fire*—The fire represents the world; the Buddha’s enlightenment is carried out in the world. In the world but not defiled by the world, a Buddha is likened to a flower blooming in fire.

*Shakyamuni*—‘Sage of the Shakyas’—the historical Buddha.

*The family belongings are all lost*—To realize Buddhahood, prince Siddhartha gave up all his earthly ties, all his family and possessions.

*A bragging little baby*—According to legend, when Buddha was born he immediately walked seven steps in each direction, pointed up and down and said, “In the heavens above and on earth below, I alone am the sole honored one.” Enlightenment is beyond all states; the earth represents states of mundane experience, heaven represents states of meditation concentration.

*Failure*—This means that enlightenment is an inherent potential, truth is always there, and to speak of ‘attaining’ enlightenment or Buddhahood can give a false impression of gaining something. Also, when people first glimpse some realization or insight, they are apt to give rise to conceit.

50. If monks really want to investigate Zen, investigating until there is no investigation is the true transmission. Even this true transmission is not grasped either—then everybody equally celebrates the year Bodhidharma came.

Notes

*Investigating until there is no investigation is the true transmission—*

The version in Eihei Koroku says, “Shed mind and body, and the truth is communicated,” then it continues, “Don’t be concerned with any good or bad. This is not the same as the small teaching of the small vehicle.” This means that the sitting meditation of the Zen school, outwardly and inwardly silent, being freed of mind and body, is not the same as goal-oriented meditation methods of the hinayana or small vehicle of early Buddhism. “Investigating until there is no investigation” means exhausting the machinations of mind. In a basic Zen meditation, “thinking of the unthinking,” which process “is not thinking,” the mind is directed toward an ungraspable point, until subjective effort is completely exhausted; focused yet without a conceptual object to entertain, the rambling and turning of the mind ceases, and the split between subject and object falls away.

*The true transmission is not grasped either—*Hyakujo said, “First detach from all things, then don’t dwell in detachment. Then have no understanding of not dwelling.”

51. (at the end of a summer session)

Do you want to see the complete cycle of a year of the teaching?

(he described a circle in the air) Understand it here. (again he



described a circle in the air) Find it out here. If you can, I grant that you understand the Zen of the Realized Ones; do you want to see the Zen of the Founders? It's just a hundred and eight thousand. But tell me, where does my meaning life? Only seeing the sunrise in the east, who would know the end of summer and beginning of autumn?

### Notes

The version in Eihei Koroku reads, "Do you want to see the complete cycle of a year of the teaching? (he described a circle in the air) The cause is made from here. (again he described a circle) The result is formed here. Having gotten radish Zen, you fill donkeys' wombs and horses' bellies; having gotten crystal jar Zen, when struck it shatters into pieces. When you get the Zen of the Realized Ones, you have no power in your eyes and you're poor all your life. When you get Founders' Zen, calamity unexpectedly extends to your descendants. Now as regards these kinds of study, what do I mean? Only seeing the sun rising in the east, who would know the end of summer and beginning of autumn?"

*He described a circle*—Unexcelled enlightenment is a sphere; the Buddhas do not leave the ocean of awareness. The genuine will for enlightenment is based on the inherent potential, and on ever-

present reality, which is always complete, symbolized by the beginningless and endless form of the circle.

*Radish Zen*—This is Zen with attachment. Master Goso said people should learn “leather bag Zen” which “would not break even if hurled off a cliff,” rather than “crystal jar Zen,” which is fragile and breaks as soon as it’s bumped.

*The Zen of the Realized Ones*—Realized One is an epithet of Buddhas, and means someone who has arrived at ‘thusness’ or being-as-is. The Zen of the Realized Ones is commonly associated with peacefulness and non-striving, and symbolized by the empty circle—no lack, no excess, beginningless, endless completeness. This is one reason Dogen says it lacks power in the eyes and means a lifetimes of poverty. On the other face of it, “no power in the eyes” means “no clouds in the eyes,” and “poor all your life” refers to emptiness or non-attachment. This is sometimes called “the pure clear Zen of the Realized.”

*Founders’ Zen* refers to bringing forth action from the essence.

‘Calamity extends to your descendants’ is interpreted as referring to strength, or power of vision; one commentator says it refers to excess exuberance and misrepresentation of the living states of the

ancient masters. Dogen calls the Zen of the Founders 108,000 to refer to the infinite multiplicity of situations and events in life.

*Only seeing the sun rise in the east, who would know the end of summer and beginning of autumn*—When one side is realized, one side is dark. It means we don't know why it is so; this is the practice of great no-thing-ness. Just seeing the sun rise in the east, we don't know what day it is, much less see the end of summer or beginning of autumn—in this unattached trans-conventional activity in the realm of transcendence, there's nothing that can be named the Zen of the Realized or the Zen of the Founders. One who has arrived here can be called one who has accomplished the work of the ninety-day retreat.

52. A monk asked Ganto, "How is it when the ancient sail is not yet hung?" Ganto said, "A minnow swallows a whale." If you want to understand this story, listen to my verse:

A minnow swallows a whale,  
A monk reads a Confucian book:  
Getting out of the nets of Buddhas and devils,  
Even the dust of Dharma is swept away.

Notes

*When the ancient sail is not yet hung*—the ancient sail is the web of human conceptions; ‘before the sail is hung’ refers to trans-conceptual awareness, the original ground of awareness. This means the immutable, unmoving fundamental basis; it’s like saying before ‘Zen’ was founded. This means ‘cutting off.’ Therefore one must become so that everywhere and anywhere there are not traces or tracks, no information, no data. This is being independent and non-reliant.

*A minnow swallows a whale*—Freed from the limitations of conceptualization and routine thought, the mind ‘contains’ or ‘engulfs’ the whole universe in an instant of awareness. This is “swallowing all in one gulp.”

A verse by master Kozan says,  
A minnow swallows a whale;  
With a charm hung over the door,  
Outsiders and devils cannot get in—  
Even ‘Buddhism’ dissolves.

53. The Buddha-nature, with time and season’s causal conditions, is complete and perfect in the interval of an instant; just step back on

your own for a long time, and the curd within the milk will be distinctly clear.

## Notes

“If you want to know the meaning of the Buddha-nature, observe time and season, cause and condition.” The Nirvana sutra says, “Within milk there is curd; the Buddha-nature of sentient beings is like this. If you want to see the Buddha-nature, observe the times and seasons, shapes and forms. This is why I say all sentient beings have Buddha-nature.”

*Complete and perfect in the interval of an instant* means the Buddha-nature is inherently complete and perfect; the “instant” refers to the instant the mind opens.

*Step back on your own* refers to the training needed to break through illusion and perceive the Buddha-nature. Stepping back on your own means reflection on the essence of being, not pursuing outside objects.

## Informal Talks

1. (at the beginning of a summer session)

When master Jiko was abbot of the monastery on Mt. Tendo, in an informal gathering at the beginning of a summer session he said,

“People investigating Zen should first of all have their nostrils right; next, their eyes should be thoroughly clear. Then it’s important to realize the source and understand the explanation, and after that capacity and its actualization are equally realized. Only then can you enter among Buddhas and devils as well, where oneself and others succeed together at once.” What does it mean?

When the nostrils are right, everything is right. It is like a man in a house; if the husband is upright, his family is naturally influenced. But how can you get your nostrils straight? An ancient sage said, “Certainty does not drift into a second thought; only herein can you enter the gate of our school.” Does this not set an example for you before your parents gave birth to you?

Although that man of old said that certainty does not drift into a second thought, I dare ask you people, what is the first thought? Tonight I do not spare the effort to speak: I tell you, the ninety-day session starts tomorrow; don’t go beyond the rules—sitting on a cushion with no other concerns, celebrating great peace in empty silence all day long.

Notes

*Have the nostrils right*—This refers to the state of perception.

Assessing the cold plum’s fragrance in the dark a thousand miles

away.

*The eyes should be thoroughly clear*—this refers to wisdom. This describes freedom from obscurity.

*Realize the source and understand the explanation*—The source means the matter of the transcendence of the enlightened ones; the explanation means teaching people. The source is one's own experience; the explanation is the experience of others.

*You can enter among Buddhas and devils*—This means transcendence of all things. Though you walk through weeds and flowers, nothing sticks to you.

*Self and others succeed together*—Self help and helping others; on the road, yet not away from home.

*When the nostrils are right*—That is, your own self.

*Certainty does not drift into a second thought*—certainty means pure single-mindedness, without mix-up; 'does not drift into second thought' means there are no various thoughts in the mental continuum.

*Before your parents gave birth to you*—This means before conception, before discriminating thought; that is not drifting into second thought.

*What is the first thought?*—According to the Eihei Koroku, Dogen added, “I also say, with certainty, do not drift into the first thought; with certainty, do not drift into no thought.”

*Sitting on a cushion with no other concerns, celebrating great peace all day long*—These lines mean abandoning all mental objects and sitting still peacefully and quietly. ‘No other concerns’ means having no thoughts of being or nonbeing. ‘Celebrating great peace’ means there’s no news of delusion or enlightenment.

## 2. (at the end of summer retreat)

(describing a circle in the air) This is an immeasurably great matter; all the enlightened ones of past, present, and future comprehend this, the successive generations of Founders realized this, people searching out the Way investigate this. If you can get it in your daily activities, you will actually go a step beyond the Buddhas and Founders. Have you not seen how Joshu asked Daiji, “What is the substance of wisdom?” Daiji said, “What is the substance of wisdom?” Joshu laughed loudly. The next day as Joshu was sweeping the ground, Daiji said, “What is the substance of wisdom?” Joshu threw down the broom and laughed aloud. People, the meeting of the two ancient Buddhas Joshu and Daiji is after all



extraordinary; today we are about to dissolve the retreat—how will you assess it? Yesterday a feast, today a bowl of gruel. But say, were those ancients the same or different? (a long pause) If Daiji had asked again, it would renew Joshu's laughter again. You have been standing a long time, compassionate ones; please take care.

## Notes

The version in Eihei Koroku is a little more elaborate in the beginning: "Drawing a circle, he said, 'This is an immeasurably great matter. All the enlightened ones of past, present, and future, realizing this one thing, emanate light and expound truth; the successive generations of Zen Founders, cultivating this one thing, hand on the marrow; the bodhisattvas learning wisdom, transmitting this one thing, make it their face and brow. Sitting for ninety days through the summer, transcending past, present, and future, fulfill enlightenment and liberate sentient beings.'...." The rest is the same as the Goroku version.

### 3. (on a winter night)

When the great achievement is perfected, it's like the new year suddenly arriving. Return to the source; then you see what is precious. That is why it is said, "All worlds are one of your eyes, all

worlds are yourself, all worlds are your aura, all worlds are a gate of liberation.” Where do you not realize enlightenment? Where do you not explain what is what and guide people? Haven’t you heard it said that even before the Guardian of Enlightenment came down from the heaven of satisfaction, the one mandala was present everywhere, fully complete.

*When the great achievement is perfected*—When the great achievement is perfected, it’s like the days and months of the year being all finished, then from there the new year is born—this is like discovery of the self.

*Even before the guardian of enlightenment came down*—The Guardian of Enlightenment is the name of Shakyamuni Buddha when he was still dwelling in the heaven of satisfaction before coming into this world—even before the Buddha appeared, the unique mandala, or sphere, of reality was already fully complete and present everywhere. The Buddha did not create the truth he expounded, he merely related as much of the ever-present truth as would benefit people in his time, in a form which would be understandable to them. In reality all being is always expounding the facts of life and death. The Buddha taught how to tame the mind to realize accurate perception. This is the great achievement.

#### 4. (New Year's Eve)

The informal gathering is a tradition of the Buddhas and Founders, but we have never heard of it being practiced in Japan in former times—we at Eihei have transmitted this for the first time, doing it for twenty years now.

The founding teacher Bodhidharma came from the West and the true teaching entered China; and the founders of former ages called this the family custom—not to practice what the Buddhas and Founders did not practice, not to wear anything that is not the robe of righteousness of the Buddhas and Founders, to give up fame and profit, abandon the sense of others and self, to live secluded in mountains and valleys, never leaving meditation communes, to treasure even a little bit of time as most valuable, not worrying about things but concentrating wholly on mastering the Way—this is the tradition of the Buddhas and Founders, the eye of humans and deities. But to be a good teacher it is necessary to practice for immeasurable eons. People, do you want to see an immeasurable eon? (he snapped his fingers) Just this is it. Can you say it is inherent? Can you say it is cultivated? If you can see here, this is time passing, years changing, when winter ends spring returns—

occupying the ten directions, mystically penetrating past, present, and future, the old year actually doesn't go, the new year actually doesn't come. Coming and going don't mix—new and old are unrelated. Thus a monk asked Sekimon, "How is it when the year is ended?" Sekimon said, "In the east village old Wang burns paper money offerings in the night." A monk asked Kaisen how it is when the year is ended; Kaisen said, "As of old, early spring is still cold." Tonight if a monk asked me how it is at the end of the year, I would just say that in the village up ahead in the deep snow last night a twig sprouted.

It's cold and you've been standing for a long time.

## Notes

*Not to practice...not to wear*—After this, the Eihei Koroku version reads, "Practice means to cast off fame and profit from the very start, to forever abandon egotism, not to associate with kings and politicians, and not to crave patrons and donors; to think lightly of life and live secluded in the mountains, considering the Teaching important, never leaving the meditation commune; not considering jewels as treasures, but rather valuing even a little bit of time; not concerning oneself with myriad things, but concentrating wholly on

mastering the Way. Such a one is a true descendent of the Buddha and the Zen Founders, a leader and guide of humans and gods.

“In truth, once you have aroused the will for enlightenment and call on a teacher to study, this is the beginning of three immeasurable eons. Do you want to see three immeasurable eons? (drawing a circle with the whisk) What do you call this? Can you call this a circle? Can you call it a square? Can you say it is inherent? Can you say it is attained? Can you call it the passing of time and changing of the years, spring, fall, winter, summer? Can you call it ‘vertically extending throughout all time, horizontally extending through all space’? If you call it any of these, you haven’t comprehended—you fall into the erroneous views of outsiders.

“So the virtues of three immeasurable eons are not to be assessed by human measurements. Why? Well, for example, tonight it is the thirtieth day of the twelfth month—tomorrow is new year’s day: you cannot call tomorrow the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, and you cannot call tonight New Year’s. Since we cannot call the last month of the year New Year’s, hence we know that the new year actually doesn’t come. Since we can’t call New Year’s the twelfth month, we know the old year naturally doesn’t go. Since the old year doesn’t go, the new year doesn’t come; coming and going

don't mix, new and old are independent..." This version then continues the same as the Goroku version.

*Three immeasurable eons*—Traditionally it is said that the cultivation of Buddhahood requires three immeasurable eons.

*He drew a circle*—Mind and environment are one.

*Can you call it the passing of time?*—This refers to change.

*Vertically extending throughout all time*—Taigen Fu said, "The essence of the reality body is like space, vertically extending through all time, horizontally extending through all space. It fills all directions, encompassing both positive and negative energies. Proceeding to effect along with conditions, it is omnipresent."

*You can't call tomorrow the thirtieth day of the twelfth month*—From here is illustrated the unique position of each moment of time.

*The old year really doesn't go*—This year doesn't move into next year.

*Since the old year doesn't go*—The preceding moment hasn't appeared, the succeeding moment hasn't vanished.

*Coming and going don't mix*—When coming, it's just coming; when going, it's just going. Today is just today, tomorrow is just tomorrow.

*Old Wang burns paper money*—When this season comes, there's a custom of burning paper money to 'warm the spirit of positive

energy.'

*As always, early spring is still cold*—This means naturally being so; it never changes.

## **Dharma Talks**

To Zen folk

In recent times people who study the Way do not distinguish dragons from snakes, or beans from wheat; so if they want to seek clarity, it sure will be hard. Of old it has been said, "The whole ground is covered with snow; when spring comes, it's cold as before. To become Buddha wherever you go is easy—after all it's explaining Zen that's hard." Even Buddhas and Founders are not free of this ailment. How is it that they are not yet free? If you say that becoming a Buddha is easy but to explain Zen is hard, or that explaining Zen is easy but becoming a Buddha is hard, with such views how can you shed emotional ideas of Buddhism, of ease and difficulty? Haven't you seen how a monk asked Ummon, "How is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" Ummon said, "The body is exposed to the autumn wind." Zen master Bussho brought this up and said, "Ummon, supposedly so great, uses common property as though it were his own." Even so, this is medicine without disease.

The old fellow Shakyamuni appeared in the world for a time, acting as a great physician, out of pity for sentient beings deeply submerged in the ocean of suffering; moved with compassion, he used various techniques to expound a whole great mine of teachings, all of them dispensing medicines in accordance with diseases, prescriptions to make all sentient beings reach the land of great peace and ease. Then with Bodhidharma's coming from the West, his successors and descendants all used poison deadly as arsenic, wanting to make the sick perish and thereafter revive. Like the elixir of immortality, this has many miraculous effects, but when you look with the true eye, it's all gouging out wounds on healthy flesh.

The real art is not this way; it doesn't cling to prescriptions, nor is it in checking pulses and vital signs. Judging grains and ounces at a glance, changing responsively with the times, even the sickness of Buddhas and the sickness of Founders are not worth the slightest pinch; it makes you completely change your bones and wash your guts, so that your mind is pure and your energy is clear. This is what is known as one pill curing many diseases—no need for many prescriptions. The old fellow's whole body is sickness, but when I look for where it originates, I can't find it. The ancient



masters had such strategy, trying to get you to set eyes on it. If you can see through, the legendary physicians will stand downwind.

The great Way of the Buddhas is profound, wondrous, and inconceivable; how can those who traverse it take it easy? Have you not seen how a man of ancient times forsook his body and life, abandoned his country, city, wife and child, looking upon them as like shards and pebbles? After that he spent eons alone in the mountains and forests, with body and mind like a dead tree, only then to unite with the Way. Once having merged with the Way, then he could use mountains and rivers for words and speech, using wind and rain for a tongue, explain the great void and turn the incomparable wheel; what action was he incapable of, what teaching was inappropriate? Those who aspire to the Way should follow this example.

In ancient times a monk asked Zen master Hogen, “What is an ancient Buddha?” Hogen said, “Even now there’s no aversion or doubt.” The monk also asked, “How can it be practiced twenty-four hours a day?” Hogen said, “Every step treads on it.” People who leave home should just go along with the time and season; when it’s cold you’re cold, when it’s hot you’re hot. “If you want to know the meaning of the Buddha-nature, you must observe time and season,

cause and conditions”—just keep to yourself and inwardly investigate the meaning of this all the time. What is ‘all the time’ and ‘keeping to yourself’? Just don’t understand form as not form, yet do not understand form as form, and don’t go both ways either; then you’ll forget aversion and doubt, and you will live and act the same as those ancient Buddhas did, like mirrors reflecting each other.

This is why old Shakyamuni said that when a monk enters a village he is like a bee gathering from a flower, just taking the flavor and not ruining the color. Why not go along with this season, and at all times, encountering conditions and meeting situations, just take the flavor, don’t ruin its form. I tell you, to receive the seal of those myriad conditions and be enlightened by myriad things, it must be a time when you do not destroy the color and fragrance. If it existed outside of this, then myriad forms would show it to you. I couldn’t help but saying what I have, but those who are really intent on the Way are beyond others, so for them I have written down a little bit to help them in thoroughgoing study. Work on this.

## Notes

*Dragons and snakes*—Not distinguishing dragons from snakes means being unable to tell genuine enlightened people from imitators and impostors.

*Beans and wheat*—Not distinguishing beans from wheat means lacking in discernment.

*When the tree withers and the leaves fall*—This means when attachments and conditioning, mental habits and routine thoughts and feelings drop off; one is left naked in the midst of unadorned reality, “the body exposed in the autumn wind.”

### **General Recommendations: How to do Zazen**

When you get down to the basis of it, the Way is fundamentally complete and perfect, all-pervading; how could it depend on cultivation and realization? The essential vehicle is freedom—why expend effort? In fact, the whole being is utterly beyond defiling dust—who would believe in a method to wipe it clean? The great whole is not apart from right here—why go someplace to practice?

However, the slightest discrepancy is as the distance between sky and earth; as soon as aversion and attraction arise, you lose your mind in confusion. Even though you may boast of your comprehension and wallow in understanding, having gotten a glimpse of insight, and though you find the Way and understand the mind, inspired with the determination to soar to the skies, though you

may roam freely within the bounds of initial entry, you are still somewhat lacking in a living road of emancipation.

Even Shakyamuni Buddha, who had innate knowledge, sat up for six years, and the traces of that can still be seen; as for Bodhidharma's transmission of the mind seal at Shorin, the fame of his sitting for nine years facing a wall is still heard. Since even the ancient sages were thus, how can people today not do it? Therefore you should stop entertaining understanding from pursuing words, and learn how to step back, turning awareness around and reversing attention. Then body and mind will naturally drop off and the original face will appear.

If you want to realize such a thing, hurry up and work on it. Now for penetrating meditation a quiet room is suitable. Food and drink should be moderate. Cast off all involvements, cease myriad concerns, don't think of good or bad, don't be concerned with right or wrong. Halt the movement of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop the calculation of thoughts and ideas. Don't aim to become a Buddha; how could it be confined by sitting or lying down?

Where you usually sit, a thick mat should be spread, with a cushion on top of it on which to sit, either in full lotus or half lotus position. The full lotus position means when you sit you first put your

right foot on your left thigh, then your left foot on your right thigh. In the half lotus you just put your left foot on your right thigh. Loosen the clothes and belt, straighten them, then put the right hand on the left foot, with the left hand resting on the right palm, both thumbs touching, their faces supporting each other. Then sit straight, without leaning to the left or right, forwards or backwards. The ears should be in line with the shoulders, the nose with the navel. The tongue rests on the roof of the mouth, with the mouth closed. The eyes should always be open and the breath should pass subtly through the nose.

Once the body is attuned, exhale once completely, rock the body left to right back and forth, then settle down and sit still. Think of that which does not think. How can you think of that which does not think? It is not thinking. This is the essential art of zazen. That is why it is said that zazen is not the cultivation of meditational states. It is just the way to peace and ease, the consummating practice and realization of enlightenment: the *koan* appears in full, no net can ensnare it. If you attain to what this means, you will be like a dragon getting to the water, like a tiger in the mountains. You should know then that the truth manifests of itself, once oblivion and distraction are first overcome.

When you get up from sitting, move the body gently little by little, and get up calmly and attentively; don't rise suddenly or abruptly.

We have seen how transcending the ordinary and going beyond the holy, passing away while sitting and dying while standing, wholly depend on this power. What's more, transformation of mind at the lifting of a finger, a rod, a needle, or mallet, the attainment of realization at the raising of a whisk or a fist, at a caning or shouting, has never been comprehensible by thought and discrimination—how could it be known by cultivation and practice of supernatural powers? This can be a standard outside of sound and form; could it not be a guideline before knowledge and opinion?

So it's not a question of superiority by knowledge and inferiority by ignorance; don't choose between the sharp and the dull: if there is single-minded concentration, this is true practice of the Way. Cultivation and realization are naturally not defiled; the direction is just ordinariness. In sum, in Japan and other lands, in India and China, they equally bear the Buddha-seal, devoted to the same fundamental way, which is only occupied with sitting, remaining immobile. Although it may be said that there are myriad distinctions and differences, just investigate Zen and discern the

Way; why throw away a seat in your own house to travel uselessly in the dusty regions of other countries?

If you take a step wrong, you will miss what's right in front of you; once you have the opportunity of having a human body, don't waste the time—bear up the responsibility for the essential potential of the Way of enlightenment. Who would vainly enjoy a spark? Moreover, the body is like dew on the grass, life is like a flash of lightning; suddenly empty, gone in an instant. I hope that superior students, long accustomed to groping over an elephant, won't be suspicious of a real dragon; advance diligently on the path of direct pointing to the heart of truth, honor and esteem those who are beyond learning and doing, join in the enlightenment of all the Buddhas, inherit the state of mind of all the Zen Founders. Long being thus, you should be thus; your treasury will open of itself, and you can use it as you will.

## Notes

“How to do Zazen” gives the form of zazen. This “general recommendation” means this is the school in which people, regardless of whether their faculties are sharp or dull, should be unmoving in the zazen in which differences are equalized. If it is a matter of the real heart of preaching and teaching, form alone will not

do. It is the personal experience of the Buddha's light in which the practice and realization which is not nonexistent is not to be defiled. As for the meaning of practice and realization, according to the explanation of the scholastics, applying effort is called practice or cultivation, naturalness is called realization. Non-defilement means unstained, pure. As for the meaning of unstained purity, the thing concerned being just what it is in the immediate present; if you speak of phenomena, the whole universe is phenomena, and if you expound noumenon there is nothing else in the whole universe. When a single eggplant is completely ripe, the body and mind of the subjective and objective realms of all forms of being are equally latent in the eggplant stem. Though there may be a hundred and one winter melon flowers, when the fruit ripens naturally, all of space vanishes and there is just a winter melon. When you sit, the whole universe is just the outgoing and incoming breath on a worn-out cushion.

*The Way is fundamentally complete and perfect, all-pervading—*

First, the essential qualities of the source are illumined. This is the ultimate great Way of the Buddhas and Founders. Because it has no lack or excess, *how could it depend on cultivation and realization?*—is there anything that needs cultivation and



realization? “The Way is fundamentally complete and perfect” is a statement that does not hinder cultivation and realization. Do not misapprehend the light of *how could it depend on cultivation and realization*. You should “add error to error.” In other words, “how could it depend on” refers to the independence of cultivation and realization.

*The essential vehicle is freedom*—The true teaching is pointed out directly. Bearing thereby a heavy load, one can travel far. “The essential vehicle is freedom” is an expression of not shying away from effort. The Great Way covers all, freely pervading everywhere; therefore, in thoroughly consummating effort’s just being effort, he says, “Why expend effort?” This is the essential vehicle in which free effort is called “why expend?”

*The whole being is utterly beyond defiling dust—who would believe in a method to wipe it clean?*—this means the whole being of the Way is beyond the mundane sense and objects. “Believe in” means depend on, make use of. The whole being is utterly transcendent. Therefore in “wiping clean” there are no traces left. This is called “who would believe.” If we were to express it in speech, “utterly beyond the dust” means not depending on a single thing. When

practicing, it is just the whole skin and flesh of practice—there is no defilement by expecting realization.

*The great whole is not apart from here*—This refers to the fundamental completeness of all things.

*Why go someplace to practice?*—This means it cannot be sought outwardly. Yoka said, “Never apart from the immediate present, always profoundly calm—if you seek, I know you can’t see.”

*However, the slightest discrepancy is as the distance between sky and earth*—the preceding section expounded the fundamental essence of reality, and showed that this is taken as the basis; hereafter he explains how even though the basic essence is so, in this connection there must be zazen practice. From the minutest difference of a single thought one can become an ordinary person or a Buddha, so it comes to a difference as great as that between heaven and earth. The second part expounds the initiation of practice based on realization. There are four sections: getting rid of delusion, getting rid of enlightenment, applying practice, bringing out the fundamental. Even though the Great Way is so, if there’s no practical application and there is delusion, a single moment of discriminatory thought and we are separated from the Great Way.

*Even though you may boast of your comprehension and wallow in understanding, having gotten a glimpse of insight, and though you find the Way and understand the mind, inspired with the determination to soar to the skies, though you may roam freely within the bounds of initial entry, you are still somewhat lacking in a living road of emancipation—*This second section gets rid of

enlightenment. Though you reach the realm of the body of the absolute, if you linger there, you're the same as an ordinary person. In Dogen's Shogogenzo he writes, "To go on informing the Buddha that today's Buddha is not only today, is called the Buddha's task of progress."

*Turning awareness around and reversing attention—*This means turning attention away from objects, including thoughts, to the essence of mind itself.

*Body and mind will naturally drop off—*This means engrossment in feelings and thoughts will subside.

*Think of that which doesn't think—*A monk asked Isan, "What is the Way?" Isan said, "No mind is the Way." The monk said, "I don't understand." Isan said, "You should understand that which doesn't understand." The monk asked, "What is that which doesn't understand?" Isan said, "It's you, no one else." Isan continued,

“People of the present time should just directly realize that which doesn’t understand—this is your mind, this is your Buddha. If you outwardly get a piece of knowledge or understanding, and consider that the Way of Zen, you’ve missed it entirely. This is called taking in a lot of crap, it is not what we call getting the crap out—it defiles your mind-field, so we say it is not the Way.

*The direction is just ordinariness*—Joshu asked Nansen, “What is the Way?” Nansen said, “The ordinary mind is the Way.” Joshu said, “Can I aim for it?” Nansen said, “If you aim for it, you turn away from it.”

*Groping over an elephant*—This alludes to a story from the Mahaparinirvana sutra; blind people using their hands to feel an elephant each felt one part, then described the elephant differently, in terms of the particular part that each one felt.

### **Guide to Zazen** (after Zen master Wanshi’s Guide to Zazen)

The essential working of Buddha after Buddha,

The working essential of Founder after Founder:

Manifesting without thought,

Becoming without interplay.

Manifesting without thought,

That manifestation is naturally intimate;  
Becoming without interplay,  
That becoming is self-realized.  
That manifestation naturally intimate,  
There has never been any taint;  
That becoming self-realized,  
There has never been absolute or relative.  
The intimacy that has never been tainted—  
That intimacy never fades, but is free and at ease;  
The realization that has never had absolute or relative—  
That realization is carried out without a plan.  
The water is clear to the bottom—  
The fish travel like fish;  
The sky is vast beyond the heavens—  
Birds fly like birds.

### **Self-praise**

Nose higher than a mountain, eyes brighter than pearls;  
head wide as a fan, feet like a mule's. When they enter his room he  
likes to raise a stinking fist; when he goes up into the hall he borrows  
power from a staff. When he meets people asking for water, he

points to the natural well; when he meets people looking for rice, he gives them a bowl. Because in the past he maintained the precepts of chickens and dogs and the like, today he has managed to steal the vestment of the Buddhas and Founders. Profusely haggling in error in the woods, he laughs to death that one wink on Spiritual Mountain.

Old plum tree, old plum tree; nurturing each branch and leaf, the spring. Stock still, the one potential is clearly obvious; adorning concentrations are in every atom. On the staff there are no divisions; on the cushion is a body pervading all directions. Sporting phoenix feathers, he grabbed Tendo's nose; entering into the tiger's cave, he laughed at Daikyu's talk. Dwelling in the mountains like a rock, he's a monastery derelict.

He plants fields and makes rice balls, in Jizo's family style; deep in the mountains he plants pines, in the manner of Rinzai. Wearing the vestment of Ugan and Ungo, he brings the atmosphere of the Himalayas and the snowy garden of Shorin. This face I clearly show to you; hang it in the upper hall and make offerings to it.

Notes

*Daikyu* was one of the Zen masters Dogen met in China.

*Jizo's family style*—Jizo asked Shuzan, “Where do you come from?” Shuzan said, “From the South.” Jizo asked, “How is Buddhism in the South these days?” Shuzan said, “There’s extensive discussion.” Jizo said, “How can that compare to me here planting the fields and making rice to eat?” Shuzan said, “What can you do about the world?” Jizo said, “What do you call ‘the world’?”

*He plants pines in the manner of Rinzai*—As Rinzai was planting pine trees, his teacher Obaku asked him, “Why are you planting trees deep in the mountains?” Rinzai said, “First, to make an environment for the mountain monastery; second, to make a sign for later generations.”

*Ungan and Ungo*—Two spiritual ancestors of the Soto Zen lineage in China.

## **Verses**

1. On visiting Mt. Puto (in China, associated with the bodhisattva Guanyin/Kannon)

From hearing, thinking, and cultivation, entering into  
absorption,

One’s own self, upright and dignified, reveals the holy  
visage.

To notify those who come, and clarify this meaning,  
Kannon is not on Mount Puto

2. To a Zen man seeking a verse

Seeking the Way, pushing aside the weeds, you must  
investigate Zen;

The Founder's meaning is crystal clear, its subtlety not  
transmitted.

Don't regret that the rivers and mountains are a thousand,  
ten thousand fold;

Every place opens up the gate of mystery for you.

3. For Mr. Wang of the Chinese Secretariat

Speaking of the marvelous and talking about the mysterious  
is all emptiness;

Forgetting words and sitting alone, the mouth is like a  
mallet.

From the first it's not holding still with pride in solitary  
detachment;

On the tips of the hundred grasses all is set in action.



4. Given to Cheng Zhong

Once primordial chaos is differentiated, heaven, earth, and  
humanity appear;

What original nature of humanity would you seek?

If you can set eyes on the potential outside of forms,

You'll laugh as you watch a stone girl perform a dance.

5. Given to Professor Ru

Natural sublime wisdom is inherently truly *thus*;

What's the need of Confucian or Buddhist books?

Sitting alone on a rope seat, mouth hung on the wall,

Naturally a single truth surpasses ten thousand vanities.

6. In reply to a verse of ministry president Wen Ben

The great Way has always been suffused with one single  
truth;

Why should paradise necessarily be inside a pot?

Wandering freely outside society—who perceives

The vibrancy of the ancient Way in the mass of naked  
flesh?

7. In reply to a verse of Miao Fu

Fundamentally the mind ground is peaceful and calm of  
itself;

There is no law to question about—it stands out aware,  
Cutting off the ordinary and holy of before;  
Why especially see the morning star?

8. On the occasion of a reunion with brothers on the ninth day of the  
ninth month

Last year's ninth month went here;  
The ninth month's this year comes from here.  
Throwing out the years, months, and days since past time,  
Leaning on the balustrade, with one laugh the  
chrysanthemums bloom.

9. Two verses spoken to disciples on the arrival of winter

Yesterday was short, today is long;  
After all there is no Buddhism to be assessed.  
After obliterating assessment, how will you comprehend?  
Everywhere people meet they celebrate the emergence of  
positive energy.

Everywhere you meet his whole face;  
Flip the body, turn the head, penetrate the heavens.  
Even if one depends on the power of the fist,  
To breathe out is the achievement of the nose.

10. Composed on hearing the 'insect awakening' thunder in  
Kamakura

Half a year eating rice in a layman's house;  
In the snow and frost of the plum flowers on the cold tree,  
The insect awakening thunder peals with a deafening roar;  
In the capital city the color of spring—the little peaches are  
red.

11. Six poems on living in the mountains

The Founder's way which came from the West, I have  
transmitted to the East;

Fishing in the moonlight, plowing in the clouds, I aspire to  
the ancient Way.

The flying red dust of the mundane world doesn't reach  
here—

Deep in the mountains on a snowy night, inside a reed hut.

Sitting at night, it grows late; sleep has not yet overtaken  
me;

Truly I know that for mastering the Way mountains and  
woods are fine;

The sound of the stream enters the ears, the moon comes  
to the eyes;

Outside of this, what further need to apply the mind?

Having long been in the human world, I have no nostalgia—  
Literature, brush and ink, I have already thrown away.  
Looking at the flowers and listening to the birds is not too  
elegant—

Let people of the time laugh at me for lacking talent.

The autumn air is crisp in the clear cool sky;  
A crescent moon, cicadas in the woods, in a plethora of  
feelings;

The night quiet, the hour late, I look at the North Star;

As dawn approaches in the heavens, it points toward the  
east.

This three section reed house is windy and cold;  
Watching my nose, I first come upon the scent of autumn  
chrysanthemums.

Even with an iron eye or a bronze eye, who could discern?  
In the province of Etsu nine times have I seen the autumn.

The tower in front and the hall behind are built like carvings;  
The monument on the summit of the peak is six or seven  
stories.

The moon is cool, the wind is high—this is the time;  
The robe is transmitted at midnight to a monk sitting in zen.