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# Dongshan and the Teaching of Suchness

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Dongshan Liangjie (807–869, J. Tōzan Ryōkai), one of the most prominent teachers of Tang dynasty Chan, is considered the founder of the Caodong lineage, one of the Chan “five houses.”<sup>1</sup> After it was transmitted to Japan by Eihei Dōgen (1200–1253), this lineage was known as Sōtō Zen, and it is now a significant factor in the transporting of Buddhism to the West. As founder of one of the five houses, Dongshan has a major impact in the classic Chan/Zen literature attributed to the legendary Tang dynasty masters. It is generally accepted by modern scholars that the *Recorded Sayings* and *Transmission of the Lamp* documents attributed to Tang masters are often not historically reliable, as many of them, including Dongshan’s record, were not recorded until well after the teacher lived.<sup>2</sup> But in this chapter, rather than analyzing the historicity of the material attributed to Dongshan, I will consider material in his *Record Sayings* and in major kōan collections as it has been transmitted as exemplary of Chan lore.

The *Recorded Sayings* attributed to Dongshan include many stories of encounter dialogues between Dongshan and his teachers, and then with his students. Many of these stories also appear in varied forms in the classic kōan collections (many published before the various *Recorded Sayings* anthologies). Dongshan’s *Recorded Sayings* also includes various teaching verses attributed to Dongshan. Dongshan is perhaps best known for the teaching poem, “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi” (C. *Baojing Sanmei*, J. *Hōkyō Zammai*), which is also

considered the first enunciation of the teaching of the five ranks or degrees that is the dialectical philosophy underlying much of Caodong, and indeed Chan discourse as a whole. Most discussions of Dongshan focus on this five ranks teaching.<sup>3</sup> One modern Chinese commentator, just before presenting an extensive discussion of the five ranks and Dongshan's related teachings, ironically states, "This doctrine and others like it are not of central importance in the teachings of Tung-shan's school [Tung-shan is the Wade-Giles transliteration for Dongshan]. They are merely expedient means or pedagogical schemata for the guidance of the less intelligent students. It is regrettable that historians of Chan have a tendency to treat these incidents as essentials and to ignore the true essentials altogether."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, although the five ranks stand as an important theoretical product of Dongshan's teaching, there is much more to the practical unfolding of the teachings attributed to Dongshan. "The Jewel Mirror Samadhi," still chanted as an important part of the liturgy in modern Sōtō Zen, begins, "The teaching of suchness is intimately transmitted by buddhas and ancestors." Selected passages from this poem will be discussed at the end of this chapter (and the five ranks more briefly), but its first line provides two of the central issues in the writing and stories attributed to Dongshan, which will be the two focal topics addressed here.

The first topic is the nature of suchness, and the Zen process of engaging this level of reality through the practice of meditative attention. Many of the central stories about Dongshan relate to recognizing, exploring, or expressing reality, or the suchness of things. Known in Sanskrit as *tathata*, this suchness is described in Indian Buddhism as ultimate truth, reality, the source, or the unattainable.<sup>5</sup> This classic Buddhist teaching becomes an important touchstone in the material related to Dongshan.

The second issue will be the teaching itself, how this reality is "intimately transmitted." Many of the stories about Dongshan concern his subtle style of teaching, the Zen pedagogy for conveying the truth of suchness. The approaches to the teaching that Dongshan experienced with his teacher Yunyan Tansheng (781–841; J. Ugan Donjō), and that are later reflected in Dongshan's own engagement with his students, are especially elusive and slippery. This reflects both the subtle nature of the reality to be conveyed and the importance of the student's own personal experiential realization of this reality.

These two main issues of suchness and approaches to its teaching will be addressed in three contexts. First, I will closely explore the stories about Dongshan's own training, his relationship to his teachers, and the circumstances of his own awakening and receiving of Dharma transmission. These stories focus explicitly on the issues of the nature of reality, and the complexity of the relationship of Chan student and master. The second section will more briefly

discuss a number of the encounter dialogues about Dongshan and his own disciples, and how they elucidate the issues of suchness and Chan teaching. Finally, this chapter will briefly describe how these two issues are reflected in passages from “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi,” and as they are related to the five ranks teaching.

### Dongshan’s Training in Suchness

The story of his first meeting with his teacher Yunyan involves Dongshan’s questioning as to whether nonsentient beings could expound the Dharma. The story, as presented in Dongshan’s *Recorded Sayings*, is extensive and rather elaborate, and is distinctive and even eccentric in how it emphasizes the issues of the nature of Dharma, or reality, and the strategies for conveying it. The story can be summarized as follows. Dongshan first inquired about this question with the great teacher Guishan Lingyou (771–853; J. Isan Reiyū), who is considered the founder of one of the other five houses of Chan. Dongshan repeated to Guishan a story he had heard about a lengthy exchange with a student by National Teacher Nanyang Huizhong (d. 776; J. Nan’yō Echū), who maintained that nonsentient beings did indeed expound the Dharma, constantly, radiantly, and unceasingly.<sup>6</sup> Huizhong states, perhaps ironically, that fortunately he himself cannot hear the nonsentient beings expounding, because otherwise the student could not hear his teaching. The National Teacher provides a scriptural source for the expounding by nonsentient beings from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Flower Ornament; C. *Huayan*, J. *Kegon*), citing the passage, “The earth expounds Dharma, living beings expound it, throughout the three times, everything expounds it.”<sup>7</sup>

After narrating this story, Dongshan asked Guishan to comment, and Guishan raised his fly-whisk. When Dongshan failed to understand and asked for further explanation, Guishan averred that, “It can never be explained to you by means of one born of mother and father.” Dongshan would later refer to such nonexplanation with appreciation. Guishan finally suggested that Dongshan visit Yunyan for further illumination on this question.

This issue of nonsentient beings’ relation to the Dharma had arisen over the previous couple centuries in Chinese Buddhist thought in relationship to the teaching of buddha-nature, which describes the potentiality for awakening in beings. This potentiality of buddha-nature is also sometimes presented as an aspect of the nature of reality itself. A century before Dongshan, Tiantai scholar Zhanran (711–782; J. Tannen) articulated the teaching potential of grasses and trees, traditionally seen as inanimate and thus inactive objects.<sup>8</sup> Zhanran devoted an entire treatise to explicating the buddha-nature of nonsentient things, though previously the Sanlun school exegete Jizang (549–623; J. Kichizō)

had argued that the distinction between sentient and nonsentient was empty, and not viable.<sup>9</sup> Jizang says that if one denies buddha-nature to anything, “then not only are grasses and trees devoid of buddha-nature, but living beings are also devoid of buddha-nature.”<sup>10</sup> Zhanran’s view of nonsentient beings’ Dharmic capacity reflected in part his interest in Huayan cosmology, with its vision of the world as a luminous ground of interconnectedness and with the mutual nonobstruction of particulars. This anticipated Guishan’s citation of the *Huayan* or *Avatamsaka Sutra* to Dongshan. Zhanran cited the Huayan school patriarch Fazang’s dynamic view of “suchness according with conditions” to support his own teaching of the buddha-nature of nonsentient beings, and was the first to connect “the co-arising of suchness and the essential completeness of Buddha nature.”<sup>11</sup> For Zhanran, “the very colors and smells of the world around us constitute the Assembly of the Lotus [Sutra]; they are the immediate and undefiled expression of buddhahood.”<sup>12</sup> Thus a central inference of the discussion of nonsentient beings expounding the Dharma presented in Dongshan’s stories is the limitation, and ultimate inaccuracy, of usual and conventional human notions of sentient and nonsentient, and of awareness.

The teaching of suchness involved in this story is not a matter of mere human psychological or perceptual realities, but is grounded in ontological reality as a primal expression of buddha-nature. We might also hear, in this question about the Dharmic capacity of nonsentient beings, modern concerns about our human relationship to the environment, and even ecological consciousness. What is the role of the phenomenal world and the world of nature to human spirituality? How might one discern the value of supposedly nonsentient elements of the natural order to a vision of spiritual wholeness and awakening?

A noteworthy implication of the historical context to this story is the degree to which Chan discourse responds to and comments on scholarly Chinese Buddhist teaching. This is so despite the widely proclaimed Chan slogan of “going beyond words and letters,” attributed to Bodhidharma long after his lifetime. Robert Sharf claims that the Chinese native philosophical concern with human “nature” contributed to this discussion in Chinese Buddhism. “I do not know of any Indian references to mundane objects such as roof tiles or stones becoming buddhas and preaching the dharma. In other words, the extension of buddha-nature to the *insentient* appears to have been a distinctively Chinese innovation.”<sup>13</sup> According to recovered documents from Dunhuang, as early a Chan figure as the fourth patriarch, Daoxin (580–651; J. Dōshin), proclaims that walls, fences, tiles, and stones preach the Dharma and so must possess buddha-nature.<sup>14</sup> Nanyang Huizhong, cited by Dongshan, was considered the greatest Chan exponent of the Buddha nature of nonsentient beings. When

asked whether “mind” and “nature” were different or not, he replied that, “To the deluded mind they are different; to the enlightened they are not different.”<sup>15</sup>

Returning to Dongshan’s story, when he finally arrived at Yunyan after leaving Guishan, he asked who was able to hear the Dharma expounded by nonsentient beings. Yunyan said that “Nonsentient beings are able to hear it.” When asked if Yunyan could hear it, he told Dongshan that if he could, then Dongshan could not hear him. Then Dongshan asked why he could not hear it. Yunyan raised his fly-whisk, and then asked if Dongshan heard it yet. When Dongshan replied that he could not, Yunyan said, “You can’t even hear when I expound the Dharma; how do you expect to hear when a nonsentient being expounds the Dharma?”<sup>16</sup>

Although there is no indication of any communication between Guishan and Yunyan aside from the person of Dongshan inquiring before them, Yunyan intriguingly performed the same action as Guishan by raising his fly-whisk. Rather than seeing this as an exotic example of mystical accord or extrasensory perception between Guishan and Yunyan, this exemplifies simply using what was at hand, literally. Such whisks were symbols of teaching authority and Dharma, commonly carried by Chan masters. But more directly, the whisk was the conventionally inanimate object most immediately at hand. If all nonsentient beings proclaim the Dharma, there was no need to seek further.

After the above exchange, Yunyan gave as scriptural citation for Dongshan not the *Huayan Sutra*, as did Nanyong Huizhong, but, interestingly for a Chan teacher, the Pure Land *Amitabha Sutra*: “Water birds, tree groves, all without exception recite the Buddha’s name, recite the Dharma.”<sup>17</sup> Thereupon Dongshan reflected on this, and composed a verse that he presented to Yunyan:

How marvelous! How marvelous!  
 The Dharma expounded by non-sentient beings is inconceivable.  
 Listening with your ears, no sound.  
 Hearing with your eyes, you directly understand.<sup>18</sup>

A slightly different version of this exchange from the one from the *Recorded Sayings*, given above, occurs in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, the most prominent lamp transmission text, and is cited by Dōgen in his *Eihei kōroku* (Extensive Record) with his own comment. In this version, the whisk and the citation to the *Amitabha Sutra* are not included, suggesting that they might have been colorful accretions in the later *Recorded Sayings* text.<sup>19</sup> However, in this version, when Yunyan initially states that if he, Yunyan, could hear nonsentient beings then Dongshan would not hear him, rather than asking why Dongshan could not hear it, Dongshan responds that then he, Dongshan,

could not hear Yunyan. This implies that Dongshan is admitting that he can indeed hear the expounding of nonsentient beings, contrary to the other version. Such hearing might have impelled Dongshan's related questions in the first place.

In his closing verse, the same in both renditions, Dongshan goes beyond merely inquiring into whether or how nonsentient beings might expound the Dharma, and demonstrates his apprehension. This hearing with eyes is a description of synesthesia, the mingling of senses so that sensation in one mode occurs from stimulus in another sense mode. This synesthesia might be related to the Buddhist *dharani*, incantations commonly chanted in Sanskrit or, in East Asia, in transliterations of the Sanskrit into Chinese or Sino-Japanese. In such *dharani*, particular sounds are supposed to have particular, beneficial spiritual outcomes. Signified meaning is not the point, but the active aural signifying of Dharma effects is useful. The actual ritual experience of proclaiming these sounds is said to have somatic benefits, and to aid memory and analytic faculties, fostering eloquent expounding, and so to connect the senses of speech or sound and mind.<sup>20</sup>

Dongshan uses synesthesia to present experiential evidence of an awareness of suchness beyond the conventional limitations of sensation and the familiar routines of human conceptualization. His description may also be taken as a meditative or *samadhi* instruction. A quality of presence is indicated, usually defined in Zen practice traditions in terms of uprightness and qualities of *mudra* or postures. The practitioner's openness to the phenomenal world is not narrowly defined in terms of particular sense media but, rather, awareness of phenomena occurs within a more primal wholeness, not separated into sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or thought. All of the senses might be seen as part of a single instrument for perceiving, engaging, and practicing suchness. This multifaceted embrace of sensation also suggests radical awareness and acceptance of the phenomenal world of karma, the causes and conditions that allow one's presence.

This extended story about Dongshan's meeting with Yunyan and its background demonstrates aspects of the subtlety of teaching that is characteristic of the tradition of Dongshan. Guishan's statement to Dongshan, "It can never be explained to you by means of one born of mother and father," as well as the instructions by the National Teacher and from Yunyan, all indicate that this realm of teaching is beyond the usual human conceptual categories, and challenges the student to his own experiential realization, beyond any theoretical "explanations."

Probably the most pivotal and emblematic story about Dongshan concerns his departure from Yunyan, rather than their first meeting, just discussed. After

some period of practice with Yunyan (its duration unspecified in extant records, as far as I know), just before departing to visit other teachers, Dongshan asked Yunyan, “Later on, if I am asked to describe your reality, how should I respond?”<sup>21</sup> After a pause, Yunyan said, “Just this is it.”

The narration states that Dongshan was lost in thought, and Yunyan said, “You are now in charge of this great matter; you must be most thoroughgoing.” Dongshan departed without further comment. Later while wading across a stream, he looked down, saw his reflection, and “awakened to the meaning of the previous exchange.”<sup>22</sup> He then wrote the following verse:

Just don't seek from others, or you'll be far estranged from self.  
I now go on alone; everywhere I meet it.  
It now is me; I now am not it.  
One must understand in this way to merge with suchness.<sup>23</sup>

This story is informative about the nature of this suchness, or reality, and also for the teaching about it. Yunyan's “Just this is it” evokes meditative or mindfulness practices of bare attention from early Buddhism.<sup>24</sup> “This” certainly might be envisioned in the context of their dialogue as referring simply to the presence together of Yunyan and Dongshan, or as referring back to Dongshan's directly prior inquiry. But “just this” also refers more universally to the simplicity and immediacy of reality beyond human conceptualizations. Such an ultimate utterance neither requires nor suggests any quick rejoinder from Dongshan, and none was forthcoming. But Yunyan sealed his conveyance of the Dharma to Dongshan saying, “You are now in charge of this great matter; you must be most thoroughgoing.”

Dongshan's subsequent revelation upon gazing at his reflection in the stream presents an inner dynamic overcoming the familiar subject-object division, a primary hindrance to the apprehension of suchness. His verse response does not merely concern discerning a description of some external reality. Dongshan speaks to the complex dialectic that goes beyond the estrangement of self and other, and integrates his personhood with the omnipresence of the reality of suchness. This reality is unavoidable: “Everywhere I meet it.”

The subtle key line that suggests the inner nature of this interrelationship is, “It now is me; I now am not it.” This dynamic interaction may be viewed from many perspectives. Gazing at his reflection in the stream, Dongshan could see that this image was him, yet he could not be reduced to this representation. The relationship of true reality to image, reflection, or depiction is at work in various ways here.

Further, the “it” of “just this” is a totally inclusive experience, incorporating everything. So “it” truly was him, the totality of his being, and yet he

could not personally claim to encompass it all. This depicts the relationship of the limited “I,” including its egoistic self-clinging, to the all-encompassing universal nature, of which any “I” is simply a particular partial expression. This dialectic echoes the Huayan Fourfold Dharmadhātu, which encompasses: the universal, the particular, the mutual nonobstructive interaction of universal and particular, and, finally, the mutual nonobstructive interaction of particulars with “other” particulars.<sup>25</sup> This dialectic between universal and particular would be developed as the Caodong five ranks teaching, introduced by Dongshan in his “Jewel Mirror Samadhi.” In that teaching poem, this line from Dongshan’s awakening verse celebrating the stream reflection, “It now is me; I now am not it,” would be echoed as, “You are not it; it truly is you.”

One of the seminal writings of Eihei Dōgen, who brought the Caodong/Sōtō lineage to Japan, includes a line that might be taken as a revealing commentary to Dongshan’s, “It now is me; I now am not it.” In his essay “Genjōkōan” (Actualizing the Fundamental Point) from one of his masterworks, *Shōbōgenzō* (True Dharma Eye Treasury), Dōgen says, “To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and experience themselves is awakening.”<sup>26</sup> In this case the “You are not it” is amplified as the self carrying forward or projecting some constructed self on to one’s experience, defined by Dōgen as delusion. The constructed “you” is not it, or reality. Dongshan’s “It now is me” is expressed as the myriad things of the phenomenal world interdependently co-arising and mutually experiencing themselves, described as awakening. This mutual arising of all would, of course, include the particular self, but now seen as merely one of the ten thousand particular aspects of reality, rather than imposing its desires and human presuppositions on to reality. This total interconnected dependent co-arising is exactly you. This description from Dōgen in terms of the dynamic process of self, the projection of the constructed egoistic self, and nonself as the wholeness of reality including the provisional person, illuminates the dynamic of Dongshan’s five ranks and its integration of the particular, including each and every self, with the ultimate universal, to be further discussed in this chapter.

In addition to its relevance to issues concerning the nature of suchness, Dongshan’s verse and Yunyan’s primary response also pertain to the student-teacher relationship, and the “intimate transmitting” of this truth. In both Yunyan’s statement, “Just this is it,” and in the middle lines in Dongshan’s verse above, there is an indefinite pronoun that could be read as either “it” or as a personal pronoun, such as “him.” So Yunyan’s statement might be read, “Just this person.” And the reading of Dongshan’s verse would then be:



I now go on alone, but everywhere I meet him.  
 He now is me; I now am not him.

Yunyan's statement and this verse are often translated in this way, and both the readings of "it" to imply "suchness," and of "him" as the teacher, are certainly implicit and valid in these lines of Dongshan's verse, as well as in his "Jewel Mirror Samadhi."<sup>27</sup> Clearly some of the comments on this story by Dongshan himself infer reading this as a personal pronoun, indicating the intricacy of his relationship to his teacher.

In Dongshan's *Recorded Sayings*, in the story immediately preceding the narrative in which Yunyan tells Dongshan, "Just this is it" or "Just this person," Dongshan is already described as taking his leave from Yunyan. Yunyan said, "After your departure, it will be hard to meet again." Dongshan replied, "It will be hard not to meet."<sup>28</sup> Even before he gazed at his reflection in the stream, Dongshan felt the enduring imprint of his teacher Yunyan's presence; "everywhere I meet him."

The story that Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157; J. Wanshi Shōgaku) later used as case 49 of the kōan collection that would become the *Book of Serenity* (C. *Congrong lu*, J. *Shōyōroku*) is actually a follow-up comment on Yunyan's stating, "Just this is it." In that text, the original story and Dongshan's verse after seeing his reflection in the stream appear only in Wansong's later commentary on the case. The story featured in the case involves Dongshan some time later as leader of an assembly making offerings to an image of Yunyan as his teacher. He was making offerings to his teacher Yunyan, probably on the occasion of a monthly memorial service for a teacher or temple founder, still part of Sōtō liturgy. A monk came forward and asked, "When Yunyan said 'Just this is it,' what did he mean?"

Dongshan responded, "At that time I nearly misunderstood my late teacher."

The monk said (somewhat impudently), "Did Yunyan himself know it is, or not?"

Dongshan said, "If he didn't know it is, how could he be able to say this? If he did know it is, how could he be willing to say this?"<sup>29</sup>

The first half of this comment is clear. Yunyan had to have personally experienced the suchness of "just this" in order to be able to state as the heart of his teaching, "Just this is it." However, it is significant that Dongshan responded to the monk with a question, "If he didn't know it is, how could he be able to say this?" The other half of the question expresses the problematic of stating this directly. To really see "just this" includes the awareness that such realization

cannot be “intimately transmitted” simply through verbiage. Dongshan needed to gaze into the reflection in the stream to realize that, “It now is me; I now am not it.” Dongshan asked that if Yunyan really knew just this, then how could he have been willing to say “just this” so explicitly? Dongshan presented an unanswerable question about whether Yunyan could really have known suchness. And this deep questioning is what is most helpful toward provoking the student’s own realization of the dynamics of suchness. Dongshan refused to give any direct answer to the monk questioning about Yunyan.

In the *Recorded Sayings*, immediately after the preceding exchange, presumably on a different occasion when Dongshan was making offerings for Yunyan, another monk inquired as to why Dongshan so honored Yunyan, who was fairly obscure, as opposed to other renowned teachers Dongshan had studied under, such as Nanquan Puyuan (748–835; J. Nansen Fugan). Dongshan replied, “I do not esteem my late teacher’s virtues or his Buddhist teaching; I only value the fact that he didn’t explain everything for me.”<sup>30</sup> Here Dongshan strongly emphasizes a pedagogic style of indirectness, and the crucial importance of the student’s personal experience rather than intellectual or ideological presentations of inner truth. At the end of this dialogue, Dongshan evinced his own indirectness by replying to the monk’s further questioning that Dongshan only half agreed with Yunyan because, “If I completely agreed, then I would be unfaithful to my teacher.”<sup>31</sup> Just as Yunyan did not explain everything (or especially the most important things) for Dongshan, Dongshan would not be willing to blindly agree with Yunyan about everything. This is a retrospective nonexplanation regarding the memory of his teacher. Even if Yunyan now is Dongshan, and Dongshan meets Yunyan everywhere, Dongshan cannot fully be, and indeed is not, Yunyan. Thus, in such a way, Dongshan becomes Dongshan.

In an earlier story about Dongshan, when he was still a young monk studying under Nanquan, the complex relationship of student and teacher is already prefigured. In the story, Nanquan was preparing for the memorial service for his own teacher, Mazu Daoyi (709–788; J. Baso Dōitsu), a great and important teacher sometimes said to have had 139 enlightened disciples. Nanquan asked his assembly, “Tomorrow we will pay homage to Mazu. Do you think he will return or not?” When nobody else responded, young Dongshan came forward and said, “He will come as soon as he has a companion.”<sup>32</sup> Already Dongshan realized that the reality of a teacher was in the interaction with a worthy student. Nanquan complimented the young monk as being suitable for training. Dongshan then said, “Master, do not crush what is good into something mean.” Here Dongshan rejected the view of Zen teaching as being a matter of molding, perfecting, or improving the student. In his later meeting with Yunyan, Dongshan would recognize the reality of teaching as the mutual

recognition of suchness, and the relationship that expresses the dynamic of suchness.

### Dongshan's Kōans

Among the encounter dialogues or stories attributed to Dongshan, which are numerous in his *Recorded Sayings*, several will be discussed here that are revealing of Dongshan's considerations of the nature of suchness, and of skillful approaches to its teaching. Developing from these themes and their dynamics, some of the stories also focus on the interrelationship of the ultimate, unconditioned truth with the particulars of the phenomenal, conditioned world (the focus of the five ranks teaching), and approaches to the practice of that relationship. The following comments and partial exegeses of these kōans, as well as those given earlier, hardly explain, much less exhaust, the complexities and lively spiritual challenges they present.

There is a later story from Dongshan in his *Recorded Sayings* that is related to the story of hearing or not hearing nonsentient beings expounding Dharma, through which he met Yunyan. This story also relates to the practice of receiving the awareness of suchness. Dongshan instructed his assembly by saying, "Experiencing the matter of going beyond Buddha, finally capable we can speak a little." An intrepid monk inquired, "What is speaking?" Dongshan said, "At the time of speaking you do not hear." The monk asked, "Master, do you hear or not?" And Dongshan replied, "Just when I do not speak, then I hear."<sup>33</sup>

Even though he previously recommended hearing with the eyes, Dongshan here recommends not using the tongue to hear. This implies silence and the practice of silent meditation as the context for "going beyond Buddha." Such going beyond signifies not attaching to prior awareness or conceptions of awakening, but fully and ongoingly sensing and simply meeting the present suchness. And yet there is still the suggestion of speaking "a little" to subtly convey this awareness. Silence alone is not sufficient to go beyond Buddha. And suchness is an unending, not static, reality.

In commenting on this dialogue, Dōgen says in his kōan verse commentaries in his *Extensive Record*:

Seeing words we know the person like seeing his face.  
 Three direct pointers are tongue, sharp wit, and writing.  
 Fulfilling the way, wings naturally appear on the body.  
 Since meeting myself, I deeply respect him.<sup>34</sup>

Dōgen here is praising Dongshan. Since meeting the constructed illusory self, his own “myself,” Dōgen says he deeply respects this teaching, and the so-called other. Dongshan’s Record includes numerous subtle stories about how to convey this silence, or hearing with the eyes, that is engagement and practice of suchness. Dongshan and Dōgen are both concerned here with how one meets this Dharma of suchness; how one might hear, taste, touch, enjoy its fragrance, and then how engage this sensing of reality. Still, despite its elusiveness, Dongshan says one must “speak a little” to convey this reality. And Dōgen is even willing to praise “tongue, sharp wit, and writing.”

In a story that occurs at the end of his leading a summer practice period, Dongshan seems to criticize sensory engagement with suchness when he enigmatically recommends that his monks now go where there is no grass for ten thousand miles (*li*). This story appears as case 89 in the *Book of Serenity*, framed by Hongzhi Zhengjue with later comments from two other teachers:

Dongshan spoke to the assembly, “It’s the beginning of autumn, the end of summer, and you brethren will go, some to the east, some west; you must go where there’s not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles.”

He also said, “But where there’s not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles, how can you go?”

Shishuang said, “Going out the gate, immediately there’s grass.”

Dayang said, “I’d say, even not going out the gate, still the grass is boundless.”<sup>35</sup>

This is an example of Dongshan’s difficult, challenging teaching. What does it mean to go where there’s not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles? The ten thousand grass tips are a conventional Chan expression for the whole phenomenal world—all the myriad things of the world. All of the sense objects, our possessions, all of our physical experiences are all just grass. Dongshan’s directions imply a place beyond conditions, beyond karma, beyond this phenomenal world. He encourages travel into the realm of the unconditioned, beyond desires and aversion and habitual patterns of seeing things. The unconditioned nirvanic realm is juxtaposed with the realities of the temporal world in which the grasses grow. But could one also see suchness as grass, or grass as suchness?

The version of this story in the *Recorded Sayings* includes the later response from Shishuang Qingzhu (807–888; J. Sekisō Keisho), a Dharma heir of Yunyan’s Dharma brother and also biological brother, Daowu Yuanzhi (769–835; J. Dōgo Enchi). In this version, Shishuang’s statement criticizes

Dongshan's monks, as he said, "Why didn't someone say, 'As soon as one goes out the door, there is grass?'" Dongshan heard of this comment and approved, saying, "Within the country of the Great T'ang such a man is rare."<sup>36</sup>

Dongshan is tricky. Even though students may glimpse or imagine a realm beyond the phenomenal sense world, Dongshan's encouragement may help them to see that this is not the whole reality of suchness he saw in the stream. He asks, "Where there's not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles, how can you go?" Yunyan in his statement, "You are now in charge of this great matter; you must be most thoroughgoing," and Dongshan in his conclusion to "The Jewel Mirror Samadhi," "Just to do this continuously is called the host within the host" (see below), are encouraging an engagement with suchness that can be sustained in the long term, right in the realm of sense awareness and the unavoidable grasslands, but unobstructed by attachments.

As indicated in the *Book of Serenity* case, a later teacher in Dongshan's lineage, Dayang Qingxuan (d. 1027; J. Taiyō Kyōgen), commented, "Even not going out the gate, still the grass is boundless."<sup>37</sup> The phenomenal world is ever-present, even within the monastic container and its enterprise of turning within and going beyond current self-awareness. The balancing of a fundamental practice polarity is implicit here. Intuitive insight or wisdom is usually seen in Mahayana or Chan as the product of meditative turning within, glimpsing the unconditioned realm, empty of all grasses. Traditionally this is balanced in practice with going out into the realm of diverse suffering beings, the myriad grass-tips, extending awareness with compassion. Dongshan's initial admonition to the departing monks in this case might suggest retaining their meditative insight as they travel. Hongzhi's verse comment to the case begins:

Grass boundless;  
 Inside the gate, outside the gate, you see by yourself.  
 To set foot in the forest of thorns is easy,  
 To turn the body outside the luminous screen is hard.  
 Look! Look!  
 How many kinds?<sup>38</sup>

This story shows Dongshan subtly suggesting the suchness that encompasses both the luminous screen and the many kinds. And yet in another related story, Dongshan seems more emphatic about going where there is no grass. His disciple Huayan Xiujing (n.d.; J. Kegon Kyūjō) confessed to Dongshan that he was still caught by "the vicissitudes of feelings and discriminating consciousness," and Dongshan told him to go to the place without an inch of grass for ten thousand miles. Xiujing humbly asked if it is all right to go to such a place, perhaps concerned to not disregard the grasses. Yet Dongshan replied,

“You should only go in such a way.”<sup>39</sup> Dongshan uncompromisingly insisted that his students experience this fully on their own.

Dongshan challenged his monks in an even more immediate, personal manner in another story that appears in both the *Recorded Sayings* and as case 43 of the important kōan collection, *The Blue Cliff Record* (C. Biyanlu; J. *Hekiganroku*). A monk inquired, “How does one escape hot and cold?” Dongshan retorted, “Why not go where it is neither hot nor cold?” When the monk asked what place that was, Dongshan confided, “When it’s cold, you freeze to death; when it’s hot, you swelter to death.”<sup>40</sup>

Here Dongshan is challenging his monks not merely to avoid all of the worldly affairs described somewhat abstractly via the metaphor of grasses, but to go beyond their own personal, physical comfort zones. First, he says to go to a place with no heat or cold, which may have been intense at times in his monastery up in the mountains. Even more, he says, to accomplish this the monks must be willing to give up their very lives. Although Dongshan does not engage in the shouts or blows famously employed by his closely contemporary Chan masters Linji Yixuan (d. 867; J. Rinzai Gigen) and Deshan Xuanjian (780–865; J. Tokusan Senkan), Dongshan’s subtle teaching is no less challenging to his students. From these stories, the misimpression of the notion that Caodong does not engage in gongan/kōans like the Linji tradition should also be obvious.<sup>41</sup>

The intensity of this story of no hot or cold certainly might apply simply to the weather. But aside from complaining about the temperature, this monk might have entered the contemplative life to escape the inner heat and intensity of human rage or passions. And he may have realized that the icy chill of uncaring dullness or of lifelessness was an equally pernicious alternative. Where is the place with no such emotional heat or frozenness?

In his verse for the story in the *Blue Cliff Record*, Xuedou refers to Dongshan’s five ranks, asking, “Why must correct and biased be in an arrangement?”<sup>42</sup> Correct and biased are the two sides of the polarity whose interrelationship is elaborated in the five ranks. These two might also be described as the real and apparent, upright and inclined, universal and particular, ultimate and phenomenal, oneness and many, or absolute and relative, and they are also frequently suggested in Chan discourse by the metaphors of host and guest or lord and vassal. Yuanwu in his commentary on the *Blue Cliff Record* case proceeds to elaborate the fivefold arrangements of correct and biased. He analyzes the story in terms of correct and biased, and even quotes in full Dongshan’s own five verses on their five interactions: the biased within the correct; the correct within the biased; coming from within the correct; arrival within the biased; and

arrival within both at once.<sup>43</sup> Although these categories might indeed be employed analytically here, this story of hot and cold also simply informs Dongshan's expression of suchness with the intensities of hot and of cold, and also with the surpassing of hot and cold, whether from climate or emotion.

Dōgen later devoted a whole essay called "Shunju" (Spring and Autumn) to this dialogue of Dongshan in his *Shōbōgenzō* (True Dharma Eye Treasury).<sup>44</sup> Tanahashi evocatively translates Dongshan's final line of the dialogue as, "When it's cold, cold finishes the monk. When it is hot, heat totals the monk," suggesting the fullness as well as the finality of Dongshan's place without hot or cold, where these conditions are faced rather than evaded. In this essay Dōgen cites eight comments on the story by later masters, and adds his own comments on these, most at least somewhat approvingly. A full discussion of all these is beyond the scope of this chapter. But the eight do include Xuedou's verse used in the *Blue Cliff Record* and a few others that reference the five ranks polarity. Dōgen clearly criticizes such analysis, by saying, "If buddha-dharma had been transmitted merely through the investigation of differentiation and oneness, how could it have reached this day?" and "Do not mistakenly say that Dongshan's buddha-dharma is the five ranks of oneness and differentiation."<sup>45</sup> In his introduction, Dōgen extols Dongshan's summit of cold or heat, and says that "Cold is the vital eye of the ancestor school. Heat is the warm skin and flesh of my late master."<sup>46</sup> This concerns direct experience beyond systematic formulations such as the five ranks. Dōgen requires "understanding cold or heat in the everyday activities of Buddha ancestors."<sup>47</sup> Both Dongshan and Dōgen suggest one face rather than avoid the reality of heat or ice.

The verse comment by Hongzhi, cited and commented on by Dōgen, emphasizes the byplay of Dongshan and this specific monk, and thus more generally appreciating the importance of the particular persons portrayed in encounter dialogues, as opposed to seeing them as representations of ideological propositions. Hongzhi discusses the dialogue about hot and cold as if it was "you and I playing go," and then Dōgen asks, "Who are the two players?"<sup>48</sup> Go is an ancient Chinese (and Japanese) game played on a board, slightly analogous to chess. Two players take turns placing black and white stones on the board to delineate and mark off territory, although either side's stones may at times fully envelop and capture the other's stones, thus acquiring more territory. Dōgen references the equalizing handicaps that can be given in the game, and rejects seeing such a discussion as merely a game.

In another story in the *Recorded Sayings*, a monk demonstrates the subtlety of realization of suchness that Dongshan encourages. This unnamed monk has incorporated the ultimate in his own experience, and engages in appropriate

expression to confirm it with Dongshan. Dongshan asked the monk, “Where have you come from?” and the monk said, “From wandering in the mountains.” Dongshan asked, “Did you reach the peak?” and the monk said, “Yes.” Dongshan asked if there was anyone on the peak, and the monk said, “No there wasn’t.” Dongshan said, “If so, then you did not reach the peak.” Here Dongshan indicates that if nobody was there then neither was the monk. If this peak experience was true emptiness in which not a thing exists, then neither did the monk. But the indomitable monk replied, “If I did not reach the peak, how could I have known there was no one there?”

After this revelation, Dongshan asked why this monk had not remained there, and the monk replied that he would have been so inclined, but that there was someone from the West (perhaps referring to the Buddha or Bodhidharma) who would not have approved. Dongshan then praised the monk by saying, “I had wondered about this fellow.”<sup>49</sup>

In his response, the monk did not hesitate or fade away, indicating that he was indeed present as a witness to the space without a blade of grass, without heat or cold, and by his presence therein he demonstrated the subtlety of Dongshan’s teaching of suchness. His engagement with the suchness of the phenomenal world of causes and conditions through his own experience beyond conditioning was verified in his “speaking a little” with Dongshan. The monk understood that the buddhas required him to take responsibility and return from the peak to share the awareness from his experience.

A briefer dialogue appearing fairly late in the *Recorded Sayings* is included as case 98 in the *Book of Serenity*. A monk asked, “Which of the three bodies [of buddhas] does not fall into any category?” Dongshan responded, “I am always close to this.”<sup>50</sup> The final “this” may refer to such a buddha body, but also to the whole question of not falling into any category. The reading above is based on the Chinese characters given by Hongzhi for the case that was used in the *Book of Serenity*. The characters in the *Recorded Sayings* version, the earliest extant version of which did not appear until some five hundred years after Hongzhi, reads, “I was once [or formerly] concerned with this.” The variant reading basically differs only in putting Dongshan’s concern or closeness in past tense, as opposed to being ever present, and remaining.<sup>51</sup>

The three bodies of buddhas is a teaching that describes different aspects of what “Buddha” came to signify in the development of the Mahayana. First, the Dharmakaya or reality body is the Buddha as the nature of reality itself, also seen as the body of the whole phenomenal universe, seen from the viewpoint of reality. Second is the Sambhogakaya, or the “bliss” body of buddhas existing in meditative pure lands, such as the Buddha highly venerated in East Asian



devotion, Amitabha (C. Amitofo; J. Amida). Third is the Nirmanakaya, the incarnate or manifested body of a buddha in history, such as Sakyamuni Buddha, who lived as an historical personage in sixth- or fifth-century B.C.E. in northern India, although future and past buddhas also are said to appear incarnated in history. This incarnate body of Buddha is the primary subject of early Buddhist views of Buddha. The teaching of three bodies, or at least that of the Dharmakaya, appeared in early Perfection of Wisdom texts, and later was articulated as three or sometimes more bodies in texts associated with the Cittamatra branch of teachings, also called Yogacara.<sup>52</sup>

This question asked of Dongshan is ironic. Even to distinguish bodies of Buddha is to create categories. One point of the question is the search for that which might go beyond categories, conditions, limitations, or stages of spiritual development. Dongshan's response successfully avoids grasping onto any category or explanation that might settle this monk's questioning. Yet Dongshan acknowledges the importance of the question by saying "I am always close to this." The quality of not focusing on stages of practice seems to be characteristic of Dongshan's teaching. Although some of the secondary presentations of the five ranks seem to indicate a progression in practice accomplishment, these five ranks or positions are most often viewed as the ontological interrelationship of universal and particular.

Hongzhi's verse comment in the *Book of Serenity* case for this dialogue includes the unconditioned as a topic of this question of not falling into categories. He begins, "Not entering the world, not following conditions." But then he says, "In the emptiness of the pot of ages there's a family tradition," acknowledging the reality of a teaching praxis and a living tradition of such from Hongzhi's vantage point nine generations after Dongshan. Hongzhi further envisions, "evening on an autumn river;/An ancient embankment, the boat returns—a single stretch of haze."<sup>53</sup> In Dongshan's effort to remain close to that which is beyond categories emerges a way of seeing suchness with the ears, or perhaps with the touch on the skin of the cool haze of an autumn evening.

The several stories of Dongshan's teaching recounted here are a mere smattering of the many dialogues recorded and attributed to him. But these provide some context for Dongshan's presentation of suchness, and his subtle style of teaching. Another image used on several occasions by Dongshan is that of the bird's path, which he encourages his students to follow, leaving no traces.<sup>54</sup> This is a provocative image for selfless practice, reminiscent of the space with no grass or without heat or cold. However, birds can actually follow the same migratory paths for centuries, so something must remain to

be followed. Another later Caodong school presentation of Dongshan's teaching includes the bird's path among "three roads" of Dongshan, which also include "extending the hands" of helpfulness as an image not separate from the bird's path, "Traveling the bird's path by yourself, yet you extend your hands."<sup>55</sup>

### The Jewel Mirror Samadhi

"The Jewel Mirror Samadhi" is a long teaching poem, one of a number of such in the Chan/Zen tradition. It is generally attributed to Dongshan, although in the *Recorded Sayings*, Dongshan presents it to one of his successors, Caoshan Benji (840–901; J.: Sōzan Honjaku), and tells him that this teaching was secretly entrusted to Dongshan by his teacher Yunyan.<sup>56</sup> This may be a way of recognizing his teacher's inspiration, but there exists no other indication that this text was drafted by Yunyan. This verse presents many suggestions about suchness and its teaching, and fairly cryptically incorporates the five ranks. Here is this verse by Dongshan in its entirety:

The teaching of suchness is intimately transmitted by buddhas  
and ancestors; Now you have it; preserve it well.

A silver bowl filled with snow; a heron hidden in the moon.

Taken as similar, they are not the same; not distinguished, their  
places are known.

The meaning does not reside in the words, but a pivotal moment  
brings it forth.

Move and you are trapped; miss and you fall into doubt and  
vacillation.

Turning away and touching are both wrong, for it is like a  
massive fire.

Just to portray it in literary form is to stain it with defilement.

In darkest night it is perfectly clear; in the light of dawn it is  
hidden.

It is a standard for all things; its use removes all suffering.

Although it is not constructed, it is not beyond words.

Like facing a precious mirror; form and reflection behold each  
other.

You are not it, but in truth it is you.

Like a newborn child, it is fully endowed with five aspects:

No going, no coming, no arising, no abiding;

"Baba wawa"—is anything said or not?

In the end it says nothing, for the words are not yet right.  
 In the illumination hexagram, inclined and upright interact,  
 Piled up they become three, the permutations make five,  
 Like the taste of the five-flavored herb, like the five-pronged vajra.  
 Wondrously embraced within the real, drumming and singing  
     begin together.  
 Penetrate the source and travel the pathways; embrace the  
     territory and treasure the roads.  
 You would do well to respect this; do not neglect it.  
 Natural and wondrous, it is not a matter of delusion or  
     enlightenment.  
 Within causes and conditions, time and season, it is serene and  
     illuminating.  
 So minute it enters where there is no gap, so vast it transcends  
     dimension.  
 A hairsbreadth's deviation, and you are out of tune.  
 Now there are sudden and gradual, in which teachings and  
     approaches arise.  
 When teachings and approaches are distinguished, each has its  
     standard.  
 Whether teachings and approaches are mastered or not, reality  
     constantly flows.  
 Outside still and inside trembling, like tethered colts or  
     cowering rats,  
 The ancient sages grieved for them, and offered them the  
     Dharma.  
 Led by their inverted views, they take black for white.  
 When inverted thinking stops, the affirming mind naturally  
     accords.  
 If you want to follow in the ancient tracks, please observe the  
     sages of the past.  
 One on the verge of realizing the Buddha Way contemplated a  
     tree for ten kalpas,  
 Like a battle-scarred tiger, like a horse with shanks gone grey.  
 Because some are vulgar, jeweled tables and ornate robes;  
 Because some are wide-eyed, cats and white oxen.  
 With his archer's skill Yi hit the mark at a hundred paces,  
 But when arrows meet head-on, how could it be a matter of skill?  
 The wooden man starts to sing; the stone woman gets up  
     dancing.

It is not reached by feelings or consciousness, how could it  
 involve deliberation?  
 Ministers serve their lords, children obey their parents;  
 Not obeying is not filial, failure to serve is no help.  
 With practice hidden, function secretly, like a fool, like an idiot;  
 Just to do this continuously is called the host within the host.<sup>57</sup>

This verse has many references to the two issues of the nature of suchness and approaches to its teaching that are the focus of this article, and which are also highlighted in the first line of the verse. The whole text might be seen as referring back to the topic of teaching of suchness and how it is intimately transmitted. A full exegesis of this lengthy and stimulating text is beyond the scope of this article, but I will very briefly discuss selected lines that are informative about suchness and Chan pedagogy related to it, followed by mentioning how the five ranks appear in this text.

The first thing Dongshan says about this teaching of suchness is that “You now have it,” with the admonition to “preserve it well.” This expresses that the reality of suchness is not something that needs to be calculated or acquired. It is already present, but needs to be personally discerned, realized, expressed, and maintained. As for the subtlety required and the inadequacy of language for conveying this suchness, the verse says, “The meaning does not reside in the words, but a pivotal moment brings it forth.” This “pivotal moment” can also be read as the energy brought forth by the inquiring student, to which the reality of suchness does indeed respond, according to Dongshan. “Turning away and touching are both wrong, for it is like a massive fire,” indicates that this suchness cannot be ignored or evaded, but also that it cannot be grabbed or grasped, other meanings of the character here for “touching.” “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi” also claims about suchness and its teaching that their “use removes all suffering,” making the very nature of reality a soteriological agent.

Unlike some Chan interpretations of the slogan of “direct pointing to the mind, beyond words and letters,” Dongshan avows that the teaching of suchness can be effectively taught or discussed, “Although it is not constructed, it is not beyond words.” In the line, “Wondrously embraced within the real, drumming and singing begin together,” the drumming and singing refers to instant, unmediated inquiry and response or, literally, hitting and yelling back. Again, suchness responds to sincere inquiry, without any mediation through analysis or deliberation. Clearly, for this text this is not a matter of arduous study or mastery since, “Whether teachings and approaches are mastered or not, reality constantly flows.” The problem, and the need for highly subtle teaching, is the habit of conditioned patterns of thinking and attachment. But, according to

Dongshan, this can indeed be seen through and put aside. “When inverted thinking stops, the affirming mind naturally accords.” This “affirming mind” is an appealing image for the awareness propounded by “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi.”

Another provocative image proclaims, “The wooden man starts to sing; the stone woman gets up dancing.” This echoes many traditional Chan/Zen images of life arising from stillness, the revival of spirit promoted by samadhi practice, such as “a dragon howls in a withered tree,” or “the plum blossoms on a dead branch.” Suchness connects with the source of creative energy. Dongshan again emphasizes the inner, alchemical nature of this reality as, “It is not reached by feelings or consciousness, how could it involve deliberation?” Dongshan’s long verse ends with the exhortation to “preserve it well,” as he states that, “Just to do this continuously is called the host within the host,” an image for complete fulfillment and realization.

#### *The Five Ranks in the Jewel Mirror Samadhi*

It is apparent from the previous considerations that Dongshan’s teaching about suchness, and about teaching itself, can be presented and discussed without recourse to the five ranks teaching. Although a great deal of Chinese Caodong scholarship as well as much in Japanese Sôtō history have addressed technical aspects of the five ranks formula, it appears only at the end of Dongshan’s *Recorded Sayings* and is downplayed by many teachers in his lineage, including Dōgen.<sup>58</sup> Immediately before “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi” in the *Recorded Sayings* text, Dongshan presents verses on five ranks, which are relationships between the real, true, or upright (C. *zheng*; J. *shō*), and the partial, particular, or inclined (C. *pian*; J. *hen*). Another version of the five is mentioned above as given in the *Blue Cliff Record* commentary on the kōan about Dongshan’s place with no hot or cold. In the *Recorded Sayings*, the five are: the partial within the real, the real within the partial, coming from within the real, going within together, and arriving within together. These are generally understood as ontological interrelationships of the two fundamental aspects of upright and inclined, rather than “ranks” in the senses of stages of development. But right after these five verses, and just before “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi” in the *Recorded Sayings*, Dongshan presents verses on five other qualities: looking upon, serving, accomplishing, accomplishing mutually, and accomplishment of accomplishment.<sup>59</sup> These do seem to represent stages of practice development.

Elaborate presentations and implications of this teaching have been offered in Caodong and Sôtō history, and sometimes they describe “The Jewel Mirror

Samadhi” as presenting the five ranks. In addition to various references to five-ness, this long verse includes five lines with the Chinese character for truth or reality used in the five ranks, and these lines might be taken as referring to these five. First the partial within the real appears as, “In darkest night it is perfectly *clear* (real); in the light of dawn it is hidden” (although this might sound as if the second, and indeed the first two ranks are interactive). The second of the real within the partial occurs as, “You are not it, but in *truth* it is you.”

The third rank of coming from within the real is depicted in the incomplete emergence described as, “In the end it says nothing, for the words are not yet *right*.”

The fourth rank of going within together describes both aspects in cooperation, “In the illumination hexagram, inclined and *upright* interact,” with a reference to the ancient Chinese classic, the *Yi Qing* or *Book of Changes*, whose traditional analysis includes a fivefold interplay of changing lines. The fifth rank of arriving within together, the two aspects of real and apparent (or upright and inclined) functioning together without any separation or sense of distinction, is depicted in, “Wondrously embraced within the *real*, drumming and singing begin together.”

Aside from the five ranks teaching, the dialogues attributed to Dongshan both as a student and then in his teaching convey the subtle nature of the reality of suchness, and his ingenious approach to conveying this reality. Further study of how this style is sustained in the Caodong/Sōtō teaching tradition that Dongshan initiated will reveal more about the figure of Dongshan and his teaching.

#### NOTES

1. It is often suggested that the name Caodong is based on Dongshan’s name combined with that of one of his main disciples, Caoshan. However, Caoshan was not the successor whose line was predominant in Caodong’s development. More to the point, the order of the name Caodong implies the “Cao” preceding “Dong,” so it is more likely that the Cao in Caodong actually referred to Caoxi, the teaching site and thus a name used for the famed Chan sixth ancestor Dajian Huineng (638–713; J. Daikan Enō). The name Caodong might thereby refer to all six teachers in the lineage from the sixth ancestor to Dongshan. For later Song dynasty questions about this lineage, see Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), pp. 140, 173.

2. See, for example, John R. McRae, *Seeing through Zen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Griffith Foulk, various articles, including “Controversies Concerning the ‘Separate Transmission,’” in Peter Gregory and Daniel Getz, Jr., eds.,

*Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 220–294; Albert Welter, *The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*. This questionable historicity is especially true for Dongshan, whose earliest extant discourse record was not compiled until eight centuries after his death. See William Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 3–4. Exceptions include the *Recorded Sayings* texts of Huangbo and Yunmen, which were supposedly compiled by direct students of the masters. We may note that oral traditions might sometimes be reliable, so the historicity of these records can be highly suspect, but not necessarily disproved except where contradictions with reliable historical records are found. The *Recorded Sayings* of Dongshan, in Chinese, *Ruizhou Dongshan Liangjie Chanshi Yulu*, or *Dongshan Yulu* for short, can be found in T. 47.519b–526b.

3. See, for examples in English, Chang Chung-yuan, trans., *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 41–57; John Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen* (Taipei: United Publishing Center, 1975), pp. 171–190; and Alfonso Verdu, *Dialectical Aspects in Buddhist Thought: Studies in Sino-Japanese Mahayana Idealism* (Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1974), pp. 115–187.

4. Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen*, p. 177.

5. Sangharakshita, *The Eternal Legacy* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1985), pp. 218–220, which includes citations from the *Lankavatara Sutra*.

6. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 23–25; T. 47.519b–c. See also Yi Wu, *The Mind of Chinese Ch'an (Zen): The Ch'an School Masters and Their Kung-ans* (San Francisco: Great Learning Publishing, 1989), pp. 99–101.

7. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 24; T. 47.519b.

8. For Zhanran, see Linda Penkower, "T'ien-t'ai during the T'ang Dynasty: Chan-jan and the Sinification of Buddhism," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1993; and Robert Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," in Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung, eds., *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), pp. 213–214.

9. Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), p. 247.

10. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," p. 212. This article by Sharf has a thorough discussion of the history of this discussion.

11. See Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 9, 14, 170; and Penkower, "T'ien-t'ai During the T'ang Dynasty: Chan-jan and the Sinification of Buddhism," pp. 371, 404, 430 n.68.

12. Sharf, "On the Buddha-nature of Insentient Things: How to Think about a Ch'an Kung-an," section II of online, preliminary version of portions of the already cited essay, second to last paragraph ([http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert\\_Sharf\\_e.htm](http://kr.buddhism.org/zen/koan/Robert_Sharf_e.htm)).

13. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," p. 222.

14. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," p. 216.

15. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," p. 220.
16. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 25; T. 47519c.
17. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 26; T. 1986: 47519c–520a.
18. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 26; T. 47520a.
19. For a rendition from the Jingde Transmission of the Lamp anthology (C. *Jingde chuandeng lu*; J. *Keitoku dentōroku*, published in 1004), see Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 58–59. For Dōgen's version with his commentary, see Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), pp. 405–407, 570–571.
20. See Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 300–301.
21. This story can be found in Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 27–28; T. 47520a; Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 59–60; and in the commentary to case 49 in Thomas Cleary, trans., *Book of Serenity* (Hudson, N.Y.: Lindisfarne Press, 1990), pp. 206–207. The *Book of Serenity* is a major kōan collection initiated by the important Caodong lineage master Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157; J. Wanshi Shōgaku), who selected and ordered the cases and wrote the verse comment. Following the pattern of the earlier *Blue Cliff Record*, further commentaries were added in the thirteenth century by another Caodong teacher, Wansong Xingxiu (1166–1246; J. Banshō Gyōshū). It should be noted that in the phrase "describe your reality," this reality, or "genuine image" might also be read as someone asking whether Dongshan received Yunyan's "portrait" (J. *chinzō*), which later in Chan history was bestowed as an insignia of Dharma transmission. That this word is used here is evidence of the later provenance of this story in the *Recorded Sayings*. But in context, the story indicates something deeper, the actual Dharma, or teaching of reality, represented by Yunyan.
22. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 27; T. 47520a.
23. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 206.
24. See, for example, the Satipatthana Sutta: Bhikku Nanamoli and Bhikku Bodhi, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the "Majjhima Nikaya"* (Boston: Wisdom, 1995), pp. 145–155. For a modern treatment, see Mark Epstein, *Thoughts without a Thinker* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 109–128.
25. For the Huayan Fourfold Dharmadhatu, see Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 24–42, 147–169; and Garma C.C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hua Yen Buddhism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), pp. 18–21, 136–170.
26. Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen* (New York: North Point Press, 1985), p. 69. This has also been translated as, "Acting on and witnessing myriad things with the burden of oneself is 'delusion.' Acting on and witnessing oneself in the advent of myriad things is enlightenment." Thomas Cleary, trans., *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 32.



27. See Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 27–28; T. 47520a; and Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 60, for translations as “him.”
28. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 27; T. 47520a.
29. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 206; see also Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 60–61; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 28; and T. 47520a–b. Powell translates the final comment as, “If he knew reality, why did he go to the trouble of answering that way?”
30. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 207; see also Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 61–62; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 28–29; and T. 47520b.
31. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 207; see also Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 61–62; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 28–29; and T. 47520b.
32. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 23; T. 47519a; see also Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 58.
33. See Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 65; or Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 52; T. 47524b.
34. Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, p. 569.
35. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, pp. 382–384. See also Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 48; T. 47523b–c.
36. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 48; T. 47523b–c.
37. For Dōgen's further comment related to this case, including Dayang's comment, see Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, p. 542.
38. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 383.
39. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 44; T. 47522c.
40. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 49; T. 47523c; Thomas and J.C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambhala, 1977), vol. 2, pp. 306–311. *The Blue Cliff Record* was initiated with a hundred cases selected and ordered with his own appended verse comments by Xuedou Chongjian (980–1052; J. Setchō Jūken) from the Yunmen lineage. *The Blue Cliff Record* collection was created later by the important Linji lineage master, Yuanwu Keqin (1063–1135; J. Engo Kokugon), who wrote introductions to the cases, and commentaries and added sayings to both the cases and Xuedou's verses. This collection was the model for the later *Book of Serenity*, cited previously.
41. For comparison of Dongshan and the Caodong tradition with Linji, see Schlüter, *How Zen Became Zen*, pp. 157–158.
42. Cleary and Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 309.
43. Cleary and Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record*, pp. 307–308. See also Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 49; T. 47523c.
44. Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, pp. 108–113.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 111.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
49. Thomas Cleary, *Timeless Spring: A Soto Zen Anthology* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1980), p. 45. See also Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 49; T. 47523c; Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 62–63; Lu K'uan Yü [Charles Luk], *Ch'an and Zen*

*Teaching: Series Two* (London: Rider, 1961), pp. 144–145; and Andy Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings* (Boston: Wisdom, 2000), p. 185. I note that the Powell translation indicates that at the end of the dialogue, Dongshan disapproved of the monk. Although I can understand Powell's interpretation as "I've been suspicious," from my reading of the original in context, I read it as formerly having "questioned" or "doubted" this monk. This positive reading is given by Cleary, Ferguson, and Lu cited above, while the Chang version omits that line.

50. T. 47.524c–525a; Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, pp. 422–424; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 56; Chang, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 68; and Lu, *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, p. 146.

51. For dating of Dongshan's *Recorded Sayings*, see Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 3–4. The Transmission of the Lamp reading accords with Hongzhi's. Interestingly, Chang renders Dongshan's response as, "I often think about it"; and Lu offers, "I am always keen about this." See citations in the previous note.

52. See Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 168–179, 123; and Donald Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 2008), pp. 131–132.

53. Cleary, *Book of Serenity*, p. 423.

54. See, for example, T. 47.524c; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, p. 55; and also Powell's note, p. 85, providing earlier Buddhist references to this image.

55. Cleary and Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record*, vol. 2, pp. 463–464.

56. T. 47.525c–526a; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 63–65. For questions about the source and age of "The Jewel Mirror Samadhi," see Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, p. 158.

57. T. 47.525c–526a. The version in the text is close to the one (initially translated by Taigen Dan Leighton, Shohaku Okumura, Carl Bielefeldt, and Griffith Foulk and reviewed in conference) in Sōtō Zen Text Project, *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice* (Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmucho, 2001), pp. 33–37, and for roman letter transliterations of the Japanese, pp. 110–113. For other renditions, see Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 63–65; Sheng-yen, *The Poetry of Enlightenment: Poems by Ancient Ch'an Masters* (Elmhurst, N.Y.: Dharma Drum, 1987), pp. 75–78; and Lu, *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, pp. 149–154.

58. The fullest exposition of this five ranks scholarship tradition in English is the somewhat obscure work already cited, Verdu, *Dialectical Aspects in Buddhist Thought*.

59. T. 47.525c; Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 61–63.