Journal of the American Academy of Religion. LVIII/3

Does the Koan Have Buddha-Nature?

The Zen Koan as Religious Symbol

Steven Heine

IN RECENT YEARS, breakthroughs in scholarship have helped begin the process of rewriting the history of Zen, freed from some of misleading assumptions that dominated previously accepted studies (McCrae 1987: 227). Many of the most basic and important issues concerning the life and thought of the early patriarchs Bodhidharma and Hui-neng, in addition to later figures such as Ta-hui and Dôgen, have been opened to question and reinterpretation. The main problem with conventional studies in the field has been a tendency to create stereotypical images of key thinkers and schools in terms of all too neat and conveniently set up opposing factions, including subitism vs. gradualism, silent-illumination vs. kôan-introspection, as well as the northern vs. southern and Rinzai vs. Sôtô schools. Such accounts are one-sided because they are based largely on sectarian rhetoric taken out of context and discrepancies in the contemporary religious practices of Zen sects rather than a thorough examination of the historical background and doctrinal development of the works in question. They also reflect the tendency of approaches to intellectual history to view religious traditions in somewhat oversimplified monolithic and/or polarized terms, overlooking intertextuality and the mutuality of thematic and literary concerns among various groups in the tradition (Taylor). The polarities the conventional accounts presuppose may have existed but not necessarily in the manner presented and interpreted. Thus, along with revisionist history comes a need to reconsider the models for evaluating religious experience so that current interpretation corresponds to and fully captures historical reality.

One of the central issues so affected in understanding the religious meaning of Zen is the role of the kôan in relation to zazen as practiced in the Rinzai and Sôtô sects. The conventional view holds that Japanese

Steven Heine is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion, La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA 19141.

Rinzai, influenced by the thought of Sung Chinese master Ta-hui, strongly supports the method of kôan-introspection (*kanna-zen*) epitomized by the major kôan collections, *Hekiganroku* (*Blue Cliff Record*, C. *Pi-yen lu*) and *Mumonkan* (*Gateless Gate*, C. *Wumenkuan*) (Takao: 93-103), and sharply criticizes the Chinese Sôtô emphasis on silent-illumination (*mokushô-zen*). At the same time, Dôgen, the founder of Japanese Sôtô, rejects kôan-introspection by stressing an exclusive focus on zazen-only (*shikan-taza*), or singleminded sitting meditation. Influenced by the silent-illumination method of Hung-chih and Ju-ching, masters of the temple at which he trained in China, Dôgen replaces the kôan seen in terms of studying traditional cases (*kosoku-kôan*) with the doctrine of the kôan realized in everyday life (*genjôkôan*) through the total dynamic functioning (*zenki*) of birth-and-death (*shôji*). His main work, the *Shôbôgenzô*, appears to be an anti-kôan tract, or at least a non-kôan-oriented approach to Zen thought in contrast to the major collections. Thus, Dôgen decries the kôan used as a teleological means of reaching enlightenment in a way that violates his basic principle of the oneness of practice and realization (*shushô ittô*), while Ta-hui charges that silent-illumination advocates a state of mind of "dead ashes and cold wood," thereby lapsing into a counter-productive quietism. However, the apparent polarity between kôan-introspection and silent-illumination is contradicted by a number of factors, including the irony that according to traditional accounts Ta-hui, the popularizer of the kôan, burned the printing blocks of the *Hekiganroku* compiled by his own teacher, Yüan-wu, and Dôgen, the opponent, copied the same text in a single night just before returning from China to Japan (Kagamishima 1985: 318-320). Neither figure strictly supports or rejects the kôan; both have been critical of what they see as abuses in its application and have sought to restore its genuine signifiance as a symbol of religious transformation. Therefore, the difference between them is not merely a matter of antithetical kôan vs. zazen standpoints, but of two alternative visions of what most makes kôan practice effective as a form of meditation.

What is the authentic function of the kôan? Most modern interpretations, whether from the standpoint of psychology of the unconscious, philosophy of language and paradox, or comparative mysticism, highlight the iconoclastic role of the kôan as a "poison to counteract poison" (Buswell 1987: 348). This model of interpretation may be true to Ta-hui's "shortcut" method, which uses one-word barriers to create a doubt-block in the practitioner. But it does not take into account how Dôgen's view of the kôan is influenced by the literary traditions of Chinese Zen and early Japanese religion as well as the sacramentalism of

Japanese esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyô*), all of which tend to stress the efficacy of poetic metaphor or scriptural recitation in disclosing spiritual attainment. Dôgen sees the kôan as a means of ongoing hermeneutic disclosure of enlightenment experience based on a principle akin to Ricoeur's "surplus of meaning" or "fullness of language." Interpreting the kôan as a religious symbol, on the other hand, seems to be a way of impartially opening up the differences and affinities in the respective approaches. For example, it allows an evenhanded analysis of how both thinkers comment extensively on the famous kôan in which Chao-chou paradoxically answers "Mu" (literally no) and "U" (yes) in response to the query, "Does the dog have Buddha-nature?" Chao-chou's kôan is the first case in the *Mumonkan* and also appears in his recorded sayings, Hung-chih's collection, and elsewhere; a similar version featuring master Ikan is included in the *Keitoku Dentôroku* (*Transmission of the Lamp*, C. *ching-te chüan-teng lu*). In contrast to Dôgen and others, Ta-hui focuses exclusively on the *Mu* response. The key element in Ta-hui's approach is the shortcut "head-word" or "main phrase" (*watô*), in which *Mu* is seen as an example of a condensed version of the kôan fully contained in a single phrase, word, or syllable that creates a sudden breakthrough to enlightenment. The *watô*, an abbreviated essence or succinct kernel of the traditional cases, is a "tasteless" yet "live" word beyond intellect and conceptualization. It functions as both a hindrance to illumination and a sword cutting through all obstacles. For Ta-hui, the *Mu* response is an iconoclastic anti-symbol pointing to a nonconceptual, nondifferentiable, and ineffable truth. Does Dôgen see the *Mu* and other kôans as effective means of expressing realization? According to Dôgen, kôans are not to be condensed but expanded as a continuing hermeneutic revelation and elaboration of the multiple dimensions of insight into the doctrines from which the articulation of the original cases derive. Thus, the *Mu* is not seen as a tasteless syllable defying thought, but as a symbolic disclosure that "the nothingness (*mu*) of all the various nothings (*shomu*) must be learned in the nothingness of no-Buddha-nature" (*mu-busshô*) (1970, I: 54). Dôgen stresses not the barrier but the gateless and ever-flexible nature of discourse and interpretation in conveying the fathomable depths of "nothingness-nothingness" (*mu-mu*).

The aim of this paper is to explicate the religious symbolism of the kôan as a model of interpretation that is more faithful to the debate between Ta-hui and Dôgen than interpretations highlighting only the aspect of iconoclasm. The following examination of the differing views of the kôan's function will include a discussion of possible Zen exegeses

of two noted parables in Western existentialist writings, Kierkegaard's "sign shop" and Kafka's "Before the Law," in addition to an analysis of several traditional cases, including Te-shan's "rice-cake" and Chao-chou's "Mu."

CLARIFICATION OF HISTORICAL ISSUES

The kôan is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Zen theory and practice. Zazen is an extension of various forms of traditional Buddhist meditation, and the notions of *satori* and *kenshô* are elaborations on the central goal of attaining nirvana (Gimello). The kôan is a psycho-linguistic puzzle that leads to the exhaustion of the ego and fosters a dynamic and dramatic insight based on the unity of self and reality, humans and nature, subject and object. It is a technique for spiritual attainment with "no reliance on words and letters" (*furyû monji*) that is rooted in the basic Buddhist approach to silence on unedifying queries and related doctrinal developments, including the parable of the discardable raft, Madhyamika dialectical negation and theory of two truths, the *Lotus Sutra*'s notion of skillful means, the Mahayana view of language as a "finger pointing to the moon," Vimalakirti's "no-words about no-words," etc. Yet, the kôan as embodied in the major collections functions by means of paradox, metaphor, and the subtle psychology of the master-disciple relation that reflect the influence of Taoist creativity, particularly Chuang Tzu's rhetorical skills concerning the "fishnet of words," and Chinese poetic eloquence and naturalism. The kôan is unique because it is a record of the encounter between an enlightened and a deluded practitioner. The former therapeutically disentangles the "vines" of misunderstanding of the disciple by a challenging—often enigmatic, irreverent, nonsensical, contradictory, incongruous, redundant, or non-sequitured—expression or gesture that is intended to be appropriate pedagogically only to this particular fixation (Burr; Kasulis). The kôan is a direct, immediate, and intensely personal form of speech or gesture. Yet its usefulness goes beyond liberating the delusion of the situation for which it was originally devised and takes on a timeless and universal quality as it becomes a tool for instruction and transformation of others. The main factor that contributes to its effectiveness as a means of spiritual training is that it must not be turned into a formula, conceptual crutch, or object of dependence—i.e., ritualized so that mere repetition diminishes spontaneity.

The notion of the kôan as a "public (*kô*) record (*an*)" or testimony of the spontaneous and therapeutic insight expressed by a Zen master in

transmitting the Dharma began to develop in the late T'ang era and was systematized primarily by the Yang-chi line of the Rinzai sect (Dumoulin 1988; Miura and Sasaki 1966). It appears that Nan-yüan in the second generation after master Lin-chi was among the first to use the words, blows, and gestures associated with traditional anecdotes and parables in instructing and illuminating disciples. The earliest collection is attributed to Fen-yang, several generations later, consisting of three portions of one hundred kôans each, including traditional cases, new queries, and alternative answers to older riddles. Wu-tsu, following Yang-chi, created his own cases and helped establish the kôan as a regular part of Zen training. His main disciple, Yüan-wu, used the one hundred case collection of Yün-men school mater Hsüeh-tou as the basis of the *Hekiganroku*. Yüan-wu contributed the introduction to each case as well as notes and commentary on both the cases and Hsüeh-tou's poems so that every chapter contains seven sections. As an indication that some aspects of the rivalry between Rinzai and Sôtô that came to the fore in Japan were not necessarily prevalent in Sung China, the *Hekiganroku* and other collections generally cite representatives from all the Zen schools as well as pre-Zen Mahayana thinkers like Seng-chao.

The Sung era collections attempt a formalization of kôan practice by organizing and interpreting the original dialogues, utterances, sermons, and anecdotes culled from T'ang and later writings, such as recorded sayings, transmission of the lamp histories, biographies, and poetry collections. By the Sung dynasty, as Shibayama Zenkei notes, the kôan tradition took on a "reminiscent, traditional character" that tried to recapture the spirit of "Zen [that] was most creative and vital in the T'ang dynasty" (xv). Thus, the Sung collections are sometimes seen as a decline from the initial period of spontaneous creativity. Ta-hui is said to have destroyed his own master's text because its poetic quality could become a misguided substitute for and a distraction from genuine pursuit of enlightenment. On the other hand, the prose and poetic commentaries in kôan collections represent from a "literary point of view. . .a pinnacle in the history of [Zen] literature. . ." (Maraldo: 166). Indeed, "A more complex genre of literature can hardly be imagined, rivaling any of the exegetical commentaries of the doctrinal [Buddhist] schools" (Buswell 1987: 345). By absorbing and reflecting in its multifaceted structure the full development of Zen thought, the seven-layered literary form and three-tiered historical fabric of the *Hekiganroku* is cited by Heinrich Dumoulin as the "epitome of poetic composition in Zen literature. . .[and] one of the foremost examples of religious world literature" (1988: 181, 249).

Japanese Sôtô and Rinzai originated in the early Kamakura period and were based largely on a reaction to the practices of Sung Zen. Certainly there is ample reason based on the frequently high-pitched sectarian rhetoric of both Ta-hui and Dôgen for seeing the sects as polarized on the role of kôan and zazen. Although close personal associates, Ta-hui repeatedly attacks Hung-chih, referred to affectionately by Dôgen as "old master" (*kobutsu*), as a "false teacher" and "fool" who "remove[s] objects but do[es]n't obliterate mind [rather than vice-versa]" (1977: 89, 90). For his part, Dôgen argues in *Shôbôgenzô zuimonki*, "Although the *kôan-watô* seems to improve one's understanding slightly, it actually leads further and further from the way of the Buddhas and patriarchs" (1963: 261-262), and in *Shôbôgenzô* "Jishô-zammai" he goes so far as to question the legitimacy of the certification of Ta-hui's enlightenment. Several recent commentators, however, have pointed out that Dôgen's relation to his Rinzai rivals and Sôtô predecessors on the issue of the kôan is complicated by several textual, ideological, and historical factors. In the foreword to an English translation of the *Hekiganroku*, for example, Maezumi Taizan highlights the need for further scrutiny of Dôgen's view of the kôan by calling attention to the tradition that it was Dôgen himself who introduced to Japan the Chinese compilation of one hundred cases that he recorded in a single night (Kagamishima 1985: 318-320). "We mention this," Maezumi argues, "because of an unfortunately widespread impression nowadays that Dôgen Zenji and the Sôtô School represent a non-kôan or even anti-kôan orientation within Zen. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth" (in Cleary and Cleary, I: vii).

An examination of Sôtô writings does not indicate that its leading thinkers were trying to throw down the gauntlet against all kôan practice. For instance, Hung-chih compiled his own kôan collections, which became the basis for the highly regarded *Shôyôroku* (*Record of Serenity*, C. *Ts'ung-jung lu*), collected by Wan-sung, that is used widely along with *Mumonkan* in Japanese Zen training today. Dôgen's own collection of three hundred cases, the *Shôbôgenzô sanbyaku-soku*, includes several dozen kôans also cited in the *Hekiganroku*, though the main sources are other writings of Yüan-wu, as well as Ta-hui and Hung-chih, in addition to the earlier Zen texts including the *Dentôroku* (Ishii 1988: 560-568). Furthermore, the *Shôbôgenzô* consists of novel interpretations, sometimes in several different versions, of dozens of kôans, including some of the most famous ones like Chao-chou's "Mu," Te-shan's "rice-cake," Ma-tsu's "polished brick," Bodhidharma's "skin, flesh, bones, marrow," and Po-chang's "fox." Dôgen's kôan collection (known as the

Mana, or Chinese *Shôbôgenzô*) cannot be compared to the classic collections because it is just a listing of cases without commentary, although Edo era commentaries are extant (Miura and Sasaki 1966: 198-199). But the philosophical essays comprising the *Shôbôgenzô* (*Kana*, or Japanese vernacular *Shôbôgenzô*) can be understood as a "kôan-text" with a different literary structure than the major collections (including Chinese Sôtô ones), reflecting a divergent vision of the symbolic function of the kôan in connection to language, meditation, and religious fulfillment. When Dôgen in the "Sansuikyô" fascicle labels as "pseudo-Buddhists" and "scatterbrains" those who understand the kôans only as "incomprehensible utterances," he is criticizing a particular interpretation of kôan study and not the technique of spiritual discipline itself.

Beyond that, Dôgen's attitude toward his colleagues is somewhat ambiguous. In the "Jinshin-inga" fascicle of the *Shôbôgenzô*, he is critical of "old master" Hung-chih, whose poetry he drastically rewrites in "Zazenshin," in addition to Yüan-wu and Ta-hui, for their lack of a genuinely dynamic approach to the Buddhist doctrine of causality (1970, I: 435-437). Yet all three Sung Chinese thinkers used many of the philosophical terms featured in Dôgen's writings, including *genjôkôan* and *zenki*, that stress the vitalist rather than quietist nature of realization. It seems the Zen masters engaged in a game of ideological oneupsmanship concerning whose approach overcame a static view of realization in favor of dynamism. But a study of the recorded sayings of Ju-ching, by whose authority Dôgen's criticisms are supposedly voiced and whom he is careful only to praise, indicates that Dôgen's mentor was not a major player in sectarian controversies, and his views often do not diverge significantly from those of his contemporary Rinzai masters (Kagamishima 1983: 48-52). Also, Dôgen apparently borrowed the term *Shôbôgenzô*, which appears in the title of three of his works, from Ta-hui's kôan collection (though it is used in other Zen texts). In his earlier writings Dôgen frequently praised Ta-hui for his dedication to meditation, which suggests that his later attacks were based more on partisan concerns in establishing his monastic order in Japan than strict ideological discrepancies (Bielefeldt 1985; Faure).

It seems that Dôgen and Ta-hui each cast himself in the role of the preserver of the kôan tradition and deliberately overstated his attack on his rival (Hung-chih for Ta-hui and Ta-hui for Dôgen) as a corrupter for partisan reasons. There are many affinities in the aims of the two thinkers. Both stress the dehypostatization of kôans so that they are understood as experientially-based expressions reflecting a thoroughly subjective awareness of original enlightenment rather than propositional

truths about an objectifiable ultimate reality. They maintain, however, that the practitioner who seeks to overcome conceptual fixations must transmute rather than simply negate discursive consciousness in examining the kôan. Also, Dôgen and Ta-hui caution against awaiting or anticipating enlightenment as a final goal in a way that loses sight of the dynamism of spontaneous realization fully integrated with life-and-death.

One way of assessing the connection between the thinkers is to consider the distinction John Dominic Crossan sets up between myth which "establishes world" and parable which demythologizes or "subverts [that very] world." Parable, he argues, in showing the limitations of myth and deliberately shattering world is neither anti-myth nor a replacement of myth. It must be self-critical and self-subverting, so that "Each time the Parable is in danger of becoming fossilized and turned into a myth, it subverts its own domestication and breaks the very structures that would contain it" (104). In Crossan's terms, the kôan is an eminent example of parabolic religion "that continually and deliberately subverts final words about 'reality' and thereby introduces the possibility of transcendence" in contrast to mythical religion "that gives one the final word about 'reality' and thereby excludes the authentic experience of mystery" (105). However, Ta-hui and Dôgen differ significantly on the aim and outcome of the subversion process. For the former subversion is an end in itself leading to a state of no-words beyond myth and anti-myth, but Dôgen seeks to collapse the distinction between myth and parable so that the symbol-making of mythic awareness itself is continuously self-subverting. As Hee-jin Kim puts it, "What was taking place then in Dôgen's mind was a radical demythologizing and, in turn, remythologizing of the whole Buddhist symbol-complex of original enlightenment, the Buddha-nature, emptiness, and other related ideas and practices. The crux of his revolutionary vision lay in a realistic affirmation and transformation of what was relative, finite, and temporal in the nondualistic vision of the self and world" (1975: 45).

Dôgen's characteristically unconventional interpretations of traditional cases are frequently aimed at defeating their author's apparent intentions in the belief that all expressions are fair game for the creative interpreter. In one interesting example, he subverts a kôan almost always seen as advocating a classic pro-kôan/anti-zazen position so that it takes on a reverse meaning supporting meditation. Based on a *Dentôroku* anecdote, Nan-yüeh likens his disciple Ma-tsu's practicing zazen in order to become a Buddha to the futility of polishing a tile to create a mirror, apparently to point out the limitation of meditation as a

gradual means of attaining enlightenment. Dôgen subverts and remythologizes this understanding by arguing that the act of polishing does create a mirror, just as zazen brings about a realization of the potential illumination of Buddha-nature. "We truly know," he writes, "that when we make a mirror by polishing a tile, Ma-tsu becomes a Buddha. When Ma-tsu becomes a Buddha, Ma-tsu immediately becomes Ma-tsu. When Ma-tsu becomes Ma-tsu, zazen immediately becomes zazen" (1970, I: 254). Dôgen argues that the kôan legitimates his view of zazen as the method of "practice of realization" (*shôjô ni shu*) and refutes Ta-hui's *kanna-zen* approach. However, such reversal of meaning or contradictory interpretation represents the kind of self-subverting process that typifies and enhances the kôan tradition even as it criticizes the standard understanding of one of the cases.

MODELS OF INTERPRETATION

A clarification of the differences between Ta-hui and Dôgen in light of their common goal of revivifying the kôan demands a reassessment of interpretive models that have been based generally on an iconoclastic standpoint Dôgen refutes. Perhaps the most prevalent modern interpretation of kôan practice is the psychotherapeutic model proposed by Suzuki and other leading figures in Zen studies [Dumoulin, Sekida, DeMartino, Kasulis] and psychotherapy [Fromm, Jung, Benoit, Konda, Horney]. This approach highlights the view that the kôan is aimed at creating a tension or conflict between two levels of awareness—the logical and irrational, discursive and intuitive, conscious and unconscious—resulting in an impasse or barrier to understanding and consequent sudden breakthrough to enlightenment. The kôan is seen as deliberately causing a "double-bind" or psychological impasse based on the accumulation of theories and eventual saturation of the intellect, leading to a penultimate psychic explosion of entrance into transcendental awareness. This model seems to have certain advantages over mystical and philosophical interpretations because it emphasizes the concrete experiential transformation realized in Zen through the dispossession of the ego, abandonment of illusion, and attainment of the fundamental nature of selfhood—the "original face" (*honrai no memmoku*), "own-nature" (*kenshô*), or state of "no-thought" (*munen*)—which Suzuki generally refers to as the "Unconscious" (1973: 124). According to Suzuki, on the higher or transcendental level (Skt. *lokottara*), language "becomes warped and assumes all kinds of crookedness: oxymora, paradoxes, contradictions, contortions, absurdities, oddities, ambiguities, and irra-

tionalities" (1968: 242). This seems to be a good explanation of why the *Dentôroku* refers to Zen teachings as "strange words and extraordinary actions" (*kigen kikô*), and it may accurately portray the Rinzai approach to sudden enlightenment (*satori*) through "a separate transmission outside the scriptures" (*kyôge betsuden*). But the use of psychotherapy as a methodology for Zen studies is not fully sensitive to the complex evolution of the conceptual and literary forms of this tradition (Gomez). Furthermore, it tends to presuppose the kind of bifurcation between a hopelessly futile rationality and a transcendental, unutterable illogicality that kôan practice in Dôgen's view seeks to overcome.

Another approach stresses the kôan's paradoxical use of language as a philosophical mode of expressing spiritual realization. Rather than distinguish between two levels of selfhood, Chung-ying Cheng suggests a double meaning of the kôan's function: one for the unenlightened who seek nirvana, the other for the enlightened who have already attained it. According to Cheng, the puzzles and paradoxes of Zen dialogic exchanges achieve a liberation from ontic commitment on the basis of the freedom of the deep ontological structure of emptiness and nonattachment. Upon the attainment of enlightenment, however, the paradoxicality of the kôan disappears for "Zen paradoxes are paradoxical to those who are not enlightened in Zen. Once a person has Enlightenment, the paradoxes are no longer paradoxical to him even though they remain the same in their linguistic appearance" (90). Thus, while stressing paradoxicality, Cheng's conclusions seem to concur with Isshû Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, who argue that the kôan is not "ever a paradoxical statement except to those who view it from outside. When the kôan is resolved it is realized to be a simple and clear statement made from the state of consciousness which it has helped to awaken" (1965: xi-xii). The first meaning of paradoxicality described here as the pursuit of liberation seems appropriate to the Rinzai iconoclastic view as reflected by the *Mumonkan* warning that any interpreting of Chao-chou's *Mu* is "like having bolted a red hot iron ball. You try to vomit it but cannot" (Shibayama: 19). In the Rinzai tradition, however, the aim of kôan practice is not to solve the paradox but to realize the hopelessness of any attempt to find solutions. It seems that much of the kôan's effectiveness rests on its defiance of common or refined logical sense. Thus, the idea of the second meaning Cheng suggests, that for the enlightened the kôan is a "simple and clear statement," may be unfaithful to the Rinzai approach and yet not fully capture Dôgen's hermeneutic view either.

Hsueh-li Cheng seems to take this second meaning a step further by

emphasizing that it is inappropriate to dissect Zen in terms of psychology and language because its sole aim is an holistic transformation for the sake of soteriology. He points out that the kôan is dependent upon and an expression of *satori*, "the emancipation of human beings from suffering and evil. . .touching on moral, social, physical and intellectual aspects of life" (459), and not the other way around. The kôan articulates soteriological transformation, "not metaphysical insight into any nature or into human nature, but living a clear, normal life without any attachment" (472). By interpreting the kôan as a natural outgrowth of realization, this approach represents the inverse of the psychotherapeutic model, which sees the kôan as a tool leading up to yet ironically blocking enlightenment. If the soteriological aspect of Zen has priority over the psychotherapeutic and philosophical, then the kôan could be analyzed as an example of religious symbolism with significant parallels to the enigmatic and paradoxical passages of scriptures and mystical texts. For instance, Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem, despite discrepancies in their approaches to Jewish mysticism, stress the uniqueness of the kôan in the context of world religions while pointing out affinities with Hasidic tales (Dumoulin 1979: 74-76). Both Zen and Hasidism are based on awakening through a living encounter with the concrete reality of truth embodied by the master; that is, truth is a state of being that is transmitted through the whole person and not necessarily words. Yet Hasidic legends often highlight fanciful and otherworldly features of the masters' lives (Wiesel) in a way that is not in accord with Zen naturalism and puritanism (although the mythologicization of Zen masters to popularize the tradition is not an uncommon theme).

The main problem with using a religious model for the kôan is that symbols are generally understood as referring to the Sacred, the numinous source from which they spring as metaphorical discourse. Yet the basis of Zen realization is what Kyoto school thinkers call "absolute nothingness" (*zettai mu*) or in a phrase attributed to Bodhidharma, "Just empty, nothing sacred" (*kakuzen mushô*). These expressions stress an iconoclasticism attempting to defeat all symbol-making as obstructive of *satori*. On the other hand, as Paul Ricoeur points out, "within the sacred universe there are not living creatures here and there, but life is everywhere as a sacrality, which permeates everything. . ." (1974: 61). For Ricoeur, the sacred generates an overabundance of meanings which have a non-linguistic dimension, and its symbolic articulations have a polysemous quality that encompasses non-semantic as well as metaphorical modes of expression. Thus, the objection is overcome when

Zen nothingness is seen as a universalist and utopian view of the sacred whereby the absolute is manifest through each and every concrete spatio-temporal phenomena, and discourse and silence profoundly interact as modes of symbolic disclosure (Turner: 46-48, 291-292). For Zen, "Either nothing and nowhere is sacred, or everything and everywhere is. . . .[all things are] capable of teaching and manifesting the Dharma, an extremely dynamic quality" (Powell: 17, 15).

One of the difficulties in interpreting the kôan is that the iconoclastic view tends to define it negatively in terms of the pitfalls inherent in coming to terms with the practice. Ta-hui, stressing the shortcut method of the *watô*, refers to the *Mu* kôan (and other pithy, maieutic examples, such as "three pieces of flax," "the cypress tree in the garden," or "East Mountain sails along the river") as "a knife cutting through the doubting mind," "a snowflake falling on a hot stove," "an iron rod that cannot be swallowed," or "a mortar and pestle used to smash misconceptions" (1969: 65, 68, 113, 226; 1977: 86, 88). He admonishes, "As the inquiry goes on steadily and uninterruptedly you come to see that there is no intellectual clue in the kôan, that it is altogether devoid of sense as you ordinarily understand that word, that it is entirely flat, devoid of taste, has nothing appetizing about it. . .[and] you will become aware that you have pushed yourself like the old rat into a blind alley" (in Suzuki 1970: 105, 109). Following the lead of Tung-shan Shou-chou of the Yün-men school (two generations before Hsüeh-tou), Ta-hui distinguishes between the "live word," which is tasteless in providing no clues to be fathomed as to a rational interpretation of meaning but puts an end to the functioning of discirminative awareness, and the "dead word," which is given logical or philosophical analysis that only leads to the snare of intellectualism. The term *Mu* can function either way depending on the approach of the practitioner. If seen as a "live word" it becomes a devastating weapon smashing through the causes and consequences of the "ten defects" of conceptualization (see below p. 221); the *Mu* liberates the mind from any concern with yes and no, have and not have, being and nothingness. But as a "dead word" it perpetuates the vicious cycle of partial views, leading to the extremes of nihilism or realism.

Thus, the *Mu watô*, according to Ta-hui, highlights and extends to the furthest possible extent the unbridgeable gap between symbol and reality, or language and truth, creating an anguishing sense of the utter futility of all ideas and discourse that is a necessary impasse setting the stage for a breakthrough to *satori*. The contrast between the *watô* method and Dôgen's approach can be illustrated by considering the fol-

lowing Soren Kierkegaard anecdote, which in offering an existentialist critique of systematic philosophy highlights the need for an "indirect communication" to convey the profound subjectivity of religious truth:

> What the philosophers say about Reality is often as disappointing as a sign you see in a shop window, which reads: Pressing Done here. If you brought your clothes to be pressed, you would be fooled; for the sign is only for sale (31).

A Ta-Hui interpretation would likely focus on the phrase Pressing Done Here as an example of a *watô* revealing the fundamental paradoxicality that reflects the trap inherent in conceptual thinking, which mistakes the bifurcations of discursive consciousness (Skt. *vijnana*) for the holistic insight of genuine wisdom (*prajna*). The sign does not and cannot deliver the results it promises. It entices the mind to pursue its supposed reservoir of meaning but only leads to a recognition of thoroughgoing meaninglessness. The moment when the mind considers how it has been betrayed or has led itself into this mockery is a turning point to freedom from dependence upon signs. The disappointment and distrust with all material (or advertising) signs and linguistic designations gives way to a sense of release from an appetitive interest in examining the content and meaning of "dead words." As long as one insists on grappling with the sign, making sense of the phrase Pressing Done Here is like trying to swallow an iron rod. But in causing liberation from such a preoccupation, it functions as a tasteless "live word."

A Dôgen interpretation of the anecdote begins as an extension of Ta-hui's approach and culminates in a view that is in some ways opposite to *watô* practice. Dôgen's understanding of the kôan is based on a view of language influenced by a combination of elements in Chinese Zen and Japanese religiosity that view literary symbols as the essential means of conveying spiritual truth. He seeks to be sensitive to and to recapture the poetic creativity and ingenuity of early Zen masters, for whom "ultimate reality [is] revealed to the mind's eye in concrete phenomena. Metaphor and poetry are ideally suited to function in this way. . ." (Powell: 11), so that "it had become commonplace to discuss poetry in terms of [Zen], to say that poetry. . .'is like' [Zen]" (Lynn: 381). Dôgen's approach also reflects his initial training in Japanese Tendai Buddhism on Mt. Hiei. In the early Kamakura period, Tendai was an eclectic sacramentalism that seemed to draw upon the emphasis in early Japanese mythology and poetry on direct participation in the reality symbolized in the sense that the mountain, for example, neither represents nor houses but *is* the kami. Kitagawa refers to this view as a "nonsymbolic understanding of symbols" because the ontological identification of symbol

and sacred is prior to yet establishes the epistemic ground for a sense of distance that is presupposed for a symbol to re-present the sacral object (45-49). Tendai affirmed the efficacy of sutra study and recitation as a locus of religious truth, particularly the *Lotus Sutra*, cited by Dôgen more than fifty times in his collected writings (Kagamishima 1974: 121-137). It also integrated the use of sacred syllables or dharani and circular designs or mandala, which are techniques connecting the subjective psycho-physical universe with the limitless potentialities of cosmic awareness "penetrating every sphere of phenomenal existence" (Matsunaga I: 184). Tendai, in turn, had absorbed Kûkai's Shingon esoteric notion of the oneness of sound, meaning, and reality (Hakeda): "From the Shingon standpoint, each and every thing in the universe is an 'expressive symbol' (*monji*) of the dharmakaya. In fact, the universe as a whole is the 'symbolic embodiment' (*sammayashin*) of the dharmakaya as the Buddha, Dainichi" (Kasulis 1988: 262). Finally, Dôgen is also influenced by classical Japanese literature which conventionalizes complex wordplay involving puns, homophones, and grammatical restructuring to accentuate the polysemous quality of words and sounds (Heine: 13-15, 61-66).

The combined effect of these factors is Dôgen's notion that each and every aspect of the universe in its daily activity preaches the Dharma verbally or non-verbally, and therefore "mountains and rivers themselves are the sound of the sutra" (*sansuikyô*). Dôgen's hermeneutic approach seems to be striving for a middle way between sacramentalism and iconoclastism, metaphor and criticism, *mythos* and *logos*. He maintains the necessity of perpetually "explaining the Way" (*dôtoku*) through "disclosing mind/disclosing nature" (*sesshin sesshô*), and clearly and consistently affirms rather than denies the efficacy of all forms of discourse including anecdotes, parables, metaphors, and logical analysis as essential means of revealing the experience of enlightenment. In "Muchû-setsumu," he maintains that words are not "figures of speech" (*hiyu*) but the "true form of reality" (*shohô jissô*). Yet Dôgen does not overlook the critical and subversive aspect of language, whose foundation is the insubstantiality of nothingness-nothingness or no-Buddha-nature. Ta-hui emphasizes the *power of doubt*, or the "ball of doubt," which is designed to concentrate all aspects of human frustration with the perplexities of life into a single event forcing a breakthrough to *satori* (Buswell 1987: 352-356). Dôgen, on the other hand, stresses the *power of disclosure* to continuously unfold multiple meanings stemming from a surplus at the inexhaustible source. As Dôgen writes in the following waka that subverts the conventional meaning of its title, "No reliance on

words and letters," by stressing continuous discourse rather than silence: "Not limited/ By language/ [Dharma] is ceaselessly expressed;/ So, too, the way of letters/ Can display but not exhaust it" (Heine: 98).

Dôgen's approach to the Kierkegaard parable probably highlights the point that the phrase "Pressing Done Here" does indeed disclose the truth even if it is a partial, misleading, or even contradictory truth. That is, the sign is an expression of the truth that there is no particular, fixed truth, but always a connection between words themselves and relative or contextually-based truths. If assumed to represent a single absolute truth, Dôgen might agree with Ta-hui's view that live-words are meaningful only in their meaninglessness; the sign points to something that cannot be pointed to and in so dong shows the futility of all pointers. Thus "Pressing Done Here" would seem to represent the inverse of the *Diamond Sutra* dictum: no-truth is truth and therefore no-truth. But whereas Ta-hui uses this paradox to make the case for the hopelessness of language, Dôgen reaches a radically different conclusion by uncovering other levels of paradoxicality. If seen in terms of its relative context, the sign invariably holds meaning: in a sign shop it is a sample product, and in a dry cleaning shop it is either a description (if on the inside wall) or an advertisement (if on the outside door). Beyond that, the verbal image of the sign "Pressing Done Here" in the anecdote holds a symbolic import because it invites the reader to identify with an existential feeling the author conveys. Subjective response transforms the sign into a symbol, which according to Tillich is an indicator that allows participation in what it symbolizes (I: 239). This understanding now reverses Ta-hui's view so that words are meaningless because of their inherent meaningfulness.

Furthermore, for Dôgen there are no half-truths. In his doctrine of "total penetration of a single dharma" (*ippô gûjin*), each and every aspect as the true form of reality reveals without partiality or limitation the truth of the whole: "A full [instance of] being-time half known is a half being-time fully known" (1970, I: 259). "Pressing Done Here," then, is the complete truth or full disclosure of reality. It is not an absurdity and it only disappoints those minds which bring to it deluded expectations. The verbal sign does deliver because it fulfills what the mind really needs, which is not a matter of cleaning or repairing a material object but spiritual purification and elevation through unity of subjective awareness and objective expression. In that light, Dôgen argues that the most basic paradox of language and thought embedded in the use of kôans is, "Only the painted rice-cake satisfies hunger" (287). That is, the illusion of metaphor, wordplay, and symbolism is the reality

of truth. According to Ricoeur, "In no way does poetic imagination reduce itself to the power of forming a mental picture of the unreal; the imagery of sensory origin merely serves as a vehicle and as material for the verbal power whose true dimension is given to us by the oneiric and the cosmic. As Bachelard says [*La poetique de l'espace*: 7], the poetic image 'places us at the origin of articulate being'; the poetic image 'becomes a new being in our language, it expresses us by making us what it expresses' " (1971: 15-16). "Pressing Done Here" therefore is not an anti-symbol or a necessary barrier to enlightenment but a metaphor completely containing and fully revelatory of realization. Metaphor, Ricoeur suggests, can be "compared to stereoscopic vision where the different concepts may be said to come together to give the appearance of solidity and depth" (1974: 56). Dôgen might concur with Ricoeur's distinction, which would represent the converse of Ta-hui's view, between "dead" metaphors whose strength is dissipated by repetition and contrivance (perhaps as in the *watô*) and "live" metaphors which spring from an ever inventive and creative source of inspiration (1974: 52).

The "Shin-fukatoku" fascicle of the *Shôbôgenzô* illustrates Dôgen's subversive remythologization of the kôan based on its symbolic power. Here, Dôgen reinterprets a well-known traditional case cited in chapter four of the *Hekiganroku* (and elsewhere) to highlight his understanding of the role of language and symbol in relation to silence and quietism. In the source passage based on an intriguing wordplay, master Te-shan, known as an expert on the *Diamond Sutra*, wants to buy some refreshments (*ten-shin*) from an old woman selling rice-cakes. The woman asks, "According to the *Diamond Sutra*, the past mind is non-abiding (*fukatoku*), the present mind is non-abiding, and the future mind is non-abiding. So, where is the mind (*shin*) that you now seek to refresh (*ten*) with rice-cakes?" (1970, I: 108). Te-shan is rendered speechless, outsmarted by the old woman who has apparently led his mind to an impasse in confronting nonconceptuality and silence that requires the abandonment of thought and discourse.

While the conventional Rinzai interpretation admires the woman's verbal feat in putting an end to words, to Dôgen the silence that concludes the dialogue reflects the deficiencies in the Ta-hui approach to kôans. Dôgen's commentary criticizes both the woman and Te-shan for not bringing the conversation to a more productive conclusion. He suggests that Te-shan should have turned the woman's deliberate use of irony back on itself by demanding, "As the past, present, and future minds are non-abiding, where is the mind that now makes the rice-

cakes used for refreshment?" (111) The woman's hypothetical reply that is recommended by Dôgen indicates that the mind is neither an entity nor non-entity but is actively engaged in self-liberation: "You know only that one cannot refresh the mind with a rice-cake. But you do not realize that the mind refreshes the rice-cake, or that the mind refreshes (or liberates) the mind (*kokoro no kokoro o tenzuru*)" (111). Dôgen concludes that the woman should reward Te-shan with three cakes, one for each of the temporal occasions of the mind. Thus, Rinzai Zen interprets the woman's pun as a barrier of language and a pathway to silence, whereas Dôgen sees it as a hermeneutic vehicle for the continual unfolding of the multiple levels of self-critical symbolism and understanding: the mind liberating the mind through discourse and symbolic disclosure of experiential truth.

THE "MU" KÔAN

The above discussion cites several instances of Dôgen's reinterpretation of traditional cases. Although in some passages, particularly the *Shôbôgenzô zuimonki*, Dôgen appears to be sharply critical of kôan exercises, his aim is not to assert the priority of zazen over the kôan as the key to Zen practice. Rather, he seeks to highlight a distinctive vision of the role of symbol and metaphor in relation to religious truth that he feels lies embedded in the initial and essential use of kôans yet obscured by the *watô* approach. (Dôgen 1970, I: 334). How greatly does he value kôans, and what role do they play in the *Shôbôgenzô*? In other words, is it fair and reasonable to refer to Dôgen's main philosophical work as a kôan-oriented text?

Clearly, the literary structure of the *Shôbôgenzô* is quite distinct from the major kôan collections as well as Zen recorded sayings and transmission of the lamp histories. The earlier writing forms—the sayings and lamp histories—focus on the ineffable truth embodied by the charismatic personality of a great master who carefully initiates a chosen successor (McCrea 1986: 73-100). The *Hekiganroku, Mumonkan*, and other compilations are centered on the traditional case, usually extracted from an encounter dialogue in the previous works reflecting a mind-to-mind transmission; their commentaries cite other anecdotes, parables, and interpretations to amplify concentration on themes established by the case. The *Shôbôgenzô*, on the other hand, revolves around doctrine. Each fascicle sets up a key Mahayana or Zen notion of philosophy or practice and uses various cases and sutra passages (generally overlooked by the collections which see themselves as "separate from the teach-

ings") as sources for elaborating on the meaning and significance of the doctrine. Thus, the dialogue of the traditional case is subsidiary to Dôgen's novel and creative philosophical perspective; it becomes illustrative rather than paradigmatic. The *Shôbôgenzô* is a less "conservative" text than the kôan collections in that it allows for or even demands taking license with tradition in accord with the spirit and intention of the T'ang masters' spontaneous utterances. Yet in addition to its poetic quality, it also reflects some degree of influence from Abhdidharma or sastra literature in its use of line-by-line analysis exploring the metaphysical and psychological implications of doctrine.

Zen writings are based on the direct transmission of the Dharma rather than hagiography or speculation in the conventional sense. A feature shared by the *Shôbôgenzô* and the kôan collections, though they would appear to accuse each other of perpetrating the problems, is an emphasis on admonishing disciples against the traps and pitfalls of misinterpreting the kôans through a faulty appropriation of ineffability leading to either too much or too little interpretive language. One of the ways in which the structure and content of the *Shôbôgenzô* converge in contrast to the collections is the manner of Dôgen's analysis of specific cases. Instead of setting up an opposition of untruth and truth represented by the dialogue between a deluded disciple and enlightened master, Dôgen tries to show that the expressions of both parties, if properly interpreted, constitute the truth of the Dharma. In the *Mu* kôan, for example, the initial query, "Does the dog have the Buddha-nature or not?" is generally seen as an unfortunate, idle, speculative question begging to be rebuffed or dismissed about whether a being that lacks self-reflective consciousness possesses the potential to be enlightened. But Dôgen comments, "The meaning of this question must be clarified. It neither asks whether the dog has or does not have the Buddha-nature. It is a question of whether an iron [enlightened] man continues to practice the Way" (1970, I: 68). He argues that the question is so challenging and penetrating that Chao-chou is taken aback and feels threatened. When the query is somewhat stubbornly restated (after Chao-chou answers *Mu* to the first question) as "All sentient beings have the Buddha-nature, why not the dog?," Dôgen argues, "The real meaning of this is, if all sentient beings are nothingness (*mu*), the Buddha-nature must be nothingness, and the dog must be nothingness as well. The real meaning is such, the dog and Buddha-nature manifest nothingness as such[ness]" (69). That is, Dôgen rereads the question, "Why does not the dog have [the Buddha-nature]?" as the statement, "the dog is such nothingness," or "the dog is no[-Buddha-nature]." Therefore, the sup-

posedly deluded question discloses in a way equal to the master's enlightened response the wellspring of nothingness and suchness from which all expressions derive.

The "Busshô" fascicle offers the clearest demonstration of the constructive and de-constructive elements in the *Shôbôgenzô*. "Busshô" is the longest and most complex fascicle, and thus the one with the most sustained and consistent argumentation on a single doctrinal topic. Here, Dôgen examines over a dozen kôans concerning causality, temporality, language, life-and-death, illusion, and practice in regard to the Buddha-nature. He refutes numerous misconceptions which hypostatize the Buddha-nature as either an objectifiable entity or a supramundane transcendence, a teleological goal or a prior possession, something in time or beginningless and eternal, a reality beyond illusion or an idealistic projection. These misconceptions tend to identify truth with the mundane world or presuppose a realm beyond concrete existence, thereby violating the middle path. Dôgen seeks to subvert and to replace the delusions with positive notions encompassing a unity of opposites, such as *shitsuu* or "whole-being," which overcomes the apparent conflict between anthropocentrism and transcendence, *shingen* or the "manifesting body" (overcoming cosmology and substantiality), *gyô* or "activity" (teleology and potentiality), *setsu* or "symbolic disclosure" (ineffability and reason), *mujô* or impermanence (time and eternity), *i* or "dependence" (causation and liberation), and *gabyô* or the "painted rice-cake" (reality and illusion). In that light, Dôgen disputes Po-chang, who suggests that freedom from extreme views is gained through the denial of each, by saying that "to preach sentient beings have. . .or have not the Buddha-nature disparages Buddha." In contrast Dôgen argues, "Despite such disparagement, you cannot avoid explaining something. . . .Although it disparges, is the Buddha-nature disclosed, or not? If the Buddha-nature is disclosed, it is penetrated by the teacher and at the same time it is heard by the listener" (64).

Like most of the fascicles in the *Shôbôgenzô*, "Busshô" does not have a clear, linear design reflecting a logical progression of ideas. But the theme that emerges underlying its various refutations is the issue of having and not having, or the being and nothingness of the Buddha-nature. Of the fourteen sections in the fascicle (Kodera), half deal directly with this topic, including the commentary on the *Mu* kôan. Dôgen indicates that the question of having is grounded on being (*u*), and the question of not having is grounded on nothingness (*mu*), based on the fact that the Sino-Japanese words *u* and *mu* have a double meaning. Beyond that, he maintains in analyzing several dialogues between the fourth and

fifth patriarchs that the nothingness of "No-Buddha-nature" (*mu-busshô*) is the fundamental concern of Zen attainment pervading Chao-chou's *Mu*. No-Buddha-nature is not the denial of the existence of Buddha-nature because "no is a touchstone to express emptiness; emptiness is the foundation of expressing no" (1970, I: 52). Dôgen asks rhetorically, "Isn't the being of whole-being (*shitsuu*) based on the nothingness of nothingness-nothingness (*mu-mu*)?" (52). On the other hand, no-Buddha-nature does not merely represent an ironic affirmation, since the categories of affirmation and negation must be subverted and broken through. The average person, he maintains, in hering of the doctrine of the Buddha-nature, fails to consider what it truly means and remains preoccupied with "such things as the existence or non-existence of Buddha-nature" (54). But Dôgen stresses that, to comprehend the truth of no-Buddha-nature, "one must not think of it in terms of the nothingness of being and nothingness, but ask 'What is this very Buddha-nature?' " (54) Thus, by the time Dôgen considers the *Mu* kôan in the thirteenth section of the fascicle, he has developed a hermeneutics of *mu* embracing yet sublating the topics of denial, negation, non-existence, nothingness, and emptiness in terms of the direct, immediate yet continuing experience of no-Buddha-nature.

As Dôgen and others suggest, the *Mu* reponse to the question of the dog's Buddha-nature is perplexing and subject to various interpretations. *Mu* has various "negative" implications, including: no, what a foolish question, for the Buddha-nature is not a possession and a dog cannot be enlightened; or it may convey a diamond-cutting and lion's roaring silence putting an end to all speculation. *Mu* can also paradoxically indicate an affirmation in that there is no Buddha-nature apart from concrete existence symbolized by the dog, and therefore from the standpoint of emptiness, of course, the dog and each and every phenomenon is Buddha. Ta-hui, who referred to this kôan at least twenty times in his writings (Ôgawa: 437), interprets *Mu* as the prime example of the short-cut *watô* technique. He sees "this one word [as] the weapon which smashes all types of wrong knowledge and wrong conceptualization" (in Buswell 1983: 338), leading the conceptual mind to the brink of collapse beyond which lies the abyss of nonconceptual truth. According to Ta-hui:

> This one character is the rod by which many false images and ideas are destroyed in their very foundations. To it you should add no judgement about being or non-being, no arguments, no bodily gestures. . . Words have no place here. Neither should you throw this character away into

> the nothingness of emptiness. . .continually stir it [this kôan] around the clock. (Dumoulin 1988: 258)

He emphasizes that, while concentrating on the *Mu* during all occasions and activities, one should feel supreme doubt of perplexity and frustration until the ten defects have been conquered and the breakthrough to *satori* is attained. The ten defects originally suggested by Ta-hui and elaborated upon by Korean Zen master Chinul are (to paraphrase): 1) thinking of *Mu* in terms of yes and no 2) relating it to doctrine 3) pondering it logically 4) considering it as a wordless gesture 5) evaluating the meaning of the word 6) approaching it through silent illumination 7) viewing it as a product of meditation 8) examining it through literary analysis 9) taking it to be true nonexistence 10) relating it to the original, inherent potentiality for awakening (Buswell 1983: 337-338, 373-374; Keel: 148). Ta-hui's *watô* appears to be similar to the contemplative prayer recommended by the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, who argues that "it is quite sufficient to focus your attention on a single word such as sin or God (or another one you might prefer) and without the intervention of analytical thought allow yourself to experience directly the reality it signifies. The one syllable prayer is like crying out 'help!' or 'fire!' " But *The Cloud* warns, "Do not use clever logic to examine or explain this word to yourself nor allow yourself to ponder its ramifications. . .I do not believe reasoning ever helps in the contemplative work. That is why I advise you to leave these words whole. . .When you think of sin, intend nothing in particular but only yourself, though nothing particular in yourself either" (Johnston: 94).

Hung-chih comments on the *Mu* kôan in case eighteen of his *Juko hyakusoku* (C. *Sung-ku pai-tse*, collection of one-hundred cases with poetic commentary), used as the basis for the *Shôyôroku*. Hung-chih's interpretation seems to indicate a different direction than Ta-hui by stressing that the *Mu* is not a truth to be contemplated without conceptualization but an expression based on and springing forth from the experience of enlightenment:

> It is not realized by no-mind (*mu-shin*) or known with-mind (*u-shin*). Because it circulates freely throughout the veins and speech of the unbounded, true person, there is no place it does not penetrate" (in Ôgawa: 446).

The approach suggested by Hung-chih may have been a key influence on Dôgen's contention that the *watô* method creates subtle yet devastating dichotomies between means and end, practice and realization, and illusion and truth. However, the interpretation of Ju-ching, who Dôgen

cites as his only authentic teacher (aside from Sakyamuni), does not seem to diverge significantly from Ta-hui's explanation of the *Mu* as a method of surpassing conceptualization through concentrating on a conceptually unresolvable puzzle. According to Ju-ching:

> In Chao-chou's expression *Mu* uttered in response to the question of the dog's Buddha-nature, the word *Mu* is an iron broom used to sweep aside delusions. As one sweeps, countless delusions are exposed; the more sweeping, the more delusions. One must sweep away all conceptualizations that even this broom cannot reach. Sit erect and vigilant day and night without taking your attention off [the kôan]. Suddenly, the broom breaks open the great, empty sky and the myriad distinctions are fully penetrated" (in Kagamishima 1983: 282).

Yet, the final line may be different from Ta-hui in suggesting that discursive thought is an avenue rather than obstacle to realization.

Dôgen's approach to the *Mu* kôan is distinctive in several respects. First, as indicated above, Dôgen grounds the discussion of *Mu* in terms of the doctrine of no-Buddha-nature, which he says causes a "reverberating echo circulating through Chao-chou," and related notions of nothingness and emptiness. *Mu* is one of the multiple ways of expressing no-Buddha-nature which must not be absolutized but explored through alternative possibilities. Dôgen also highlights Chao-chou's affirmative response, *U*, which he interprets in terms of being-Buddha-nature. The doctrine of being-Buddha-nature, however, is not a possession or an inherent potentiality that exists in contrast to no-Buddha-nature. Concerning Chao-chou's *U*, he writes,

> . . .is not the 'has' posited by the Sarvastivadans [an early Buddhist school of 'realism']. . . .The being of Buddha is the being of Chao-chou. The being of Chao-chou is the being of the dog. The being of the dog is being-Buddha-nature" (1970, I: 69-70).

According to Dôgen, Chao-chou answered both *Mu* and *U* because these terms are interchangeable yet distinct ways of expressing no-Buddha-nature. In addition, Dôgen comments on the Chao-chou's ironic answer, "It is because a dog has karmic consciousness," given in response to the disciple's restatement of the initial question, "All sentient beings have the Buddha-nature, why not the dog?" Dôgen interprets Chao-chou's reply in positive terms. Since causality is inseparable from non-causality, the existence of karma indicates that the problem of the dog's Buddha-nature is oriented in terms of "the nothingness of the dog and the nothingness of the Buddha-nature" (70). This phrase (*kushi-mu, busshô-mu nari*) can also be read as "no-dog and no-Buddha-

nature," "dog-nothingness and Buddha-nature-nothingness," or "dog-*Mu* and Buddha-nature-*Mu*."

In some ways, Dôgen's approach to the *Mu* kôan is similar to Ta-hui's, especially when he suggests that "this *Mu* has the power of the sun to melt rocks" (69). Dôgen seems to concur with Ta-hui's refutation of some of the ten defects, such as 1), 4), and 10), but he clearly and willingly violates others, including 5), 8), and 9). Dôgen's argument appears to be: Is it reasonable or even desirable to use words such as *Mu* (or, in *The Cloud*, sin or God) that are loaded with so many levels of meaning and implication reflecting the historical development of doctrine only in order to defeat thought and discourse? Isn't it preferable to explore the polysemy of such words while remaining free from commitment to any particular meaning? This is the "language of samadhi" (Sekida: 99) or the playful (*asobiteki*) expressions of awakened consciousness. Subversion is liberating in a sense parallel to Derrida's view of the repetition of language: "Its freedom is to exploit every latent connection, every associative bond, every phonic, graphic, semiotic, and semantic link, every relation of whatever sort which exists among signifiers, in order to set forth the power of repetition in all its productivity, inventiveness and freedom" (Caputo: 142). Dôgen's critique of the *watô* approach thus reflects several concerns. Philosophically, he seeks to firmly establish the middle way encompassing the oneness of means and end, practice and realization, activity and anticipation without any subtle gap separating these apparent opposites. Psychologically, Dôgen emphasizes the interplay of thought and thoughtlessness in order to open up all possible approaches to enlightenment experience. From the standpoint of religious language, he values the deconstructive function of metaphor and symbol as semantic and non-semantic modes of disclosing the nothingness of nothingness.

CONCLUSIONS: ABUSES AND USES

In *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Mishima Yukio discusses the potential fatal flaw of the kôan used in Zen training. Near the end of the book, just before the miserable anti-hero Mizoguchi commits the tragic act of burning down the hautningly beautiful temple because of his overly literal interpretation of Rinzai's dictum, "If you see the Buddha, kill him," he meets Father Zenkai. In contrast to the secretive and corrupt Dosen, Father Superior of the temple, the visiting Zenkai appears to Mizoguchi as an authentic teacher who is able to see into his heart without making judgment or causing suspicion. Zenkai exhibits "the gentle-

ness of the harsh roots of some great tree that grows outside a village and gives shelter to the passing traveler" (244). He is not like "[Zen masters who] are apt to fall into the sin of never giving a positive judgment on anything for fear of being laughed at later in case they have been wrong. . . .[or] the type of Zen priest who will instantly hand down his arbitrary decision on anything that is discussed, but who will be careful to phrase his reply in such a way that it can be taken to mean two opposite things" (245).

Both Dôgen and Ta-hui are sensitive and seek to avoid the kind of counter-productive spiritual predicament in which the study of traditional cases can easily result if metaphor is taken literally and flexibility, spontaneity, and ambiguity degenerate into arbitrary, whimsical, misleading pronouncements (Kapleau). The issue in comparing these thinkers is not whether the former accepted or rejected the kôan in taking a position that is polarized in relation to the latter. Rather, within the context of trying to revive and refashion the kôan tradition, two distinct views arose of how to minimize the kinds of problems Mishima describes. Ta-hui warns that thinking itself, which invariably results in the ten defects, must be conquered by trying to spit out the tasteless live word; one word is sufficient to the task. For Dôgen, all words are touchstones to articulate the nothingness of no-Buddha-nature; language is the play of samadhi. Kôans are not seen as either merely compatible with or replacing sutras but as the essential nature of the symbol-making process encompassing parable and paradox, tautology and metaphor, syntactical meaning and non-semantic wordplay (puns, homophones, onomatopoeia, etc.)

The differences in approach can also be seen by interpreting Franz Kafka's famous parable in *The Trial*, "Before the Law" (267-269). According to Kafka, a "man from the country" comes to the door of the Law begging for admittance but is denied entrance by an intimidating doorkeeper who counsels, "It is possible, but not at this moment." The man continues to wait, trying to cajole and even to bribe the doorkeeper, all to no avail. Finally, near the end of his life, the man sees a radiance streaming inextinguishably from the door of the Law and asks the doorkeeper, "Everyone strives to attain the Law, how does it come about, then, that in all these years no one has come seeking admittance but me?" The doorkeeper responds, "No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended for you. I am now going to shut it." Ta-hui would likely see the doorkeeper as an embodiment of the necessary obstacle or impenetrable barrier of the *Mu watô*, which forces the conceptual mind into exhaustion and eventual collapse. The

death of the man from the country represents the demise of rationality, requiring a sudden leap beyond all doorways into the Law. The paradox for Ta-hui is that the man has wasted his efforts on a path of hopeless futility. Dôgen, however, inteprets the paradoxicality in terms of the doorkeeper's final pronouncement: there are an infinite number of doors but each person must find the key to the one that is appropriate to him. The man from the country never realizes that he has always been at the door containing the light or the truth of the Law. Instead of idly waiting or focusing on his frustration, the man should have tried to negotiate his way through the gateless gate (*mumonkan*) by engaging earlier in the discursive process that inspired his final illuminative question.

The conventional account of Zen history which suggests that the kôan is useful and meaningful only in demonstrating the uselessness and meaninglessness of words may be applicable to Ta-hui's Rinzai Zen, but it is misleading or irrelevant for Dôgen's Sôtô approach. In light of the above examination of the "Mu" and other cases, does the kôan for Dôgen have the Buddha-nature? To paraphrase (by substituting the word "kôan" for "sentient beings" in the original, 1970, I: 64) Dôgen's rhetorical comment to Ta-kuei, who said that "all sentient beings have no Buddha-nature":

> You explain that all kôans are no-Buddha-nature. But you do not explain that all Buddha-natures are no-kôan, or that all Buddha-natures are no-Buddha-nature. How could you expect to realize even in your dreams that all Buddhas are no-Buddha-nature? You must see things more clearly!

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