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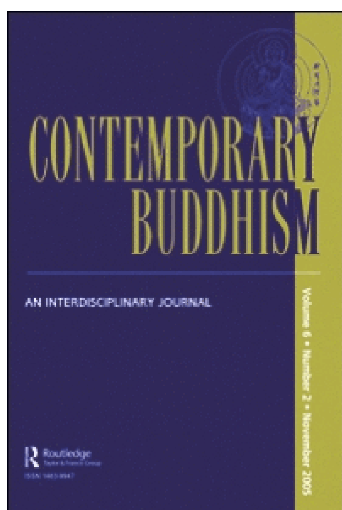

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THE VIEW FROM THE CUSHION: ZEN CHALLENGES TO DUALITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE SITUATION[1]

Leesa S. Davis

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Based on participant-observation fieldwork, interviews with western Zen practitioners, public dharma *talks and personal interviews given by two contemporary Sōtō Zen teachers (Hōgen Yamahata and Ekai Korematsu), this paper explores the challenges to 'everyday' dualistic thought structures that Zen practice poses to the questioning student and the ontological and epistemological significance of these challenges to the worldview of the experiencing student. First, the teaching styles and non-dual emphases of the two teachers in the context of teacher/student exchanges are examined; and, secondly, the experiential challenges and changes in worldview from the practitioner's point of view are phenomenologically explored. By teasing out the parallels and links between the phenomenology of Zen practice and the philosophical underpinnings of Zen practice instructions, foundational philosophical tenets can be shown 'in action' in the contemporary practice situation and a window is opened on the ontological and epistemological significance of the experiential impact of Zen teachings.*

Introduction

> Zen practice is a practice of no separation. Rain is falling outside but really it is falling in you, falling through you, in practice you feel this. This is not a concept—when we say non-duality it becomes a concept—what I am talking about is experience. Zen is not about concepts, it is experience. (Zen Master Ekai Korematsu 1999a)

The Zen emphasis on the experience of non-duality offers fertile ground for investigating the impact of non-dual practice instructions on students and the resulting shifts in worldviews and perspective that this experience may ignite. In this paper I will explore Zen challenges to dualistic modes of thinking and being in the practice situation through the teachings and teacher/student dialogues of two contemporary Zen masters with practice communities in the West.

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In the late 1990s two Japanese Sōtō Zen monks moved permanently to Australia and began establishing *sanghas*. The first, Hōgen Yamahata, had been visiting Europe and Australia conducting *sesshin* and developing practice communities for some time, and was eventually granted permanent residency in Australia. The second, Ekai Korematsu, married an Australian woman and settled in Melbourne. Hōgen Yamahata (b. 1935, known to his students as Hōgen-san) was trained at both Sōtō and Rinzai temples in Japan and met his master Tangen Harada Rōshi in the early 1960s. He is the spiritual director of Open Way Zen Centre in Byron Bay, New South Wales. Ekai Korematsu-oshō (b. 1948, known to his students as Ekai-oshō) was trained at the San Francisco Zen Center and at one of the Sōtō head temples, Eihei-ji in Japan. He received Dharma transmission from his teacher, Ikkō Narasaki Rōshi, in 1980 and is currently Abbot of the Jikishōan Zen Buddhist Community in Melbourne. The two centres that formed around these teachers have developed over the past 10 years and are steadily increasing their activities and attracting more practitioners.[2]

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Both Ekai Korematsu and Hōgen Yamahata are spiritual descendants of the 'founder' of the Sōtō school, Eihei Dōgen (1200–53), and both emphasize Dōgen's key philosophical tenet that 'practice and realization are one' (i.e. non-dual). Further to this, like Dōgen, both contemporary teachers operate within the classic Zen understanding of non-duality; that is, reality is not-two (*advayavāda*)—the theory that reality is subject to neither of the two extreme views of existence or non-existence and by extension is not linked to any dichotomous pairings (such as self and non-self, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, etc.). In Zen, such dichotomous pairings are understood as 'not-two pairings' that transcend ideas of identity and difference (such as Nāgārjuna's foundational exposition of the mutually entailing relationship between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*).[3] From this point of view, such pairings are thus seen in dynamic relationship not in static opposition; and it is realization of this dynamic relationship of thought-structured dichotomies that Zen practice aims to ignite. Both teachers also centre their students in the practice of *shikantaza* (just sitting) an objectless yet physically precise meditative practice made paradigmatic for the Sōtō School by Dōgen.[4] Bearing these core non-dual philosophical tenets and practice instructions in mind, my discussion will emphasize the challenge to 'everyday' dualistic thought structures that Zen practice poses to the questioning student and some observations will be made on the ontological and epistemological significance of these challenges to the worldview of the experiencing student.

Based on participant-observation fieldwork, interviews with Australian Zen practitioners, and public *dharma* talks and personal interviews given by the two teachers, this paper will proceed in two stages. First, the teaching styles and emphases of Hōgen-san and Ekai-oshō in the context of teacher/student exchanges will be examined; and, secondly, the experiential challenges and changes in worldview from the practitioner's point of view will be phenomenologically explored. By teasing out the parallels and links between the phenomenology of Zen practice and the philosophical underpinnings of Zen

practice instructions, a window can be opened on the significance of the experiential impact of Zen teachings and philosophical tenets can be shown 'in action' in the contemporary practice situation.

Ekai Korematsu: 'return to the spine'[5]

During one of Zen master Ekai Korematsu's *teishō* (formal *dharma* talks) on Dōgen's non-duality of practice and realization, a student commented that: 'It's like a case of which came first the chicken or the egg!' To which Ekai-oshō replied: 'What about if they both come together?'(Korematsu 2001)

Through a common witticism, the student throws into question the idea of anything 'coming first'. 'Which came first, the chicken or the egg', we cannot say, although there is a paradoxical search in the mental 'flip' between chicken, egg, egg, chicken, and so on, that could be said to be experientially illustrative of Buddhist ideas of the inter-dependence of all things (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Such an unanswerable question already throws cause-and-effect relationships into question, but Ekai Korematsu's simple retort takes common consequential ideas of causality one step further: 'What about if they both come together?' The whole question of 'what came first' is suddenly turned on its head and questions of 'what came where' are swept away with this dynamic non-dualistic challenge to linear causality.

'Things coming together' is a metaphor for the mutual dependence or inter-dependence of all phenomena. As such, it is a common Zen foil for ideas of linear time-bound progression in practice, as it shatters any conceptualizations of *zazen* practice and realization being in a consequential relationship. As soon as a seeker falls into dualistic oppositions of before and after or ends and means, as in such projections like 'first I will practice and then I will be enlightened', he or she is shown that there is no 'first this then that'. With this simple statement that denies any 'first cause' and affirms Dōgen's undoing of the thought constructed dualism that poses practice as means and realization as goal, Ekai Korematsu succinctly underlines the dynamic unity of practice and attainment as a ceaselessly unfolding process that is fully integrated with all aspects of temporality and concretely situates the practitioner 'right now and right here'.

According to Ekai-oshō, there are two aspects to practice: the physical body engagement, which 'is very concrete, and in Zen the concrete aspect is very important'; and the mental aspect, 'in which thoughts expand, wander and they are brought back'. However, 'it's not just sitting and watching the scenery, there is a deliberate effort'. In Ekai Korematsu's practice instructions, intention, in the form of 'effort', is important for the practitioner to keep the focus on the body.

> Any thoughts that you attach to, move you away from the body—moving away is not the required effort, the effort is to return—so how to return—not by thinking, no, just by paying attention to the spine, coming back, returning. (Korematsu 2000)

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'Returning to the spine' is the most essential element of the whole process and, according to Ekai-oshō, the 'closest and most accurate explanation that [the teacher] can give people' is 'just sit with your back straight' (Korematsu 2000).

Ekai Korematsu's emphasis on the posture of *zazen* and the importance of formal practice highlights that, for practitioners, Dōgen's three 'thinking' distinctions—thinking, not-thinking, and non-thinking—cannot be removed from his instructions for the physical position to be adopted in *zazen*. For Ekai-oshō, the 'essential art of *zazen*' is predicated on the 'steady, immovable sitting position'. In following Dōgen's precise and detailed physical instructions the thought-constructions of the conceptualizing mind are 'naturally undone' by being allowed to fall back into a non-thinking dynamic 'space' that is not aligned with the thinking/not-thinking dichotomy. In Ekai Korematsu's teaching, objectless, formal sitting practice (*shikantaza*) allows this 'undoing' of habitual thought patters to occur and enables the practitioner to extend the non-dual body and mind engagement that begins with practice into all aspects of daily activities.

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Speaking of the 'undoing' process of Zen practice, Ekai Korematsu comments that:

> ... in Zen practice, habitual patterns and conditioning are naturally undone. Everyone without exception is made up of all kinds of habits or patterns, past conditions, all the packaging—and putting oneself in the sitting naturally unfolds this—unpacks these conditionings. But it doesn't mean that these conditionings go away, that is wrong, rather they become kind of free-floating instead of fixed and solid. The mind is dynamic and flexible. Flexible means unfolding, unpacking but ..., it doesn't mean rejecting or destroying patterns. (Korematsu 2000)

According to Ekai-oshō, the practice of *shikantaza* is an 'opening of the senses' not a concentrated 'closing down', and it is by 'being totally open' in practice that the undoing or the 'letting go' of the hold of thought-based constructions takes place:

> *shikantaza* is openness, being totally open, all senses open. To concentrate is to close off, to only focus on one thing. To let go is a crude way of putting it, a crude level, because letting go implies trying, using the mind. You can't let go with the mind; you have to let go with the body and mind. Mind alone can't do it, it just becomes another construct. Body engagement is necessary. (Korematsu 1999a)

A 'dynamic and flexible' mind can thus recognize and release thought structured conditionings without falling to rejection. But 'mind alone can't do it', the 'essential thing' is to 'return to the spine':

> Zen practice is about the essential thing—simply erect your spine again and again and that which is beyond all conditioning will be slowly clarified. (Korematsu 1999b)

Hōgen Yamahata: 'why not now?'

At the beginning of a public talk, Zen master Hōgen Yamahata was asked to expand on one of his often-used teaching expressions: 'just this'. In reply, Hōgen-san, who was sitting in *zazen* posture, took a deep breath, extended his arm and intoned in a steady, strong voice: 'TTTHHHIIIISSS'. His reply was greeted by silence, and after a full minute or so he softly said 'just this—only this—that's all' and returned to *zazen* posture (Yamahata 2001).

By responding with a classic 'direct' demonstration of Zen, Hōgen Yamahata is following the traditional Zen emphasis on direct demonstration rather than verbal explanation. His 'answer', as simple and spontaneous as it was, had the effect of silencing his audience and placing them in immediate response to his teaching. Simply put, in the moment of his answer, in the 'now' of his response, all questions were 'frozen' in the sense that there was no space for the conceptualizing mind to 'kick in' and, in this sense, Hōgen-san's response was a direct presentation of the 'now and here' moments that Zen aims to ignite.

In the reading of this analysis, Hōgen Yamahata's demonstration serves to shift the questioner out of attempting to intellectually figure out 'what could "this" mean' or 'what are the qualities of "this" to "this" in concrete actuality'. The 'concrete this' located in absolute 'now' is one of the lynchpins of Hōgen Yamahata's teaching; where Ekai Korematsu would move a student away from conceptualizing reifications of *zazen* by bringing them back to the body, 'back to the spine', Hōgen-san moves to undo all objectifications and projections of sequential constructions of practice by challenging his student with a 'now':

> [Hōgen]: The most advanced moment is now
> Why not now?
> Why not?
> [Student]: Silence
> [Hōgen]: Will you be aware after this *sesshin* [retreat], is that it?
> Where are you now? (Yamahata 1999)

With the unanswerable question 'Why not now?', Hōgen-san forces the questioning student into the elusive present moment; as there is no possibility of articulating a response, the only thing to do is to remain in 'now'. Taking advantage of the 'unanswerability' of his question, Hōgen Yamahata further challenges the student's projections of attaining 'awareness' through mediation by confounding her ideas of 'before' and 'after'. If 'the most advanced moment is now', how can awareness be projected as something that is attainable in the future? 'Will you be aware after this *sesshin* [retreat], is that it?' The student's projections are momentarily cut by being brought back to the immediate present.

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In a restatement of Dōgen's core teaching of the non-duality of practice and realization, Hōgen Yamahata outlines for his students the nature of 'real' practice:

> What is real practice? We can easily assume the posture of zazen, but not actually practise. Real practice is very simple, and at the same time very profound. It is nothing more or less than freedom from concepts and beliefs about everything: even those about practice itself. Therefore, practice, to be free, is enlightenment. (Yamahata 1998, 188)

In keeping with Nāgārjuna's warnings against reification of Buddhist insights, Hōgen Yamahata instructs his students to be free of concepts and beliefs about 'everything', including 'practice itself'. Given the centrality of practice, one of the greatest spiritual pitfalls for the Zen practitioner is the reification and objectification of the Buddhist path itself. Dōgen stresses the oneness of practice and attainment but a dynamic oneness in which practice cannot be substantialized and attainment cannot be reified. In his efforts to steer students away from reification and objectification, Hōgen Yamahata's teaching targets these same dualistic pitfalls.

The teachings of Ekai-oshō and Hōgen-san both emphasize Dōgen's absolute non-duality of practice and realization but their teaching methods differ. Ekai-oshō's practice instructions focus on body engagement in the traditional Sōtō practice of *shikantaza* (just sitting); his constant instruction to 'return to the spine' serving as a non-dual 'marker' to shift practitioners away from the thought-constructions of the conceptualizing mind.

In contrast, Zen master Hōgen Yamahata centres his teaching on returning to 'now'. In Hōgen-san's presentation of Zen, the questioning student is constantly challenged to undo any projected dualisms of ends and means in spiritual practice by coming back to 'now'. Hōgen-san diverges from the traditional Sōtō method of using teaching stories and dialogues (*kōan*) only in formal *dharma* talks (*teishō*) by sometimes advising students to work with *kōan* in meditation. In this respect he differs from Ekai Korematsu, who does not advise practitioners to work on *kōan* during meditation practice (*shikantaza*). Also, in his instructional discourse, Hōgen-san sometimes extends the parameters of traditional *kōan* definition from the canonical cases of the masters to include elements taken from daily life. A common thread that runs through Hōgen-san's formulating of *kōans* is the idea of 'one's deepest life-question' and the instruction that student's should '... put [their] most important question into the sitting position'. According to Hōgen-san:

> The final and first question (*kōan*) begins by asking ourselves in our *tanden*,[6] 'Now that everything of my body mind has been cremated, what is the deepest vow of my Buddha-self?' (Yamahata 1998, 180 and 200)[7]

Hōgen Yamahata and Ekai Korematsu emphasize different facets of fundamental Zen philosophy and advocate different practice methods, but both focus on the same root 'problem'—practitioners' fixed dualistic thought-structures and worldviews. Despite these differences both teaching techniques

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educe similar experiences in the practice situation. In the next section, I will look at the experiential impact of these non-dual teachings and, where appropriate, parallel practice instructions and philosophical tenets with reported practitioner experience. The two practitioners focused on here are Australian Zen students and each have over 20 years of Zen practice experience. They have been actively involved with both teachers since the late 1990s.

Challenging duality: the view from the cushion

Based on Dōgen's non-dual insight that spiritual practice and spiritual awakening are one (*shushō-ittō*), Sōtō Zen instructional discourse and practice works to actualize insight into the inter-related, interpenetrating, dynamic relationship between dichotomies in the practitioner's immediate experiencing. In short, any attempts on the student's part to substantialize or ontologize practice as a 'thing' or to epistemologically frame understandings as 'realization' are 'nipped in the bud' by non-dual strategies that serve to counter reification of both sides of the practice/realization dualism.[8]

Dōgen's description of the relationship of the one and the many, the different and the same, in *Shōbōgenzō Zenki* (*Total Dynamic Working*) highlights the importance of de-reifying both sides of dichotomies: '... though not oneness, it is not difference, though it is not difference, it is not sameness, though it is not sameness, this is not multifariousness' (Waddell and Abe 1972a, 76). To this end, both Hōgen-san and Ekai-oshō work with a non-dual dynamic that challenges the boundaries of polarized dichotomies by turning, juxtaposing, and/or reversing practitioners' dualistic notions of identity and difference.

For Dōgen, all things are dynamically not-two (*advaya*), and for the practitioner to experientially understand this dynamic not-twoness, 'the sameness of things' differences and the differences of things' sameness' (Waddell and Abe 1972b, 130) must be 'penetrated' (i.e. non-dualistically understood) in practice. In other words, the dualistic sense of contradiction that the practitioner encounters when told that all things, including practice and realization, are 'identical in difference' and 'different in identity' must be undone by highlighting the creatively dynamic interplay between both perspectives. In Heine's view, 'two or more meanings seen in a single phrase may not imply contradiction, but indicate that in Dōgen's understanding there are multiple and paradoxical dimensions of impermanence' (Heine 1982, 46).

In a commentary on Dōgen's multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival vision, Ekai Korematsu states that in Zen thought and practice 'nothing is in contradiction to anything else—everything is moving in a dynamic relationship'. Ekai-oshō refers to practice instructions that indicate this dynamic relationship as 'reversals' that represent 'the turning of the *dharma* [which] is the meaning of impermanence—always reversing or turning. ... In practice, you turn *dharma*, *dharma* turns you' (Korematsu 2000).[9]

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Ekai-oshō's description of the two-way turning of *dharma* is experientially echoed in this practitioner's insight into the non-dual 'stillness' of *shikantaza*:

> The stillness is still but it's not always the same stillness. There is still movement in the stillness—it's a funny expression. It's all the same thing when you talk about stillness and emptiness and space and there's still everything in there the movement and whatnot. (InterviewB00 2000)

In this report, 'stillness' is not perceived as being in opposition to 'movement'. The practitioner finds that 'there is still movement in the stillness' and that 'talking about stillness and emptiness and space' does not mean that 'movement' is excluded. In this description she has hit upon the 'dynamic stillness' of *shikantaza* in which the dichotomous boundaries of movement and stillness are in dynamic interplay rather than rigid opposition.

The unhinging of clear-cut definitions of identity and difference and the pointing toward their ultimate dynamic interplay has the paradoxical experiential effect of leaving aspirants with no 'solid ground' on which to predicate objectifications and reifications. In this process, things are shown to be 'not-two' by experientially opening the paradoxical space between dualisms wherein both sides of a dichotomy can be simultaneously affirmed and negated or neither affirmed nor negated in the practitioner's experiencing without apparent contradiction.

This neither affirming nor denying 'nature' of *shikantaza* is well illustrated in the response of this student who was asked 'Does the practice of *shikantaza* 'undo' anything?'

> No. I think with *shikantaza* there is a sense of there's nothing really to undo. It's things—I know what I'm trying to say but I can't say it. I've gone blank! I'm just trying to get a sense of what I am feeling and then try and put it out. I'm trying to say that *shikantaza* just presents things as they are. There's nothing that's been undone but—it's like the difference between saying it's a cup [pointing to the cup] and it's a cup! I can't say it! It doesn't make sense! (InterviewJ20 2001)

The difficulty in formulating a statement describing what *shikantaza* 'does' is indicative of the neither negating nor affirming nature of the practice itself. In 'trying' to say 'that *shikantaza* just presents things as they are', the practitioner is fighting substantializing the practice of *shikantaza* as a 'thing' that presents or produces other things. The practitioner is intuitively aware that *shikantaza* cannot be reified as a 'subject' that is undoing or presenting any 'thing' or any 'self'. Ekai Korematsu warns against this exact reification by stating that it is in 'the process of *zazen* or the phenomena of *zazen*' that habitual structures or patterns are recognized and unfolded, it is not *zazen* as a 'thing' that is 'doing' this unfolding. 'If you say *zazen* as subject then it becomes difficult—you begin to make wrong effort' (Korematsu 2001).

The practitioner is struggling with the attempt to frame a non-dual insight within the dualistic framework of identity and difference. The mutually entailing

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quality of things-being-present-just-as-they-are and habitual ways of thought undoing 'doesn't make sense' to her in the conventional context of trying to explain it. That is, she cannot epistemologically frame these felt process(es) of practice without dualistically separating them as categories that can be identified and compared. The practitioner likens the differentiation to 'it's like the difference between saying it's a cup [pointing to the cup] and it's a cup!' By paradoxically stating difference as identity—'it's a cup and it's a cup'—this practitioner offers an experiential re-statement of Dōgen's identity-in-difference and difference-in-identity that 'doesn't make sense' in dualistic either/or structures of thought.

This 'difference-in-identity' is reflective of the neither/nor phenomenological space of *shikantaza* in the sense that it represents a non-oppositional experience of the categories of difference and identity. Here, 'difference and identity' are experienced as dynamic and mutually entailing rather than being in dualistic opposition. This non-oppositional differentiating is the driving force behind much of Dōgen's non-dualistic 'turning' expressions of identity and difference, in which he '... reveals the middle path [as] unbound by, yet giving rise to all polarities' (Heine 1982, 56).

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In another experiential example that illustrates the de-ontologizing nature of 'just sitting', the same practitioner describes the non-oppositional and mutually entailing phenomenology of *shikantaza* with the following observation:

> You notice when you are sitting that the boundaries between yourself and whatever don't seem to be there anymore. The boundary between you and the wall in front of you—like you are looking at each other! (InterviewJ20 2001)

The practitioner further reports that the experience 'flipped her sense of reality', in that 'things weren't behaving in the way that [she] was used to' (InterviewJ20 2001). Moreover, she describes the experiential tension of the breakdown of the boundaries of oppositional ways of thinking thus:

> It was like seeing two sides of the same coin at the same time and being confused by it but at the same time feeling it was perfectly ok. It felt like I got the turn between the two things and ... I was getting both at the same time but it was turning too quickly and I was getting dizzy! But that was interesting, that was a physical thing right through my whole body. ... It finally lifted and it was like a calm lake. (InterviewJ20 2001)

'Getting the turn between things' is an apt experiential description of Dōgen's multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival vision of the inter-penetrating nature of all dichotomies. Moreover, it is indicative of the phenomenological turning space of non-thinking that, according to Ekai Korematsu, is the 'dynamic of thinking and not-thinking' (Korematsu 2000). This turning dynamic is experienced by the above practitioner as a mental and a physical 'thing' that initially made her 'dizzy' but then 'lifted and it was like a calm lake'.

The practitioner continues by noting the physicality of the experience and linking it to Zen conceptions of the two truths:[10] 'I went for a walk in the bush

and I had the realization two feet but one body! Just walking. Just that relative and absolute connection there. How the two both fit together and how they are actually separate' (InterviewJ20 2001). The practitioner has realized the mutually entailing connection between the relative and the absolute that allows her insight into their simultaneous difference and identity. Her above description of the experience as 'seeing two sides of the same coin at the same time' is also reflective of the mutually entailing and inter-penetrating absolute and relative connection in Zen, whilst her initial confusion is reflective of attempting to frame the 'turning' within static dualistic understandings.

As in the example above, in speaking of *shikantaza*, Zen practitioners commonly report that they cannot 'find' a solid sense of self and that the boundaries of self and non-self seem to dissolve: 'You can't find your self or anything solid'. When our second student was asked 'How can you not find you?', she replied:

> A whole lot of things fall apart. You don't seem to need what you thought you needed. What was indispensable just doesn't seem so solid. (InterviewB00 2000)

This loss of a sense of self is experienced as a 'falling apart' or 'disassembling':

> All those walls that you've happily built up over the years they just fall apart and you kind of disassemble there somewhere and you have to make sense of it. On retreat you get a lot deeper because a lot more of that happens—you do disassemble! (InterviewB00 2000)

This ontological 'disassembling' is often experienced as disorientating and 'scary':

> Getting yourself off familiar ground is a scary thing—you don't know what to do. I've thought, 'I don't know who this person is—Who the heck am I?' 'What am I doing? Why am I doing it? Who is doing what?' (InterviewB00 2000)

The practitioner's disorientation has produced a series of radical ontological questions indicative of her inability to 'find' her usual unquestioned 'solid' sense of self. Paradoxical questions such as 'who is doing what?' signify the beginning of a 'no-subject' state in which no stable sense of 'self as subject' nor 'other as object' is recognized. This internal problematizing of substantialized ideas of self serves to shift the practitioner into a 'not-knowing' experiential 'space' in which standard epistemological framings do not hold. As we have seen, in Zen, the overall pattern of practice and dialogues is centred on questioning and undermining practitioner attachments to substantialized ontological categories and reified polarizations of dualisms. To this end, Zen teachers work to disclose the mutually entailing and dynamically reciprocal nature of dichotomous categories of thought in the practitioner's experiencing by challenging the dualistic assumptions that support them. In the practitioner reports above we get a glimpse of the felt-nature of these challenges and the experiential shifts that ignite new, sometimes radical, understandings of self and world.

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Every Buddhist teacher brings something of their own experience and personality to their teaching methods; although Hōgen Yamahata's and Ekai Korematsu's presentations of Zen differ, they are both fundamentally true to core Sōtō teachings—as articulated by Dōgen. In broad terms, both teachers accept no bifurcation between practice and realization—indeed, they do not accept any conceptualizations of such dichotomous dualistic pairings and strive to keep the student from attaching to and thereby ontologizing any ideas of ends and means or linear causality to practice.

One of the interesting elements of further study, in terms of contemporary Zen practice, is the nature of the interactions between these teachers and teachings with students in the practice situation. In the contemporary western context, both teachers are dealing with attempting to 'fit' a primarily monastic practice to lay communities. Both teachers are dealing with a far more 'questioning' *sangha* and, as we have seen from the exchanges above, both are dealing with framing teachings and responses in ways that contemporary students can relate to. This presents challenges for their own practices—Hōgen-san has often commented that one of the reasons he kept coming back to teach in the West is that western students asked a lot of questions—a process that he was not used to (Yamahata 1999). In attempting to respond to what is, by traditional standards, many questions on the nature and 'meaning' of Zen practice and to simultaneously keep students from 'fixing' dualistic ideas on practice, both Hōgen-san and Ekai-oshō are forging new ways of presenting the non-dual essence of Zen.

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NOTES

1. This paper is based on experiential research undertaken for the author's doctoral thesis 'Deconstructive Spiritual Inquiry: Experiential Undoing in Advaita and Zen' (Deakin University, 2005), to be published in book form as *Advaita Vedānta & Zen Buddhism: Deconstructive Modes of Spirituality* (Continuum Press, 2010 forthcoming).
2. For further information see online (www.jikishoan.org.au; INTERNET, and www.openway.org.au; INTERNET).
3. *Saṃsāra* . . . is nothing essentially different from *nirvāṇa*. See Inada 1970, 158. *Nirvāṇa* is nothing essentially different from *saṃsāra* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XXV: 19).
4. Dogen's detailed instructions for the practice of *shikantaza* can be found in one of his key works, *Fukanzazengi* [*The Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen*], in which he gives precise physical instructions for *zazen* posture and advises students to 'settle into a steady, immovable sitting position'. He further instructs students to 'Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Non-thinking. This in itself is the essential art of zazen' (Waddell and Abe 1973, 123).
5. The sections on Ekai Korematsu and Hōgen Yamahata are adapted from my doctoral thesis. See note 1 above.

6. Hōgen-san defines *tanden* as 'our own cosmic centre which is located just below the navel, between the lower abdomen and pelvis' (Yamahata 1998, 232).
7. Foulk notes that: 'the idea that 'anything can serve as a *kōan*' is prominent in Western expressions of Zen (i.e., anything that becomes the sustained focus of an existential problem or "life crisis" can be used as an "insight riddle" or *kōan*) [and is] a modern development [for which] there is scarcely any precedent for in the classical literature' (Foulk 2000, 26).
8. There is an important aspect to this 'undoing' of dichotomies in Zen that is beyond the scope of this paper—Zen practice is experientially deconstructive and, for conceptual purposes, can be said to work with four key deconstructive techniques: unfindability analysis; bringing everything back to the here and now; negation; and paradoxical problems. For a full study of this aspect see *Advaita Vedānta & Zen Buddhism: Deconstructive Modes of Spirituality* (see note 1).
9. Compare Dōgen in *Shōbōgenzō Hokke-Ten-Hokke*: 'When the mind is in a state of delusion the Flower of Dharma turns. When the mind is in the state of realization, we turn the Flower of Dharma' (Nishijima and Cross 1994, 215).
10. In his masterwork *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (XXIV verses 8–10), Nāgārjuna stresses the interdependent nature of the 'two truths'—conventional (*saṃvṛti-satya*) and ultimate (*paramārtha-satya*), a not-two (*advaya*) approach often found in Zen discourse.

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