



The Zen Philosopher: A Review Article on Dōgen Scholarship in English

Author(s): T. P. Kasulis

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Feature Review Article

T. P. Kasulis **The Zen philosopher: A review article on Dōgen scholarship in English**

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T. P. Kasulis is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii.

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Before we actually review the development of Dōgen studies in English, it might be helpful to consider the nature and importance of Dōgen's thought as representative of the philosophical structure of Zen Buddhism. Throughout this review, the emphasis will be on Dōgen as a philosopher rather than Dōgen as an historical religious figure or Dōgen as a practicing Zen master. This statement might raise eyebrows in some quarters insofar as many people make the assumption that being a Zen Buddhist and being a philosopher are mutually exclusive projects. Since this assumption is widespread, I will address it briefly at the outset.

First of all, we face the fundamental issue of what makes philosophy "philosophical." When people exclude Zen Buddhist thought from the classification of "philosophy," they often use such a limited definition of "philosophy" that their own criteria would also exclude such classical philosophers as Socrates, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas as well as modern figures like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and aspects of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. One may be justified in *disliking* these Western philosophers, but it is merely an act of a semantic sleight of hand to discount them as "unphilosophical." To be more specific, any definition of "philosophy" that insists upon "answers" or "assertions" as well as a "method" would exclude Socrates. Anyone who would demand at least the attempt at suppositionless inquiry might discount much of the medieval tradition. Anyone who would emphasize the rational to the exclusion of the emotive and to the exclusion of living out a consistent life project might then be forced to look askance at much of the existential movement. The demand upon the philosopher that he *justify* his every use of controversial philosophical terms was not heeded either by Spinoza or even by Wittgenstein in the writing of much of his *Tractatus*.

We also have to be wary of arguing that there is some approved sense of "philosophy" that is completely free of historical and cultural context. We could disallow much of Aristotle's writings, for example, as being essentially "scientific" or "psychological" rather than "philosophical," but this would be unfair to Aristotle's own sense of the breadth, applicability, and practicality of philosophy. After excising the "unphilosophical" portions of his complete works, we might be justified in calling the remnant "philosophy *in* Aristotle," but it would be an injustice to the spirit of the man to call it "*Aristotle's* philosophy." There would be an uproar among the historians of Western philosophy were we to decide, for example, that only the *Analytics* truly qualified as Aristotle's "philosophy," but we observe nary a wince when the same type of butchery is performed on the Eastern traditions.

Another popular way of excluding Zen Buddhist thought from the domain of philosophy is to claim that any "philosophy" (in the "Western" sense of the term) must proceed primarily by rational argumentation. On the face of it, this is a valid enough claim. We must be careful, however, not to take the phrase "rational argumentation" too narrowly. For example, many of the most fun-

damental and important claims that either an empiricist or a phenomenologist might make are often based on “rational argumentation” only to the extent that they make “an appeal to experience.” This observation helps us to recognize that, in at least *some* Western philosophies, the philosophical project is as much *descriptive* as assertory or deductive.

This latter observation has a particularly useful application when we consider the philosophical potential of Zen Buddhist thought. After all, once we wade through the various traditional stories and actually view the purpose and project of the Zen tradition, it becomes evident that indeed Zen Buddhism does make certain claims about the structure and pattern of human experience. By distinguishing different modes of consciousness, it claims that some modes are indeed more complete, more creative and more self-expressive than others. Zen “argues” its position by appealing to our own experiences. For example, suppose I were to ask you: “What is this thing now in front of you?” Is it a review article on Dōgen? Is it a series of imprints made by a printer’s type and ink? Is it a resource? Is it an amusement used to kill a little spare time between classes? Is it a piece of mail? Is it the referent of a number in the library’s card catalogue? Was it a paperweight yesterday on your desk? To ask what things are is a fundamental question in the Western tradition from Thales to Heidegger. Hence, when Shu-shan holds up his staff and asks us to tell him what it is without either affirming or denying it as “staff,” this is not “Zen humor,” nor is it an excursion into “Eastern mysticism.” It is (among other things) the asking of a philosophical question that has often been raised in Western, as well as Eastern, contexts.

Our skeptic may push his point further: is the Zen question really being asked in a *philosophical* way? One of our skeptic’s unexamined assumptions is that he believes that Zen Buddhist thought holds to unexamined assumptions. It is time that the burden of proof be placed on *his* shoulders: where are these “assumptions”? What *I* see in the Zen tradition (especially in looking at the tradition itself and not the Western commentaries on that tradition) is a dogged refusal to manufacture realities that are not directly experienced and a critical vigilance against both the idling of language and the acceptance of hidden, unjustified presuppositions lurking within our commonly held conceptualizations. When the master pops one of our favorite conceptual balloons, we turn on him, calling him a “mystic,” a “proponent of the ineffable.” In reality, however, it is very often the case of his holding to a *higher* philosophical standard than ours as to what constitutes an adequate account of the facts or a faithful description of the experience.

If we take this to be the philosophical standpoint of Zen, then how should its position be “argued”? It is not enough to show in what respects ordinary interpretations of experience are inadequate. If Zen is not to blur into the monolithic ineffability of the *neti, neti* in the Upaniṣadic tradition, something positive must be said. Simple propositional statements alone may not do, however,

since they are so dependent on the tacit assumptions within ordinary discourse that, even if the intent *were* proper, the interpretation by the listener would distort that intent. Creative expression, whether in the tactile arts or in language, therefore, comes to play a major role in the Zen tradition. Language then achieves the role not only of making propositions but also of invoking or evoking certain kinds of response, certain kinds of experience.¹ Here we see in what sense Zen makes its “appeal to experience.” The major difference between the appeal of the Western empiricist or phenomenologist and the appeal of the Zen master is that the former very often appeals to experiences we have all *had*, but the latter appeals only to the experience that his disciple is having *at that very moment*. In other words, while the former may often require of us that we *remember*, the master requires only that we “look!” When seen from this perspective, the Zen “appeal to experience” has the distinct advantage of directness, that is, the Zen “appeal” is protected from the sort of distortion that might be subconsciously carried out by the conceptual and affective apparatus involved in the remembering act. To put this in concrete terms, it is much more difficult to distort your present experience of the blackness of the letters on this page than to distort your memory of the color red that is on the cover of this journal. While the former is directly experienced, the latter may have already been “colored” by the fact that I called the remembered impression “red.” Hence, in the latter case, you already have asked yourself, “What kind of *red* was it?” This is the type of mediation within experience that Zen masters mistrust.

DŌGEN AS PHILOSOPHER

Now that we have seen that Zen need not necessarily be excluded from being a “philosophy,” or at least, having significant philosophical elements, we can discuss what constitutes the particular contribution of Dōgen. Among Japanese philosophers, Dōgen Kigen^a (1200–1253) is held in very high respect. Along with such figures as Kūkai^b (774–835) and Nishida Kitarō^c (1870–1945), he is considered to be one of the most profound thinkers in Japan’s history. Dōgen’s status is enhanced by his historical centrality. Unlike most of the traditional masters of China, Dōgen attempted to give a systematic approach to the essential nature of Zen Buddhism. Hence, his teachings are open to philosophical scrutiny in ways that the sayings of most of the classical masters are not. Considered to be the founder of Japan’s largest Zen Buddhist school, the Sōtō^d sect, Dōgen is also the first significant figure in Japanese history to write a major Buddhist treatise in his native language rather than in classical Chinese. Hence, his major work, *Shōbōgenzō*^e (henceafter *SBGZ*) “The Treasury of the Correct Dharma Eye,” marks a key stage in the Japanization of Buddhism. Furthermore, looking ahead to twentieth-century developments, *SBGZ* has become an important resource for contemporary Japanese philosophy. Nishida Kitarō, Watsuji Tetsurō^f, and Tanabe Hajime^g were all admirers of Dōgen,

the latter two having gone so far as to write monographs on the philosophical significance of his writings. This development is quite natural insofar as these modern Japanese philosophers faced the task of melding traditional Japanese thought with Western philosophical vocabulary; and Dōgen, as the first writer to use the Japanese language in a truly philosophical way, was looked upon as a forefather of Japanese “philosophy” (*tetsugaku*^b) in its modern sense.

One of the problems the new student might first encounter in his study of Dōgen is the general issue of what Dōgen is trying to accomplish in writing *SBGZ*; none of the English-writing scholars thus far have been very helpful in this area. Either we find (a) a general characterization that might apply equally well to any Zen master from Bodhidharma to the present; or (b) a psycho-historical characterization (for example, Dōgen as trying to resolve the personal encounter with transiency raised by the early death of both of his parents); or (c) a characterization that is accurate but so complex that the beginning student cannot distinguish the forest from the trees.²

Now one of the chief points to bear in mind in discussing Dōgen’s philosophical point of view is that, like most of the other great religious figures of the Kamakura period, Dōgen was trained and ordained in the Tendai tradition, the form of Buddhism that had become most dominant in Japan at that time. (For the benefit of Chinese specialists, it should be noted that even by the late Heian period, Japanese Tendai had already developed along lines somewhat different from its Chinese progenitor, T’ien-tai, the single most important difference being its assimilation in Japan of many of the esoteric doctrines and practices of the Shingon school formed by Kūkai.) Because of the Tendai interpretation of the “one-vehicle” doctrine of the *Lotus Sutra* and because of the hierarchichal systemization of all doctrines developed in China by Chih-i and his successors, Japanese Tendai had developed in such a way that it synthesized all of the previous Buddhist traditions of Japan into one school of Buddhism, eclectic in its practices and monolithic in its theories. In the doctrinal synthesis, incidentally, prominence was given to the basic ideas of interpenetration developed by the Kegon (Chinese Hua-yen) school.

The major result of the dominating influence of Tendai was twofold. On the one hand, since the Tendai sect was centered on the outskirts of Kyoto, the capital city, the political and military power of this Buddhist group became a force that the secular forces in Kyoto had to reckon with. On the other hand, the religious practices of Tendai had become more and more eclectic while only a very arduous study by intellectually gifted clerics could render intelligible the complex and seemingly abstract doctrines. In short, the conditions were such that reformation was very likely. Dōgen was blessed not only with the necessary intellectual talent but also, being of aristocratic background, with the training in the Chinese classics to enable him to play a role in this reformation. As a young man, he set out on a personal quest to unravel the mysteries of the Buddha-dharma as preached by the Buddha and expounded by the great

scholars of the Tendai tradition. His initial attempts failed: Dōgen could not deal with an apparent rift between Tendai practice and Tendai teaching. In the practice halls, he learned that enlightenment was something to be cultivated or acquired; in the study halls, he learned the doctrine of “original enlightenment,” that is, he learned that everyone is already, by his very nature, enlightened. Despite his earnestness, he could not resolve the apparent contradiction and his questioning ultimately led him to China where he studied under Ch’an master Ju-chingⁱ.

By the time Dōgen returned from China after four years there, he apparently felt that the problem was solved (or perhaps more appropriately, dissolved). Violating the common practice, he claimed that he brought back with him no new scriptures, commentaries, esoteric practices, or images. This seems to symbolize the fact that Dōgen felt that his problem had not been eliminated through the acquisition of something *new*; the answer had been there all along, even while he had first studied in Japan. In particular, Dōgen had come to the realization that if one merely participated in seated meditation (*zazen*), the very distinction between “acquired” and “original” enlightenment would disappear. *Zazen*^j was already well known and accepted by the Tendai followers as one legitimate practice among many alternatives and, in his first writing, Dōgen merely attempted to clarify and refine the actual procedure for performing this practice. Since he was writing this document for his clerical companions (throughout his life Dōgen rejected the idea that he was establishing something new called “Zen Buddhism”), he wrote it in Chinese and entitled it “*Fukan-zazengi*^k,” (Principles for the promulgation of *zazen*). Apparently, though, Dōgen’s Tendai companions were not ready to embrace this *zazen* as the one exclusive practice of Buddhism; they demanded doctrinal justification for the superiority of this practice. Dōgen took up this challenge, lecturing on and discussing the merits of *zazen*. In fact, he wrote in Japanese the record of one such exchange (“*Bendōwa*” or Talk about Undertaking the Way) and Sōtō scholars consider this to be the first chapter of what was to become *SBGZ*. I personally consider it to be very important that Dōgen himself did *not* include this fascicle in his own seventy-five fascicle edition of *SBGZ*, that is, I believe a careful reading of this fascicle reveals it to be the record of a failure: Dōgen simply makes no inroads into the mind-sets of his audience. Confronted with their skepticism about the centrality of *zazen*, Dōgen tried several kinds of arguments as recorded in the fascicle. For example, he tried to appeal to scriptural authority (*zazen* is the only practice performed by all the great Buddhas in history). He also tried an appeal to the authority of his own transmission, but this is countered (in the fourth question) by a skeptical historian who points out that Dōgen diverges from the Tendai, Kegon, and Shingon traditions. Almost in desperation we see Dōgen say that the ultimate source of the Buddha-way is not a historical transmission but rather the very things experienced in this world: the weeds, flowers, mountains, and water. As we shall see, this is a

foreshadowing of the new approach that Dōgen would eventually take. In “*Bendōwa*” however, its significance is not yet recognized.

Against this basic background, the philosophical project of *SBGZ* may be summarized in the following way. Dōgen considers himself a traditionalist, that is, he does not see any opposition between his own view and that of the major Buddhist sutras and commentaries. Rejecting the notion of the historical degeneration of the Buddha-dharma (the theory held by the “*mappō*” proponents), Dōgen merely claims that many of the key expressions of Buddhism have been subject to gross misinterpretation. Hence, the classical expressions of Buddhism are *completely* true, not merely “conventionally true” or “pragmatically helpful but ultimately inadequate.” Dōgen sees one of the most important confusions about interpreting Buddhist teachings to be in terms of the meaning of “*dharmas*.” Too often, Dōgen maintains, *dharmas* (things) are taken to be static, hypostasized entities often having a quasi-metaphysical status. Actually, though, *dharmas* are more like experiential units or things-as-experienced. To assert or speculate about any reality behind these things-as-experienced is to take Buddhism out of its own field of discourse. The implication of Dōgen’s standpoint is that many statements that have been misunderstood as having metaphysical significance are actually *descriptive* statements about experience. Hence, the Kegon (Hua-yen) and Tendai (T’ien-t’ai) statements about the interpenetration of *dharmas*, for example, are not statements about “things” but rather are statements about “things-as-experienced.” In other words, the expressions of those schools are not metaphysical at all; rather they are descriptions of human experience.

But *whose* experience is being described—the enlightened person’s or the deluded person’s? Here is the crux of Dōgen’s position. As we noted earlier, Dōgen does not want to maintain that there is any ultimate difference between cultivation (*shu*ⁿ) and authentication (*shō*^o) or between original and acquired enlightenment. Hence, Dōgen would not want to say that he is describing “Zen consciousness” or “enlightened consciousness” to the exclusion of “ordinary consciousness.” Fundamentally, our experience *as* experienced is not different from the Zen master’s. Where we differ is that we place a particular kind of conceptual overlay onto that experience and then proceed to make an emotional investment in that overlay, taking it to be “real” in and of itself rather than to be an “expression” (*dōtoku*^p) of the “occasion” (*jisetsu*^a) in which we think or talk about the given experience. In a sense, we have a double layered description. First, there is the prereflective, not yet conceptualized, experience—what we all share, Zen master and the rest of us alike. Second, there is the expression or characterization of any experience within a particular situation or occasion. If the speaker brings no personal, egotistic delusions into this expression, the occasion speaks for itself, the total situation alone determines what is said or done. Thus, in the case of the Zen master, what-is-said is simply what-is. In the case of the deluded person, however, the “what-is” includes his excess concep-

tual baggage with its affective components, the deluded ideas about the nature of “self,” “thing,” “time,” and so on that constitute the person’s own particular distortion of what actually is. Hence, throughout *SBGZ* Dōgen investigates the nature of human experience and challenges the reader to observe personally whether his experience is actually the way it is normally characterized to be. For example, in the “*Uji*” (Being-time) fascicle, Dōgen points out that most people think of time as “flying away.” Dōgen then asks us to investigate our experience. Does time really fly away? If it did, there would be a gap between ourselves and time, between things and time. Yet, we actually experience ourselves *as* time and things *as* time. Hence, the idea that time flies away must be based on self-delusion: misled by a metaphor that points to one small aspect of time-consciousness, we have convinced ourselves that we experience something that we have not really experienced at all. This does not imply that there is one and only one correct characterization of a particular thing. For example, as Dōgen points out in the “*Genjōkōan*” fascicle, the ocean is a different thing-as-experienced to a fish swimming in it, to a deva looking at it from heaven and to a man in a boat. The occasion or situation is different in each case, so the “ocean” is legitimately characterized respectively as a “jeweled palace,” a “necklace,” and a “great circle.” That is to say, the occasion determines the perspective that any given expression will take. In short, the meaning of an expression always has a contextual dimension. Consequently, Dōgen frequently analyzes the classical Zen *kōans* from the contextual point of view since the situation in which something is said is crucial to understanding what is being said.

Can we talk at all about that which is independent of situation or perspective? For the fish, the deva, and the person, is there anything in common about ocean-as-experienced? Yes, for all of them, it is simply “the presencing” (*genjō*¹). To ground one’s experience in this prereflective experience is the key to Zen practice and therefore the essence of enlightenment as well; to experience this presencing is to focus all of one’s energies. Hence, Dōgen says presencing is a “*kōan*.” It is a “*kōan*” in two senses. First, it is a situation that cannot be fathomed through discursive thinking (so it is a “*kōan*” in the sense emphasized by the Rinzai tradition). Second, it is a “*kō-an*,” that is, a situation in which each thing presences publicly in its own appropriate way. To speak of this “*genjō-kōan*” in an adverbial sense, one can use an expression like “as-it-is” or “being such” (the correct translation for “*immo*”—often rendered inappropriately by the nominalized, metaphysical sounding word “Suchness”). In yet another way of getting at this same point, Dōgen implies (especially in his “*Buddha-nature*” fascicle) that an interrogative is both the question and the answer. If we wish to speak independently of any perspective, the proper answer to “What?” is “The what.” The proper answer to “How?” is “How.” Independent of situation, occasion, or context, nothing more can be said. For example, when I earlier asked the reader to characterize what was in front of him (a

journal article? a page with printer's ink on it? a paperweight?), the only appropriate answer independent of any context would be "the-what-is-in-front-of me," or "presencing," or "its being such as it is." To say anything more would introduce one *particular* context that makes that object meaningful. Of course, such almost tautological expressions tell us little about the nature of the world, but independent of any situational context, there is no world to talk about. These expressions refer us to the preconceptualized experience out of which we develop our idea of the world. Like Dewey, Dōgen would deny that the world is something "antecedently real."³

This then is Dōgen's basic philosophical project in *SBGZ*. He seems to develop this project first in his fascicle "*Genjōkōan*," and, importantly, in his own version of *SBGZ*, Dōgen places that fascicle in the first position. Throughout *SBGZ* Dōgen raises very basic questions about the nature of experience and our attempts to characterize and understand it. Many of the individual fascicles take up one particular topic such as Buddha-nature, (being-) time, good and evil, and so on. In almost all cases, Dōgen refers to expressions recorded in the various Buddhist classics. Each expression has to be understood in its context, every drop of meaning has to be squeezed out of the phrases before Dōgen continues. Often this involves highly unorthodox interpretations of Chinese quotations, but Dōgen would maintain that he is only discovering deeper meanings of terms that were already implicitly there. The "argument" to which Dōgen most frequently resorts is simply an appeal to the reader's own experience. Of course, the points Dōgen makes will be most clear to the reader who is deeply involved in Zen meditative practice, but this is not because the practice gives the reader something extra (such as transcendent experience, for example). Rather the meditative experience in its purely prereflective form is what is most fundamental in *all* experience. It is, in fact, the pure experience of presencing. Therefore, the Zen practitioner is acutely aware of just how experience takes shape prereflectively, of how context becomes formulated, of how we can let the context express itself or how we can introduce personal self-delusions into our reflections. Thus, through Dōgen's analysis and through our use of the *zazen* experience as a touchstone, we can discover the suppositions hidden within our philosophical understanding of the world, see how those suppositions arise and thereby evaluate whether they are valid or the products of delusion. This is the ultimate justification for Dōgen's emphasis on "just sitting" (*shikantaza*^w).

THE FIRST GENERATION OF DŌGEN SCHOLARSHIP IN ENGLISH

English translations and commentaries dealing with Dōgen's *SBGZ* have been rather slow in developing, especially if we compare them with the output of materials dealing with Chinese Ch'an Buddhism or the Japanese Rinzai tradition. The progenitors of the recent works which will occupy our main interest deserve some mention and evaluation here. In order of appearance, the two

major ground-breaking efforts were Masunaga's *Soto Approach* and Kennett's *Selling Water*. We will also consider here the brief treatments in Dumoulin's *History* and Kapleau's *Three Pillars*. An important point to bear in mind here is that three of these pioneers in Dōgen studies were primarily interested in Zen practice. Kennett and Kapleau were (and are) practicing Zen masters, while Masunaga is a devout Sōtō scholar, who is seriously interested in the transmission of Sōtō Zen to the West. Hence, the first introduction of Dōgen to the West was primarily a nonphilosophical one and, of the three figures just mentioned, only Masunaga could be classified as having any "scholarly" interest at all. Let us begin with a discussion of his book.

Masunaga explicitly states that Dōgen's intellectual depth is an antidote to claims that Zen and philosophy are mutually exclusive. On the second page of his Preface he writes: "His [Dōgen's] philosophic depth should help dispel the often-encountered Western view that Zen is mysticism." The book begins with an outline of some of the historical and doctrinal background of Zen Buddhism. Much of this material has been superseded by Dumoulin's more extensive treatment and since Masunaga's book is out-of-print, there is little point here in discussing what issues require further elaboration or clarification.

Here we are most interested in Masunaga's contributions to our understanding of Dōgen. After the introductory material, Masunaga includes translations of some of Dōgen's writings including four fascicles belonging to the larger (official Sōtō sect) edition of *SBGZ*, namely, "Uji," "Shōji," "Genjōkōan" and "Bendōwa." Also of noteworthy importance is a chapter concerning Dōgen's understanding of time. In that chapter Masunaga tries to make his claim for Dōgen's philosophical profundity, therein making some passing comparisons with Heidegger, Bergson, and Augustine. Although his exposition lacks depth in some respects, it does serve at least as a hint to the philosophical riches to be found in Dōgen's *SBGZ*. Masunaga's explanation is clear and straightforward and, copious English misspellings and typographical errors notwithstanding, it is quite intelligible even to a reader unfamiliar with the literature. Masunaga's book was an important first step not only in Dōgen studies, but in Zen studies in general, since it was a signal to Western readers that Zen Buddhism *does* have an intellectual fabric and that all the prevalent discussion of "nothingness" so popular at the time was as if people were trying to discuss the holes in a piece of lace while ignoring the surrounding threads that give that emptiness a "place."

As for Masunaga's translations, they are often somewhat mechanical and they certainly lack grace and idiomatic rhythm. It seems that Masunaga's intention is to make a straightforward, but not literal, translation. That is to say, he simply seeks to render Dōgen's thought directly into English while omitting the specialized vocabulary of the original. On these terms, he succeeds well enough, especially when we take into consideration the fact that he had virtually no previous translations to which he could refer. In general, though,

we would have to say that his pioneering work has been superseded by those who followed him. This, I suspect, would make Masunaga himself quite pleased since it vindicates his early appraisal of the potential interest in Dōgen among Western readers.

Since Kennett's book has recently been reissued, it has more than simple historical interest to us here. In all, Kennett translates ten fascicles of Dōgen's writings plus "*Shushōgi*," a compilation of quotations from *SBGZ* compiled in the nineteenth century as guidelines for the Sōtō Zen laity. Although her three-page introduction implies that all eleven selections are from *SBGZ*, only four in fact are. Interestingly, these four are precisely the same four included by Masunaga so that we can probably assume that Kennett took advantage of the presence of the previous translation work. It might be noted as well that Masunaga had also translated "*Shushōgi*." The other selections in Kennett are writings that deal mainly with the rules and regulations of monastic life or with practical advice about living the Zen way. Again, as in the case with Masunaga, we are here interested primarily in the *SBGZ* selections since they have the most philosophical value.

As we might expect from a translator whose native language is English, Kennett's translations read much more smoothly than do Masunaga's. This readability is further enhanced by the fact that line-for-line literalness is not even attempted. As Kennett herself advises us (p. 86), she is primarily interested in communicating the spirit, not the letter, of Dōgen's writings. This does not mean that she will take liberties with the text but only that she will simultaneously interpret as well as translate. It also seems to me that Kennett-roshi did not immerse herself in the extensive Dōgen scholarship available to her in Japanese, but the point, I take it, is that she will take advantage of her unique insight as a Zen master. The end result is that sometimes she does, as I see it, miss the point of a particular reference that Dōgen makes or she will overlook a philosophically important distinction in deference to a point that has more relevance to practice. Yet, sometimes a particularly abstruse passage comes to life under her insight; I would not say that her translations are always faithful to the letter of the text, but they are sometimes very helpful in reminding us to look at the forest as well as the trees. After all, the practical side of Dōgen is always there in the text alongside the philosophy. Without having to be encumbered by scholarly apparatus, Kennett is free to keep her focus on the spiritual point of *SBGZ*, namely, that we must reencounter the very ground of our own experiencing process. However inadequate they may be from a strictly scholarly perspective, Kennett's translations do suggest some of the vitality and poignancy of the original. That is a contribution that we must not undervalue.

In his *History*, Dumoulin has a chapter devoted to a study of the place of Dōgen in the development of Zen Buddhism. In accordance with the title of his book, Dumoulin is primarily interested in historical issues and about half

of the chapter on Dōgen deals with biographical information. In the second part of the chapter, Dumoulin makes some observations about Dōgen's philosophical perspective, displaying therein a sound general knowledge of some of Dōgen's more important ideas. My only criticism of Dumoulin's treatment is in terms of his choice of words such as "Dōgen's metaphysics," "transcendence," and "monism." As I have tried to indicate at the outset of this review, I feel the thrust of Dōgen's thought is precisely *against* such a metaphysical understanding of Zen. Despite this weakness, Dumoulin's account was successful in reaffirming the fact that, in the case of Dōgen at least, Zen Buddhism and philosophy are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In Kapleau's book, we find a brief mention of Dōgen and a translation of part of the *SBGZ* fascicle, "*Uji*" ("Being-Time"). Though Kapleau himself makes no additional contribution to the Dōgen scholarship available already at that time, his recognition of Dōgen's intellectual profundity was important historically in making Dōgen's name at least better known to Westerners interested in Zen. The translation itself is very clear, but the text and notes make no attempt at reflecting any of the philosophical nuance of the original.

RECENT TRANSLATIONS OF *SBGZ*

First let us consider the Nishiyama/Stevens translation. That someone is finally attempting to translate the complete *SBGZ* is indeed a good sign for the future of Dōgen studies in the West. Unfortunately, I doubt that this particular translation will stand for a long time. Part of the problem with this book is that its editorial sloppiness will scare off anyone who demands minimal scholarly standards. For example, two sentences after the writers advise us that they will use the diacritical marks (p. xxii), they make their first mistake: having *prajña* for *prañā*. On the same page, they make their first mistake with a Japanese romanization, leaving the macron off of *kū*^z. The compilers of this volume also have a proclivity for getting Dōgen scholars' names wrong, even when the correct readings of the names are given in the back page of the books cited. Hence, in the Acknowledgments we find Dōshu Okubō for Ōkubo Dōshū, Soichi Nakamura for Sōichi Nakamura, Benyu Masutani for Fumio Masutani, and Kenchin Takahashi for Masanobu Takahashi. Another disturbing editorial problem is hinted at in this excerpt from the Translators' Note (p. xxii):

Consequently, while much of this translation follows the original text quite closely, there is some paraphrase or interpretation of certain passages in order to make it intelligible to western readers.

In practice this means that some sentences of *SBGZ* are skipped entirely or paragraphs are "paraphrased" into single sentences without any indication by means of ellipses, brackets, asterisks, or footnotes. The translators seem to feel this is justified since it follows the style of Japanese *gendaiyaku*^{aa} (transla-

tions of classical texts into modern Japanese), but they forget that the *gendaiyaku* reader usually has the original text in front of him so he *knows* what the modern rendering is attempting to translate or paraphrase. Furthermore, the criterion for determining what might be “unintelligible to western readers” is left unstated. Certainly, it is not only the presence of Buddhist terms or references to historical facts. “Paraphrasing” seems to enter in whenever there are complex passages requiring a sensitivity to the subtleties of Dōgen’s thought. I suspect the translators were often influenced by their own bewilderment as well as by their compassion for the Western reader.

Since it is obviously not a scholarly work, how well does Nishiyama/Stevens serve the general reader? The book receives very high marks for readability and even the least experienced reader of Zen materials should be able to follow at least some of the main drift of the various fascicles. The price paid for this premium on readability is lack of nuance, both linguistic and philosophical. Footnotes are scanty and are used mainly for giving the dates of historical figures. Difficult passages are interpreted in the most straightforward way possible and we seldom find the insightful interpretative renderings that occasionally show up in Kennett’s translation, for example. Hence, the primary value of Nishiyama/Stevens is its potential *completeness*: we simply have no other alternative if we wish a translation of the entire *SBGZ*.

Though it is also intended for the general Western audience, Yokoi’s book is of a decidedly different species. He seems to respect the intelligence of that audience, and he tries to offer it the basic tools needed in order to see below the surface of Dōgen’s writings. The first chapter is a very brief treatment of Japanese Buddhism in the pre-Kamakura period. There are some real problems with this account (Kūkai is treated much too cavalierly, for example), but at least there is the attempt to introduce the readers to the historical context of Dōgen’s Buddhist thought. In the next chapter, there is a short discussion of Dōgen’s life and an attempt to state some of the general themes in Dōgen’s writings. Yokoi lists eleven dichotomies (for example, self/others, practice/enlightenment, time/being) that Dōgen’s thought tries to overcome and, as far as it goes, it might be of some help to the new reader of Dōgen. Naturally, I would have preferred some clearer characterization of the underlying philosophical structure of *SBGZ*, but this would be to ask Yokoi to venture into an area in which he has no expertise. Yokoi also supplies the reader with an eighteen-page glossary (Kennett’s book also has a glossary, I might add), but there is neither a bibliography nor an index. The glossary is helpful, including terms, persons, places, and names of texts. This convenient listing allows Yokoi to keep footnotes to a minimum while still supplying the aids to the reader who needs them. Although there are a few technical problems in some entries, the glossary strikes me as being generally useful for the intended audience. A couple of points are important enough to merit discussion here, however. For “*dharma*” the glossary only supplies the meaning of “standard”

or “universal norm or law.” Yokoi’s translation also follows this limited interpretation of the meaning of “*dharma*.” As I have noted earlier, however, Dōgen often uses the term to mean either “teaching” or “thing-as-experienced.” This specific misinterpretation also points to another major limitation of the glossary, namely, the terms are defined according to their general Buddhist meaning and Yokoi does not make mention of Dōgen’s own particular interpretation. To take the clearest example, “Buddha-nature” is defined as “the potential to realize enlightenment innate in all things,” yet as Yokoi must know, Dōgen explicitly denies this interpretation (in his “Buddha-nature” fascicle) and claims that all of being *is* Buddha-nature; Buddha-nature, for Dōgen, is not something that beings *have*. Hence, I think the glossary could have been more useful and less misleading if it had also included references to Dōgen’s own view on the meaning of certain key terms.

How good is Yokoi’s translation? Basically, I feel that it is as readable as Nishiyama/Stevens but it also reveals more subtlety in the translation of nuance. As far as I could tell in a cursory check, Yokoi does not delete or paraphrase the original in the manner followed by Nishiyama/Stevens. This does not mean that Yokoi’s is a literal translation, however. Often he attempts to convey the spirit rather than the letter of the original, but he usually stays within the bounds of interpretative license. Yokoi does tend to strip Dōgen of much of the more technical vocabulary, but he does so in a way that would seem beneficial to the novice reader of such texts. The more serious or more trained student of Buddhist thought, however, might miss some of the critical nuances that are lost in such a translation. Yokoi is not a Dōgen scholar nor even a Buddhist scholar *per se*, but he does have some sensitivity to what Dōgen is doing and he communicates very well the understanding that he does bring to the text. My deepest regret about Yokoi’s translation is in his selection of texts. The selections are divided into two parts. The first group consist of three non-*SBGZ* texts, all of which are primarily of practical rather than philosophical import: *Fukanzazengi*^k, *Gakudōyōjinshū*^{bb}, and *Shushōgi*^y. The second group is the so-called “Twelve-Fascicle *SBGZ*.” Written shortly before Dōgen’s death, some of these fascicles, in fact, received their final editing by Dōgen’s disciple, Ejō. Ejō was also the compiler of *SBGZ Zuimonki*^{cc} (“Occasional Lecture Notes on *SBGZ*”), a series of conversations between Dōgen and his followers (translated as *A Primer of Sōtō Zen* by Masunaga, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971). Like the *Zuimonki* text, these twelve fascicles of *SBGZ* are practically oriented, emphasizing the proper attitudes and behavior one should display in living the Zen life. These fascicles lack the intellectual power and philosophical depth of Dōgen’s most productive period which started with the writing of “*Genjōkōan*” in 1233 and gradually tapered off around 1244–1245. I think it is rather misleading to claim, as Yokoi does on p. 67, that the last chapters of *SBGZ* to be written represent the “fruition of Dōgen’s thought”; certainly, they are not the fruition of his *philosophical*

thought. Because of Yokoi's selection of texts, I am hesitant to recommend his book as a student's first introduction to Dōgen. To have an introduction to Dōgen that does not cover the "*Genjōkōan*" fascicle of *SBGZ*, for example, seems to me a little too idiosyncratic. As a supplement for the general reader who has already read, say, Kennett or Masunaga, the book has much to recommend it, however.

If one is seriously interested in studying Dōgen's thought and if one is limited to English translations of his writings, the work of Waddell/Abe will be greatly appreciated. Over the past few years, Norman Waddell and Abe Masao have been publishing careful translations in the *Eastern Buddhist*, utilizing commentarial notes that make it possible for the reader to study, not merely read, Dōgen in translation. These translations have all the appropriate signs of scholarship: terms are explained in notes and the original Japanese or Sanskrit is given for problematic passages. The text is carefully followed throughout. I would basically classify the translation as "conservative" in nature, that is, in difficult sections, Waddell/Abe usually tend to agree with the most traditional commentaries and the more prominent *gendaiyaku*. Occasionally, they will argue in a footnote that one of the traditional interpretations is questionable, but usually they respect the scholarship that has preceded them. The English is readable, but like any but the most brilliant of scholarly translations, a little heavy going at times. I suspect that most readers can only read through the translation of the text with any ease after they have gone over it a few times, digesting the import of the various notes. The translators set out to make Dōgen available to the non-Japanese reading public; they do not try to make Dōgen any easier to read in English than he is in the original.

Although in any given paragraph quibbles might be made about this or that aspect of the translation, I basically find the Waddell/Abe translations to be excellent. I have only three suggestions for improvement. First, the translators could have taken more of a stand on the general connections among the ideas found in the various fascicles. For example, how do they view the apparent discrepancy between the somewhat static language of "*Ikka Myōju*^{dd}" and the dynamic language of "*Zenki*^{ee}"? Abe has, in fact, done this type of holistic interpretation in one instance, namely, in regard to the "Buddha-nature" fascicle of *SBGZ*. Before publishing their translation of that fascicle, Abe wrote an article about the general relationship between ideas found therein and in other fascicles of *SBGZ* (see *Eastern Buddhist* IV:1, "Dōgen on Buddha Nature"). Perhaps more of this type of commentary could be included in the introductions to the various translations.

My second suggestion is that the translators be a little more careful in distinguishing whether an awkwardness in the English is really necessary to communicating the meaning of the original. For example, their translation of "*Bendōwa*" begins:

Buddha-tathāgatas all have a wonderful means, which is unexcelled and

free from human agency, for transmitting the wondrous Dharma from one to another without alteration and realizing supreme and complete awakening. That it is only transmitted without deviation from buddha to buddha is due to the *jijuyū samādhi*, which is its touchstone.

The scholarly apparatus here also demands seven footnotes for this passage. Keeping their basic technical terminology for the sake of comparison, the passage might have been translated as follows:

Having directly transmitted to each other the subtle *dharma*, all Buddha-tathāgatas authenticate perfect enlightenment. Here is the wondrous art of *wu-wei*. Being passed [directly] from Buddha to Buddha, this [transmission] is undistorted, i.e., *jijuyū samādhi* itself is the touchstone.

Though the two translations differ only slightly in meaning, there is, I feel, an improvement in fluidity and perhaps even in clarity. Fortunately, Waddell/Abe only seldom stumble in this way and I might add that their more recent translations have tended to overcome such difficulties. Their most recent effort, “Buddha-nature,” must have been the most challenging for them since the whole fascicle bears on certain nuances within the differences between the original Chinese scriptural passages and Dōgen’s renderings of them into Japanese. The sensitive scholarship of Waddell/Abe shines through very well here.

My third suggestion is that Waddell and Abe should be wary of the “over-metaphysicalization” of Dōgen’s language. I will illustrate my point by making reference to the following list of terms from their translation of “*Genjōkōan*”:

<i>Original Term</i>	<i>Waddell/Abe</i>
genjō	manifesting
meigo ^{ff}	illusion/enlightenment
genjōkōan	manifestation of absolute reality

After reading several of the Waddell/Abe translations, a student of mine once wrote: “the person then overcomes illusion and experiences directly the manifestation of absolute reality.” I demetaphysicalized the student’s comment on Dōgen by writing above his statement: “the person then overcomes his delusion and experiences directly the presencing of things-as-they-are.” My point is that Dōgen does not find any illusion in the world; the problem is our own self-delusion. There is no “absolute” reality; there is only what is. There is nothing behind this world that is waiting to be manifested; there is just the presencing of what-is. Although Waddell/Abe make it clear in their notes that Dōgen does not hold to any theory of absolute, as opposed to relative, reality, the language of the translation can still be misleading. Too often, in my opinion, Waddell/Abe resort to terms that inevitably conjure up metaphysical theories in Western readers, terms like “reality,” “transcends,” and “absolute.” Very often, if not always, a more concrete term can be used which would better capture Dōgen’s meaning.

With these suggestions noted, I would like to restate my admiration for the Waddell/Abe translations. They have indicated that they intend to publish their translations in book form someday. That will be a fortunate day in the further development of Dōgen scholarship in English.

THE FIRST BOOK-LENGTH COMMENTARY ON DŌGEN

Summarizing the bulk of Japanese scholarship on Dōgen to a Western audience is not an easy task, but Kim in his *Dōgen* has carried it out very well; in many respects, unbelievably well. After the introductory preliminaries, the book has four major parts. First, there is a fifty-page biographical sketch of Dōgen (chapter 2). Next, there is a discussion of Dōgen's key doctrines (chapters 3 and 4). The final part of the text per se (chapter 5) is a discussion of the way those doctrines were interwoven into the structure of the monastic discipline that has evolved into Sōtō Zen. In the back of the book is a rich set of reference materials: a chronological outline of Dōgen's life, a list of Dōgen's major writings with brief descriptive notes of their contents, a list of the fascicles of *SBGZ* in romanized Japanese and in English translation, forty pages of footnotes to the text, a bibliography (especially good for listing the major Japanese works) and a functional index. In many respects, the book can serve as a reference work as well as a commentary to be read from cover to cover. Regrettably, although Kim refers throughout to a vast array of Japanese terms, there are no characters either in the text or in the back of the book. Other than the ideal situation of having the characters for *each* term, it might have been most helpful to have a glossary in the reference section with a listing of, for example, the hundred most important terms. This list would also help the novice reader in Dōgen to see which terms are most important.

One problem in using Kim's point-by-point approach in explicating Dōgen's thought is that one might produce a book that is a goldmine in detail but poor in overall interpretation or in posing a clear thesis. Kim only partially succeeds in avoiding this problem. He succeeds insofar as we get a very definite sense of Dōgen as a historical figure committed to transmitting a foreign religious tradition to his own land. We are presented with a convincing historical character study that explains why a person such as Dōgen, capable of writing with stunning philosophical acumen, might also spend so much time and effort in describing the proper modes of conduct in monastic life (including what the cook should do with the water after using it to wash the rice and what should and should not be done while waiting one's turn in the latrine). Zen Buddhism is a way of life, and its full picture includes both behavioral and intellectual discipline in the atmosphere of overall harmony. The problem is that in Kim's book we get a clear portrait of Dōgen the Zen master, the founder of Sōtō Zen, only at the expense of getting just an outline (and sometimes a blurry outline) of Dōgen the thinker. My point is not to belittle what Kim has done but only to clarify the main focus of his project.

Nor do I want to leave the impression that Kim's approach is nonphilosophical in all respects. He deals with many of Dogen's key concepts in a very perceptive way. On many points discussed in chapters 3 and 4, Kim's analysis shows a good sense for what is of philosophical interest, but my uneasiness with Kim's work as a presentation of Dōgen's philosophy is operative on two levels.

First, Kim does not really come to grips with Dōgen's overall philosophical *project* in the sense outlined earlier in this review. Too often the emphasis is on particular points rather than the relationship between the various points. When Kim does address the issue of an overall thematic interpretation, he offers cryptic characterizations such as the one in the title, "mystical realist." Kim's comments on what this species of thinker might be are not helpful. The lingering impression is that Kim means something more like "religious realist" or "contemplative realist." This one example typifies Kim's own blurriness about the precise sense in which Dōgen is philosophical.

Second, I occasionally disagree with some of the details of Kim's treatment of specific ideas in Dōgen, but those disagreements are often points of controversy within Japanese scholarship itself. Hence, my criticisms are in no way aimed at the thoroughness of Kim's research. Rather, I feel that sometimes Kim has not given an interpretation that is as philosophically satisfying as another might be, especially when we keep an eye on that overall philosophical "project" of *SBGZ* that we have already discussed. Two specific points of disagreement involve Kim's treatment of Dōgen's idea of time and his view of ethics.

In respect to Dōgen's view of time, the problem bears essentially on the relationships among three terms: "*uji*" (Kim: "existence-time"; Kasulis: "being-time), "*nikon*^{gg}" (Kim: "absolute now"; Kasulis: "right-now" or "just-now") and "*kyōryaku*^{hh}" (Kim: "continuity" or "dynamism"; Kasulis: "ranging"). Kim discusses "*uji*" first and makes the universally agreed upon point that Dōgen insists upon the ultimate inseparability between beings (Kim: "existence") and times (Kim: "time"). That is, we do not experience "time" but rather "temporal things." The difficulty arises within the interpretation of the other two terms. If I understand Kim's view correctly, it is that Dōgen makes the *nikon* (Kim's metaphysical sounding "absolute now") primary and that his root idea of time, therefore, is static. An overlay of dynamism (*kyōryaku*) is placed on this so that we get a picture of an absolute, present moment discontinuous with other moments but which is dynamic within its own (experiential?) boundaries. My own interpretation would argue along different lines. "*Uji*" ("being-time") is the root level characterization of experience before it has been reflectively analyzed into parts or perspectively viewed from one's "situation." Rather than making any primacy claim between *nikon* ("right-now") and *kyōryaku* ("ranging"), Dōgen sees the two as interdependent yet mutually exclusive, that is, they represent two different ways of reflecting on the nature of lived time. The first, the "right-now"

characterization, is adequate for capturing the fundamental sense of “being-time” in which what-is is “now.” This supports the traditional Zen emphasis on the presently experienced “moment”: the Zen practitioner immerses himself in the experience as given without letting it be colored by expectations or past conditioning. This is only half the story of *uji*, however. From another perspective, time presents the profile of “ranging” or “flowing.” As Kim points out, this is not simply a temporal movement from past to present to future; Dōgen explicitly states that future ranges into past, as well as past into present and present into present. I see this as time’s coming to bear on and within experience, that is, the now is not isolated (as “right now” implies) but it is the axis of the confluence of events. While the concept of “moment” is a further, secondary reflection on “right-now,” the secondary reflections on “ranging” might include eschatological time in one direction and historicity in the other. In comparison with Kim’s interpretation, this view has the advantage of being able to account both for the emphasis on the “now” in Zen as well as for the acceptance of karmic, moral continuity (for Dōgen’s discussion of the latter, see, for example, his fascicle *SBGZ* “*Jinshin’inga*”ⁱⁱ, (“Deep Faith in Cause and Effect”).

One further example of the type of disagreement I have in the detail of Kim’s presentation is his treatment of the moral dimension of Dōgen’s writings. In particular, Kim’s treatment of the *SBGZ* “*Shoakumakusa*”^{jj} fascicle is incomplete. This is partly, I think, because Kim treats it in his chapter on “monastic asceticism” (chapter 5) rather than in the more doctrinal and philosophical discussions of chapters 3 and 4.⁴ The key issue, which is not discussed by Kim, is that Dōgen claims the phrase “*shoakumakusa*” can be understood in different ways. When first heard, it tends to assume the force of an imperative (“do no evil”); later it has the force of an indicative description (“[The state of mind is such that] no evil is produced”); finally, it is seen to be partially redundant and one arrives at a still more pithy description of true mind, namely, “nonproduction.” The manner in which one interpretation of the phrase leads to another is too complex to explicate here, but the remarkable point of Dōgen’s analysis is that each interpretation is, when made, *true*. Furthermore, there is no claim here about levels of truth, that is, later interpretations are not “higher” truths. Dōgen maintains that such traditional phrases as “*shoakumakusa*” are authentic “expressions” (*dōtoku*) that structure one’s discipline. Since each interpretation at the time of its occurrence is the total involvement of the person—the full realization of what he is at that time, in that situation—each interpretation is fully “true.” This is central to Dōgen’s philosophical framework: the question is never answered; the questioning process itself (what does that mean? what am I?) is the “answer.” Since enlightenment is the living through of the personal questioning, Dōgen has again shown us that cultivation (practice) is not separate from authentication (realization). My criticism against Kim is simply that he does not show how

Dōgen's view of good and evil is again at the heart of the philosophical project to which I keep referring. It is one thing to discuss the practical aspect of Dōgen's ideas; it is another matter to reduce, as Kim does in this one instance, a philosophical theory to a comment on "monastic asceticism."

The final point about Kim's book that I would like to make is to commend him for the rich selection of excerpts from *SBGZ* sprinkled throughout his book. In general the translations are accurate and can be trusted. The only danger here is the same danger encountered whenever one excerpts passages out of context, that is, the reader may be misled by a particular quote precisely because the context is not given. Kim tries to reduce the possibility of this by discussing much of *SBGZ* on a fascicle by fascicle basis. This helps the contextual problem for the translated excerpts but, of course, it exacerbates the problem of Kim's lack of an overall, thematic interpretation of Dōgen's philosophical project.

CONCLUSION

Although there is still a need for a more philosophical treatment of Dōgen, much progress in Dōgen studies has been made in recent years. English readers now have available to them a couple of collected selections from *SBGZ*, including the very scholarly approach of Waddell/Abe. For the more serious student of Dōgen's Zen, there is also the excellent introduction to Dōgen's thought supplied through the careful scholarship of Hee-jin Kim. In Kim's book, the student can find not only the wisdom of Dōgen himself, but also a hint at the rich scholarship in Japan that has made Dōgen so influential in modern-day Japanese philosophy.

NOTES

1. In regard to the perlocutionary force of Zen statements, see Henry Rosemont, Jr., "The Meaning Is the Use: *Kōan* and *Mondō* as Linguistic Tools of the Zen Masters," *Philosophy East and West* 20, no. 2 (April, 1970).

2. In the materials reviewed, approach (a) is represented by Kennett and Kapleau, (b) by Dumoulin and Kim (chapter 2) and (c) by Kim (in chapters 3 and 4).

3. See John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), pp. 16–17. For further comparisons between Zen Buddhism and pragmatism, see Van Meter Ames, "Zen and Pragmatism," *Philosophy East and West* 4, no. 1 (April, 1954) and "Zen and American Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 5, no. 4 (January, 1956).

4. A more philosophical appreciation of this fascicle is found in Douglas A. Fox, "Zen and ethics: Dōgen's synthesis," *Philosophy East and West* 21, no. 1 (January, 1971). Unfortunately, Fox's discussion and translations also overlook the importance of Dōgen's alternative interpretations of the phrase "*shoakumakusa*."

^a 道元希元	^j 坐禪	^s 現成公按	^{bb} 學道用心集
^b 空海	^k 普勸坐禪儀	^t 現成	^{cc} 正法眼藏隨聞記
^c 西田幾多郎	^l 辨道話	^u 公按	^{dd} 一顆明珠
^d 曹洞	^m 末法	^v 怎麼	^{ee} 全機
^e 正法眼藏	ⁿ 修	^w 只管打坐	^{ff} 迷悟
^f 和辻哲郎	^o 證	^x 生死	^{gg} 而今
^g 田辺元	^p 道周	^y 修證義	^{hh} 經歷
^h 哲学	^q 時節	^z 空	ⁱⁱ 深信因果
ⁱ 如淨	^r 有時	^{aa} 現代訳	^{jj} 諸惡莫作