

# A Treasury of Illumined Visions Zen Master Dogen's *Shobogenzo*

Translation by  
Yasuhiko Genku Kimura  
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## Being-Time *Uji*

An ancient Zen master said:

Some-time stands upon the summit peak of the highest mountain;  
Some-time moves about the bottom region of the deepest ocean;  
Some-time is the monstrosly disfigured unawakened being;  
Some-time is the gloriously transfigured awakened being;  
Some-time is the master's instrumental staff or whisk;  
Some-time is the monastery's round pillar or stone lantern;  
Some-time is this person or that person;  
Some-time is the great earth or the vast sky.

What is termed "some-time" ("being-time") signifies that time is already being and being is always time. The gloriously transfigured body of an awakened being is time; therefore it has the adornment-radiance of time, which you must study in the nowness of these twenty-four hours. The monstrosly disfigured unawakened being is also time; because it is time, it is the nowness within these twenty-four hours.

People generally do not measure the span of a day, yet they presume that it is twenty-four hours. The seeming trace left by the incessant comings and goings of time appears so self-evident that they never doubt the verisimilitude of their presumption. Not-doubting, however, is not authentic knowing. Even when they doubt this or that, their doubt is so inconsistent that the doubt in the previous moment does not correspond to the doubt in the present. Nevertheless, their doubting itself, for the moment of doubting, is time.

The Self, which is the interpenetrating array of all selves, constitutes the whole world. Behold that each and every being existing in the world is each and every time. The mutual non-obstruction of all arrayed beings is the same as the mutual non-obstruction of all arrayed times. Therefore, the resolve for awakening arises non-locally at the same time throughout the whole world; the time of awakening arises non-locally from the same mind throughout the whole world. The same is true with the practice and attainment of awakening. The self sees itself as the

interpenetrating array of all selves constituting the whole world. This is the meaning of the holistic logic that self is time.

Therefore, you must realize that not only do a myriad of phenomena exist inside the universe, but also the universe exists inside each and every phenomenon. The realization of this mutual immanency of the universe and the phenomena is where the authentic practice of awakening originates. Once this realization is achieved, a mere blade of grass becomes a single, whole cosmic phenomenon, which means that meeting a phenomenon or seeing a blade of grass becomes not a local experience but a non-local, cosmic experience. Since there is no time but this time of being-time, being-time is the time entire, and therefore being-a-grass or being-a-phenomenon is none other than time itself. The whole existence and the whole world exist in and as the time of all times. Think if there exists any being within the whole existence and the whole world that is excluded from this time of being-time.

However, the uninitiated, not learned in the Way of Awakening, in hearing the term “being-time,” tend to think that “sometimes” it takes the form of an unawakened being and “sometimes” it takes the form of an awakened being. This view may be likened to the metaphor of crossing a river and ascending a mountain. They think: “The mountain and the river are there, but I have left them behind, and now I am in the vermilion tower of the ruby palace. Therefore, the mountain-and-river and I are as apart and separate as are the heaven and the earth.”

Yet, the logic of time is not limited only to this kind of linear conception. When the “I” climbed the mountain and crossed the river, the “I” was there, wherefore the “I” was time and time was the “I.” The “I” already is, therefore the time also is without slipping away. If time is not of the mono-dimensionality of comings and goings, the very time of ascent in the mountain is the right-now of being-time. Even though time may retain this mono-dimensionality of comings and goings, within my own self there is this right-now of being-time. This is what being-time is. Does not that time of ascending the mountain and crossing the river enfold and unfold this time of being in the vermilion tower of the ruby palace?

The monstrously disfigured unawakened being is yesterday’s time; the gloriously transfigured awakened being is today’s time. Yet, the holistic logic of yesterday-and-today is not the logic of sequentially passing one peak after another, but that of the time when one at once enters the whole mountain range and simultaneously surveys a thousand mountain peaks. The monstrously disfigured unawakened being is right within my being-time and at once passes through the whole of my being. Although it appears to be there-and-then, it is in truth right here-and-now. In the same way, the gloriously transfigured awakened being is right within my being-time and at once passes through the whole of my being. Although it appears to be there-and-then, it is in reality right here-and-now.

Therefore, the pine tree also is time; and the bamboo also is time. Do not think of time only in its flying-away aspect. Do not conclude that the flying-away is the only property of time. If the flying-away were all there were to time, there would have to be a gap between being and time, which is contrary to the fact of reality. If a person has never heard of the holistic logic of being-time, it is because his learning has been limited only to the transilient aspect of time. In essence, each and every being in the whole universe is an interconnected individual time. Since each and every being is being-time, the “I” who thus observes is also being-time.

Being-time has the ontological functionality of holistic transilience: There is the holistic transilience from today to tomorrow; from today to yesterday; from yesterday to today; from today to today; and from tomorrow to tomorrow. This transpires because holistic transilience is the distinctive ontological functionality of time. The times of past and present do not pile up on top of one another nor line up side by side, yet each of the awakened Zen masters of the past such as Ch’ingyüan, Huang-po, Ma-tsu, Shih-t’ou is time. That is to say, since self and others are already and always time, practice and realization are also time, and entering the muddy water in order to teach sentient beings is also time.

The views held by the uninitiated and the ways in which their views originate are conditioned and therefore not the whole, unconditional truth of their own being. Both are how the whole, unconditional truth, for the time being, conditionally originates the uninitiated in their being-in-the-world. Because they are not aware that this time, this being, of here-and-now is the whole, unconditional truth of being, they erroneously presume that they are not themselves gloriously transfigured awakened beings. Yet, even the concealment of the truth that they are already in reality gloriously transfigured is itself a whole and complete bit of being-time—the fact which the unrealized should investigate thoroughly and completely.

The existence of the sequential arrangement of time in this world is the bidirectional movement of being-time in its legitimate dwelling place. Therefore, midnight is time; dawn is time; the sentient being is time; the awakened being is time. This time gives rise to a whole world at a time by becoming the monstrously disfigured and at another time by becoming the gloriously transfigured. To en-world the whole world with a whole world is to accomplish complete realization. The presence of resolve for, practice for, self-purification of, and attainment of awakening through continual transfiguration of the already transfigured is itself being, itself time. There is no other realization than complete realization that the whole of time is the whole of being. Even if there is some realization other than complete realization, the being-time half realized is the half being-time completely realized. Even what appears to be an errant mode of being is being-time. A further investigation will evince that the before-and-after of the occurrence of an errant mode of being is also the atemporal dwelling of being-time. To dwell in the legitimate dwelling place is energetically dynamic, and it is being-time. Do not think that this dynamic dwelling is nothingness or thingness, for it is neither.

When one thinks of time only in terms of its linear passage, one does not know the kind of time that does not pass. Although knowing itself is time, time is not dependent upon whether or not it is known. There is no one vested in the linear conception of time who can penetrate the being-time of the atemporal dwelling— let alone have the transcendental moment in the being-time of the atemporal dwelling. Once vested in the linear conception of time, even if one has the intellectual knowledge that the legitimate dwelling of being-time is atemporal, one does not understand that everything that exists and has existed already and always dwells in the atemporal dwelling of being-time. Even if one has only held the intellectual knowledge of this for a long time, one is bound to grope in the dark when it comes to the here-and-now realization of one's original self which dwells in the atemporal dwelling of being-time. Therefore, so long as we depend upon the linear conception of being-time held by the uninitiated, the process of spiritual purification and awakening will remain merely within the linear modality of being-time.

Free from all conceptual encasement or entanglement, being-time realizes itself right here-and-now. The heavenly gods and kings of the past, manifesting in every realm and direction, are being-time of the self-exertion of the Self of the universe right here-and-now. The innumerable creatures outside the heavenly spheres that are on the grounds and in the waters are also being-time of the self-exertion of the Self of the universe right here-and-now. The countless beings whose being-time is in the visible or invisible worlds are the pristine realization and the holistic transilience of the self-exertion of the Self of the universe. You must realize that without the holistic transilience of the self-exertion of the Self of the universe right here-and-now there would be no pristine manifestation or holistic transilience of even a single being or single entity.

Do not think that holistic transilience is like wind and rain that move east and west. The universe is neither motionless nor changeless but eternally regenerative. Holistic transilience is just like springtime: Spring has a myriad of diverse expressions that are all springtime, and this manifold diversity of springtime is holistic transilience. Know that in spring there is nothing else but spring which is the eternal regeneration of spring; and that the eternal regeneration of spring always holistically transits as springtime. Yet, holistic transilience itself is not springtime, but because it is the eternal regeneration of spring, holistic transilience realizes itself in and as springtime. Thoroughly examine what holistic transilience or eternal regeneration is. If you think of holistic transilience in terms of the objective outer world wherein transilience takes place or of the subject of transilience that moves eastward, transiting through one hundred thousand worlds and one hundred thousand epochs, you have not singleheartedly studied the Way of Awakening.

The Master Yüeh-shan Hung-tao, at the direction of the Master Shih-t'ou, went to call on the Zen Master Chiang-hsi Ta-chi, and asked, "The essential teaching of the entire Buddhist canon, through my years of scriptural studies, I understand almost completely. However, what is the meaning of (the originator of Zen/Chan Buddhism) Master Bodhidharma's coming from the

West (from India to China) without a single scripture?" Upon listening to this question, the Zen Master Ta-chi replied:

Some-times have him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes;  
Some-times not have him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes;  
Some-times it is right to have him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes;  
Some-times it is not right to have him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes.

Hearing these words, Yüeh-shan attained great awakening, and said to Ta-chi, "When I was with Shih-t'ou, I was like a mosquito trying to bite an iron cow!"

What Ta-chi expresses above is different from the expressions of all the others before him. The eyebrows and the eyes must indeed be the mountains and the seas, because the mountains and the seas are the eyebrows and the eyes. Both are being-time and self-exertion of the Self of the universe here-and-now. In "having him raise his eyebrows," we ought to see the mountains in their height; in "having him blink his eyes," we ought to see the seas in their depth. That "it is right to have him" makes the "having" familiar to "him," while "he" is induced by the "having" to be one with it. However, that "it is not right to have him" does not mean not-having him, nor does having him mean that "it is not right to have him." These are all instances of being-time.

The mountain is time; the sea is time. If they were not time, there would be no mountain, no sea. Do not think that there is no time in the right now of the mountain and the sea. If time collapses, the mountain and the sea will also collapse. If time does not collapse, nor will the mountain or the sea. Because of the same holistic logic of time, (in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha) there arose the morning star (occasioning his awakening), the unfolding of light (evinced his awakening), the lighting-up of the eye (signifying the spread of his teaching), and the gentle rotation of the lotus flower (symbolizing the transmission of his awakening). These are all time-as-such; without time none of them would have ever come to be.

The Zen Master Kuei-hsing of the Yeh district is a rightful successor of the Zen Master Lin-chi and the legitimate transmitter of the Zen Master Shou-shan. One time, holding forth before his congregation, he said:

Some-times the meaning reaches but not the expression;  
Some-times the expression reaches but not the meaning;  
Some-times both the meaning and the expression reach;  
Some-times neither the meaning nor the expression reaches.

Meaning and expression are both being-time. Reaching and not-reaching are both being-time. Even if the time of reaching has not yet risen, the time of not-reaching has already risen. Meaning is the donkey; expression is the horse. The fast-running horse is the expression already reached; the slow-walking donkey is the meaning not left. Reaching is not the same as coming;

not-reaching is not the same as not-coming. This is how being-time is. Reaching becomes hindered not by not-reaching but by reaching; not-reaching becomes hindered not by reaching but by not-reaching. Meaning enfolds itself and thereby unfolds itself. Expression enfolds itself and thereby unfolds itself. Enfoldment enfolds itself and thereby unfolds itself. Enfoldment enfolds enfoldment. This is time. Although the common sense dictates that enfolding means enfolding of something else, in truth there is no enfolding that enfolds something else other than itself. Therefore, when I come out to meet someone, it is the “I” meeting someone, someone meeting someone, the “I” meeting the “I,” and coming-out meeting coming-out. Without time none of these would occur. Also, meaning is time that is realizing truth-as-reality; expression is time that is opening the gateway of transformation. Reaching is the time of liberation—of body-mind-casting-off. Not-reaching is the time of freedom—of being-one-with-yet-detached-from-it. Therefore, you must thoroughly examine being-time, and intently practice being-time. The past Zen masters have thus spoken, but is there anything further that needs to be said? Let me state the following:

Meaning-expression half reaching is being-time;

Meaning-expression half not-reaching is being-time.

You must further inquire into the following:

Having him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes is half being-time;

Having him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes is mistaken being-time;

Not having him raise his eyebrows and blink his eyes is doubly mistaken being-time. Thus, coming to learn and going to learn, or reaching to learn and not-reaching to learn, is the very time of being-time.

*Shobogenzo (A Treasury of Illumined Visions)*, the Twentieth Fascicle, *Uji (Being-Time)*. Composed on November 1, 1240 at Koshohorinji Temple in Fukakusa. Copied by Ejo in the summer of 1243 in Echizen Province