

# 正法眼藏

## *Shobogenzo: A Treasury of Illumined Visions*

道元禪師 (Dogen Zenji)

現成公案 (Genjo-Koan)

## Dynamic Realization of Sempiternal Truth

Translation by

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When everything in existence is viewed in the context of Buddha's Teaching (*Dharma*), there exist delusion and awakening, practice, birth and death, awakened beings and deluded beings.

When nothing in existence is seen to have any self-entity, there exists no delusion or awakening, no awakened or deluded beings, no birth or death.

Since Buddha's Way (*Dao*) categorically transcends the dichotomy of plenitude (affirmation of everything) and paucity (affirmation of nothing), there is birth-death, delusion-awakening, and deluded being-awakened being (affirmation of affirmations).

Yet, flowers fall in like and weeds grow in dislike.

To bring the self to the realization of the whole is delusion; to let the whole come to realize the self is awakening. To be awakened of delusion is to be an awakened being; to be deluded of awakening is to be a deluded being. There are awakened beings who are awakened beyond awakening; there are deluded beings who are deluded within delusion.

When the awakened beings are authentically awakened, they are never self-conscious of their awakening. Yet, they are the living proof of the awakened consciousness, which they continuously manifest in and through their presence.

For the awakened self, seeing forms or hearing sounds is always with one's whole body-mind. The self intimately apperceives them, but that apperception is unlike reflecting an image on the mirror or the moon in the water. There is no distance between the forms or sounds and the subject that sees or hears them. The experience of seeing or hearing completely disappears into the forms or sounds that alone exist, and the forms or sounds completely disappear into the experience that alone exists.

To learn the way of awakening (*Dao of Buddha*) is to learn the self. To learn the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is the whole being realized. The whole being realized is to let the body-mind of the self and that of the other cast off. Further, the trace of the awakening ceases. Then, the traceless awakening illimitably advances forth.

When one first begins one's search for the Real (*Dharma*), one is far removed from the realm of the Real. When one realizes that the Real is already within, while allowing the Real to unfold from within, one becomes at once the authentic original being.

When one rides in a riverboat, if one looks only at the riverbank, one will fall into an illusion that the riverbank is moving. As one looks closely at the boat, one will realize that it is the boat that is moving. Similarly, if one tries to apprehend the universe only through one's relative, object-oriented consciousness, one will misapprehend one's mind and nature to be something permanent. However, if one turns the light of awareness upon the self towards the source of awareness itself, one will realize that nothing objective in the universe, including your objective self, is the Self.

Firewood turns to ashes and never returns to firewood. However, you should not view the ashes as after and the firewood as before. Know that firewood abides in and as the dimensionality of firewood within which there is a before and there is an after. Although there is a before and there is an after, both are utterly discontinuous with each other. As well, ashes abide in and as the dimensionality of ashes within which there is an after and a before. As firewood, after turning to ashes, never returns to the same firewood, so does the human being, after dying, never return to the same life. Yet, not to state that life becomes death is part of the immutable principles in the teaching of the Buddhas. Hence, life is called "unborn." Not to state that death becomes life is also part of the immutable principles in the teaching of the Buddhas. Thus, death is called "undying." Life is a temporary dimensionality; death is a temporary dimensionality. They are like winter and spring: we do not think that winter becomes spring, nor do we say that spring becomes summer.

How one obtains spiritual awakening is akin to how the moon rests in the water. The moon does not become wet, nor does the water become broken. Even though the light may be vast and expansive, it still rests in a tiny droplet of water. The whole moon or the entire firmament rests in a dewdrop on a leaf of grass or in a single droplet of water. That awakening does not rupture people is like the moon not piercing the water. That people do not obstruct awakening is like the water not obstructing the moon. The depth of reflection is proportional to the height of the light in the firmament. The length of time in which the light is reflected measures the magnitude of the drops of water and surveys the expanse of the moon and the firmament.

When the Truth (*Dharma*) has not yet fully penetrated one's being, one feels as if one were already filled with it. But, if one's being were indeed suffused with the Truth, one would recognize that one's realization was as yet insufficient. For instance, when you sail into the ocean in a ship where no mountains are seen and look in all four directions, the ocean looks only round and does not look in any other way. Yet, the ocean is neither just round nor just square. The remaining qualities of the ocean are simply inexhaustible. It may look like a palace or it may look like an ornament to other kinds of creatures. Only to the extent our eyes can behold the ocean, only for the time being does it look round.

As this is so with the ocean so it is also with all things in and of the universe. Both in the realms of *samsara* and *nirvana*, everything that we experience has manifold qualities and facets, which we can see and know only to the extent that the power of our understanding can attain. If we want to learn the especial ways of being of all things, we must know that there are as yet unseen worlds in all four directions, and that beyond seeming roundness or squareness, the qualities which the oceans and mountains possess are utterly limitless. This applies not only to the large, surrounding world of mountains and oceans but also to the small, immediate world of right here-now, of a single droplet.

As a fish travels through the water, there is no end to the water, no matter how far it travels. As a bird flies in the sky, there is no limit to the sky, no matter how far it flies. Thus, neither the fish nor the bird has ever been apart from the water or the sky. When the need is great the use is great, and when the requirement is small the utility is small. Therefore, wherever they are, they always reach the furthest bound of the moment, and explore the whole

distance of the moment. Yet, if the bird leaves the sky, it will perish instantly, or if the fish leaves the water, it will perish instantly. Therefore, know that the water constitutes life; know that the sky constitutes life. Further, a bird constitutes life; a fish constitutes life. Also, life constitutes a bird; life constitutes a fish. There needs to be further progress in your understanding concerning this matter, however. For, there is realization and recognition beyond understanding. This is how living beings in the realms of *nirvana* and *samsara* live in total at-one-ment with their worlds.

However, if there were a bird or a fish that wanted to travel the sky or the water only after it knew the limit of the sky or the water, it could never find the way or the place in the sky or the water. When you find the Place that is beyond space, your life will accordingly become a Dynamic Realization of the Sempiternal Truth, realized by the Buddhas. When you find the Way beyond time, your life will accordingly become a Dynamic Realization of the Sempiternal Truth.

This Way, or this Place, is neither large nor small, neither self nor the other, neither existing from the past nor arising from the present, and precisely for this reason, it is what it is. Therefore, when you practice the Way of the Buddhas, the process is that of “learning one principle, mastering that principle” or “meeting one practice, realizing that practice.” There is a definite Place for the accomplishment of this process. As you master the Way, you realize that the furthest reach of realization is utterly unknowable. Yet, you realize that this realization of the unknowability is entirely conterminous and concomitant with the ultimate reach of the *Buddha Dharma*.

The knowledge of the *Buddha Dharma* that you attain through the *Buddha Dao* is the Knowledge-through-Identity in which the knower is the known is the knowing. Do not think that such Knowledge can simply be turned into intellectual comprehension or conceptual understanding. Although the complete Knowledge-through-Identity is immediately realized as Awareness, its intimate depth dimension is not necessarily actualized as consciousness. Therefore, the Realization is a “not-necessarily.”

The Zen Master Hotetsu of Mt. Mayoku was using a fan. On this occasion, a monk approached him and inquired, “The nature of wind is ever present, and there is nowhere where it is not present. So why do you have to wave a fan?” The Master said, “You know only that the nature of wind is ever present, but you don’t know the principle that there is nowhere where the nature of wind is not present.” The monk said, “What is the meaning of the principle that there is nowhere where the nature of wind is not present?” The Master just continued to wave the fan, whereupon the monk bowed in reverence.

The authentic recognition of the *Buddha Dharma* and the vital transmission of the *Buddha Dao* happen just like this. To say that one should not wave a fan because the nature of wind is present everywhere and that one should feel the presence of wind even when one is not waving a fan is to know neither the meaning of ever-presence nor the nature of wind. Precisely because the nature of wind is ever present the wind of the Buddha’s lineage transforms the earth into gold and transmutes the river into butter.

*Shobogenzo Genjo-Koan*

Written in mid-autumn, circa 1233, and given to the lay disciple Yokoshu of Chinsei.

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