

Honolulu Diamond Sangha

Fall 2018

Uji

Being-Time from Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*

Dharma talk by Clark Ratliffe

An ancient Buddha once said:

Being-time stands on the highest peak and lies on the bottom of the deepest ocean, being-time is the shape of demons and Buddhas, being-time is a monk's staff, being-time is a hossu, being-time is a round pillar, being-time is a stone lantern, being-time is Taro, being-time is Jiro, being-time is earth, being-time is sky (Nishiyama and Stevens 68).

Eihei Dōgen was born in 1200 CE near what was then the capital city Kyoto. Most of what we know about Dōgen's life is from his own writings after he became a monk. Before that the details are sketchy. Several sources say he was the illegitimate son of an important person in the imperial court who died when Dōgen was two or three years old. He lost his mother when he was eight. At thirteen, he visited the monk Ryokan at the foot of Mt. Hiei who encouraged him in his desire to seek the Way. Dōgen himself said, "Realizing the impermanence of life, I began to rouse the way-seeking mind" (Tanahashi xi). He was formally ordained by the head priest of the Tendai School about a year later.

This was an unsettling time for Buddhists in Japan. The



Shingon and Tendai sects were the most influential. The Shingon school practiced a so-called esoteric teaching of Tantric Buddhism, while the Tendai school was an eclectic mix of many kinds of practices and academic studies (Kodera 25-31).

Dōgen left Mt. Hiei shortly after learning the basics of being a monk. For four years he wandered around visiting various teachers. Dōgen said, “I had some understanding of the principle of cause and effect; however, I was not able to clarify the real source of Buddha, dharma, and sangha. I only saw the outer forms—the marks and names” (Kodera 28).

In 1217, Dōgen became a student of Butsuju Myozan of the Linji School. Despite the common assertion that Dōgen’s way eschews the use of koans, he presumably worked on koans with his teacher and indeed in 1221, he received a transmission certificate from Myozan. However, it is hard to know what this transmission really meant because it turned out that Myozan was not satisfied with his own understanding and wanted to travel to China because he felt it was the only place to encounter authentic Zen. In 1223, Myozan accompanied by Dōgen and two others undertook the dangerous two-month sail to China.

When Dōgen finally arrived in China he had a memorable Zen encounter before he even left the port. He recounts the experience at some length in the *Tenzo Kyokun* or the *Instruction for the Head Cook* (Wright 9-11). When Dōgen saw a very elderly monk from a nearby monastery buying mushrooms, he asked him why, at his age, he didn’t concentrate on zazen and study of the words of the ancient masters, instead of doing this mundane shopping. The old monk replied, “Good man from a foreign land, you do not comprehend the practice or know the words of the ancient masters at all.” Dōgen was ashamed. Later when Dōgen had entered a monastery at Mt. Tiantong he met another old Tenzo who gave him a lesson. The old tenzo Lu was drying mushrooms in the hot sun with no hat, wearing little and covered in sweat. Dōgen described him, “His

back was a bow drawn taut, his long eyebrows were crane white.” Dōgen asked him his age and Lu told him he was 68 (very old in those days). He went on to ask why he wasn’t using assistants. The old monk answered, “Other people are not me.” Dōgen replied, “You are right. I can see that your work is the activity of the Buddhadharma, but why are you working so hard in this scorching sun?” Lu responded, “If I do not do it now, when else can I do it” (Wright 9).

Dōgen’s teacher in China was Rujing and after four years of study and receiving transmission from Rujing, Dōgen returned to Japan. During his remaining 25 years he wrote volumes and volumes on the dharma. The subject of my talk today is taken from one of these collections. The *Shobogenzo* is a collection of essays and talks given or written by Dōgen in Japanese, which was unusual at the time. It is a truly monumental work. Dōgen was the founder of Koshoji near Kyoto, the first independent Zen monastery in Japan.

Let’s look at the title of this fascicle of the *Shobogenzo*, “Uji.” In Chinese, “u” or “you” usually means “to have.” This was chosen by Chinese Buddhist translators for “bhava,” which is the 12th link in the 12-fold causal chain. It is usually translated as “becoming” or “existence,” where existence is conceived as a process (Buswell and Lopez 111; M. Kieran, personal communication). So “Being” in the title does not refer in any sense to a discrete person, but rather to the process of becoming or existence. So the characters u and ji are typically translated as “for the time being, or sometimes or even once.” However, Dōgen separated the two characters and uniquely reassembled them as one word, uji, to unmistakably signal the nondual intimacy of existence and time. This “new” compound character is usually rendered as the compound word being-time (Roberts 58). I’m thinking of this, however, more in the sense of becoming-time.

So what is this being-time or becoming-time? Dōgen says, “The changing of time is clear so there is no reason to doubt it; but this does not mean that

we know exactly what time is.” Because we don’t really know what it is, we feel trapped by it—in it. Busy people’s most common complaint is lack of time. And this points to the even bigger predicament; we can never, ever have enough of it. And worse yet is our ever more realistic certainty that it will all end, and that we are running out of time. Time is experienced as something that is passing like sand through our fingers. No matter how hard we try, or how much we want to—we can’t stop it! We deserve to live forever! Or, so we think. When we feel separate from time, we think we can control it—even though nobody, anywhere, has ever been able to do that. As long as we see time as separate from us and something that passes by outside of us, the façade remains, and we try to control it, manage it, or commodify it to make ourselves feel secure in it. People think they can save time, but time cannot be saved because we are it.

All things exist in ourselves. Every thing, every being in this entire world is time. No object obstructs or opposes any other object, nor can time ever obstruct any other time. Therefore, if we have the resolve to attain supreme enlightenment the entire world will also be seen to possess that resolve at the same time. Here, there is no difference between your mind and time (Nishiyama and Stevens 68).

So to realize one’s own true nature is to experience the true nature of time. Time is not something I have. It is what I am. David Loy described it quite nicely when he says, “Instead of me being in space and time, it’s more accurate to say that I am what space and time are doing right here and now” (41). Take this cup for instance. I can pick it up and wave it about and drink from it. Is this something that is IN space or is it a FORM that space takes? No space, no cup. The cup is what space is doing right here. Time isn’t something external to things. We can’t remove a thing from time. No time, no things. Modern physics calls it space-time. Dōgen calls it being-time, and I’m calling it becoming-time.

...Ordinary people think... things of the past are left far behind and have no relation to living in the present. They are as separate as heaven is from earth. This is not true...there is no coming or going in time, when we cross the river or climb the mountain we exist in the eternal present of time; this time includes all past and present time (Nishiyama and Stevens 69).

What is present is always changing, but it is always the present. Where ever you are—there you are! The now that I think I HAVE seems to slip away into the past and is lost. We keep trying to catch that slippery eel and put it into our pocket, unless it bites or smells; then we run away. We could say that the now that I am becoming never fades into the past and is eternity right here in the pit of my belly; but even that is too far away and is just another one of our elaborate constructs. The idea of an “eternal now” is catchy and enticing, but it is just another slippery eel...and a stinky one at that.

Dōgen points out that what is “me” is only something that we construct at this moment. We only seem to spread out across time, but it all happens in being-time. The Lankavatara Sutra says that self is “memory wrongly interpreted,” creating an illusory sense of a continuity in time that gives birth to a sense of self.

Every living thing is rooted in pure, original Being. Most people think time is passing and do not realize that there is an aspect that is not passing. To realize this is to comprehend being; not to realize this is also being... Your self-conception continually changes as you discover more and more about your True Self... even the wisdom of enlightenment are tentative and delusive. Remember that being-time is not dependent on ideas; it is the actualization of being (Nishiyama and Stevens 70).

What is this actualization of being?

Case 53 of Blue Cliff Record:

Once as Great Master Ma (Mazu) and Baizhang were out for a walk, they saw a wild duck fly by. "What is that?" asked the Great Master.

"A wild duck," said Baizhang.

"Where did it go?" asked the Great Master.

"It flew away," answered Baizhang. The Great Master twisted Baizhang's nose and he cried out in pain. "When did it ever fly away?" exclaimed the Great Master.

A person who has clarified their True Self sees only each thing, each thing, each thing, and lets go of understanding the nature of each thing. And at that moment, being-time contains the whole of time, and that time is all things. The real meaning is always in being-time. Mountain is time, ocean is time. Mountain and ocean exist only in the present (Nishiyama and Stevens 71).

When we are crossing the mountain we are always crossing the mountain. Being-time or becoming-time is not divided here and there. Ask yourself—what is the past? Isn't it our most intimate memories that we construct into some kind of imaginary reality. And when do we experience this? NOW. Consider the future. It's made up of so many hopes, dreams, expectations, fears and joys that are based on what we have experienced—memory again. When does all this happen? NOW. But let's go further and take apart that NOW. When you dismantle that, what then? Thinking we are in some kind of now is getting it all turned around.

Case 15 of Blue Cliff Record:

A monk asked Yunmen, "When it is neither a projection of mind nor an object before the eyes, what is it?"

Yunmen said, "A backwards remark."

Mind and words are between coming and going, not-coming and not-going: and they are also being-time... The beginning of practice, the completion of practice, the realization of Buddha Mind and even not practicing are being-time (Nishiyama and Stevens 72).

Time is not something that stops and starts. It does not flow from past to the present and into some unknown future. The fact is that it does not start at all, so how can it stop or flow? It is all a created reality—façade. So is there something that is real? I assure you there is. You must grasp it directly.

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Children at Play in a Burning House

by Nelson Foster

It was a metaphor originally. *Lotus Sutra*, chapter three. A wealthy old man living with his many sons (and presumably many daughters, too) in a vast compound. Counting his retainers, he sheltered perhaps as many as five hundred people there, within a wall that had just one narrow gate. The building was old, too, and when fire suddenly broke out, it burned hot and fast.

The old man immediately saw the danger and the need to escape, but the children, caught up in their games, didn't notice anything. He thought first of carrying them out, but with so many of them and the gate so narrow.... He shouted for their attention, hoping to explain the situation, but—you know, kids—"They merely raced about this way and that in play and looked at their father without heeding him." Sigh.

Then he hit on a stratagem, the "expedient means" of promising them what they wanted: cool toys! In particular, carts drawn by goats or deer or oxen, their very own. Roughly equivalent to a fast, new smartphone. That did it! The kids swarmed out the gate, all safe and sound, and the old gent rewarded each with a cart even better than he'd promised: a giant carriage arrayed with jewels and flowers, canopied, made comfortable with an abundance of cushions, and yoked to—yes!—a swift, powerful, pure-white ox.

I wish it had remained a metaphor. But this summer, as the children continued playing, it shifted category. Here we dwell. The grand old house has gone up in flames, no question, and the wise are screaming for the kids' attention. Do the kids hear? Not much, it seems.

It surely isn't accurate or fair to depict them—make that "us"—as completely consumed in games, oblivious to everything except the lure of cool stuff. Obviously, some of us are awake to the inferno raging on all sides, and not everyone is a sucker for the

next fancy goat-cart. Yet a great many of us do seem disastrously preoccupied, if not with games then with social media or with what a young German attorney identified as perhaps the essential element in the Nazis' rise to power: the "automatic continuation of ordinary life." Doing the laundry. Shopping. Getting to work. Watching the Big Game. Keeping on keeping on.

Like many sangha members, I see this as a time of political crisis in the United States and of dangerous trends in the politics of numerous other countries. But I've come to see the fire this time as much bigger than that, as a total cultural and ecological phenomenon that puts the Earth household as a whole in jeopardy. Of course, if our planet's sixth great extinction goes forward, taking our species with it, some stout forms of life will survive and eventually evolve into a new assembly of beings perhaps just as wondrous as the set that we've been privileged to know, a set itself the result, after all, of the fifth extinction. But I find that cold comfort.

If the world as we know it is going to hell in a handbasket, I feel obliged by my love for it, and by membership in it, to impede that process. This sense of obligation persists despite very reasonable doubts about the usefulness of such efforts as I can make; considering the magnitude of the destructive forces now in play, my capacity to affect the outcome seems puny indeed. But concern for effectiveness, at least *my* concern for effectiveness, pales next to the urgings I feel to protect what remains. Or to state the point in patently Buddhist terms, neither the vows we make explicitly nor the values implicit in practice and realization have much to do with feasibility and "realism." How realistic or quantifiable is a bodhisattva's commitment to forgo final awakening until other beings have all awakened?

The question I'm asking myself now, and want to ask you, too, is whether we've reached a point where changing our ways—discontinuing the "automatic continuation of ordinary life"—has become imperative. You and I may have different

perceptions of the conflagration licking at the foundations of the house, how far it's progressed, how swiftly it's growing, what chances our current countermeasures have of extinguishing it, and so forth. But do we agree that the time has come to accept full responsibility for it and to revise our behavior in correspondingly urgent and far-reaching ways?

If so, what might those ways be? A number of sangha members have felt moved to step up their activity in the political process, hoping that the mid-term elections will precipitate much-needed changes in Washington. I share that hope, of course. Yet even the best electoral outcome seems unlikely to produce change of the scope, the profundity, and rapidity that our predicament calls for. Our worst problems lie beyond the bounds of legislation: our ever-swelling population, our seemingly insatiable desires for convenience and comfort, our gross insensitivity to the needs of other beings, our willingness to destroy mountains and rivers and otherwise to exploit "natural resources" for human benefit, our callousness toward members of even our own species, and our continuing failure to cooperate in the common cause of life on Earth. Not to mention our age-old fondness for games and our apparently infinite distractibility. I understand all of these as cultural problems at root, not amenable to political solutions but certainly open to solution through other avenues—if, and only if, enough of us get serious about it. Soon.

As for the wondrous ox-cart of the Buddhadharma, what role might it play now? It's still ready to roll, I hope, but the old image needs an important correction: the cart isn't waiting for its takers "outside the gate." Unless you buy into the fantasy of escaping to Mars, our tradition, like everything else in our old home, stands to get crisped in the explosive, kalpa-ending firestorm we collectively have set and fueled. Finally, I think we'd better ask ourselves one more question: are the cushions of our fine cart too comfortable? I hope not.

Quotes

Burton Watson, translator. *The Lotus Sutra*. Columbia, 1993. p. 57.

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Dharma Delivered

—Sesshin Stories

by Kathy Ratliffe

The FedEx Guy

I could hear his boots thumping across the deck. I wondered if he was just late to the Dharma Assembly, and would find his way into the zendo, but wouldn't most people have removed their shoes? The person thumped into the residents' hall, the door squeaking, then walked all the way to the teacher's quarters at the other end of the building, obviously looking for someone. I glanced at the Jisha, who was raptly listening to Michael—he clearly didn't hear the fellow on the deck. I jumped up and slipped out the jikijitsu door and moved quietly around the building, seeing the man, who was wearing a uniform, disappearing down the stairs toward the kitchen. I caught up to him at the bottom where he was staring dejectedly at several large boxes stacked on a dolly. His FedEx van was parked at the top of the driveway and he had clearly dragged these boxes across the mud and grass. He started talking to me in a normal voice, not seeming to be bothered by my black robe and rakusu. I quickly shushed him with a finger over my mouth. He understood, and started whispering. He leaned down to check the addresses on the boxes, and I sat down next to him on the bottom step as we both perused the labels.

He whispered, "I'm not sure of this address." I looked at the name, and didn't recognize it—Courtney something. I said, "I don't know anyone by that name here." He pointed at the address, 2727

Waiomao Rd. I said, “Oh, this is 2747, not 2727.”

He said, “I know. I can’t find that address. I’ve looked everywhere. I’ve looked that way,” he pointed up the road, “and I’ve looked that way,” he pointed down the road, “and I can’t find it. It’s not anywhere. I don’t know what to do.” He looked totally dejected. Then he looked at me, “Are you sure it’s not here?”

“I’m sorry, it’s not here,” I said. We both sat quietly for a few seconds looking at the boxes. Finally, he sighed, and got up.

“I think it’s mislabeled,” he said. “I’ll have to take it back.” He thanked me and set off across the lawn dragging the heavy boxes, and I went back up the stairs and rejoined the Dharma Assembly.

Buddhist Meat

I could hear the van driving in and parking near the kitchen, then a loud “HELLO!” from the bottom of the stairs. I slipped out of the zendo and moved quickly toward the stairs, where I could hear someone shuffling around down below. As I started down the stairs, the driver started talking loudly, so I put my finger over my lips, and he quickly put his own finger on his lips, looking chagrined. He was a large local man in his 30s. As I reached the bottom of the stairs, he pointed at the sign saying we were in a silent retreat and shushed himself again. I smiled and nodded and asked him how I could help him. He whispered to me that he and his buddy, who was sitting in the passenger seat of the van with his feet out the window, were selling Angus beef from the Big Island. They had steaks and ribs and all different cuts. Would we like to buy any?

“Um,” I said, “This is a Buddhist temple, we don’t eat any meat here.”

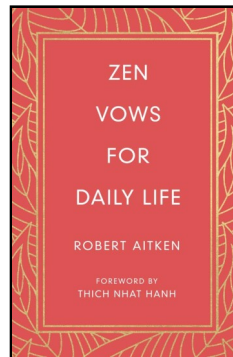
He looked amazed. “None! Are you sure? No meat at all?” He couldn’t believe it. I debated with myself about how to be clear and yet friendly, because he didn’t seem to understand.

Finally, I just said, “Yup, we don’t eat meat here.”

I watched him struggle to find another angle that

would get me to buy some meat, but he couldn’t come up with anything. He was stymied. Finally, he smiled and whispered, “Well, okay then. Have a good day.” I wished him well, and he rejoined his friend in the van to tell him the story about these strange people who don’t eat meat, and to suggest they try the next neighbor.

Stymied, baffled, standing right here; “not knowing.” Addresses that don’t exist, people that don’t eat meat—Dharma delivered—right here.



Aitken Roshi Books

“Each act in a Buddhist monastery—washing up, putting on clothes, entering the Buddha hall, sitting down for meditation, getting up from meditation—receives its own Dharma poem.

Events on pilgrimage—

encountering a tree, a river, a bridge, a dignitary, a mendicant—likewise offer entries into truth. My purpose in this book is similar: to show how ordinary occurrences in our modern lay lives are in fact the Buddha’s own teachings—and also to show how we can involve ourselves accordingly in the practice of wisdom and compassion with family and friends, with everyone and everything.” —

Robert Aitken, from the Preface

Roshi’s 1990 book, *The Dragon Who Never Sleeps*, has just been republished by Wisdom as *Zen Vows for Daily Life*, and we will soon have copies for sale.

We also have ordered copies of the new edition of Roshi’s *Zen Master Raven*. Please stop by the office if you wish to purchase either of these books.

Administrator, HDS: Susan Brandon, Interim

Temple Keeper, PZC: Michael Hofmann

NL Editor & Layout: Kendra Martyn

Editorial Board: Kathy Ratliffe, Clark Ratliffe, Michael Kieran

Poems

by Deborah Ball

Impermanence Echoes Continuation

Water enfolding
Swallowing a life, just so
Gone, gone, gone. Here now

Zazen

Tempest bellows
moonlight pierces sky
ocean deep below

Diamond Head

Each step she saves me
Le'ahi firm under foot
Reaching for the plastic straw,
Saving and saves

Hungry Ghosts

All beings with all their
wrinkles and spurs
Carry over,
carry over,
Carry this one here now



Renovations at Palolo Zen Center

This fall we began our first major capital improvement project at the PZC, urged on, as Michael Hofmann has stated, "by the termites, carpenter ants, wild pigs, mold, mildew and rain."

Beautiful new wooden floors are being installed throughout the entire residence hall and dining room, and the bathroom shower walls and floors will be retiled, too. In addition, we are replacing all the bathroom plumbing, installing new sinks, counters and toilets and repairing damaged wooden subflooring. We also are building an accessible bathroom with a roll-in shower.

We are fortunate to have Clark Ratliffe as our construction manager and guide, along with the expertise of our special consultant, Bill Metzger. Be sure to ask Clark if you have any questions about this project, or contact the office.

All this has been made possible by the generosity of our sangha, immediate and larger, and we are very grateful to our generous donors. If you would like to contribute to this project, your gift now, or in the future, is also very welcome.



Fun picnic with Nelson Foster on a beautiful day. Nelson visited this past September to participate in our annual Dharma Study with Michael. This year we explored the Heart Sutra in depth and detail.

Highlights from the Calendar

We gather for Zazen most Sundays from 9 to 11 am, and most Wednesdays from 7 to 9 pm, followed by tea. Variations on that schedule, and special events, are highlighted below. Please see, or download, our full calendar from our website, diamondsangha.org, call us at 808-735-1347, email to info@diamondsangha.org, or find us on FB.

November, 2018

- 11/2—11/7, Fri—Wed: **Maui Zendo Sesshin**
- 11/11, Sun: **Zazen/Dokusan**, 9—11 am, tea. **Zendo Leader Signup and Workshop**, 11:30 am—1 pm.
- 11/17, Sat: **Orientation to Zen Practice**, 9 am—noon. No preregistration is necessary and there is no fee.
- 11/18, Sun: **Work Party**, 9 am—noon, lunch.
- 11/19, Mon: **Rohatsu Signup Deadline**.
- 11/23—12/1, **Vipassana Hawaii Retreat**, The temple will be closed all week. Please contact vipassanahawaii.org for registration or retreat information.

December, 2018

- 12/2, Sun: **Zazen/Dokusan**, (all-day sitting), 8:30 am—4 pm, followed by tea. Bring a brown-bag lunch for the 11:30—12:30 lunch period. There will be a dharma talk at 1 pm. All are welcome for all or part of the day.
- 12/7, Fri: **Board of Directors Meeting**, 6:00 pm.
- 12/9, Sun: **Zazen/Dokusan**, 9—11 am, tea. **Winter Sangha Meeting**, 11:30 am—1:30 pm.
- 12/19, Wed: **Zazen/ Dokusan, Q & R**, 7—9 pm, tea.
- 12/29, Sat: **Orientation to Zen Practice**, 9 am—noon. No preregistration is necessary and there is no fee.
- 12/30, Sun: **Zazen, Samu**, 9 am—noon. Lunch.
- 12/31, Mon: **New Year's Eve Sitting**, 7 pm—midnight.

January, 2019

- 1/2—1/10, **Rohatsu Sesshin**, Gather on 1/2, 5 pm.
- 1/12, Sat: **Orientation to Zen Practice**, 9 am—noon. No preregistration is necessary and there is no fee.
- 1/18, Fri: **Board of Directors Meeting**, 6:00 pm.
- 1/20, Sun: **Zazen, Samu**, 9 am—noon. Lunch
- 1/25—1/27, Fri-Sun: **Ikikata Jyuku Sesshin**, The temple will be closed for this 3-day retreat.

Half-Time Administrator Position Open at Honolulu Diamond Sangha

We are currently looking to fill our half-time administrator position. This employee position is for an experienced Zen student with a well-established practice, preferably with this sangha or a Diamond Sangha affiliate. Our administrator maintains the financial books and records of the Honolulu Diamond Sangha, keeps the membership records, serves as sesshin coordinator, and is the corporate secretary and an ex-officio member of our Board of Directors.

The administrator is an important part of our communication among and within the sangha and between the Board and the community in person, in writing, on the web, and by leading production of the newsletter and sangha mailings. Applications will be considered as received.

For further information about this opportunity, please call or write to Susan at (808) 735-1347, or email info@diamondsangha.org



Summer sesshin, PZC, 2018

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