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Victor Forte

Albright College

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Indian Traditionalism in Eihei Dōgen's *Shoaku makusa*

Victor Forte¹

Abstract

Eihei Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Shoaku makusa* ("Not Producing Evil"), was presented during the early period of his career, while leading a small group of monastic and lay followers at the Kōshōji temple in Kyoto. Derived from the early Buddhist universal precept and inspired by the Indian ideal of bodhisattvic moral freedom within the *dharmadhātu*, this work primarily served as a corrective for anti-nomian inherent awakening doctrine. The ethical implications of this corrective are best understood in the context of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy, an often-overlooked influence on Dōgen's thought. Not only are such influences to be found in the *Shoaku makusa* fascicle, but throughout Dōgen's career, in earlier works like the *Shōbōgenzō*

¹ Religious Studies Department, Albright College. Email: vforte@albright.edu. I would like to thank Steven Heine and Dale Wright for their gracious and insightful guidance in developing and editing this paper, as well as the members of the Dōgen reading group (Rika Dunlap, George Wrisley, Yolanda Sanchez, Matthew Streit, and Jhonatan Baez) for their support and editing recommendations.

zuimonki, and later fascicles like *Sanjūshichihon bodaibunpō*, “The Thirty-seven Factors of Awakening,” and *Hotsu bodaishin*, “Raising the Mind of Enlightenment,” which were also concerned with the meaning of moral practice from an Indian Buddhist standpoint.

Introduction

In the summer of 1240, Eihei Dōgen 永平道元, the founder of the newly established Japanese Buddhist sect of Sōtō Zen, delivered his sermon *Shoaku makusa* 諸惡莫作.² By this time in his early career, he had been leading a monastic community at the Kōshōhōrinji 興聖法林寺³ temple in Kyōto for more than seven years and had attracted a small number of monastic and lay followers. Among the former was Koun Ejō 孤雲懷奘 a former member of the Darumashū 達磨宗, a Japanese Zen sect established by founder Dainichi Nōnin 大日能忍 in 1189. Nōnin and his school had been criticized by a number of sectarian leaders, including Dōgen, for espousing an antinomian brand of inherent awakening (*hongaku* 本覺), asserting that neither seated meditation nor adherence to traditional moral discipline were necessary for liberation.⁴ It is assumed that Nōnin's death occurred before the end of the twelfth century,⁵ and subsequently his movement endured ongoing persecution from the Tendai sect, culminating in a violent attack on a Darumashū center in Nara prefecture in 1228.

² Various translations as “not doing wrong,” “refraining from committing evil,” “not producing evil” and “nonproduction of evil.”

³ More commonly known in its abbreviated name, Kōshōji 興聖寺.

⁴ See Bernard Faure's study of Dōgen's relationship with former *Darumashū* monks in “Darumashū, Dogen and Sōtō Zen,” (1987).

⁵ Faure's estimated time-period of Dainichi Nōnin's death, in “Darumashū, Dogen and Sōtō Zen,” p. 28.

After the death of Nōnin's successor, Kakuan 覺晏 in 1234, a number of his followers may have begun seeking alternative monastic communities. Ejō joined Dōgen in 1234, and more former Darumashū monks are known to have arrived in 1242, subsequently becoming a prominent group of disciples throughout the remainder of Dōgen's career.

After receiving transmission in 1236, Ejō was promoted to head monk and functioned as the recorder and editor of much of Dōgen's writings. Most notably among these was the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, or *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, Dōgen's master work of informal sermons, including *Shoaku makusa*. In this article *Shoaku makusa* will be examined as a traditionalist argument for moral life, primarily grounded in Indian Buddhist doctrine, and presented in order to expose the errors of antinomian doctrine.

In 1238 Dōgen delivered only one sermon that has been included in the *Shōbōgenzō*, titled *Ikka Myōju* 一顆明珠 or "One Bright Pearl." The five-year span, beginning in the spring of the following year to the spring of 1244 marked the most prolific period of his career. During this time, he constructed close to seventy sermons, making up the great majority of the *Shōbōgenzō* collection. From 1240 to 1241 Dōgen was at the peak of his literary powers, presenting *Shoaku makusa* in 1240, as well as other related master works like *Uji* 于時 "Being Time" (1240), *Sansuikyo* 山水教 "The Mountains and Waters Sutra" (1240), and *Busshō* 仏性 "Buddha Nature" (1241). Along with *Ikka Myōju*, these sermons address distinct topics, but all share a similar theme, being doctrinally grounded in Chinese *Huayan* (J. *Kegon* 華嚴) philosophy, canonically originating from the Indian Mahāyāna *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. The meaning of moral life as presented in *Shoaku makusa* can therefore be best understood as an expression of bodhisattvic activity in the realm of the *dharmadhātu*.

It is within this historical context that an evaluation of *Shoaku makusa* will proceed, beginning with its textual foundations in the verses of

the *Dhammapada*. While the *Dhammapada* and Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* are far removed in both time and space,⁶ assessing the Pāli version of the text will help to address traditional influences in the later work, and to show more clearly where and why divergences arise.

Examination of the Pāli Verse

The phrase “*Shoaku makusa*” originates from the universal precept of *Dhammapada* verse 183, an often-quoted verse from the early Buddhist discourses indicating for many the very heart of Buddhist practice, a practice centered in a clear dedication to moral living. The original Pāli version with my preferred English translation of the verse is as follows:

sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ
Shunning all evil,
kusalassa upasampad
Undertaking the good,
sacittapariyodapanaṃ
Fully purifying one's own mind,
etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ (Dhp 183)
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.⁷

⁶ The transmission of the verse to East Asia can be traced to an early Chinese translation of the *Dhammapada*, the *Faju jing* 法句經, c. 224 CE. Recent scholarship has indicated that the translation more than likely resulted from the appraisal of multiple versions in various Indian and Central Asian languages, including Pāli, but also Gāndhārī, Patna, and Udānavarga. See Li, 2023. Dōgen's version of the verse is clearly derived from the *Faju jing*, see Bhikkhu Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti, 1995, p. 316.

⁷ Pāli taken from S. Radhakrishnan's *The Dhammapada* (120).

From such a translation there seems to be little one would debate regarding the moral import of these verses. But the simplicity of the translated lines is in some ways misleading, given their contextual relation to the Pāli Canon. *Sabba—ssa* indicates “entirety,” and *pāpa* is commonly translated as “evil,” but specifically functions as an antonym for *puñña*, a notion of the good associated with meritorious action, and is thus primarily concerned with the kinds of actions that lead to inauspicious rebirths. *Akaraṇaṃ* is the nominal negation of *karaṇa*, meaning “doing,” “making,” “causing,” or “producing,” and is etymologically related to *kamma*. The first line, in this sense, has a double meaning of both *not doing* acts that are understood as demeritorious, as well as *not producing* the kammic demerit that results from such actions. Not doing and not producing, are in this context, thus one and the same. This interpretation is supported further given that the first line of the preceding verse 182 is, “Difficult is it to obtain birth as a human being. . .” (120). An additional moral dimension of the first line is the negative structure of the language—what not to do, or what to avoid, rather than what to do.⁸ To a great extent, the first line is primarily concerned with the central importance of the not-doing required in keeping the precepts, a purification of one’s actions, just as line three is concerned with the purification of the mind.

The second line of the verse also provides important contextual indications regarding the meaning of the good, derived here from *kusala*, a concept that is rarely translated as “good,” but commonly rendered as “wholesome,” “skillful,” or “profitable.” Translations of *kusala* as “skillful” or “profitable” may indicate further alignment with line one, that is, concerned with skillful ways of living that lead to profitable results, such as auspicious rebirths or liberation, but presented in positive language—what one *should do*. *Kusala* certainly has such connotations in the

⁸ According to the Pali-English dictionary, *akaraṇa* is “Negative in all meanings of the positive” (196). Not doing is therefore, a positive good in that such avoidance is non-producing.

discourses, but the association of *kusala* with particular states of mind are so prevalent in these texts, that the use of “wholesome” provides a clearer rendering as “wholesome states,” rather than skillful or profitable states.⁹ The discourses often provide claims that protection from unwholesome states/abiding in wholesome states will arise through a number of core early Buddhist teachings and practices, like the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold path, the precepts, mindfulness, the *brahmavihārās*, the *jhāna* absorptions, and devotion to non-harming oneself or others.¹⁰ So ubiquitous is the emphasis on *kusala* in the Pāli discourses that one might even claim that the primary purpose of early Buddhist practice was the *skillful* cultivation of wholesome states, states that were understood as *profitable* because they led to higher rebirths while fostering a mind conducive to liberative attainments. It is in this sense that one may recognize *kusala* as *the good* in the practice of the Buddhaddhamma.

However, as we found in the first line of verse 183, this particular understanding of the good, based in an emphasis on *kusala*, also has a negative structure, commonly indicated as the negation of *akusala*—that which is “unwholesome,” “unskilled,” or simply, “wrong,” “evil,” or “demeritorious.” The unwholesome roots (*akussala-mūlani*) are identified as *dosa* (anger), *lobha* (greed), and *mōha* (delusion), and the wholesome (*kusala*), is simply the negation of the same, that is, *adosa*, *alobha* and *amōha*. The good in this context is therefore the negation of anger, greed,

⁹ There have been a number of arguments presented in the field of Buddhist ethics for the most accurate English translation of *kusala*. For example, in Damien Keown's groundbreaking study of Pāli ethics, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992), he devotes some time to the concept, deciding to translate *kusala* as “virtue.” L. S. Cousins prefers “skillful states” [sic], arguing that the translation of “wholesome states” is a later development in the tradition (145).

¹⁰ See, for example, throughout the Middle-Length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikāya*): MN 28:184 (the Four Noble Truths); MN 78:29 (the Noble Eightfold path); MN 114:46 (the precepts); MN 125:135 (mindfulness); MN 40:283 (the *brahmavihārās*); MN 4:21 (the *jhāna* absorptions); MN 61:417 (non-harming).

and delusion. Although in early Buddhism there are systems of positive wholesome practices such as the *brahmavihāras*, these mainly have an internal, negating function, in order to dispel or replace the unwholesome. Buddhaghosa supports such an understanding in the *Visuddhimagga* where he states, “. . . lovingkindness has the purpose of warding off ill will, while the others have the respective purposes of warding off cruelty, aversion (boredom), and greed or resentment” (311).¹¹ *Upasampadā*, translated as “acquiring,” “obtaining,” or “undertaking” connotes taking up the path of discipline that cultivates the wholesome by dispelling the unwholesome, the discipline espoused by Gautama Buddha, and accordingly, by all the Buddhas.¹²

¹¹ There is probably no greater a striking example in the Pāli discourses extolling the importance of maintaining wholesome states as “The Simile of the Saw” (*Kakacūpama Sutta*) found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* or *Middle Length Discourses*. Here, Gautama Buddha admonishes a *bhikkhu*, Moliya Phaggunā, for “associating overmuch” with *bhikkhunis*, becoming angry whenever a *bhikkhu* spoke dispraise of them. The Buddha tells him to “abandon any desires and any thoughts based on the household life.” Even if anyone would give him or a *bhikkhuni*, “a blow with his hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife. . . herein [he] should train thus: ‘My mind will be unaffected, I shall utter no evil words; I shall abide compassionate for his welfare, with a mind of loving kindness, without inner hate. . .’” (MN 21:123-124).

¹² Arguing that Pāli Buddhist morality has a negative stricture does not mean that it is therefore deficient. First, a steadfast dedication to doing no harm goes a long way to limit suffering and injustice. In addition, the Pāli discourses exhibit a clear and extensive resolve for nonviolence, and there are several examples in the texts promoting justice for slaves, servants, workers, young girls, friends, and family, as well as animals and plant life (see for example, MN 27:179-181; and DN 5:141). Over the last century these values for nonviolence and justice have inspired the emergence of a number of socially engaged forms of Theravada Buddhist practice. The work of Sallie B. King and Christopher S. Queen have led the scholarly interest in these movements, beginning with their edited volume of essays, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996). A significant global example of contemporary Theravada social engagement is Buddhist Global Relief, founded by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi: <https://buddhistglobalrelief.org/>.

Dhammapada* Verse 183 in Dōgen's *Shoaku makusa

Here, I am narrowing my discussion to the meaning of morality in Dōgen's Zen, asking if anything significant changed in the translation from early Indian forms of Buddhism. Or even more simply put, was there a notion of morality in Indian Buddhism that was either retained, clarified, or somehow lost in Zen? Or was there really no clear system of morality, or at least a very limited system of morality in Indian Buddhism in the first place, which is only continued in Zen?

To allow the single example of *Shoaku makusa* to somehow represent the moral meaning of Zen may be asking too much of it, but there is also good reason to place some importance on this particular record within the Zen canon in regard to an evaluation of Buddhist morality. First, Dōgen's fascicles are singular in the canon because they give us the opportunity to examine premodern *jishu* 示衆 style sermons, which were commonly presented by Chinese Chan masters, but traditionally not preserved in writing. The fascicles contained in the *Shōbōgenzō* provide us with rare access to one Zen master's attempts to express the meaning of the Dharma in an informal setting. Second, in comparison to the other fascicles contained in the *Shōbōgenzō*, *Shoaku makusa* is most clearly concerned with the meaning of morality and its application in Zen practice. Third, because the main concern here is to attempt to clarify the extent of Zen's continuity with traditional Indian expressions of morality, *Shoaku makusa* proves to be quite useful because it is derived from a very early verse in the Buddhist canon. The majority of Dōgen's Kōshoji-period fascicles tend to focus on *kōan* case studies and other Chan texts, but *Shoaku makusa* is unique in that it is mainly based on a Pāli verse and depends much less on Chinese sources. There is an attempt in this fascicle, therefore, to demonstrate the meaning of morality as it is grounded in the earliest foundations of Indian Buddhism.

Shoaku makusa opens with the lines from *Dhammapada* verse 183. The translation below is based upon my own interpretation of the original text in comparison to other available translations.

Ko butsu un 古仏云

The Ancient Buddhas say:

Shoaku makusa 諸惡莫作

Not producing any evil,

Shuzen bugyō 衆善奉行

Offering many kinds of good,

Jijō go i 自淨其意

Purifying one's resolve,

Ze shobutsu kyō 是諸仏教

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas. (SBGZ v. 2 230)

Compared to the Pāli verses, there are important similarities and differences. *Shoaku* provides a subtly altered meaning to *sabbapāpassa*. *Sho* can mean “various,” or “many,” indicating an unspecified plurality of immoral acts, while *sabba-ssa* represents the entirety of specified immoral acts (“all”) primarily understood as breaking the precepts (*papa*). *Akaraṇaṃ* and *makusa* are quite similar in that both provide the double meaning of “not doing” and “not producing,” which has resulted in differing translations of “*shoaku makusa*.”¹³

Shuzen bugyō is a quite different statement in comparison to *kusalassa upasampadā*, due both to the absence of an emphasis on wholesome

¹³ Nishiyama (1977), Tanahashi (2010), and Nearman (1996) all employ directives in their translations— “Refrain from all evil,” “Refrain from Unwholesome Action,” and “Refrain from all evil whatsoever,” respectively. Nishijima (1994) emphasizes “doing” in his translation of “sa” 作, as “Not Doing Wrongs,” while Nagatomo (2015) prefers to emphasize “non-production,” as “Non-production of Evil.”

states and, as in the first line, indicating a non-specified variety of good actions. Tanahashi's translation—"Do Wholesome Action," seems to attempt an inclusion of the Pāli into this line of the verse. While "wholesome" certainly has a rather general meaning of goodness, the use of *kusala* in the Pāli is so particular to the moral import of early Buddhism, that this translation indicates a consistency with the original Pāli verse which, I would argue, is not really accurate.

The third line may present the most translation challenges. *Jijō go i* 自淨其意 seems to be a standard phrasing in the Chinese for "purification of the mind." Nishiyama and Tanahashi use directives throughout the verse, ending here with "Purify your mind" and "Purify your own mind." These translations are more than likely due to the first line that is included in Dōgen's verse, "The Ancient Buddhas say," or "An Ancient Buddha said," a line not included in the *Dhammapada* or the Chinese *Faju jing*, but appropriate in this later context, citing these verses as originating from the early discourses. The Pāli, however, is causative—*pariyodapanam*, "fully purifying" *sacitta*, "one's own mind." Because *ji* 自 indicates "self" rather than "mind," including the language "one's own" is appropriate here. *Go i* 其意 implies "intention," but a reference to intention is not included in the original Pāli.¹⁴ Only Nearman attempts to include this language in his translation—"And thereby you purify your own intentions." Nishijima provides the most creative translation, but to make an important interpretive distinction. Settling on "Naturally purifies the mind," he argues that *ji* 自 can either be translated as "oneself" or "naturally." Eschewing the kinds of directive language found in other translations, he states, ". . . the verse is not a recommendation to be moral, but a

¹⁴ Keeping in mind that there are discourses in the Pāli canon suggesting that *kamma* is primarily the result of intention, it is striking to see this language showing up in this East Asian rendition of the verse, even though it is not included in the original Pāli. Nevertheless, there is no indication that the relation between intention and karmic causation applies in the East Asian absorption of this verse.

proclamation of the Buddha's teaching that moral conduct is just purification of the mind" (fn. 98). I chose to translate *go i* as "resolve" because this aligns more clearly with the Mahāyāna path of the bodhisattva than "intention," resulting in "Purifying one's resolve."

One obvious problem comparing this *Dhammapada* verse to *Shoaku makusa* is that we are using a first-vehicle text and attempting to apply it to a Mahāyāna-based system of thought in medieval Japanese Zen. Although the verse originates from a volume included in the Pāli *Suttapiṭika*, Dōgen is not examining the verse from its place within the Pāli canon, or even within the context of the entire *Dhammapada*. His verse originates from the *Faju jing*, the third century Chinese translation of the *Dhammapada*. But there is no clear evidence that Dōgen was even familiar with the entire *Faju jing*. The verse had most likely taken on an independent, stand-alone imperative, representing the universal precept for all practicing Buddhists, regardless of vehicle or sect.

The third line of the verse as "purification of the mind," seems to represent a contradiction with Mahāyāna doctrine. The purity of the original luminous mind (*cittaprakṛitiprabhāsvartā*) had been a position within Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism as early as third century *Tathagatagarbha* and fourth to fifth century *Yogācāra* systems of thought. Purification of the mind was no longer the goal, since it was recognized that the mind is originally pure and attempts to approach the practice as though one is actively purifying the mind was regarded as delusional. We find this distinction to be of foundational importance in Zen, for example, in Huineng's ascendance as the Sixth Patriarch based on his realization that the mind as a mirror is originally free of dust.¹⁵

¹⁵ In response to Shenxiu's poem,

The body is the Bodhi tree, 身是菩提樹

Although the unwholesome roots are not ignored in Zen, there are no meditational practices designed to negate them directly, as we have in the Indian systems, for example, the practices concerned with the *brahmavihāras*. There is, therefore, a different version of the *Dhammapada*-based universal precept, known as the “pure precepts” that removes the third line, “Purification of the mind” and replaces it with, “To benefit all beings,” representing a Mahāyāna correction of the original verse. Dōgen used this alternative form of the verse in his own 16-article system of bodhisattva precepts, which included the three pure precepts,¹⁶ along with the three refuges and the ten grave precepts. The language in the first two pure precepts is much different from the second and third lines of the verse that open *Shoaku makusa*, indicated much different purposes. In *Shoaku makusa*, Dōgen is responding to the meaning of morality in the universal precept, but in the pure precepts of the Sōtō Zen ordination ceremony the first two precepts are more concerned with conduct in the monastery—following the monastic rules and living according to the Buddhisthadharma.

Yet, in *Shoaku makusa* Dōgen takes a more traditionalist approach, presenting his understanding of Buddhist ethics based upon the universal precept instead of the Mahāyāna pure precepts. This may be a response to the confusion in the antinomian notion that the claim of the original

The mind is the stand of a clear mirror. 心如明鏡台

At all times we must strive to polish it, 時時勤拂拭

And must not let the dust collect. 勿使惹塵埃

Huineng writes,

Bodhi originally is not a tree, 菩提本無樹

The mirror also has no stand. 明鏡亦非台

There has never been a single thing, 本夾無一物

Where is there room for dust?” 何處惹塵埃

¹⁶ 撰律儀戒 The precept for observing rules; 撰善法戒 the precept for observing the moral law; and 饒益衆生戒 the precept for the benefit of all beings (SBGZ v. 4 111)

purity of the mind negates the need for ethical practices such as the five primary precepts. The biographical evidence seems to indicate that this was a central concern for Dōgen throughout his career, given his early struggles with original enlightenment as a Tendai novice, his attempts to correct former Darumashū students for the school's rejection of the precepts, and his emphasis on karmic causation in the final years of his life. Delivering this sermon in 1240, while still residing at the Kōshoji temple, his purpose may have been to deliver a traditional teaching that was recognizable to everyone in his audience, while presenting, at the same time, a corrective to common assumptions about the verse by illuminating the relationship between morality and original purity.

The corrective Dōgen presents during this period is primarily based in Mahāyāna *dharmadhātu* (J. *hokkai* 法界) doctrine. The concept of the *dharmadhātu* can be traced to the Pāli discourses and the early *Prajñāpāramitā*¹⁷ literature but takes on central doctrinal significance in *Tathagatagarbha* and *Yogācāra* philosophy. The fourth century *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, said to have been Bodhidharma's gift to Huike, further elucidated the *Yogācāra* position that all phenomena are a projection of the mind while revealing how this realization empowers the path of the bodhisattva. The c. fourth century *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (J. *Kegonkyō* 華嚴), provided elaborate descriptions of the *dharmadhātu* as the realm of bodhisattva activity. It is only within this realm that the non-attachment, fearlessness, and freedom of the bodhisattva is fully manifested, due to the realization of the not-caused, not-born, not-ceasing nature of all phenomena. These later additions to Mahāyāna philosophy, on one level, served as correctives to the highly negative logic of Mādhyamaka Buddhism, arguing that the empty nature of all phenomena served as the ground for the *dharmadhātu*, a realm of universal Buddhahood. While we do see active

¹⁷ For the historical development of the concept of the *dharmadhātu*, See Kang-Nam Oh's "Dharmadhātu: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism." (1979).

purification of the mind still operative in the early *Prajñāpāramitā* literature,¹⁸ these practices become less necessary by the fourth century, due to the later doctrinal developments of *Tathagatagarbha* and *Yogācāra*.

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* made a considerable impact on Chinese Buddhist thought, examining the descriptive poetry of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and producing a formal system of philosophy (*Huayan* 華嚴) to further elucidate the meaning of the *dharmadhātu*. *Huayan* played a large role in the formation of Japanese Buddhism, resulting in the early establishment of a scholastic school (*Kegonshū* 華嚴宗), and influencing the development of prominent sects of Japanese Buddhism like Tendai, Shingon, and Zen. *Shoaku makusa* is Dōgen's attempt to reveal the traditional Buddhist meaning of moral action from the enlightened standpoint of the *dharmadhātu*. The meaning of the *dharmadhātu* was a common theme in other early sermons as well, beginning in 1238 with Dōgen's presentation of *Ikka Myōju* 一顆明珠 (*One Bright Pearl*). In the following statement from this sermon, for example, he describes the interdependence of both phenomena and time, while revealing the unity of ultimate and conventional truth:

... because it is not birth-and-death, not coming and going, it is birth-and-death, it is coming and going. This being so, it is the past leaving now, the present coming from here. As for its ultimate investigation, who can comprehend it as bits and pieces, or inspect it in stillness? (SBGZ v. 1, 183-184)

¹⁸ For example, in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* (Sk. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*), "A Bodhisattva who is thus endowed with this thought of enlightenment and with skill in means does not midway realize the reality-limit. On the contrary, he does not lose his concentration on friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and impartiality [i.e., the *brahmavihāras*]. For, upheld by skill in means, he increases his pure dharmas more and more" (Conze 225).

In the *Uji* 有時 fascicle, presented in 1240, Dōgen de-essentializes time as “being-time,” in that time does not somehow function independently of the phenomenal world. His examination of Buddha-nature in the *Busshō* 仏性 fascicle, written in the following year, equates *tathāgata-garbha* with “whole-being” (*shitsū busshō*, 悉有仏性), so that Buddha-nature is not understood as the cause of awakening, or a dormant potential, but rather the moment-to-moment presencing of whole-being as phenomenal interdependence. In each case he analyzes concepts that could be otherwise misunderstood or unrecognized given the *Huayan* claim of interdependence without obstruction. If all phenomena without exception are included in a network of interdependence, a realm where no thing exists, then what is the meaning of time, the meaning of Buddha nature, or the meaning of good and evil? Mistaken assumptions regarding the *dharmadhātu* could lead to the kinds of antinomian original enlightenment views that were prevalent in thirteenth century Japan.

While the title of the *Shoaku makusa* fascicle can be translated as, “Not doing wrongs” (Nishijima 97), or “Do not commit evil” (Fox 35), as found in the original Pāli, the kanji *sa* (作) can be understood as “making,” or “producing,” as well as “doing,” or “committing.” As a negation, *ma* 莫 indicates “not,” rather than “non,” so that “Not producing any evil” is more aligned with the language of the verse than “non-production of evil.” Furthermore, “non-production of evil,” indicates an essential state of moral being, while “not producing any evil” indicates an unending reflective and active moral life.

Makusa therefore mirrors *akaraṇaṃ*, indicating that not doing and not-producing are one in the same. Upholding the precepts is, therefore, still operative, in that immoral actions produce demeritorious karma.¹⁹ “If it does not sound like ‘not producing’ it is not the true Buddhadharma, but

¹⁹ The precepts are never directly mentioned in *Shoaku makusa*, but they are discussed in other material from the same period which will be discussed in the following section.

rather the teaching of demons” (SBGZ v. 2, 231-232). However, unlike the original Pāli, *makusa* also reflects the negations of the *dharmadhātu* which includes the negation of production. “Those who recognize that evil originates from dependent arising, yet do not recognize that dependent arising is itself, *not producing*, should truly be pitied” (235). But not producing evil only means that evil has no independent substantial nature, not that there is no evil.

The third line, *shuzen bugyō*, may be translated as, “Offering many kinds of good,” so that both the second and third lines do indicate a wider range of possible evils and goods than in the original Pāli verses. Evil is not limited to breaking the precepts and the good is not ultimately aimed toward the negation of the unwholesome roots. Also, the kanji “bu” (奉) in the third line, means offering or serving, so that the goods are recognized as many and they are offered outwardly, indicating a greater sense of moral creativity.²⁰ This provides an important contrast with the Pāli *Upasampadā*, meaning, “acquiring,” “obtaining,” or “undertaking” which reflects the path of the *arhat*—acquiring wholesome states as preparation for insight and final liberation. Conversely, Dōgen’s verse reflects a bodhi-sattvic path, offering the many kinds of good for the liberation of all

²⁰ For a recent study of the possibilities of moral creativity in Dōgen’s conception of Buddhist practice see Rika Dunlap’s “Practice as a Work of Art: A Study of ‘Gabyō’ in Dogen’s Buddhist Philosophy,” *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 45-65. Here, through an exegesis of the meaning of the three levels of truth presented in the opening lines of Dōgen’s *Genjōkōan* 現成公案 fascicle (1233), as well as a study of the multiple meanings of *gabyō* 画餅 “painted rice cake” in his fascicle of the same name (1242), Dunlap reveals how a Zen practitioner can create a life as a work of art through a deep realization of interdependence. She states, “Through the metaphor of *ga* [‘painting’], Dōgen suggests that we see each moment as an opportunity to create and become an evanescent co-creative work of art within the entire world. Although all beings without exception fluidly and incessantly illustrate their concrete expressive forms of being in the world, this activity requires our personal attunement to impermanence, nonduality, and the pervasiveness of Buddha-nature, to live gracefully each moment in our own impermanence while acting compassionately toward all beings” pp. 60-61.

beings. Because Dōgen presents the meaning of evil and good in the context of the *dharmadhātu*, these are both recognized as various and many, rather than being limited to the Buddhist doctrine of precepts and the guidelines of the 8-fold path. It is the interdependent nature of good and evil within the *dharmadhātu* that makes possible changes and variability in their meaning according to place and time.

. . . the evil of this world and the evil of other worlds is sometimes the same and sometimes different, of former times and present times it is sometimes the same and sometimes different. The evil of the heavens and the evil of humankind is sometimes the same and sometimes different. (231)

While the fascicle is concerned with discussions dedicated to each single line of the verse, most of this emphasis is on the first line, *shoaku makusa*, the title given to the entire fascicle. As in the Pāli verse, there appears to be greater emphasis on the good as negation. So that to understand the meaning of Buddhist moral living, the most important, or foundational realization, is that of not producing any evil.

Dōgen begins his explanation of the verse by extending the meaning of all the Buddhas from the traditional recognition of only seven Buddhas to the inclusion of all phenomena, both sentient and insentient, all revealing the Dharma and thus teaching this verse continuously. What the Buddhas teach is “not-producing,” the realization of the essential non-substantiality (*mushō*, 無生), of both good and evil. From the standpoint of the *dharmadhātu*, in every moment, there is only the true expression of every phenomenon as an unobstructed inter-relation with all other phenomena, (a standpoint described by Dōgen as “body and mind falling away”) *shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落. What is accepted as moral differs according to time and place and has a meaning relative to these conventions. This, however, does not mean that there is no good or evil—

according to time and place there is good and there is evil, but there is the possibility through zazen of recognizing, at one and the same time, both evil and its non-appearance.

we can penetrate not-producing evil, and realize it by a commitment to sitting. [so that] at this moment reality is realized as not-producing evil. . . (SBGZ v. 2, 235)

As was the case with the earliest practitioners, in Zen practice not producing evil begins by observing the precepts, as an outward expression, of enlightened life. When one practices not-producing evil there is an imitation of the *dharmadhātu* (the original purity of universal Buddhahood), just as in early Buddhist practice of the precepts there is the imitation of the purity of all the buddhas. Dōgen thus describes all phenomena in the *dharmadhātu*, both sentient and insentient, as an expression of the precepts because they all reveal the reality of not producing.

It is not that evil does not exist, it is nothing but not producing. It is not that evil exists, it is nothing but not producing. . . spring pines are neither existence nor nonexistence, they are not producing. An autumn chrysanthemum is neither existence nor nonexistence, it is not producing. The buddhas are neither existence nor non-existence, they are not producing. Such things as an outdoor pillar, a stone lantern, a whisk and a staff are neither existence nor non-existence, they are not producing. The self is neither existence nor nonexistence, it is not producing. (235-236)

The non-substantiality of evil is reflected in the non-substantiality of all things. In attempting to not produce evil, there is an attempt to live in accordance with reality. There is, of course the danger of assuming that if evil is not ultimately real, then one can do as one pleases without consequence. There has been some debate among contemporary Dōgen

scholars as to whether Dōgen became much more conservative in his later sermons, collected in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, ultimately rejecting his earlier work by adopting a firm position on the reality of cause and effect and karmic consequences. These questions were first brought forth by Critical Buddhists Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō in the 1980s,²¹ arguing that Dōgen was responding in these works to the lack of moral grounding in a Buddhism based on the original harmony (*wagō* 和合) of the *dharmadhātu*. But even in an early fascicle like *Shoaku makusa*, Dōgen recognizes that the original non-substantiality of evil does not negate evil in the relative world.

To assert that if not producing is so, we would deliberately produce [evil], is like walking north and expecting to arrive in the south. Not producing is not only a well looking at a donkey [seeing phenomena from the standpoint of the *dharmadhātu*], it is the well looking at the well [the *dharmadhātu* when body and mind have fallen away], the donkey looking at the donkey [the relative world] a human being looking at a human being [the relative world of human relationships, which include good and evil, right and wrong], and a mountain looking at a mountain [the natural world].
(236)

It is in the relative world of everyday relationships that offering the good occurs. But as in the case of evil, good is also originally non-substantial from the standpoint of the *dharmadhātu*, and it is in this very non-substantiality that the many kinds of good are made possible. Because there is originally no determined good, there is the freedom to respond to every relative moment by offering the good that is required.

²¹ The influence of their work drew both the interest and criticism of a number of Western Buddhist scholars, resulting in a collection of essays titled, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, appearing in 1997.

. . . there has never been any kind of good that is realized beforehand and then waits for someone to do it. There is none among the many kinds of good that fails to appear at the very moment of doing good. The many kinds of good have no set shape, but they converge on the place of doing good faster than iron to a magnet. (237)

In contrast to the original meaning of verse 183 from the *Dhammapada*, the lack of specificity given to the good allows for a greater range of response than what we found in the original Pāli verse. In that case, the good was primarily understood as the negation of mental impurities—namely the negation of the unwholesome roots of anger, greed, and delusion. Dōgen's presentation of the verse allows for the witness to respond with freedom, realizing a possible good appropriate for any given moment, originating out of the *dharmadhātu* and having “no set shape” (*muzō nari* 無象なり).²²

²² Of course, one could also state that the meaning of good and evil is much more explicit in Pāli Buddhism, and therefore clearer and less likely to be misrepresented. The lack of specificity of both good and evil in the *dharmadhātu* can also open the door to the kinds of moral relativism indicative of the transgressions found among Zen leaders since the Meiji Period. However, such moral relativism is a clear misapprehension of the Middle Way and the meaning of the Two Truths, leading to the kinds of detrimental errors that, I would argue, Dōgen is attempting to address in *Shoaku makusa*. Influential studies of these transgressions include, William Bodiford's “Zen and the Art of Religious Prejudice” (1996), a study of the Sōtō treatment of Japanese outcastes (*burakumin* 部落民) during the modern period; studies of Zen Buddhist nationalism, including James W. Heisig's and John C. Maraldo's *Rude Awakenings: Zen, The Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (1995), Brian D. Victoria's *Zen at War* 2nd edition (2006) and *Zen Terror in Prewar Japan: Portrait of an Assassin* (2020), and Christopher Ives' *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (2009); for an example of sexual misconduct in a contemporary American Zen community see the NYT article, “Joshu Sasaki, 107, Tainted Zen Master” (2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/joshu-sasaki-a-zen-master-tarnished-by-abuse-claims-dies-at-107.html>. For an important alternative study of modern Japanese Buddhism providing examples of social justice and resistance,

Dōgen's *Shoaku makusa* thus aligns to a great extent with traditional Indian Buddhist moral thought. He recognizes the non-production of evil in the adherence to the early Buddhist precepts, while illuminating the freedom of non-production of evil and “offering the many kinds of good” in the bodhisattva's realization of the *dharmadhātu*. The freedom of the bodhisattva's moral activity is not antinomian, nor does it result in moral relativism. The freedom of the *dharmadhātu* is not simply an observation of harmony, but a moral engagement with the complex challenges of a continually altering world. It is not that good and evil are non-existent or that good and evil are ultimately equal, it is only that the meaning of both good and evil is non-substantial and ever-changing. Zen practice is therefore the capacity to show up in the midst of each relative moment and respond wisely and compassionately.

On the Precepts in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* and the *Jukai* Fascicle

Because there is no direct discussion of the precepts in *Shoaku makusa*, in remaining sections I will, first, take up Dōgen's stance regarding the practice of the precepts and second, discuss how *Shoaku makusa* reflects the moral practice of the traditional bodhisattva path.

From the standpoint of the *dharmadhātu* the Buddhist precepts do not represent an absolute moral practice any more than any other moral practice. The precepts are simply without substance, resulting from the human interests of a particular place and time—namely, the concerns for karma and rebirth in fifth century BCE northeastern India. This fact does not negate the human benefits of keeping the precepts both on an

see James Mark Shields' *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan* (2017). For a nuanced examination of the scholarly debates over ethics in modern Zen Buddhism see Steven Heine's “Zen Rights: A Series of (Un)fortunate Social Events,” in *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up?* (2008), pp. 115-153.

individual and a social level, or the value of preserving the precepts among devout Buddhists. Within the context of early Buddhism the moral practice of the precepts was generally understood as karmically auspicious and, “. . . by such practice [one] becomes a conqueror of both worlds, so that all will go well with [them] in this world and the next, and at the breaking-up of the body after death will go to a good destiny, a heavenly world” (DN 31:181). Keeping the precepts was thus understood as a central practice of *puñña* or meritorious action, along with other practices such as the support of the Buddhist Sangha, pilgrimage, or “going forth” as a monk or nun, all of which contribute to the promise of higher rebirths. At the same time, an auspicious rebirth is not liberation, and being reborn in a heavenly realm was not understood in early Buddhism as the most auspicious realm for liberation, given that the pleasures of heaven were understood as so extreme that they would produce serious impediments to liberation.²³

One of the more useful sources for examining Dōgen's understanding of the precepts is the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* 正法眼藏随聞記 (*Record of Things Heard*),²⁴ compiled by Ejō between 1234 and 1238. The *zuimonki* is a collection of informal sermons and conversations delivered throughout the first four years after Ejō's arrival and two years before *Shoaku makusa*. The text covers a wide range of topics, many of them concerned with Dōgen's reflections on the ethical dimensions of Zen Buddhism. In the very first section of the text, Dōgen warns his audience about the limits of merit-making practices:

²³ See for example, in *Handsome Nanda* (2007), written by Āśvaghoṣa in the second century CE, Canto 11, “The Condemnation of Heaven,” pp. 213-228.

²⁴ Citations from the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* have all been taken from the Chōenji version, which has an altered organization of the six books that make up the text when compared to the more commonly translated Menzan version.

In general, it is true that if we venerate and make offerings to the realm of the Three Treasures our faults will disappear and we will gain merit, the karma that leads us to the evil realms will be removed, and we will be reborn in the realms of human and heavenly beings. However, it is a mistaken view to cling to such activities and say that we have attained the Buddha's realization through these [acts alone]. (SZ 2-1:63)

He follows this assessment by stating, "we should protect and maintain our practice based on the precepts and regulations for eating" (63), but that it was:

. . . also wrong to take them as paramount, focusing on them as our only task, and think that we will attain the Way [merely] by living in such a manner. We follow these regulations simply because that is how patch-robed monks behave; this is the family style of the Buddha's children. Although [keeping the precepts] is a good thing, it is wrong to grasp them alone as the essential practice. However, I am not saying that we should break the precepts and become self-indulgent. Clinging to such an attitude is a mistaken view and [if we do so] we will be outside the Buddha Way. We follow [the precepts] only because that is the standard for the Buddha's family and the family style of Zen monasteries. While I was staying at monasteries in the country of Song [China], I did not see the monks make them their primary practice. (63)

Here Dōgen recognizes the legitimacy of the precepts within the tradition of Buddhist practice. The precepts, as a moral code, are particular to the time and place of the early Buddhist movement, and if one is to take up the practice, aligning oneself with this way of life, then this includes

following the precepts. However, following the precepts in itself is not sufficient for awakening. This view does not conflict with traditional notions of the precepts—they are karmically auspicious, but not liberation. In addition, these are not absolute moral codes, because no moral codes are. However, recognizing this is not an antinomian stance. Seeing their lack of substance does not mean one would therefore break the precepts in response—such an attitude is according to Dōgen, “a mistaken view.” The main point here is not to contest the practice of the precepts, but rather, to not have one’s moral life limited to the precepts.

On other occasions in the *Zuimonki* Dōgen reiterates that his view of the precepts is not one of disregard.²⁵ Rather, he associates the meaning of keeping the precepts with devotion to the monastic life itself, including the practice of zazen.

. . . the precepts are maintained [by doing] zazen, and so forth. “Reciting the *Precepts Sutra* [sic] day and night and keeping the precepts single-mindedly” means nothing other than practicing just sitting [*shikantaza* 只管打坐], in the manner of the ancients. When we do zazen, what precept is not observed? What virtue is not actualized? (65)

Dōgen’s devotion to the precepts is also evident in his construction of the *jūrokujukai* 十六受戒 or 16-article precepts.²⁶ This particular grouping of precepts was the result of Dōgen’s narrow distillation of all the collections of monastic rules transmitted from India to China, and then to Japan.²⁷ Rather than including either the entire *Bhikkhu prātimokṣa* or the 58

²⁵ For example, 3-19:157 and 4-8:181.

²⁶ Recorded in the undated *Jukai* fascicle, the second work included in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*.

²⁷ On Dōgen’s formation of the ordination precepts see Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen’s Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 2020, pp. 209-215.

Brahmajāla Sūtra bodhisattva precepts, he developed a unique set of 16 bodhisattva precepts including the 3 Refuges, the 3 Pure Precepts and the 10 Grave Precepts.²⁸ These are primarily vows from early foundational Buddhism, except for two Mahāyāna-based vows, “not to criticize the bodhisattvas,” and the third pure precept of benefiting all beings, a Mahāyāna replacement of “purifying the mind” in *Dhammapada* verse 183. To this day, Sōtō monks continue to receive the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts upon ordination and promise to maintain each precept until they “attain a Buddha body” 至仏身(SBGZ v. 4, 111).²⁹

The Bodhisattva’s “Not Yet” in the Zen Practitioner’s “Going Beyond”

In the corpus of Indian Pāli and Mahāyāna texts, the path of the bodhisattva is one of an unknowable and arduous journey. Spending innumerable lifetimes practicing the perfections (Sk. *pāramitās*; Jp. *haramitsu* 波羅蜜) and traversing the ten stages (Sk. *daśabhūmi*; Jp. *jūji* 十地) of awakening, the attainment of Buddhahood was presented as a hopeful aspiration rather than a realized claim of final completion. The Pāli and Sanskrit Jātaka Tales, including the largest collection of discourses in the entire *Sutta Piṭika*, traced the many previous lives of Śākyamuni Buddha in both human and animal form, revealing the fantastic level of self-sacrifice and wisdom required for the bodhisattva’s journey. The primary meaning of this journey was grounded in the bodhisattva vow to *attain*, rather than

²⁸ The Ten Grave Precepts include: (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal; (3) not to engage in sexual misconduct; (4) not to lie; (5) not to handle intoxicants; (6) not to criticize the bodhisattvas; (7) not to praise oneself and criticize others; (8) not to begrudge the Dharma or material possessions; (9) not to become angry; and (10) not to insult the Three Treasures.

²⁹ I.e., indefinitely.

attainment itself. In contrast to the arhat,³⁰ what defined the identity of the bodhisattva in the Indian Buddhist *imaginaire* was the “not yet” of final attainment. A bodhisattva is a *not yet* fully enlightened being. It is this “not yet” that provides the moral space for a continuous and unceasing evolution of wisdom and compassion. The *dharmadhātu* was understood as the space where this journey was made possible.

In the *Shoaku makusa* fascicle Dōgen also recognized the *dharmadhātu* as the space for Zen practice, allowing for the “not yet” of moral activity. This included receiving the traditional Buddhist precepts as bodhisattva precepts, while promising to maintain each precept until the attainment of a Buddha body. But as indicated in both *Shoaku makusa* and the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* he also warned against seeing the precepts as the end point of Buddhist morality. This was not an antinomian position. Dōgen wasn't arguing for a Buddhism not limited by the precepts, but rather a Buddhism not limited *to* the precepts. This allows for the potential to realize moral action that goes beyond the traditional precepts. Not only beyond the precepts, but beyond other forms of conventional morality that may be prevalent during a particular place and time.

The meaning of “going beyond” in the context of Chan Buddhism was introduced to contemporary scholarship by Dale Wright in his seminal work *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (1998). Presented as a critique of the romanticism informing John Blofeld's transhistorical interpretation of Zen awakening, Wright pointed to the Chinese *Transmission of the Lamp* records which belie a repetition of insight, instead often depicting each patriarch going beyond the insight of their predecessor. The authors of these texts, therefore, according to Wright, recognized the historical contextualization of mind-to mind-transmission (106). In his

³⁰ Whose final *nibbāna* is presented in a Pāli canon pericope as, “Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being” (SN 35.28.6).

article published in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* in 2006 titled, “Satori and the Moral Dimension of Enlightenment,” Wright critiqued the ineffectiveness of traditional Zen training in responding to complex, real-life ethical questions. Yet he found in the Chan concept of “going beyond” the possibility of allowing for change and creativity in the meaning of the thought of enlightenment so that Zen practitioners could develop a greater capacity to effectively respond to a variety of historical challenges. Wright points to the image of:

“... the Chinese Zen claim that every authentic enlightenment “goes beyond” the teacher and the tradition as it was inherited. This account is based on the realization that the most exciting Zen masters were creative, that their actions extended the tradition in unforeseen directions. It seemed to recognize that the success of the tradition’s efforts to preserve the vitality of Zen is located in its ability to criticize itself and to develop in new directions in response to the new possibilities and situations that emerge. (14)

Why would the Zen tradition betray both a record of self-critical creativity and one of complacent moral failure? In the early dawn of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, Nāgārjuna warned of the dangers implicit in emptiness philosophy. Like handling a poisonous snake, misapprehension would surely lead to harm.³¹ Limiting one’s realization of the *dharmadhatu* to a realm of non-duality where all phenomena are equal in their voidness fails to recognize that voidness makes possible the arising of the multiplicity of phenomena, including the multiplicity of good and evil. The *dharmadhatu* as the realm of non-duality is the source of bodhisattvic freedom, but it is the *dharmadhatu* as the realm of multiplicity that makes possible the creativity of enlightened moral action. The good, “having no set

³¹ See the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (XXIV.7-11), in Jay L. Garfield p. 68.

shape,” can only be actualized in the relative world of phenomena, a world that, as such, provides the space for bodhisattvic activity.

Worldly Morality and the Morality of Bodhicitta

The good described by Dōgen is performed in the relative world as a bodhisattvic deed, but there is no guarantee that such a relative world will necessarily recognize a bodhisattvic good as good. In the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* for example, Dōgen states:

. . . we should not cease practicing the Way even if worldly people speak ill of us. . . . How is it possible to judge the Way of the buddhas and ancestors from [the worldly standards of] good and bad? Therefore, do not follow the sentiments of worldly people. If there is reason for an action to be carried out according to the Buddha Way, then we should carry it out wholeheartedly. (SZ 4-9:187)

The distinction between a worldly person (J. *sejin* 世人) or “worldling” (P. *puṭhujjana*, S. *laukika*), and one who is devoted to the Buddhadharma, had been prevalent in Buddhist parlance throughout its historical development. The term is not necessarily pejorative. If one does not agree, for example, that the Four Noble Truths are in fact true or believes that contentment is best achieved in the life of home and commerce, then in this sense one would be living as a worldling—as one possible way of living a human life. Dōgen speaks of this distinction to a great extent in the *zuimonki*, especially in Book Three. Much of this concern may have been due to the practical challenges in attempting to establish a new monastic community, and the possibilities of being maligned for any number of

social or political reasons.³² But Dōgen primarily makes this distinction in terms of moral differences that result from the awakening of *bodhicitta* (J. *bodaishin* 菩提心).

Examining the fourth line of the *Shoaku makusa* verse, “Purifying one’s resolve,” Dōgen turned to a Zen dialogue between the Tang era poet Haku Kyo-i 白居易 and Chan patriarch Chōka Dōrin 鳥窠道林. When Kyo-i asked, “What is the intention of the Buddhadharma?”, Dōrin responded, “Not-producing evil, offering many kinds of good.” Kyo-i scoffed at the answer, stating, “if so, even a child of three could say this!” (SBGZ v. 2, 241). While Dōrin responded by reminding Kyo-i that the simplicity of the statement did not somehow deny the difficulty of the practice,³³ Dōgen entered the dialogue by arguing that Kyo-i, while being a great poet, was still a worldlying who had no understanding of the Buddhadharma. Kyo-i’s response to Dōrin betrayed a complete misapprehension of a three-year-old child, a misapprehension resulting first, from a lack of *bodhicitta* (and so failing to purify his own resolve) and second, an unwillingness to acknowledge the child’s place in the *dharmadhatu*. The child is not excluded from the interdependent realm of the *dharmadhatu*, and so expresses the truth of the Buddhadharma with every word and action.

Kyo-i, how pitiful you are. What are you saying? You have never associated with the ways of the buddhas, so how could you know a three-year-old child? . . . One who knows a three-year-old child must also know the buddhas of the three times. How could someone who has never known the

³² Including perceptions of laziness or anti-Confucian ways in renunciate living, unfair governmental donations of land and tax breaks for monasteries, influences of *bakufu* political power, as well as sectarian conflicts, especially with the well-established Tendai school.

³³ “A child of three can speak the truth, but an old man of eighty cannot practice it” (241).

buddhas of the three times know a three-year-old child? . . .
 . . . One who knows a single speck of dust knows the entire world, and one who has penetrated a single dharma has penetrated the myriad dharmas. One who has not penetrated the myriad dharmas has not penetrated even a single dharma. (243-244)

The “not yet” of final awakening and the moral “going beyond” of the bodhisattva is made more explicit in the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles *Sanjūshichihon bodaibunpō* 三十七品菩提分法, “The Thirty-seven Factors of Awakening,” and *Hotsu bodaishin* 発菩提心, “Raising the Mind of Enlightenment.”³⁴ The former is obviously derived from the *bodhipakkhiyā dhamma*, or Thirty-seven Factors of Awakening (sometimes translated as “wings to awakening”) indicated in the Pāli Buddhist canon,³⁵ and codified in early post-canonical works. Dōgen’s presentation of the factors mirror the Pāli materials quite closely, with only minimal subtle differences in translation and ordering of factors within groups. During his discussion of Right Livelihood within the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, Dōgen takes up the differences between the *śrāvaka* and bodhisattva path, chastising his contemporaries for conflating the two by including both the Pāli

³⁴ Both are recorded as being delivered in the winter of 1244, during the period when Dōgen’s community had left Kōshōji, and were staying in temporary quarters while the construction of Eiheiji 永平寺 was being completed. The records of the *Shōbōgenzō* state that the *Hotsu bodaishin* sermon was delivered on the same day as another informal sermon of the very same title, but with completely different content. This *Hotsu bodaishin* fascicle is the sixty-third work in the 75-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, and the fifty-third work in the 60-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, where it is given the alternative title *Hotsu mujō shin*, or “Raising the supreme mind” (see Bielefeldt, 2008). It is therefore possible that the *Hotsu bodaishin* fascicle included in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, the text that I am citing, may have been confused at one point with the other text and was dated 1244, but may have actually been composed during the later Eiheiji period, along with the great majority of other material included in the 12-fascicle collection.

³⁵ See, for example, DN 16, and AN 9.1

Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts in monastic training.³⁶ To drive home his point he cites a statement attributed to Śākyamuni Buddha—“A śrāvaka keeping the precepts is a bodhisattva breaking the precepts” 声聞持戒菩薩破戒, *Jōmon jikai bosatsu hakkai* (SBGZ v. 4, 307). In actuality, this is not an exact quote taken from the Buddhist canon, but rather Dōgen’s own summation of a section from the *Upāli-pariṣcchā*, or *The Upāli Inquiry* (Ch. 優波離會), a short Mahāyāna sūtra included in the *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, or *The Great Heap of Jewels Sūtra*, (Ch. 大寶積經), a collection of forty-nine Indian Mahāyāna sūtras compiled over the early centuries of the Common Era and translated into the Chinese beginning in the eighth century. Dōgen was referring to a section within the text where the Buddha is discussing the distinctions between the śrāvaka and bodhisattva precepts with Upāli, the great reciter of the original *Vinaya* following the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*. Dōgen does not go into the details of this discussion found in the original text, but concludes, “. . . the śrāvaka precepts, when compared to the bodhisattva precepts are all violations of the precepts” (307).

This conclusion is based in the Buddha’s primary message in the *Upāli-pariṣcchā*, namely that the śrāvaka precepts are limited to prohibitions,³⁷ for they are primarily concerned with the goal of eradicating the defilements and avoiding rebirth. In contrast, the bodhisattva precepts are both “prohibitive and permissive” because the bodhisattva does not abhor *saṃsāra* but gladly returns for the sake of sentient beings (*Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, *Upāli-pariṣcchā* 268). When Upāli asks the Buddha to distinguish between the severity of breaking precepts out of desire, hatred, or ignorance, the Buddha replies that while bodhisattvas should never break precepts out of hatred or ignorance, precepts broken due to desire should not burden the bodhisattva with remorse and regret as long as they do not relinquish their *bodhicitta*. “Upāli, a Bodhisattva should not

³⁶ These would include both Chinese monastic systems of the period, as well as the Rinzai school of Zen, founded by Eisai in 1191.

³⁷ Thus, reducing śrāvaka morality to its negative structure.

be afraid of the passions which can help him hold sentient beings in his embrace, but he should fear the passions which can cause him to forsake sentient beings” (270).³⁸

Given the context of Dōgen's citation, his claim that keeping the *śrāvaka* precepts is a violation of the bodhisattva precepts, is based in the recognition that the bodhisattva precepts arise from *bodhicitta* while the *śrāvaka* precepts do not. Precepts maintained without *bodhicitta* are therefore broken precepts, given that the intention behind maintaining the precepts is not the same. The intention that informs *bodhicitta* is the welcoming of rebirth—the “not yet” of final awakening, a “not yet” that provides an opening for the continual “going beyond” of moral cultivation.

Dōgen addressed the meaning of *bodhicitta* in the *Hotsu bodaishin* 発菩提心, or “The Arising of *Bodhicitta*” fascicle, a work included in the twelve-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*. Throughout the text, Dōgen was concerned with revealing how the bodhisattva vehicle is distinguished from the *śrāvaka* vehicle by the awakening of *bodhicitta*.

Upon the arising of *bodhicitta*, one may train for immeasurable eons or for one-hundred great *kalpas*. After innumerable *kalpas* of practice one may become a Buddha. Or, guided by the pleasures of *bodhicitta*, one may practice for such great lengths of time only to benefit sentient beings, ferrying them to the other shore without concern for one's own attainment of Buddhahood. (SBGZ v. 4:178)

This is certainly not original enlightenment language, but instead, aligning more evidently with the language of early Indian Mahāyāna

³⁸ Another section of the *Upāli-pariprcchā* germane to *Shoaku makusa* follows, when Mañjuśrī enters the conversation stating that, “all dharmas are ultimately Vinaya” and then proceeds to describe the “ultimate Vinaya,” revealed through the negative dimensions of the *dharmadhātu* (i.e., *dharmadhātu* as not-producing) (270-271).

Buddhism. Time is unimaginably vast and final attainment unknowably far removed from the present. *Bodhicitta* thus brackets attainment, replacing it with the benefit of others—a sentiment openly presented in the *Zuimonki* as well:

. . . we should practice the Way of the previous sages and emulate the conduct of the ancestors [while] expecting nothing, seeking nothing, and attaining nothing. We should cut off our desire for seeking; we should not expect even the fruit of Buddhahood. . . . Solely for the sake of becoming the foundation of happiness for human and heavenly beings and without having the slightest of expectations, we should maintain the prescribed manner of conduct, think of acting to save and benefit living beings, and earnestly perform all good deeds while giving up our former evil ones. (SZ 4-8:181)

We find in this language both the “not yet” of the bodhisattva path as well as the necessity of adherence to tradition precepts. Even with Dōgen’s often high praise for the attainments of the great Zen patriarchs, and their transmission of a Dharma originating from the Buddha himself, in his reflections on the meaning of *bodhicitta* in *Hotsu bodaishin* the patriarchs are also relegated to the “not yet” of the bodhisattva.

Know that the study of the Way of the ancestors invariably makes the awakening of *bodhicitta* a priority. This is the abiding Dharma of all the buddhas and ancestors. Such an awakening is like the arrival of the dawn, it is not the ultimate awakening of a buddha. Even if one would suddenly experience all ten stages of the path at once, one would still be a bodhisattva. The Four Heavenlies, the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and the first six patriarchs of China, as well as the other great ancestral masters, were all

bodhisattvas; they were not buddhas. Nor were they śrāvakas or *pratyekbuddhas*. (SBGZ v. 4:187-188)³⁹

Conclusion

Given Steven Heine's extensive work analyzing various contemporary assessments of the trajectory of Dōgen's career,⁴⁰ these reflections on *Shoaku makusa* may be most appropriately placed in what he has identified as the "Tradition" school of thought, rather than the "Renewal," "Decline," or "Critical" camps. However, unlike a prevalent position of many Sōtō School traditionalists, I would be less inclined to reduce Dōgen Zen to "just sitting." While recognizing his commitment to establishing a new monastic community steeped in the disciplines of Chinese Chan, his devotion to

³⁹ This denial of final attainment in Dōgen Zen has also been addressed in Atsushi (Shōken) Hayakawa's recent article, "Smuggled Hinduism—Dogen's Viewpoint," concerned with Dōgen's critique of Mazu's claim, "Your very mind is Buddha" 即心是仏. Hayakawa argues that Mazu's statement is Hinduist rather than Buddhist, and Dōgen exposes Mazu's error in the 1239 *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle *Sokushin zebutsu*, emphasizing instead, the necessity of continuous practice. From Dōgen's insistence on continuous practice, Hayakawa concludes, "he is not striving for his own salvation. It is an eternal loop without salvation, at least, of oneself" (7).

⁴⁰ For a recent discussion of these interpretive categories, see Steven Heine's *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, pp. 81-87.

the value systems of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism,⁴¹ is also apparent throughout his career.⁴²

Finally, while *Shoaku makusa* is only a presentation of Mahāyāna Buddhist morality in the abstract, one concrete example of Dōgen himself going beyond conventional morality was in his rejection of an offer of land and a monastic abbacy in Kamakura from the shōgun regent Hōjō Tokiyori in 1248,⁴³ and soon after, his reluctance to wear the imperial purple

⁴¹ The Indian influence has been recognized in previous scholarship as well. In Book 1 of the Nishijima and Cross translation of the *Shōbōgenzō*, they include a guide to the many references Dōgen makes throughout his sermons to each chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Taigen Dan Leighton has examined these influences of the *Lotus Sūtra* as well, especially Chapters 15 and 16, in both the *Shōbōgenzō* and the formal sermons of the *Eihei Kōroku*, in “Dōgen’s Appropriation of the *Lotus Sutra* Ground and Space,” (2005).

⁴² The texts evaluated in this article include examples ranging from very early works like the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* and “One Bright Pearl” to middle-period sermons like “Not Producing Evil,” and other *dharmadhātu*-based works, as well as the post Kōshōji work, “The Thirty-seven Factors of Awakening,” and finally, a work included in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenō*, “The Arising of *Bodhicitta*.”

⁴³ According to traditional records, Dōgen spent more than six months in Kamakura, between the summer of 1247 and late winter of 1248, delivering his teachings to the centers of power in the region. Eiheiji, his monastery, newly acquired through the donations of a samurai patron Hatano Yoshishigi in the summer of 1244, was located in the remote region of Echizen province, removed from both the shōgunate in Kamakura and the imperial court in Kyoto. Upon his return to Eiheiji he delivered a discourse recorded in his collection of formal sermons, the *Eihei Kōroku* 永平広録, revealing his humbled and grateful mood. “On the third day of the eighth month of last year, this mountain monk departed from this mountain and went to Kamakura District . . . to expound the Dharma for patrons and lay students. . . . there was no Dharma at all that I have never previously expounded, or that you have not heard. I merely explained to them that people who practice virtue improve; that those who produce unwholesomeness degenerate. . . . Does the great assembly want to understand this truth? I cannot stand that my tongue has no means to express the cause and the result. How many mistakes I have made in my effort to cultivate the way. . . . This mountain monk has been gone for more than half a year. I was like a solitary wheel placed in vast space. Today, I have returned to the mountains,

robe.⁴⁴ While these kinds of tributes would have certainly been cherished as a great honor and an institutional benefit among monastic leaders of his time, Dōgen's actions indicate a questioning of such traditional value systems, possibly at great risk to his career and even his own life.

In Dale Wright's critical assessment of Zen tradition's lack of moral cultivation and reflection, he states that in contrast to prevalent modes of Zen teaching and practice:

Past experience in explicit moral deliberation provides the resources enabling one to respond thoughtfully to unfamiliar situations. It also gives one the capacity to challenge traditional moral practices and customs in an unfamiliar

and the clouds are feeling joyful" (EK 3:251, p. 246). While traveling from Kamakura back to Eihei-ji he also composed a *waka* poem expressing his resolve to remain independent of Kamakura influence:

In the heart of the night,
The moonlight framing
A small boat drifting,
Tossed not by the waves
Nor swayed by the breeze. (Heine, "Dōgen: His Life" 33)

⁴⁴ For a discussion of these events in Dōgen's life, see Steven Heine's *Did Dōgen Go to China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It*, Oxford UP, 2006, p. 200, and *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, Columbia UP, 2020, p. 78, where Heine argues that Dōgen's construction of the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* may have been instigated by a critical reaction to the shōgun regent's offer, especially the fascicles on karmic causality delivered near the end of his life. As for the purple robe, declining the offer three times may have been a common, and even expected response during the period, primarily as a ritualized show of humility. However, there remains the contention in some contemporary scholarly circles that Dōgen was never willing to wear the robe. See for example, Reiho Masunaga's "Zen Master Dōgen's Life and Thought," 1966, p. 2; also, Hee-Jin Kim's *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*, 1975, p. 47.

situation that doesn't fit into previous models of behavior.
(11)

Dōgen's actions in the above example do exhibit the kind of moral deliberation that Wright sets forth in his critique, as one early example of resistance to Imperial-Way Zen. Such deliberation could not have simply been the result of just sitting, but rather from a keen awareness of the socio-political circumstances in which he found himself, recognizing the damage to the integrity of his community that could result from being beholden to the shōgunate.

This capacity to “go beyond” prevalent notions of good and evil find a source for cultivation in Dōgen's presentation of *Shoaku makusa*, possibly serving as a model for effecting moral freedom in contemporary Zen practice. First, Dōgen's sermon provides a clear warning against the antinomianism and moral relativism that can easily creep into Zen Buddhist misappropriations of the *dharmadhatu*, where assertions of voidness, non-dualism, and transhistorical insight have served as convenient justifications for immoral, and even violent actions. Living in the midst of an interdependent world, the practice of “not producing any evil” can only be maintained if one's recognition of wrongdoing is not limited to commonly prescribed expectations, but is instead based in a dedication to *bodhicitta*, where harm to any living being is repudiated. The cultivation of meditation and monastic discipline according to Dōgen is itself a practice of not producing evil, but an authentic dedication to *bodhicitta* requires the extension of monastic not-producing to socio-political and ecological not-producing, with all its complexity, unexpected challenges, and constantly changing moral demands. Dōgen's refusal of Tokiyori's land offer was a socio-political act of not-producing within actual historical context.

Second, “offering the many kinds of good” is realized in the non-substantiality of the *dharmadhatu*, allowing for both the courage and the moral freedom to act for the welfare of other beings. Courage and

compassion are discovered in the non-substantial as non-attachment and universal selflessness. Moral freedom is made available in the multiplicity of the good, offered and recognized in the concrete particularity of time and space.

Finally, “purifying one’s resolve” through a dedication to the cultivation of *bodhicitta* requires the recognition and inclusion of all beings in the present-moment manifestation of the *dharmadhatu*. Each included in all, all included in each. Non-discrimination is not a matter of special knowledge, but rather the humility and compassion resulting from the unknowability of any single living being.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
EK	<i>Eihei Kōroku</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
SBGZ	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i>
SN	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
SZ	<i>Shōbōgenzō zuimonki</i>

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