

Critique of Original Awakening Thought
in Shōshin and Dōgen.

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THE CONTEXT OF ORIGINAL AWAKENING THOUGHT

Original Awakening (*hongaku*) thought is the name given to the theories that developed around the thematization of the term, *hongaku*, which first appeared in the *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun* (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith; T. 1666 and T. 1667). We can define it as that way of thinking which, overcoming and transcending all dualistic thought, expounds an absolute world of non-duality, and in that context affirms all factual reality as a manifestation of Original Awakening. Historically, the theme of Original Awakening was first developed by the Chinese Tripitaka Master, Hsien-shou, i.e., Fa-tsang (643-712), who established Hua-yen (*Avatamsaka*) philosophy by employing *The Treatise on the Awakening of Faith* together with the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* (T. 278 and T. 279), thus initiating Original Awakening as a doctrinal theme. In Japan, in his attempts to systematize esoteric doctrine, Kūkai (774-835) had frequent recourse to Hua-yen doctrine, especially its theme of Original Awakening, thus giving a new start to this idea in Japan. In particular, Kūkai made extensive use of the *Shih ma-ho-yen lun* (Treatise on the Interpretation of the Great Vehicle; Jap., *Shakumakaenron*; T. 1668), which is a commentary upon *The Treatise on the Awakening of Faith*, with the result that he pointed the Chinese treatment of Original Awakening in a new direction. In China Original Awakening thought had developed by placing emphasis upon the fundamental "one-mind" in Hua-yen

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philosophy, while in Japan it progressed by emphasizing non-duality (*funī*) in Kūkai's tantric Buddhism. In fact, Kūkai attached the utmost importance to the term, "the non-dual Mahāyāna teaching," (*funī-makaen*) found in the Shih ma-ho-yen lun, i.e., the Shakumakaenron, and applied it to both esoteric Buddhism and to the theme of Original Awakening.

In tandem with Kūkai's esoteric doctrine, the theme of Original Awakening was subsequently carried to the Tendai sect on Mount Hiei and there found a new path of development. In the Middle Ages the theme of Original Awakening reached its apogee and took on the characteristics which we indicated above in the initial definition.

In concrete terms we could describe our world as constituted in two dimensions: the dimension of factual reality, i.e., change, living and dying and the dimension of the eternal, i.e., unchanging permanence. In traditional Buddhism, one distinguishes these two dimensions by such terms as the conventional and the real, the mundane and the true, fact (*ji*) and principle (*ri*). The *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith* refers to these two dimensions as living-and-dying and suchness. In the dimension of the factual, there arise all kinds of things and phenomena which can be expressed in categories that differentiate them from one another, such as self and other, male and female, old and young, matter and spirit, life and death, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Such dualistic categories, however, do not exist each by itself with an independent and fixed essence (*ātman*); they are without essence and empty; they are fundamentally non-dual and in unity. Thus one can conclude that the non-duality of the categories whereby we differentiate things is the original dimension of the eternal. Original Awakening thought first focuses its attention on this eternal dimension of non-duality. It is only in a second move that it returns to the dimension of factual reality, endeavors to revivify that factual dimension of duality through the eternal dimension of non-duality, and thus concludes with an affirmation of

that factual reality.

The duality between living and dying can serve as an example. Ordinarily one tends to seek after eternal life in the form of non-dying endless life. Thus one affirms only life while negating and rejecting death. But such an affirmation must be evaluated as a way of thinking under the spell of the factual dimension of the duality of living and dying. Since one rejects the one and clings to the other, life and death are seen as mutually opposed to one another, and one does not truly grasp eternal, absolute life. Thus eternal, absolute life is reached by transcending the mutual opposition between living and dying. The primitive sūtras expressed this by phrases like "transcending living-and-dying," "neither living nor dying," "neither origination nor extinction," for this is the transcending and negating of both living and dying. In their turn the Mahāyāna sūtras tend to express this somewhat more positively and to speak, for example, of "the non-duality of living and dying" or "the oneness of living and dying." Living and dying are non-dual and equal, for it is not a matter of taking the one and rejecting the other. This non-duality of living and dying is what is meant by the eternal dimension.

Original Awakening thought began by pushing this idea of the non-duality of living and dying to its extreme, to return then to the factual dimension of the duality of living and dying, thus evaluating both positively. If one wants to negate and reject, then not only death but also life must be negated and rejected; if one wants to affirm and grasp, then not only life but also death must be affirmed and grasped. In the writings on the theme of original Awakening there is one entitled *Shōjikakuyōshō* (A Summary Useful for Gaining Insight into Living and Dying), which has the subtitle *Honmushōjiron*, (Treatise on the Original Absence of Living and Dying). This text declares:

There is a wondrous coming of no-coming, a true birth of no-birth, an harmonious leaving of no-leaving, a great death of no-death. Life and death are one;

emptiness and being are non-dual" (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 42:186c).

The subtitle, *The Original Absence of Life and Death*, puts the stress on the transcendence and negation of both living and dying, while the main title makes the point that both living and dying are manifestations of the nature of awakening, i.e., Original Awakening, and thus are both to be affirmed. From this double affirmation, the text then declares that both living and dying together constitute the eternally permanence, i.e., the eternal abiding of life and death. Reflecting nature, these thinkers used the saying: "Flowers bloom, this is abiding; petals scatter, this too is abiding."

This positive evaluation of the duality of life and death is also applied to all the other dualities in the dimension of factual reality. For example, there is the duality of Buddha (the condition of being awakened) and common deluded worldlings, but the true and absolute Buddha is to be seen in the non-duality between Buddha and common worldlings, a non-duality which transcends their standing over against one another. Looking back then from that perspective, not only Buddha but also common worldlings come to be affirmed as a manifestation of the non-dual absolute Buddha. Or, more radically, it is precisely the common worldling who is in fact a living Buddha, and in that sense the essential and true Buddha, while a Buddha that transcends factual reality is a dead Buddha, a merely conventionally valid Buddha. In this way the common worldling is affirmed just as he is. When interpreted with a mind ready to understand its meaning, we can state that the thesis that "the common worldling is the essential Buddha" has uncovered a deep value in the condition of being a common worldling, who in pain and sorrow struggles to live through factual reality.

When we apply this same reasoning to the duality of the momentary and the eternal, a true and absolute eternity is found in the non-duality that overcomes and

transcends the temporal opposition of the momentary and the eternal. Viewed positively once again, this means that the eternal can be grasped **now**, in this present moment. It is a proclamation of the eternal now, expressed in Original Awakening thought by the phrase "the eternal is precisely today." It is an affirmation of the value of the present moment, the now. When this sense of the eternal, the absolute in the present moment, is further applied to space, one comes to an awareness of the eternal and absolute Pure Land in the factual sahā-world, for a Pure Land that is truly eternal and absolute transcends the opposition of the here and the beyond. In its affirmative sense, this means that the eternal Pure Land can be taken hold of in the midst of this miserable and impure world. Although one may speak of an Absolute Pure Land of Eternal Peace and Light, yet it can be affirmed that this world of suffering is precisely Peace and Light, that this sahā-world is precisely Pure Land.¹

Thus Original Awakening thought, in its initial step, went all the way in the direction of the non-dual absolute and one could consider this as the deepest philosophical principle in the history of Buddhist thought. Then, as a second step, these thinkers went on to a further affirmation of all the dimensions of factual duality. This affirmation may be related to the natural Japanese way of thinking, the roots of which can be found in a sense of harmony with nature. At the risk of simplification, we can say that in Japan, blessed as it is with a generally peaceful climate in which the four seasons follow one another in an agreeable rhythm, nature and humans constantly adapt to and unite with one another. Thus the life, feelings, and traditional culture of the Japanese abound in maintaining harmony with nature. From this harmony there arises a

1 When Chih-I used the term, "Land of Eternal Peace and Light," jō-jakkōdo, to emphasize the Absolute Pure Land, he took it from the Kuan-p'u-hsien ch'ing (T. 277), a text intended as an epilogue to the Lotus Sūtra. See Chih-I's Wei-mo ch'ing wen-shu, chapter I, Zokuzōkyō 27.5:431c-432a.

tendency to adapt to factual reality as given by nature. This tendency takes the form of an affirmation of that factual reality to those who look on the bright side, and of a fatalistic resignation to those who look on the dark side.² Applying this to the history of Japan, we see the latter direction being followed in the second half of the Heian period, a time which, with the downfall of the nobility, showed all the signs of the Degenerate Latter Days. The direction of affirmation of factual reality is found from about the middle of the Kamakura period, when the newly risen warrior class inaugurated a period of a new and positive order. It can be surmised that it is under the influence of that positive spirit that Original Awakening thought developed its theories of a radical affirmation of factual reality.

It is from the middle of the Kamakura era into the Muromachi period that Japan's traditional ideas and arts took definite shape through a process of theoretical and intellectual elaboration. In that process Japan's tradition "re-imported" much of the Original Awakening thought with its affirmation of factual reality and made ample use of it. For example, Shinto, as representative of the traditional Japanese way of thinking and feeling, took up Original Awakening ideas and propounded the theory of three kinds of gods: originally awakened gods, gods with a beginning awakening, and unawakened gods. On the strength of their affirmation of factual reality, they came to put the this-worldly gods above the trans-worldly Buddhas, and thus to proclaim a doctrine of "gods as the essence, Buddhas as avatars," which is the earlier *honji-suijaku* theory turned upside down. These two Shinto theories are found in two Tendai priests who became very much involved with Shinto, Jihen and Ryōhen, and find their full development in the

2 See Tamura, *Thoughts on Karma and Naturalness in Japan* (*Nihon ni okeru gō to shizen no shisō*) in *Gō shisō kenkyū*, pp.641-660.

Shinto-only doctrine of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511).³

As for the arts, Fujiwara no Toshinari (1114-1204) and Teika (1162-1241) tried to work out a theory of *waka* poetry with the help of Tendai philosophy, and in their footsteps Shōtetsu (1381-1459) used the word *hongaku* in his poems—in the *kun* reading form of *moto no satori* or *moto no hotoke*. Later, from the time of Shinkei (1406-1475) to that of Sōgi (1421-1501), *renga* linked poems were the order of the day, and in Sōgi's *Azuma mondō* (*Azuma Conversations*) we read:

The way of poetry . . . must entrust itself to the principle of Original Awakening and suchness.

Also in *Nō*, *ikebana*, and tea ceremony, Tendai Original Awakening thought was adopted for the elaboration of their respective theories. For the transmission of these arts, too, the same methods were used as with Original Awakening thought, such as secret oral transmission or as transmission on slips of paper.

The common characteristic of these Japanese arts lay in the fact that they found beauty in the changes of nature and human life and celebrated these in their art. As was said above, originally there was a tendency to adjust to nature, which then developed into compliance with and affirmation of all factual reality, and it was at this point that Original Awakening thought came into play. Original Awakening thought, on its side, emphasized its affirmation of factual reality by applying that idea to the occurrences of nature, for example, where the idea that "living-and-dying abide eternally" is expressed as "Flowers bloom, this is abiding; petals scatter, this too is abiding." This is a projection of the transiency of human life onto the changes in nature and, conversely, a transfer of the beauty and charm discovered in the seasonal changes of nature to the

3 See Tamura, *Original Awakening Thinking and Shintō Theory* (*Hongaku-shisō to Shintō-riron*) in *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū*, 28.2:61-68.

transience of human living-and-dying—all of this centered in a fundamental affirmation. In this way, Tendai's Original Awakening thought and traditional Japanese thinking (Shinto) and arts developed in mutual dependency.

ORIGINAL AWAKENING AND PURE LAND NEMBUTSU

How, then, was this Original Awakening theme received in the world of Buddhism itself? In general, one could say that the principle of non-duality as absolute was adopted and studied but, at the same time, its affirmation of factual reality was rejected. Indeed, by overly stressing this affirmation, Original Awakening thought came to see common worldlings in their factual reality as the Buddha and, consequently, to proclaim that no special practice or observance is needed apart from everyday behavior. It was such a theory of the non-necessity of religious observance and any awakening event that drew criticism. Here, we must pay attention, first of all, to Pure Land Buddhism, which in a sense can be seen as the opposite of Original Awakening thought.

Contrary to Original Awakening thinking, Pure Land thought makes a sharp distinction between the Buddha and common worldlings, between this *sahā*-world and the Pure Land, and places Buddha and Pure Land in the beyond of a future world. While Original Awakening thought is taken to be absolute monism and an affirmation of factual reality, Pure Land thought can be considered to be relative dualism and a negation of factual reality. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Nembutsu was adopted at an early date in the Tendai of Mount Hiei, and developed there under the cloak of Original Awakening thought. For example, claiming that Amida Buddha and the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss are already implicit in the mind of the individual, Original Awakening thinkers spoke of "Amida of one's own mind" and "Pure Land of one's own mind." Or again, it was taught that by a single, definitive act of faith one immediately becomes one with Amida Buddha. This is what is termed the theory of contemplative recollection of Buddha (*kannen*

nembutsu).

The man who removed that Original Awakening cloak and restored the original Pure Land Nembutsu idea is none other than Hōnen Genkū (1133-1212). Hōnen paid close attention to the factual reality of a world that, with all its defilements, evils and upheavals, showed all the symptoms of the Latter Degenerate Days. This world is really a world-to-be-borne, full of impermanence, evil, and suffering, and all human beings are deluded and enmeshed in sin. Therefore, the world of salvation must be placed in the future, in Amida's Pure Land. Strongly stressing the impossibility for any human being in this present world to attain Buddhahood by religious practices, Hōnen preached instead a Birth in a future Pure Land. The Nembutsu here becomes the verbal recollection of Buddha (*shōmyō-nembutsu*), whereby one utters with the mouth Amida's Name while looking up to Amida Buddha as to something outside one. Thus, focusing upon the factual reality of this Latter Day world, Hōnen brought the Pure Land Nembutsu back to its original form, and radicalized its characteristics of relative dualism and world negation. Consequently, his Nembutsu appeared as an opponent of Original Awakening thought with its absolute monism and affirmation of factual reality. Hōnen's Nembutsu theory advocates the impossibility of attaining Buddhahood by religious practices, while Original Awakening school teaches its non-necessity.

However, with Hōnen's disciples, especially Kōsai (1163-1247, the protagonist of the once-calling doctrine), Shōkū (1177-1247, founder of the Seizan branch), and especially Shinran (1173-1262), the Nembutsu comes to be covered again under the mantle of Original Awakening thought. In Shinran's writings, for example, we find many monistic expressions like "absolute non-duality," "living-and-dying (*saṃsāra*) is precisely cessation (*nirvāṇa*)," "passion and awakening are not two," "sentient beings are precisely Buddha," "equal to the Tathāgata," and so forth. When it comes to defining Amida Buddha, Shinran sees his original essence as the Dharma-body, the Nature of Reality,

Truth, Suchness, Unity, and finally as the Buddha omnipresent in the ten quarters. In his view, the Nembutsu is not a question of Birth in a next life in the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the West, where one meets Amida Buddha for the first time. Rather it is a question of being enveloped and embraced by Amida Buddha in this present *sahā*-world. It can be maintained that Shinran's Pure Land Nembutsu conception moves along the same axis as the Pure Land Nembutsu adopted by Original Awakening thought.

Why, then, did Shinran again drape the cloak of Original Awakening thought, once removed by Hōnen, over the Nembutsu? One can surmise that the following elements played a role in this development. Shinran could not deny that, as philosophy, the Pure Land Nembutsu of the relatively dualistic type is inferior to the monism of Original Awakening thinking, and wanted therefore to fill this gap by means of that same Original Awakening thought. Also the spirit of the times was such that a tide of evaluating factual reality more positively was rising with the building of the new social order by the newly flourishing samurai class, and thereby the affirmation of factual reality of the Original Awakening school came to be widely approved and applied. However this may be, it is safe to say that in Shinran the Nembutsu for the sake of future Birth in the Pure Land changed into a practice for the sake of life in this world.

Later on, the affirmation of Original Awakening thought was abused to the point that, at the end of the Middle Ages, things like the Altar Society of Refuge in Mystic Lore (*Genshikimyōdan*) originated with the intention of praying for the fulfillment of one's worldly cravings for sensual gratification and possession. Against these abuses, Myōryū Jizan (1637-1690) and Reikū Kōken (1652-1739)—the latter especially in his *Byakujahan* (Chapters of Refuting Unorthodoxy; text preserved at Otani and Taishō Universities) of 1868—unleashed vigorous attacks. This, it is said, signaled the end of Original Awakening thought. However,

these people directed their critique against that one particular manifestation of Original Awakening thought, without rejecting it as a philosophy. Proof of this is found in Reikū's advocacy of the recollection of Buddha in one's own mind in his *Sokushin nembutsu anjin ketsujōdan-gibon* (The Meaning of the Recollection of Buddha in One's Own Mind for Peace of Mind) of 1727. This is very similar to the contemplative Nembutsu of the Tendai Original Awakening thinkers and parallels the Pure Land Nembutsu wrapped in Original Awakening thought. We find there, for example, such expressions as:

The Pure Land and Amida are precisely my mind. . . . Since both my mind and Amida are the Dharma-realm, my mind and Buddha are one; my mind is precisely Buddha. . . . My deluded mind is in and by itself the inner and outer totality of Amida. . . . (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 98:214-215).

Thus, Reikū's idea of the recollection of Buddha in one's own mind is based on the principle of non-duality as absolute and has its apogee in the contemplation of that principle. From that perspective, Reikū judges Shan-tao's and Hōnen's view of Amida and the Pure Land to be physical, relative entities and the orally recited Nembutsu to be a Nembutsu idea of a lower grade, intended as a skillful means for the inferior capabilities of the Latter Days. Thus he writes:

As to the factual Nembutsu recommended by Shan'tao and Hōnen, therein the real intention of the Buddha is gradually diluted, because they explain the Nembutsu on a lower and lower level in their effort to reach the inferior vessels of the Latter Days.

The Nembutsu recommended by Shan-tao and Hōnen is milk with a lot of water added The recollection of Buddha in one's own mind (*sokushin nembutsu*) of our school is like milk undiluted by any water, and is a

Nembutsu that fully corresponds to the Buddha's real intention. (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 98:214-215)⁴

Turning back to Shinran, we could say that, as far as basic philosophy is concerned, Shinran's Pure Land Nembutsu, just like Reikū's recollection of Buddha in one's own mind, parallels Original Awakening thought. The difference lies only in the fact that, in the footsteps of his master Hōnen, Shinran started from a standpoint of negating factual reality. In a second move, however, he incorporated the affirmation of factual reality of Original Awakening thinking. To show this, let us take the relationship of Buddha and common worldlings as an example. Following Hōnen, Shinran too made a sharp distinction between the Buddha and all common worldlings, and deplored the fact that all real people, himself included, are steeped in evil and sin. But, realizing that the light of the Buddha had flooded in precisely at that point, he came to affirm the status of common worldlings in an affirmation mediated by an existential concentration on that human condition. To put it simply, it is precisely in the deeply deluded and sinful human that the light of Buddha's salvation has shone; it is precisely in human life with its impermanent character of living-and-dying that the eternal life of Buddha can be grasped. If we want to express the characteristic trait of Shinran's thought in a short formula, we could speak of affirmation mediated by negation, absoluteness in relativity. It is a synthesis by sublation (*Aufhebung*) of both the absolute monism and affirmation of factual reality of Tendai's Original Awakening thought and the relative dualism and negation of factual reality of Hōnen's Pure Land Nembutsu conception.

The sublation and synthesis of these two was also the task faced by two other people who were active in the

⁴ See Tamura, Original Awakening Thinking and Pure Land Nembutsu (Hongaku-shisō to Jōdo-nembutsu) in Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū, 32.2.

same period as Shinran, namely Dōgen and Nichiren. On the one hand, they could not but recognize the absolute monism of Tendai's Original Awakening thinking as the ultimate in philosophical wisdom but, on the other hand, when looking at factual reality concretely, even without consideration of the theme of the Latter Degenerate Days, the stern fact of a human life as impermanent and being-unto-death, and the fact that all of us are common worldlings, could not be denied. Thus, the relative dualism and world negation of Hōnen's Nembutsu could not simply be ignored. Consequently, their criticism was directed against the fact that Tendai's Original Awakening thought derives from its absolute monism an unqualified affirmation of factual reality. This is how Dōgen, while upholding a monism that is basically the same, criticizes Original Awakening thought when he comes to a consideration of factual reality. But here we must first take note of Hōchibō Shōshin, the first man to criticize Original Awakening thought.

THE CRITICISM OF SHOSHIN AND DOGEN

Hōchibō Shōshin was a scholar-monk of the Tendai sect who was so engrossed in his studies that he is reputed not even to have known of the battles of the Minamotos and the Tairas. He started writing his book, *Hokkesandaibu shiki* (Personal Notes on the Threefold Lotus), in 1165-66 but did not cease adding, erasing, and emending it until its publication in the autumn of 1207. The criticism on Original Awakening thought is to be found in the seventh chapter, "Personal Notes on the Mystic Meaning of the Lotus." Shōshin criticizes the Original Awakening scholars in the name of "a man studying Shingon," and in summary his criticism runs as follows: You interpret Original Awakening to be the original will of the Buddha, and from there you conclude to the superfluity of religious observance. However, Original Awakening is the awakened state that is immanent in all sentient beings as a principle (*ri*). Therefore, religious practice is needed to come to a realization of this principle. You, Original Awakening

theoreticians, are so drunk with the wine of Original Awakening immanent in us as an original essence and an innate quality that you forget to give any positive evidence of it and to make it into a concrete reality.

Shōshin also judges this to be the unorthodox opinion of non-believers about naturalness, i.e., that there are results without causes. This description was first used to indicate a non-Buddhist school of thought in India that claimed that results exist from the beginning and naturally without the need for any causal activity, and that therefore negated all efforts and practices that go into causal formation. For that reason this theory is criticized in the early sūtras as an unorthodox doctrine of the same grain as fatalism.

However, Shōshin's position, in its turn, gives rise to a new problem: How far must religious practice go in order for the awakened state (Buddhahood) to appear and bear fruit? As long as we are in this world, our factual condition can be none other than that of common worldlings. Is it not, therefore, impossible to manifest Buddhahood therein? It is on this point that Hōnen had concluded that no human being can shed the condition of a common worldling and become a Buddha, and he advocated instead Birth in a future Pure Land. In Hōnen's case we have an assertion of the impossibility of awakening as a result of looking directly at the factual human condition, but, from a theoretical standpoint, the objection as such had already been raised from olden times. It was then pointed out that the doctrine of attainment of Buddhahood by religious observance implies that Buddha and common worldlings are relative to one another, and falls thereby into the logical contradiction of infinitely approaching Buddha (the awakened state) but forever being unable to reach it.

In other words, even when the difference between Buddha and common worldlings diminishes, it never disappears, and one must conclude to the impossibility of ever completing the practice and becoming a Buddha. In the seventh chapter on "Contemplating the Three Aspects" of his *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, Nāgārjuna called this the logical

fallacy *regressus ad infinitum* (*anavasthā-doṣa*). In the second chapter on Preaching of the **Wu-liang-i ch'ing** (Sūtra of Innumerable Meanings; T. 276), which is considered to be an introduction to the **Lotus Sūtra**, this practice is evaluated as a "great detour over countless aeons." With Hegel it could be called endless infinity, unending process, bad infinity. In principle, Shōshin's doctrine differs from that idea of attaining Buddhahood through practice with its opposition of Buddha and common worldlings, since he teaches that Buddha nature is from the beginning immanent in sentient beings as awakening. But one must say that in fact here also Buddha and common worldlings stand in opposition, and that even Shōshin does not escape this old objection.

It was precisely to overcome this logical objection that the doctrine of non-duality and unity between Buddha and common worldlings—and, based on this, of speedy awakening or Buddhahood in one's present body had been developed. This makes the attainment of Buddhahood possible and is a direct path straight to Buddhahood. "Speedy Awakening" and "a direct path" are stressed in the third chapter on Ten Merits of the **Wu-liang-i ch'ing** and "Buddhahood in one's present body" is propounded by the sixth patriarch of T'ien-t'ai, Chan-jan (Myōraku Tannen, 711-782) in chapter 8, section 4 of the **Fa-hua wen-chu chi** (Notes on the Text of the Lotus; T. 1719). Chan-jan, while quoting from the **P'u-sa chu-tai ch'ing** (Scripture on the Conception of the Bodhisattva; T. 384), teaches this in connection with the awakening of the daughter of the dragon king in the twelfth or Devadatta chapter of the **Lotus Sūtra**.

In Japan, it was Saichō (767-822) who took the theme of the direct path and the realization of Buddhahood in one's present body to be the highest teaching of the **Lotus**, in comparison to which all other sūtras were inferior, precisely because they taught the need for countless aeons of practicing. In his **Hokke-shūku** (The Excellent Words of the Lotus), he wrote:

On hearing the Lotus Sūtra, people like the sluggish Bodhisattvas who practice for countless aeons turned to the direct path. (Dainihon zōkyō 77:1a)

The teaching daughter of the dragon king did not go through countless practices, nor did the sentient beings that were taught by her. No endless practice for either. By the power of the Lotus Sūtra they attained Buddhahood in their very bodies. (Dainihon zōkyō 77:1a and III)

However, by merely advocating the direct path and the realization of Buddhahood in one's present body, the above logical contradiction is not perfectly exorcized. For, as we saw in Shōshin, even when there is essentially no duality between Buddha and common worldlings, in reality there remains a difference between them. This is one of the reasons why the development of Original Awakening thought in Mount Hiei's Tendai arrived at the claim that the non-duality of Buddha and common worldlings is not only true in essence but also in factual reality. Thus there was still room for a reconsideration of Original Awakening thought in regard to the question of the possibility of realizing Buddhahood, even after the rejection and criticism of Hōnen and Shōshin.

There had also been a problematic within the Original Awakening thinking itself. As pointed out above, while applying the non-duality of Buddha and common worldlings to factual reality and pushing this to an extreme, these thinkers came to teach that common worldlings as such are in the state of Buddha, that the actions of daily life as such are the behavior of Buddha, and that, consequently, there is no need for any special religious practice in order to realize Buddhahood. The problem with this is that, if one goes too far in such a radical affirmation of factual reality, the whole idea of realizing Buddhahood evaporates. In the *Sanjūshikajisho* (The Book in Thirty-Four Points), which is an abridgment of Original Awakening thinking, the

uselessness of all discussion about realization and non-realization is taught:⁵

In the originally abiding Reality without beginning or end, why debate about realization and non-realization? (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 39:75-85)

In connection with the disputed question whether grasses and trees can attain Buddhahood, the same work says:

This denotes that it is most meaningful to say that grasses and trees do not obtain Buddhahood. (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 39:75-85)

In other words, since grasses and trees in and by themselves are Buddhas, it is even insufficient to say that they can become Buddhas; so, it is better to negate that possibility. Hōnen too held the theory of the non-realization of Buddhahood, but in his case this negation is based on a negative evaluation of factual reality and on the incapacity of sentient beings, while in the case of the Original Awakening thinkers this same conclusion is based on an affirmation of factual reality and the non-necessity of realizing Buddhahood.

Such an extreme position as that here taken by the Original Awakening thinkers had to provoke renewed criticism and it is here that Dōgen (1200-1253) enters the picture. In general, the factual world wherein we live is constituted in two layers: that of the existential factual reality of the impermanence of living and dying and that of the deluded reality of ignorance and passion. The latter consists of the fact that all things provoke in us feelings

5 A manuscript version has been discovered in the Kanazawa Archives in Yokohama, but the printed version in the Dainihon bukkyō zenshū, vol. 39, bears the title "Makura-sō-shi", i.e., "Bedside Papers." Since it is an abridgment of Original Awakening thinking, its composition must be placed near to or after the middle of the Kamakura period, i.e., 1250.

of attachment although in themselves they are impermanent and will perish just as surely as they have arisen; and that as a result a cloud of delusion comes to cover things. Hōnen first directed his negative evaluation toward the deluded factual reality of ignorance and passion, and in a second move extended his negation also to the existential reality of the impermanence of living and dying. Original Awakening thought, on the other hand, began by affirming this existential factual reality and afterwards extended its affirmation to deluded reality. The thoroughness of Hōnen's negation of factual reality can be gleaned, for example, from the fact that he saw the condition of common worldlings, essentially a product of deluded factual reality, as an inescapable existential fact, wholly as impossible to avoid as is dying for those who have been born, no matter whether one be wise or foolish. In contrast, the radical nature of Original Awakening thinkers' affirmation appears in their affirmation of common worldlings in their factual reality as the Buddha. Dōgen will turn his critical attention to both and endeavor to bring them to a synthesis by sublation.

As to Dōgen's critique of Original Awakening thinking, it is first to be noted that he concurred with the affirmation of the existential factual reality of the impermanence of living and dying. Let us illustrate the similarity in the affirmation of both death and life by parallel pronouncements by both Dōgen and Original Awakening thinkers. In Original Awakening texts we find, for example, the *Shōjīkaku yōshō* (A Summary Useful for Gaining Insight into Living and Dying) stating:

A time of birth does not come, and a time of death does not leave.

There is a wondrous coming of no-coming, a true birth of no-birth, a perfect leaving of no-leaving, a great death of no-death.

The living and dying of original non-action is abiding (Dainihon bukkyō zenshū 41:186c-187a).

And the **Gozu-hōmon yōsan** (The Essential Summary of the Ox Head Teaching) states:

There is no living-and-dying (*saṃsāra*) to be rejected, no cessation (*nirvāṇa*) to be sought. (Text preserved in Risshō University in Tokyo)

In Dōgen's **Shōbōgenzō** (The Eye and Treasury of the True Law) we read, for example:

It is an established doctrine of Buddhism that one cannot speak of birth becoming death. Therefore, we speak of non-becoming. It is a constant tradition in Buddhist preaching that death does not become birth. Therefore we speak of non-extinction. Life is a stage of time; death too is a stage of time. (Genjōkōan section; cf. Nishiyama I:2; T. p.24a.17)

Death is not relative to life, life does not wait upon death. (Shinjingakudō section, cf. Nishiyama I:16; T. p.160c.8)

Life is the manifestation of total dynamic; death too is a manifestation of total dynamic. (Zenki section, cf. Nishiyama I:81; T. 167b.4)

You must obtain the insight that living-and-dying (*saṃsāra*) is in and by itself cessation (*nirvāṇa*); it makes no sense to speak anymore of a cessation apart from living-and dying. (Bendōwa section, cf. Nishiyama I:156; T. 19c.10)

We could say that all these expressions stress the point that life precisely as life is absolute and all-encompassing, and equally death precisely as death is absolute and all-encompassing; that both living and dying are the factualizing, vivifying and manifesting form of eternal life.

In reference to the affirmation of impermanence, both Dōgen and the Original Awakening writers quote the words of the second (Upāya) chapter of the **Lotus Sūtra**:

The endurance of the dharmas,
The secure position of the dharmas,
In the world ever abiding. . . (T. p.202b.15; Hurvitz
1976, p.41)

In the *Sanjūshika-jisho*, one Original Awakening thinker
comments:

The phrase in the world ever abiding does not refer to
a fixed and immobile eternity. World means imper-
manence and differentiation. It means that imperma-
nence as impermanence and differentiation as differen-
tiation are abiding and do not disappear. (*Dainihon
bukkyō zenshū* 39:80c.3)

In a similar vein the *Shōbōgenzō* teaches:

Blooming flowers and falling petals are the nature of
suchness. Still, fools think that there ought not to be
blooming flowers and falling petals in the world of
dharma $tā$. (*Hosshō* section, cf. *Nishiyama* II:65; T.
p.202b.15)

Even if leaves drop in suchness, the phrase the
endurance of the dharmas, the secure position of the
dharmas, in the world ever abiding remains true. (*Immo*
section, cf. *Nishiyama* I. 62; T. 126b.19)

In other words, the impermanence and vicissitudes of human
life are the form of reality and the activity of eternal life.

Thus, we can conclude that the affirmation of the
existential factual reality of the impermanence of living-
and-dying is identical in Original Awakening thought and in
Dōgen. Where, however, the former went on to affirm even
the deluded reality of ignorance and passion and to preach
the non-necessity of practice and the realization of
Buddhahood, *Dōgen* parted company and made efforts to
emend it. It is said that *Dōgen* began to be beset by one

particular problem not long after becoming a monk on Mount Hiei at fourteen years of age, for Esoteric as well as exoteric Tendai taught the doctrine of the Original, Basic Reality, the spontaneous Essence Body of Buddha. But if that is true, is not the quest for wisdom engendered in our minds superfluous?⁶ This question was undoubtedly directed at the Original Awakening theories with their tenets of the non-necessity of practice and realization, since common worldlings are purported to be in and by themselves the original Buddha. Driven by the need to find a solution to this problem, Dōgen came down from Mount Hiei to knock at Eisai's door and, further, when he was twenty-four, travelled to Sung China. There he met Ju-ching (1163-1228) of Mount T'ien-t'ung and flung his question, once again, at this master: Is the thesis that "all sentient beings are the Tathāgata of original and beginningless being" compatible with the teaching of the Buddha or not? Ju-ching's answer was: To say that "all sentient beings are originally Buddha" is equivalent to professing the doctrine of naturalness of the non-believers.⁷ Thus, Ju-ching proffered the same critique which we encountered earlier in Shōshin. On hearing this negative answer, Dōgen had the feeling that his problem had evaporated. After having received the Buddha Doctrine (Sōtō Zen) anew from Ju-ching, he returned to Japan, where he embarked on a new kind of Buddhist activity while criticizing the Original Awakening theme.

In sum, the critique of Original Awakening thought in the *Shōbōgenzō* is that the Original Awakening adepts are attached to Original Awakening and hypostatize it. They teach that no religious observance is needed apart from the contemplation of Original Awakening, but that is a fall into the same error as the naturalists and some other schools of non-believers. A few examples of this critique follow:

6 Presented in the *Sanso-gyōgō-ki* and the *Kenseiki*, which are biographies of Dōgen.

7 Mentioned in the *Hōkyōki*, which is a record of Dōgen.

All the Buddhas whatsoever have fully cultivated their dignified activity and they are called Buddhas who engage in practice. They are not Buddhas of their Own Essence Body, nor Buddhas of Another Essence Body. They have not acquired awakening, nor are they originally awakened. (Gyōbutsu iigi section; cf. Nishiyama IV:141; T. p.101a.25)

It can be said that the realization of Original Awakening and other awakenings is the characteristic of Buddhas and Patriarchs, but this does not imply that we should regard all awakenings as constituting Buddhas and Patriarchs. (Kaiin zammai section; cf. Nishiyama I:41-42; T. 144c.18)

Those who have never seen or heard the doctrine of Buddha say: "Once one is liberated from the body of a wild fox, he returns to the natural ocean of Original Awakening," but that is going back to the self (*ātman*) of the schools of non-believers, and is not the teaching of the Buddha. (Daishugyō section; cf. Nishiyama I:142; T. 256b.20)

As appears from the terms "practicing Buddha" and "realization," the marrow of this critique lies in the accentuation of practice and observance.

However, with a run-of-the-mill concept of practice one would again be caught in the impossibility-of-gaining-Buddhahood trap. Here, however, Dōgen came up with an inverted theory of practice. While in the customary theory of practice things go from common worldlings to Buddha, from practice to awakening, in Dōgen we get the direction from Buddha to common worldlings, from awakening to practice. In the words of the *Shōbōgenzō*, "practice in awakening," "wondrous practice that is original realization" (Bendōwa section; cf. Nishiyama I:147-161), "bringing all dharmas into being on the basis of awakening, practicing suchness in the transcendent path" (Ibid.), "practicing Buddha" (Gyōbutsu iigi section; Nishiyama IV:141-153; T. p.101a-106c). In this way, Dōgen balanced Hōnen's Pure

Land Nembutsu doctrine and the theory of the necessity of practice for countless aeons (which led to the impossibility of attaining Buddhahood) against the Tendai Original Awakening theory (which resulted in the non-necessity of realizing Buddhahood), and revived anew the path of observance and practice. Since this is a practice and observance that incarnates Buddha in the factual reality of common worldlings, Dōgen calls it "manifesting-realizing" (*genjō*) and "embodiment" (*shūgen*). For example, in his *Shōbōgenzō* he says:

The doctrine of Buddha is the manifested realization of the path of the Buddha. (Bukkyō section; cf. Nishiyama II, 21; T. p.106c)

The manifested realization of immeasurable and all-pervading qualities. (Senjō section; cf. Nishiyama II, 88; T. p.30b.7)

The essence of Buddha is embodying, it is the embodying of Buddha nature. (Busshō section; cf. Nishiyama IV:131; T. p.96c.1)

Shōshin also spoke of "realization" but, as we saw earlier, in him this is still "upward-directed" and leaves us with the impossibility of reaching Buddhahood, while in Dōgen we have a "downward-directed" doctrine that inverts practice and attainment of Buddhahood.

Put in simple terms, we get the following picture. In a sense, practice takes place from common worldlings toward the Buddha, for in factual reality Buddha and common worldlings are opposites. However, practice is not terminated by attaining Buddhahood, for on each and every step of the practice the Buddha is manifested and realized. Couched in Other-Power language, this means to be enveloped and embraced by the Buddha. And this can only be said because, fundamentally speaking, Buddha and common worldlings are not dual. In Pure Land language again this would become: To be immersed in the absolutely Pure Land at each and every step of the effort to transform

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factual society into the Pure Land (*jōbukkoku*).

In this way Dōgen revived the path of religious observance and practice, and preached constant effort until the moment of death. Then, even when death visits us in midway, we can welcome it. We then have the "completion of incompleteness." We can conclude that, logically speaking, Dōgen synthesized by sublation both the monism of Tendai's Original Awakening thought and the relative dualism of Hōnen's Pure Land Nembutsu, and that the key of his synthesis is "relativity in absoluteness."

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