

*Why would you say "what Bodhidharma brought over" if you are a Buddhist?*

- *Don't you know Buddhists lynched the 2nd Zen Patriarch?*

*Why would you say "what Huineng transmitted" if you believe in 4NT and 8FP?*

- *Don't you know that Bodhidharma and his followers never taught those religious doctrines?*

*Why would you say "what Linji and Dongshan teach" if you believe in messiahs like Dogen and Hakuin?*

- *Don't you know that Zen Masters reject practices like Dogen's Zazen prayer-meditation?*
- *Don't you know that Zen Masters reject Hakuin's ritual questions, ritual answers "certification"?*

*Why would you say Caodong or Soto if you've never studied Caodong?*

- *Don't you know the teachings of Dongshan the founder, Hongzhi's Poems, and Wansong's book of instruction?*

*Why would you say Linji or Rinzai if you've never studied the Linji lineage?*

- *Don't you study Huangbo, Linji's teacher, and books of instruction written by Linji's descendants, Yuanwu and Wumen?*

*Why not be a person of your word?*

## *The Real Caodong and Soto Zen*<sup>1</sup>:

When Caoshan took leave of Dongshan,  
Dongshan asked, "Where are you going?"

Caoshan replied, "To an unchanging place."

Dongshan retorted, "If it is unchanging, how could there  
be any going?"

Caoshan replied, "The going is also unchanging."

Foyan's Record, *Instant Zen*, Cleary trans.

One time, [Dongshan] said, "If you would experience that  
which transcends even the Buddha, you must first  
be capable of a bit of conversation".

Dongshan's Record, *Record of Tung-shan*, Powell  
trans.

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<sup>1</sup> Caodong is how the Chinese talk about the lineage from Dongshan and Caoshan,  
Soto is how the Japanese say Caodong.

“Master Zhenjing said to an assembly, “In the school of Dongshan, sometimes we mix with mud and water, sometimes we stand like a wall a mile high. If you people try to see Dongshan in mixing with mud and water, Dongshan is not in mixing with mud and water. If you try to see Dongshan in standing like a wall a mile high, Dongshan is not in standing like a wall a mile high. If you try to see Dongshan everywhere, Dongshan is not everywhere. If you don’t want to see Dongshan, Dongshan has you by a nose halter. If you try to go to sleep, he gives the halter a yank, making your eyes spin without you even knowing it. I don’t need you to know Dongshan—if you just get to know yourself, that will do.”

The Real Shobogenzo by Zen Master Dahui,  
*Treasury of the Eye of True Teaching*, Cleary trans.

## What People Are Saying

“In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, [a parent] will instill in his wide-eyed brat three bad things: the terror of public opinion, and, flowing from that as a fountain, the desire of wealth and applause.”

- Robert Louis Stevenson

“...And you are never to stir out of doors till you can prove that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner.”

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

“We here begin to discern one of the reasons for the prevailing anti-intellectualism in this country. People who think do not fit in easily. The trouble with thinking is that it leads to criticism. A person who thinks is one who dislikes falsehood. And since it is impossible to dislike it and never say anything about it, it is impossible to think and never say anything controversial.”

- Robert Maynard Hutchins

“I have learned from long experience never to apprehend mischief from those understandings I have been able to provoke: for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and impotent.”

- Jonathan Swift

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Zen is still not Buddhism:

Nanquan said to a chief monk, "What Sutra are you lecturing on?"

The monk replied, "The Nehan Sutra."

Nanquan said, "Won't you explain it to me?"

The monk said, "If I explain the sutra to you, you should explain Zen to me."

Nanquan said, "A golden ball is not the same as a silver one."

The monk said, "I don't understand."

Nanquan said, "Tell me, can a cloud in the sky be nailed there, or bound there with a rope?"

-Blyth, Zen and Zen Classics, Volume 3

## Preface

### Dogen Buddhism Is Not Zen:

#### Caodong/Soto Zen v/s Dogen Buddhism

This book is about how Dogen Buddhism has nothing to do with Zen. As I wrote this in the back of my mind is a book that I would have wanted to read before I read all these other books about why people have for a long time now used their Buddhist faith or devotion to Dogen as justification for misrepresenting Zen.

I am not an expert at Buddhism in general or Dogen Buddhism in particular. I don't claim a depth of knowledge of either one. I didn't, for example, read all of Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* despite the fact that I quote the book over and over and over.

I tell you this in the preface because I've been accused of confusing prefaces with introductions, so I looked it up, and then, in order to include both and really embarrass my critics, I had to put something in a preface.

I also mention this because there are people are going to pretend to disagree with me in order to avoid the critical point: they can't get their story straight. To disagree you need an argument, premises, conclusions, facts, *and they don't have anything but faith.*

Dogen's churches and Dogen scholars, who are the primary source of misrepresentations about Zen in the West, can't agree on which Dogen texts are authentic or representative of Dogen. Some of Dogen's followers know they are misleading people, most don't. Some are happy with their faith and are comfortable amending their religious doctrines so that Zen isn't misrepresented, others are not. Some of Dogen's churches continue to claim that sex predators can transmit the Dharma of Dongshan, while other churches condemn their sex predators while continuing to claim enlightenments from those sex predators. Other churches simply certify themselves, as if they didn't get their religion from Dogen.

Dogen Buddhists often don't agree with each other, and all of them express tenets of their faiths that are incompatible with Zen. My not having spoken to every Buddhist or every Dogen Buddhist does not invalidate the taxonomy problem with "Buddhism" as a label that nobody can define, or with the contradictory faiths of those who claim "Dogen Buddhism" as a religion. I can't address every pop culture Dogen doctrine in this text, but I can illustrate how Zen isn't compatible with the major Dogen lineages in the West.

If you want a firsthand look at these problems, just ask a Buddhist what "Buddhism" is and what Buddhists believe. If you want to see for yourself the struggles that Dogen Buddhism faces in pretending to be associated with Zen, ask a Dogen Buddhist why Dogen lied about studying Zen in China, or how it is that a sex predator can be excommunicated, but still used as lineage holder by his church.

Coventry Patmore said, "When it's done its work the lie will rot; the truth prevails, when none care whether it prevails or not". All people of good conscience are obligated to honestly confront the roots of their religion, and make amends. To not do this is to make a lie out of any religious belief.

As prefaces are meant to explain some of the limitations of this book, there you go. I wrote this book after having many conversations, and I intend it to start more conversations.

I am still, as I have always been, not qualified to explain Zen to anybody. Those who believe they are qualified should come forward. I have a few questions for them.

Feel free to dispute anything you find in this book if you can find some facts to dispute with.

ewk, 2020

What we are doing here:

“Students as numerous as sands in the Ganges, but none are awakened.

They err by searching for the words in another person's mouth.

If you wish to forget form and not leave traces,  
Wholeheartedly strive to walk in emptiness. “

*-Dongshan, Compendium of Five Lamps*

Nanquan's Four Statements of Zen

1. A special transmission outside the scriptures
2. No dependence on words and letters;
3. Direct pointing at the soul of man
4. Seeing into one's nature and attainment of Buddhahood

*D.T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism*

Huineng said, “Stopping the mind and meditating on stillness is a disease, not Zen! And sitting up all night exhausts the body and does not benefit one's understanding.”

*Red Pine, Platform Sutra*

A monk asked. “What is your family custom?”

Zhaozhou said. “Having nothing inside, Seeking for nothing outside’

*Green, Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*

## Introduction (To One Another)

In retrospect I'm shocked at how open minded I've been.

Long story short, I ended up in the conversation that resulted in this book because I wandered into the Reddit Zen forum and found some Buddhists hanging out smoking cigarettes and pretending they knew what Zen Masters teach. I asked them some questions. I pointed out that Wumen (Mumon) doesn't teach faith-based Buddhism, nor does Dongshan, or Wansong, and so on.

While the Buddhists were all yelling at me and some people went off to read Wumen, I got some reading recommendations myself from people who like to feed a fire, among them a reclusive musician with a tea habit. As I began to read through the resulting pile I was still hearing from Buddhists, but now most of the complaints were specifically about how Dogen Buddhism claims it is in the Zen lineage of Caodong/Soto.

**Spoiler alert:** Dogen Buddhism isn't in the Caodong/Soto lineage. "Dogen says so" isn't an argument, it's a religious claim.

I decided I would read Dongshan, the Master<sup>2</sup> at the beginning of the Caodong/Soto lineage and then Wansong, a Caodong/Soto Master who wrote a four-hundred page Zen text toward the end of the Song period in China. Along the way I would visit whatever other Caodong/Soto Masters I could find. I was looking for where Dogen might have learned his Zazen practice-enlightenment prayer-meditation religion. I didn't find any such thing in Caodong/Soto.

**Spoiler alert:** It turns out Dogen invented Zazen prayer-meditation himself, after heavily plagiarizing a mediation manual attributed a guy that Dogen would later denigrate. That's just delicious, isn't it?

Still puzzled but still open minded, I picked up a book someone

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<sup>2</sup> I capitalize Master when referring to Zen Masters. It's the least I can do.

suggested in /r/Zen (the forum is really just a reference desk, isn't it?) by a Stanford Professor of Buddhism named Bielefeldt, titled *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*. Bielefeldt proves that Dogen invented Zazen practice-enlightenment prayer-meditation. Bielefeldt proves that Zazen prayer-meditation has nothing to do with Caodong/Soto. Bielefeldt reviews Dogen's possible connection to Rujing, the Caodong/Soto Master that Dogen claimed was his teacher and concludes not only that Rujing never taught Zazen prayer-meditation, Rujing probably didn't teach Dogen either. Bielefeldt says it's likely Dogen couldn't even speak Chinese.

So the whole claim that Dogen Buddhism is related to Zen is faith-based, like the claims of Scientology and Mormonism. Dogen, L. Ron Hubbard, and Joseph Smith all started religions based only on their own personal claims. In retrospect it would seem that virgin mothers and thunder gods are more plausible than Dogen being a Zen Master.

People who convert to Dogen Buddhism can believe what they like, of course, just like Scientology converts get to believe that aliens were trapped in volcanoes. But outside of churches, Dogen isn't really much of a topic for conversation regardless of what religious studies departments have concluded, especially those religious studies departments headed by scholars that have significant financial and professional ties to Dogen Buddhist churches.

In retrospect the idea that Dogen was just a liar should have occurred to me nearer to the beginning. After all Dogen, along with people like L. Ron Hubbard and Joseph Smith, is one of the few people in history to create a viable church based only on his own claims. Church creators aren't famous for being bastions of intellectual integrity, their stories aren't famous for standing up to inquiry.

I'm writing all this down for anybody who wants to bother following along this shockingly open minded trip down Caodong/Soto lane. Most people of course aren't that interested to begin with, and anybody who has converted to a church they don't know the history of hasn't got time for scholarship. Here we are, anyway. Family custom and all that.

If you know me at all, you know that I'm an unapologetic blabbermouth and thus it is no surprise that I'm still talking after having argued quite convincingly that there isn't much chance of there being anyone paying any attention.

-ewk, January 2020

## Part 1: Dogen Buddhism is not Caodong Soto Zen

**In this part:** *Three arguments against Dogen - Rujing unrelated to FukanZenGi - A much ignored Appendix - Zen never meant "meditation" - Sitting Meditation for self improvement - Prayer Meditation explained*

The more questions I asked, the more people from Dogen's churches got mad at me. The angrier people got, the less we talked about facts and the more we talked about needing special authority to challenge religious beliefs. I had to refine and refine and refine my questions and my presentation of facts to ensure that arguments were about facts, not faith.

### Dogen is Not Zen in Three Arguments

Some people are convinced by historical fact, some by the realities of modern religious practice, some by original sources. For the sake of those of us who came for the Zen, I'll roughly sketch the arguments and let you all decide which hill you want to die on.

*1st Argument, Factual: Are you convinced by history?.*

While Bielefeldt's book is dryish, and while it's audience is clearly academics, and while Bielefeldt isn't shy about mixing religious testimony together with facts, the historical facts put Dogen clearly outside the Zen tradition.

Here are the yes/no questions Bielefeldt's text will help anyone convinced by historical fact to answer, **and if you don't believe me, read Bielefeldt's book yourself**<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> I have taken some liberties with citations and format and everything because a) I expect everybody to read everything and b) I wrote this on Google Docs, I'm not

## Bielefeldt's facts about *FukanZazenGi*: Yes/No answers

1. According to Bielefeldt, did Dogen get any part of *FukanZazenGi* from Rujing? **No**.
2. According to Bielefeldt, did Dogen get any part of *FukanZazenGi* from Buddha or Bodhidharma, as Dogen claimed? **No**.
3. According to Bielefeldt, is there \*any\* evidence of anyone teaching of "practice-enlightenment" or a "dharma gate" of Zazen prayer-meditation before Dogen? **No**.
4. According to Bielefeldt, was Dogen's source text (plagiarized) for *FukanZazenGi* written by any known author, let alone a Zen author?<sup>4</sup> **No**.

I want to stress these are yes/no questions *about historical facts*. Some people can't be talked out of the belief in supernatural powers or astrology or numerology; the historical facts argument is not going to convince everybody. If you are persuaded by historical facts, then you know where to go to see how the argument that Dogen was Caodong/Soto Master got pwnd: Bielefeldt. He teaches at Stanford. He likes Dogen. He proves *FukanZazenGi* is not Zen. There is no way out.

If there is no Rujing connection *FukanZazenGi*, then there is no Caodong/Soto in Dogen Buddhism.

And don't even argue that Dogen got enlightened *after* frauding it up in *FukanZaZenGi*. Just don't.

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some fancy academic.

<sup>4</sup> Where did Dogen get the mediation manual he plagiarized from? See Appendix: Who Wrote What Dogen Plagiarized

## *2nd Argument, Moral: Are you convinced by conduct?*

“The facts of the evangelical Dogen Buddhist origins in the West are these: In the 1960s, four major [Japanese Buddhist] teachers came to the United States from Japan: Shunryu Suzuki, Taizan Maezumi, Joshu Sasaki, and Eido Shimano. Andy Afbale, one of Shimano’s former head monks, called these four the “major missionaries” of [Japanese Buddhism], As they had all received “transmission” from leading Japanese teachers... and three of the four... have caused major public sex scandals... The only one of the four whose reputation was unblemished, Shunryu Suzuki of the San Francisco Zen Center, gave his sangha over to a man named Richard Baker, who was later embroiled in a sex scandal of his own, resigned from his abbacy, and became the subject of a book with the appropriately suggestive title *Shoes Outside the Door.*” (<https://newrepublic.com/article/115613/zen-buddhist-sex-controversies-america-excerpt>)<sup>5</sup>

There is no question that Dogen Buddhism has had *more* than it’s fair share of sex scandals, where “masters” had affairs with students, kept secret by themselves and often their communities. These affairs raise several questions:

1. Can sex predators transmit the dharma of Nanquan?
2. Can Dogen’s religion have anything to do with Zen given the sort of “masters” Dogen’s religion has produced?

Bonus question:

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<sup>5</sup> I created a mirror of the /r/Zen page where sources on Dogen Buddhist sex predators were first consolidated just this morning when I noticed a fresh batch of vandalism... <https://www.reddit.com/r/zensangha/wiki/ewk/m-sexpredators>

3. Can Zazen prayer-meditation be thought of as anything more than prayer, given the moral failures of those widely believed to be “masters” of the practice?

I’ve heard some complaints about this kind of argument, mainly that Zen Masters were “likely just as much sex predators too”, but their immorality was kept out of Zen texts. As soon as evidence of this hypothetical immorality surfaces, I’ll get back to those people. Ditto the people who claim the roots of Yeti Trans-psyche Healing are found in Atlantis.

### *3rd Argument, Textual: Are you convinced by source texts?*

Anyone who wants to know what Caodong is really like need look no further than the record of Dongshan and the book of instruction written by Wansong, and translated by Cleary, called \*Book of Serenity\*. There are religious texts (from Dogen Buddhists and new agers) that have plagiarized the title and some of the contents, so save your money since I didn’t.

These two texts span hundreds of years of Caodong history. These two represent the name Caodong as no other two sources can claim to. Bow down. We will be spending some time with these two sources going forward. There is no Zazen prayer-meditation specifically, no reverence for meditation in general, and nothing that is even strongly suggestive of a history of any of that.

It is worth noting that Bielefeldt saw this problem, struggled with it, and then tried to bury it, like this below (brackets are my changes):

*Bielefeldt:* "Yet there remains a sense in which we have not fully come to grips with the historical character and the religious problematic of the meditation tradition in which they occur. We are often told, for example, that Zen ~~Buddhism~~ takes its name from the Sanskrit dhyana<sup>a</sup>. ...and that the school has specialised in the practice[of sitting meditation], but we are

rarely told just how this specialization is related to the many striking disclaimers, found throughout the writings of Chan and Zen<sup>b</sup> ...to the effect that the religion has nothing to do with [sitting meditation]<sup>c</sup> “. (p11)

*ewk notes on this passage:*

**a:** Bielefeldt translates *dhyana* here as "meditation", which has been strongly rejected by etymologically-based translations, most notably by both D.T. Suzuki in *Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, and by secular Buddhist scholars.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/zensangha/wiki/ewk/m-dhyana>

**b:** Dogen's own writings, and the inconsistency of his religion, is being used by Bielefeldt to imply a consistency with Zen's famous seeming inconsistency which is at least "assuming the premise", and at most outright dishonesty. Liars are inconsistent, Zen Masters aren't bound by consistency. It's not the same thing.

**c:** Bielefeldt uses "*dhyana*" at the end of this passage, switching back and forth between *dhyana* and meditation in this quote, either out of confusion, or out of the desire to obscure questions arising about the etymological history of *dhyana* and how it never meant "sitting in Zazen prayer-meditation" let alone "sitting meditation".

If Dogen wasn't enlightened (or honest) when he wrote *FukanZazenGi*, then why pretend that starting his own church would make him enlightened or honest?

Always remember to ask people *what they believe*. Dogen Buddhists don't know in contrast with most Christians and many other kinds of Buddhists. Always remember to ask people *what text their faith is based on*. Dogen Buddhists can't link their religious beliefs to Zen texts, particularly their belief in prayer-meditation.

## Zen Is Not Sitting Meditation

How much meditation is there in Zen texts? How much religious meditation? What's the proportion of discussion about sitting meditation compared to other topics? We are straying out of y/n territory here, so let's keep it interesting.

### 1. *Dhyana never meant "meditation"*<sup>6</sup>

Secular Buddhist and Sanskrit scholar John Peacock<sup>7</sup> argues that seated meditation isn't an integral part of Buddha's teachings:

"There is no such word for 'meditation' in the lexicon of Buddhism. Buddhists do not meditate. They cultivate... they are engaged in actually bringing something into being... [not what is] very much more from the tradition of Christianity of taking scripture and contemplating it and using it as something edifying to reflect on ...That's not what is happening in the early texts... Even the word "meditation" which seems to be very very much almost the prerogative of Buddhism... so much so that Buddhism can be reduced on many occasions in the Western World into a system of meditation... is not actually the full correct engagement [of textual Buddhism]."

Keep in mind that he isn't talking about Zazen prayer-meditation in particular, but *all* meditation. It is surprising, isn't it, that the Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths not only don't mention meditation, but tend to encourage behavior that engages the world rather than withdraws from it?

D.T. Suzuki's book *Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* is a careful assessment of Huineng's use of Chinese transliteration of "*dhyana*",

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.reddit.com/r/zen/wiki/dhyana>

<sup>7</sup> from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXYBtT4uN30&feature\\_@18:20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXYBtT4uN30&feature_@18:20)

and there is ample evidence that it did not mean “sitting meditation” let alone Zazen prayer-meditation.

"To begin with Dhyana, Hui-neng's definition is: 'Dhyana (tso-ch'an) is not to get attached to the mind, is not to get attached to purity, nor is it to concern itself with immovability.... What is Dhyana, then? It is not to be obstructed in all things. Not to have any thought stirred up by the outside conditions of life, good and bad- this is tso (dhyana). To see inwardly the immovability of one's self-nature- this is ch'an (dhyana)... Outwardly, to be free from the notion of form- this is ch'an. Inwardly, not to be disturbed- this is ting (dhyana)'.

(p33, Suzuki's *Zen Doctrine of No-mind*.)

We haven't even gotten to the pages and pages of Zen Masters rejecting seated meditation and other religious practices in general. Finally, from Reddit's own OneManGayPrideParade:

Two other sources that show how our idea of "meditation" does not map onto traditional practices are Alan Sponberg, *Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism*, in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (edited by Robert Gimello) and Jeffrey Bass's dissertation *Meditation in an Indian Buddhist Monastic Code* (overseen by Gregory Schopen).

Two interesting conclusions that both sources mention are that what we consider "meditation" as purely an act of mental focus or of mental effacement is much less frequently discussed than are the ritual and magical functions of dhyana such as chanting and superpowers (so that translating it only as "meditation" ignores some of its more primary meanings), and that "enlightenment" is almost never mentioned as being achieved in a meditative state, but rather during a sermon or encounter.

There are clearly some significant problems with how we conceptualize the experiences that these words represent. This is not to deny the existence of forms of seated, focused contemplation (whether in India or China), but to point out that for historical and cultural reasons it was privileged when Westerners were learning about Eastern religions.

Zen Masters' teachings are often excluded from conversations about Zen because Zen Masters' teachings don't accord with Dogen's religion, or Buddhism generally. Add to this the fact that the majority of translations and most of the scholarship the West has produced in the last fifty years are heavily influenced by Dogen's religion and voila: People aren't studying Zen.

The famous R.H. Blyth also tackles dhyana:

" For the practical study of Zen, you must pass the barriers set up by the masters of Zen." In the phrase, "the practical study of Zen", sanszen, the word san is said to have three meanings: 1. to distinguish (truth from error.) 2. to have an audience with a Zen Master. 3. to reach the ground of one's being. There is no explaining, philosophizing, idealizing, eccentricity. The character [zen], used to transliterate[1] Dhyana, originally meant "to sacrifice to hills and fountains."

p.32, Blyth, *Zen and Zen Classics, Vol. 4*)

Lastly, here is Zhaozhou talking about it in Green's translation. Green relegated an essential translation question to a footnote, which I've kept as a footnote here:

A monk asked, "What is meditation?"<sup>8</sup>  
The master said, "It is not meditation."  
The monk said, "Why is it 'not meditation'?"  
The master said, "It's alive, it's alive!"  
Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu,  
Green's trans, #100

In light of Green's note, I've rewritten the translation to reflect the question of meaning:

A monk asked, "What is [sitting] meditation?"  
The master said, "It is not [dhyana]."  
The monk said, "Why is it [sitting meditation] 'not  
[dhyana]'?"  
The master said, "It's alive, it's alive!"

## 2. *Zen Masters aren't fans of meditation*

How many quotes would suffice, do you think, to establish the disregard with which Zen Masters hold meditative attainments? You can find as many as you could ask for in the appendix of this book, and some of them are quite nasty. There are more here:

<https://www.reddit.com/r/zensangha/wiki/notmeditation>

Alan Watts remarks on the lack of meditation instruction in Zen texts, as does Bielefeldt. Perhaps this is why Shunryu Suzuki disavowed Zen in favor of Buddhism in the book *Beginner's*

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<sup>8</sup> "The Japanese word zen comes from Chinese chan which comes from the Indian Sanskrit dhyana which means "meditation". The character translated here refers more specifically to the act of doing meditation as a special practice in contrast to the other activities of daily life. Dhyana refers to meditation as a state of mind that is present in all the affairs of daily living." -Green

### *Mind-After- Beginner-Indoctrinated ?*

Why is it that Zen Masters ridicule sitting meditation so frequently? Why is it that Zen Masters relate stories of enlightenment that are entirely unrelated to sitting meditation? Why is it that so many Zen texts seem impenetrable to those who spend hours in meditation? Why is it that meditation religions have failed to produce Zen Masters, but instead carbon copy evangelical preachers who practice talking in soothing tones on youtube videos?

Fundamentally, sitting meditation is a practice that aims at some form of self improvement. The idea that self improvement is necessary is based on a religious belief that the self can and should be improved. Zen Masters reject this belief. So why wouldn't a religion be honest about such a huge doctrinal dispute?

### *Why is Zazen Prayer-Meditation A Kind of Praying?*

How is Zazen prayer-meditation even a kind of prayer? I know it's going to come as a shock to some people that their new church is just like their old one, but here are the elements of prayer in FukanZaZenGi: ritual conditions, promises of salvation, communing with the sacred other, reliance on subservience to a spiritual authority (Dogen). Citations from Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*.

1. Dogen, like Jesus, argued that prayer was an activity away from the world:
  - a. Failing to "stop deliberation" means "losing your way in this world of defilements" (p.175)
  - b. "One should have quiet quarters". (p. 177)
  - c. "Cast aside all involvements and discontinue all affairs". (p.177)
2. Dogen devoted extensive discussion to the ritual posture, another indicator of prayer-like activity:
  - a. Dogen described the setting, the use of a mat, etc.

- b. Dogen described the posture and alignment of the body; he even insisted that the "tips of the thumbs" must be "pressed together". (p. 179)
  - c. Dogen even addressed how one should breath during ritual practice. (p. 181)
3. Dogen encouraged people to pray for salvation. For as long as possible necessary.
  - a. Pacify your mind: "Halt the revolutions of mind, intellect, and consciousness; stop the calculations of thought, ideas, and perceptions." (p.177)<sup>9</sup>
  - b. "If you remain for a long period" you will "naturally become unified". (p. 181)
  - c. "This [remaining in ritual posture] is the essential art of [Zazen prayer-meditation]". (p. 181)
4. Dogen argued that his ritual practice was the key to salvation; he claimed famous people did it before him (which we now know Dogen lied about)
  - a. "[Zazen prayer-meditation] is the dharma gate of great ease and joy." In contrast with Wumen's "No-Gate" and Dongshan's "No entrance".
  - b. Dogen claimed that the 5th Patriarch of Zen practiced Zazen prayer-meditation! (p. 177)
  - c. Dogen claimed Bodhidharma and Buddha practiced Zazen prayer-meditation. (p. 176)
  - d. Bonus: Dogen deliberately misrepresented Fayun Yuantong, claiming that "don't sit in meditation with your eyes closed" meant "sit in meditation with your eyes open". (p. 180)

Keep in mind that *FukanZazenGi* represents only one facet of Dogen's inconsistent doctrinal system, even to the point that people argue Dogen's later work contradicted his earlier work due to "mental

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<sup>9</sup> Bielefeldt: "D.T. Suzuki attacked Dogen's doctrine of 'body and mind sloughed off' as mere negativism and his practice of 'just sitting' as mere mental stasis. [Zazen prayer-meditation], he complained, failed to capture the vital spirit of Zen..."

decline"; according to Heine:

*"Some passages in these texts contain highly-charged attacks on opponents and positions praised or endorsed in the earlier works...*

- *The [1] Decline Theory, argues that Dōgen entered into a prolonged period of deterioration after he moved from Kyoto to Echizen in 1243 and became increasingly strident in his attacks on rival lineages. The second view, which I refer to as*
- *the [2] Renewal Theory, maintains that Dōgen had a spiritual rebirth after returning from a trip to Kamakura in 1248 and emphasized the priority of karmic causality. Both theories, however, tend to ignore or misrepresent the early writings and their relation to the late period.*
- *[Heine's] alternative [3] Three Periods Theory suggesting that the main change, which occurred with the opening of Daibutsu-ji/Eiheiji in 1245, was a matter of altering the style of instruction rather than the content of ideology." (Heine, [http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/DogenStudies/dogen\\_canon\\_heine.pdf](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/DogenStudies/dogen_canon_heine.pdf))*

Even if all of us aren't persuaded by any of this, certainly we have to acknowledge there is room for doubt. Once we begin to doubt Dogen, who has no other claim to Zen *than his own word*, the Zen teachings of eight hundred years before Dogen begin to look a little more credible than the teachings of one man who invented his own church.

## Part 2: Introduction to the Zen Lineage

**In this part:** *Talking about Zen means starting with texts - Scholars with conflicts of interest are called apologists - How Zen Masters do - The Real Four Pillars of Zen -*

When you want to know what Abraham Lincoln said in his speeches, any reasonable person would tell you to go read Abraham Lincoln's speeches. Why not approach Zen this way? There are three books written by Zen Masters before 1300 CE, why not start there? When we start there, a number of interesting questions emerge about the relationship between Zen and the religious institutions, particularly Japanese Buddhist religious institutions, that now claim to represent those texts.

Interestingly, of the three books that Chinese Zen Masters wrote, only one is available in multiple translations. This might come as a surprise, after all, Zen is so well known! There are so many books about Zen! Why would books written by actual Zen Masters receive so little attention?

The main reason is that religions (and religious apologetics masquerading as scholarship) are put in a precarious position by Zen Masters' teachings. Zen Masters are dangerous. Zen Masters' teachings aren't feel good wisdom for social change. Talking about what Zen Masters teach tends to upset people rather than sooth them and tranquilize them, robbing people of the peace that Western faux-Zen Dogen Buddhism is famous for.

Speaking of Dogen Buddhism, you know what hasn't been translated in English? The sayings text of Rujing, the teacher Dogen claimed he studied under. Huh. That's odd. It's almost like a deliberate sort of circumstance rather than an accident.

So, turn back now. If you haven't read *The Gateless Gate*, or Cleary's translation of *Book of Serenity* (beware of texts that plagiarize the title), or the *Blue Cliff Record*; go read one of those. Zen Masters wrote them. The books Zen Masters write aren't about meditation or

peace.

Nobody was around to remind me that churches, especially evangelical Buddhist churches, often mislead people. Or that centuries of religious authority tends to suppress debate. You'd think I would have been more suspicious. It turns out I have to be slapped around by facts for a while before I become indignant about being lied to.

What? Did you expect me to not take people at their word?

If you want to understand more about how so many people misused a name, see the appendix entry on Sesame Street and Zen.

## What is Zen Tradition?

Much like we might expect to find a distorted picture of Abraham Lincoln in those parts of the world that opposed Lincoln's Presidency, in the West discussions about Zen rarely include much in the way of facts or history. Many people claiming to be "Zen Buddhist" are completely unfamiliar with the history of the Chinese Zen that Dogen Buddhist churches claim to be teaching. Without reading the speeches of Lincoln while growing up in parts of the world where Lincoln is actively disliked, somebody could easily get the wrong idea about what Lincoln said.

This is generally what has happened in the West, particularly in the U.S. with regard to Zen scholarship in the years since D.T. Suzuki died. New Age religions and those branches of Buddhism heavily invested in a self-anointed messianic teacher named Dogen rode the wave of popularity started by D.T. Suzuki's work, once again using the fame of the Zen Masters to spread their own religious beliefs. You can recognize them by their lack of a catechism or statement of beliefs.

Even those preachers not especially popular in Japan with their own church (like Shunryu Suzuki and Philip Kapleau) found the West eager to embrace a kind of prayer-mediation that promised to be better than all the other kinds of praying. This new kind of religion that was just like the older kinds of religion but with a new exotic

flavor. Riding the wave of pop culture craze and Japanese sponsorship from religiously-based Eastern academia, Dogen's religion became the focus of Western academia<sup>10</sup> as well.

Further, it is worth noting that the "masters" from Dogen's religion that led the evangelical invasion of the West were generally morally reprehensible people, and not masters in any sense of the word<sup>11</sup>.

*However, if we follow D.T. Suzuki's lead and take as our starting point the books Zen Masters wrote, and branching out from there, we read the Sayings texts that represent more or less the written history of the Zen lineage up to the first printed books, what do we find?*  
***What do Zen Masters teach is the question at the foundation of the***

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<sup>10</sup> Given that scholars should be wary of associating themselves with and benefiting from the people they claim to impartially study, a brief summary of appearances of impropriety in Western Scholarship:

1. Faure: Kyoto University, 1976-1983, studied Dogen's *Dogenbogenzo* under Yanagida Seizan
2. McRae: Komazawa University [Dogen Affiliated and Founded], University of Tokyo, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), Soka University (Founded by Evangelical Buddhist)
3. Sharf: Kyoto University, 1985-1987
4. Schlutter: Komazawa University [Dogen Affiliated], 1993-1995
5. Welter: Komazawa University [Dogen Affiliated], 1980-1982, 1987-1989;

<sup>11</sup> "In the 1960s, four major [Japanese Buddhist] teachers came to the United States from Japan: Shunryu Suzuki, Taizan Maezumi, Joshu Sasaki, and Eido Shimano. Andy Aftab, one of Shimano's former head monks, called these four the "major missionaries" of [Japanese Buddhism], as they had all received "transmission" from leading Japanese teachers... And three of the four... have caused major public sex scandals... The only one of the four whose reputation was unblemished, Shunryu Suzuki of the San Francisco Zen Center, gave his sangha over to a man named Richard Baker, who was later embroiled in a sex scandal of his own, resigned from his abbacy, and became the subject of a book with the appropriately suggestive title *Shoes Outside the Door*."

<https://newrepublic.com/article/115613/zen-buddhist-sex-controversies-america-excerpt>, See also Appendix 1: Sex Predators and Their Lineages, <https://www.reddit.com/r/zen/wiki/sexpredators>

**entire conversation.** The term “Zen Master” originates with these people, after all. The name “Zen” was coined to give a name to this group that often refers to themselves as a family or a lineage. Everybody, even Dogen, who started a religion with himself as the focus, acknowledged that the name Zen refers to these people.

Why is it that when we study these old timers they don’t teach what today’s churches are preaching? And what exactly are these old Masters talking about? And where does the confusion come from? And why the dishonesty from religious authorities? And what is a “Zen tradition”, if not meditation, funny outfits, and bizarre rituals?

Apart from what Zen Masters say for themselves, there are consistent themes in the books Zen Masters wrote and the sayings that they produced, some of which we could list as: *Gossip, Asking and Answering, No Unalterable Dharma, No methods or practices, Visiting relatives, Poverty, and Blabbermouthing.*

### *Gossip*

Three books unquestionably written by Zen Masters have been translated into English, along with the “Master Approved” Shobogenzo written by Dahui (title plagiarized by Dogen for his now renamed book \*Dogenbogenzo\*). Despite what Dogen might have said to his faithful, everybody acknowledges that these authors are the Zen Masters that the name “Zen” refers to. These books by Zen Masters are filled with gossip about the Zen Masters’ family going back to the Patriarchs. Quotes, poems, and lectures by Zen Masters all are repeated and discussed, along with previous discussions of those quotes, poems, and sermons. It’s gossip, family gossip. Zen Masters are asked repeatedly in dialogues about what other Zen Masters have said, gossiping about gossip. You can’t pick up a pile of Zen dialogues without running into gossip.

Church books, in contrast, focus on the importance and holiness of church beliefs and the importance and value of church practices. Sometimes you can read a whole church book and not come across any Zen gossip at all. It’s a startling contrast, and people who

want church books aren't satisfied by dialogue, while people who want to hear Zen Masters gossiping generally have little interest in church books.

Foyan says something interesting about Zen practice as it relates to the family gossip:

"Now, don't hold on to my talk; each of you do your own work independently. You may contemplate the stories of ancients, you may sit quietly, or you may watch attentively everywhere; all of these are ways of doing the work." (Foyan, *Instant Zen*, p.59)

Another thing Foyan says:

"You should simply step back and study through total experience. How do you step back? I am not telling you to sit on a bench with your eyes closed, rigidly suppressing body and mind, like earth or wood. That will never have any usefulness, even in a million years.

When you want to step back, if there are any sayings or stories you don't understand, place them in front of you, step back and see for yourself why you don't understand.

Professional monks say, 'Thinking will not do; not thinking will not do either.' Then how do they teach people to contemplate? I tell you, just step back and look.

Phew! Sure gives people trouble! Sure is hard to understand! But look here – what is it that troubles people? Who is it that troubles anyone? Step back and look in this way; gradually you will wake up, with each passing day illumination will expand and enlarge." (Foyan, *Instant Zen*, p.51)<sup>12</sup>

Foyan's text, *Instant Zen*, is interesting in that it is mostly lectures, but,

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<sup>12</sup> The astute reader will wonder if these means Foyan is interested in gradual enlightenment. The short answer is no. The long answer is "Read Foyan".

as I've warned you, you shouldn't be surprised to find that Foyan's sermons are full of gossip about what the Zen lineage teaches. Foyan's lectures mention his own teacher very sparsely, but this is still way more than most Zen Masters mention their teachers. Zen Masters like gossip, it seems, but not lots of talk about how their teachers were helpful and wise.

Cases (koan) deal with some kind of gossip, he said, she said. The history of the term for "Cases" aka koans has to do with legal precedents, so calling this body of literature "gossip" rather than "legal history" is a step down, but why not.

While many Buddhist religions worship sutras in which some important wisdom is discussed, Zen Cases don't always have gossip about major philosophical or religious truths. Some of these Cases have become some of the most famous of gossip, including Zhaozhou's Mu Case in which he both affirms and rejects philosophical-religious truths, and Yunmen's Shit Stick Case, in which Yunmen says Buddha is just dry, but perhaps previously used, toilet paper.

### *Asking and Answering*

Zen dialogues going all the way back to Bodhidharma's time have been full of questions and answers. Here's two from Yunmen to set the stage:

Someone asked Master Yunmen, "Since antiquity, the old worthies have transmitted mind by mind. Today I ask you, Master: What device do you use?"

The Master said, "When there's a question, there's an answer.

App, Master Yunmen, p.56)

...and then...

Someone asked, "What is the fundamental teaching?"

Master Yunmen said, "No question, no answer.

App, Master Yunmen, p.98

Work that out for yourself. Now, when we talk about Caodong/Soto, specifically, remember that Caodong is named after Dongshan and his student Caoshan, and Dongshan's nickname was "He-who-questions-head-monks-to-death". Now, come on. No church person ever questioned anybody to death.

Yunmen use to taunt people, "Ask me! Ask me!" when they couldn't answer him. If they refused, he would ask himself and answer himself. Not being able to answer a question is an indicator that somebody has run out of doctrinal script and that they are on their own. Yunmen wrote the script as he went along though, so he was a tough guy to corner.

Zen monasteries had head scribes to copy down the history of *ask and answer* and also people responsible for maintaining the queue of people waiting to get into see Zen Masters to ask their questions and get their answers. Churches, of course, aren't interested in going on the record for hours a day. Imagine if all those church people who teach sitting meditation and get paid lots of money for it (sit quietly, pay me 50\$ an hour) were instead, for free, to simply engage whoever came to the door and answer their questions. How long would that church last? Zen Masters did it for 800 years at the first go. Even old Juzhi, who only answered questions by raising one finger, still answered them.

There is an interesting exchange between Guishan and his student Yangshan about asking and answering and its role in Zen teachings, here it is:

Yangshan once returned to Guishan to interview him, Guishan said to him, "You are now called a good and clever teacher. How can you distinguish between those who come from all parts and know It, and those who don't know It; the Masters who have inherited It, and those who have not; the profound learning, and the (mere) meaning

learning. Explain and let me hear."

Yangshan replied, "Yangshan has had this experience. When monks come from all directions, he raises his mosquito-flapper, and asks them if 'This is expounded where they come from or not'. Further, he says to them, leaving this aside, 'What are the old Masters where you come from teaching?'"

Guishan admired him and said, "This has always been the claw and fang of our sect."

Blyth, *Zen and Zen Classics*, Volume 3

Guishan is saying that asking people "what is taught where you come from" is *the fang and a claw* of the Zen lineage. Zen's animal defenses and means of feeding itself is in this question, so how can doctrine be at the core of Zen? Without doctrine Zen is antithetical to religion. Japanese Buddhism isn't famous for its questions or its answers.

### *No Unalterable Dharma*

The Four Statements of Zen, possibly written by Nanquan and brought back to the public attention by D.T. Suzuki (and not any churches, you'll notice) go thisaway:

"No dependence on words and letters.  
A special transmission outside the Scriptures.  
Direct pointing to the soul of man.  
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of  
Buddhahood."

(Blyth's *Zen and Zen Classics*, Volume 1, p.48)

For emphasis on what it means to not depend on words and letters (despite what Hakamaya, the Critical [Dogen] Buddhist says in Paul L.

Swanson's *Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism*<sup>13</sup>) we turn to that old church burner Huangbo.

Above all it is essential not to select some particular teaching suited to a certain occasion, and, being impressed by its forming part of the written canon, regard it as an immutable concept.

Why so? Because in truth there is no unalterable Dharma which the Tathagata could have preached. People of our sect would never argue that there could be such a thing.

Huangbo, Blofeld's *Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, p.57

So, there is no unalterable dharma in Zen, just seeing. No rules. Thus Buddhist churches, which depend on a dharma that is provided by a messiah and cannot be altered, have nothing to do with Zen. That includes special Bibles that preach directions on how to sit your way to prayer enlightenment.

### *No methods or practices*

Speaking of which, there's a bit from Huangbo about methods which applies to any "dharma of method", and it goes a little something like this:

So long as you are concerned with 'by means of, you will always be depending on something false. When will you ever succeed in understanding? Instead of observing those who tell you to open wide both your hands like one who has nothing to lose, you waste your strength bragging about all sorts of things.

Huangbo, Blofeld's *Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, p.60

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[http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/What\\_and\\_why\\_of\\_Critical\\_Buddhism\\_1.pdf](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/What_and_why_of_Critical_Buddhism_1.pdf) Very worth the read. Thanks, Mr. Swanson. Scholarship can be tough to find these days.

There is an interesting bit from D.T. Suzuki regarding what exactly Bodhidharma taught and it touches on both this idea of no method as well as “outside words and sentences”. We should all know by now that Dogen lied about getting Zazen prayer-meditation from Bodhidharma, so what was “wall staring about”? Aside, that is, from Huangbo’s rejection of any specific practice-based interpretation of “wall sitting”.

“The master [Bodhidharma] first stayed in the Shorinji monastery for nine years, and when he taught the second patriarch, it was only in the following way: ‘Externally keep yourself away from all relationships, and, internally, have no hankerings in your heart; when your mind is like unto a straight standing wall you may enter into the Path.”

Hui-k’e tried variously to explain the reason of mind, but failed to realize the truth itself. The master simply said, ‘No! No!’ and never proposed to explain to his disciple what was the mind-essence in its thought-less state.

[Later] said Hui-k’e, ‘I know now how to keep myself away from all relationships.’ ‘You make it a total annihilation, do you not?’ queried the master. ‘No master,’ replied Hui-k’e, ‘I do not make it a total annihilation.’ ‘How do you testify to your statement?’ ‘For I know it always in a most intelligible manner, but to express it in words- that is impossible.” ‘That is the mind-essence itself transmitted by all the Buddhas. Harbor no doubts about it.”

*Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki, p.63*

“Mind like a straight standing wall” sounds like a practice, sure. Where are all the people who practice this? How do they teach it? Is there a retreat for that?

Zhaozhou addressed practice, but it’s not the sort of religious injunction to practice that Dogen’s church is famous for preaching.

A monk asked, "What is a person who understands matters perfectly?"

The master said, "Obviously it is great practice."

The monk said, "It's not yet clear to me; do you practice or not?"

The master said, "I wear clothes and eat food."

The monk said, "Wearing clothes and eating food are ordinary things. It's still not clear to me; do you practice or not?"

The master said, "You tell me, what am I doing every day?"

*(Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu, Green trans., p.68)*

As an aside, this is Xuefeng, Deshan's student, Yunmen's teacher, who studied under Dongshan:

A monk said to Xuefeng, "We are always putting on and taking off our cloths, and eating our food - is there any way of avoiding this?"

Xuefeng said, "By putting on and taking off our cloths, and eating our food."

The monk said, "I don't understand."

Xuefeng said, "Not understanding is wearing cloths, eating food."

*(Blyth, Zen and Zen Classics, Vol. 3)*

Dongshan's practice is discussed in the Case below, but before you rush down into it, this is the only mention of practice in Dongshan's record. Why does Dogen's church claim that Dongshan taught Zazen prayer-meditation? I don't know. Why does Jesus' church teach that Jesus' mother was a Virgin? Why does L. Ron Hubbard's church teach aliens got bombed in a volcano? Seriously? Seriously? *Churches make stuff up*. The real question is why is ewk so tolerant of these questions that we're even having this conversation? Too much compassion, that's probably it my friends. Disgusting.

An official asked [Dongshan], "Is there a practice for people to follow?"

The Master said, “When you become a man, there is such a practice.”

(Dongshan, *Record of Tung-shan*, p.48)

Thus any claims about Zen Masters teaching “practices” of the sort that Buddhists rely on to maintain their faith are absurd. There are eight hundred years of Zen teachings with no directions on meditation in them. Dogen made up a new kind of prayer-meditation practice and said it was “Zen” so he wouldn’t get shunned for messianic heresy.

### *Visiting relatives*

Dongshan, for example, famously visits Nanquan, which leads to complicated questions about who Dongshan’s teacher was. Zhaozhou visits Touzi, the oil seller. Yangshan visits Zhongyi and they discuss the monkey in the cage with six windows. Puhua visits Linji, Tianlong visited Juzhi and taught him One Finger Zen by accident. There is no end to it.

Where are all the records of famous visits in the Dogen Buddhist canon? Or is it that guest and host just practice mind pacification and nothing comes of it? There has also been a tendency in churches to make the teacher more available to the faithful and less to the public, like those Aikido Masters of Japan who could throw full grown men around with their pinkie fingers... until MMA was invented.

### *Poverty*

Zen Masters are big fans of poverty, this one of the many reasons that churches don’t like Zen, can’t teach Zen, can’t study Zen. Patch-robed monks? Monks with robes made out of cloth that was thrown away; their appearance was even one of poverty.

Churches are built on having something, so real poverty is tautologically out of their reach. To illustrate this poverty, here’s a bunch of Zhaozhou. Now, sure, the Dogen Buddhists are going to complain about how Caodong/Soto is different (Zen Masters disagree) and they will crybaby about how there is a teaching not recorded in

dialogues and a practice not taught in dialogues and if they are like that coward Schlutter<sup>14</sup>, they might try reading gravestones for evidence of the Zen dharma, but listen here: these words burn away “faith” and “church” and “practice” and “believe”, so I ask you, where are the people that put this into practice?

A monk asked, "What is your 'family custom'?"

The master [Zhaozhou] said, "Having nothing inside, seeking for nothing outside."

(Green trans. Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu, #389, p.123)

“Having nothing inside”: how can you attain that through practicing having-nothing-inside without all that having-nothing-practice becoming something you have inside? “Seeking for nothing outside”: how can you make a custom of this that is passed down over generations if nobody ever seeks out such a custom? Go to a church and they will invariably instruct you, but not with Zen teachings.

A monk asked, "This poor man has come. How can he be saved?"

The master [Zhaozhou] said, "You are not poor."

The monk said, "Then how do you deal with the fact that I am begging from you?"

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<sup>14</sup> Schlutter wrote a revisionist history for Dogen proselytizers called *How Zen Became Zen*. Ask me how anybody can take me seriously when I call Schlutter a coward in my book? Go ahead. Well, how can anybody take Schlutter seriously when he takes money to teach history and instead fabricates religious propaganda for pew sitters? Where is the bottom of that barrel? I'll dig down through the dead words of Buddhist Apologetics, you tell me when I get to bedrock.

The master said, "By just firmly staying poor."

(Green trans. *Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*,  
#308, p.101)

Zhaozhou's poverty isn't of words, is it? His record is longish compared to some, his fame is enormous. Before people tried to make something out of Zhaozhou's discussion of the Buddha-nature of a dog, what did Zhaozhou say about the dog? Yes, the dog has a Buddha nature, and no, no the dog doesn't have it. Didn't Zhaozhou know, one way or the other? Since nobody can say any more than "Yes and no" regarding Zhaozhou's position vis-a-vis the dog and the Buddha nature, isn't that poverty?

Zhaozhou doesn't stop there of course, he is the talkative sort. Here is Zhaozhou take up the question of moral poverty:

The master [Zhaozhou] was leaving the main hall when he saw a monk bowing to him. The master struck him with his stick.

The monk said, "But bowing is a good thing!"

The master said, "A good thing is not as good as nothing."

(Green trans. *Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*, #513, p.167)

That this *nothing* is more appropriate to Zen than any something is an echo of that story about Bodhidharma and the Emperor, where Bodhidharma supposedly was asked "What is the first principle of the holy doctrine?" to which he replied, "Vast emptiness, and nothing in it to be called holy" (*Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*).

Finally, as the King of Poverty, Zhaozhou says this about "instruction", which is always good for a few gasps of shock from a church goer:

A monk asked, "I have come a long way, please instruct me."

The master [Zhaozhou] said, "You have only just entered my door. Is it proper that I should spit in your face?"

(Green trans. *Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*, #303, p.100)

How is the “instruction” of priests and proselytizers not “spitting in your face”? When these sorts of people claim they are caring for Zhaozhou’s teaching it’s obvious they aren’t being truthful. Why drag Zhaozhou into it if they can’t show Zhaozhou agreeing to their beliefs and practices?

### *Blabbermouthing*

I don’t think an argument needs to be made that Zen Masters talk and talk and talk and talk and talk. The written canon of Zen can be said to stretch across eight hundred years and all of that filled with Patriarchs, since, as Zhaozhou observed, “We are all Patriarchs since Bodhidharma has come.” These religions with one messiah, Christians, Dogen Buddhists, Mormons, Scientologists, how can they possibly compete on volume? These philosophies with their sophisticated arguments, Kant, Hegel, Russel, and that nut Gödel, as examples, still couldn’t produce eight hundred years’ worth of blabber.

At the end of *Wumenguan*, *The Gateless Barrier of the Zen Lineage*, there is a letter supposedly written from one Amban to the author himself, Wumen. In it, Anwan (Amban) offers an argument about where this blabbermouthing comes from:

“Have you not heard how Bukan was (told he was) a chatter-box? This originated in Shaka's talkativeness<sup>15</sup>. That old chap created a lot of phantoms, and so bound the descendants of a thousand and one ages in entanglements, that they couldn't stick their heads out.”

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<sup>15</sup> Blyth’s footnote as it appears there: “This story comes in the Records of the Great Priest of the Sung Period, published in Japan in 1651. It says that Bukan [Fenggan] lived at Kokuseiji [Guoqingsi] Temple on Mount Tendai, and among the monks there were Kanzan [you may have heard of him by the name Hanshan] and Jittoku [Shide]. Once Bukan introduced Ryokyuin to them as incarnations of the Bodhisattva Manjusri, at which they laughed, called Bukan a chatterbox, went out the temple Gate, and never came back.”

If this is to be taken at all seriously, then talking talking talking is something that we can expect to find wherever Zen is taken seriously. Even Juzhi, the famous Master of One Finger Zen, said on his deathbed that One Finger Zen had not been exhausted in his lifetime... that finger did a whole lot of talking for him, remember. Of course Juzhi, after instructing by means of raising a finger, finishes his tour by *talking* about it. Which the point I was making to begin with, or Amban was making anyway.

So there we have it, a little tour of some of the Zen lineage's characterizable characteristics. Not much in there about meditation, but then even the great Dogen scholar Carl Bielefeldt acknowledges that real Zen Masters don't talk much about meditation.

"We are often told... that Zen Buddhism takes its name from the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, or "meditation," and that the school has specialized in the practice, but we are rarely told just how this specialization is related to the many striking disclaimers, found throughout the writings of Ch'an and Zen... to the effect that the religion has nothing to do with *dhyāna*. It is the gap between these two poles that serves as the arena for the debates and creates the kind of tension between Zen theory and its practice that is supposed to be resolved in the school's characteristic notions of the transcendental sudden practice."<sup>16</sup>

(Bielefeldt, *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, p.11)

For a bunch of big talkers to not talk about meditation, that's saying something.

## Some Real Four Pillars of Zen

I propose the following as "Some Real Four Pillars of Zen" in

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<sup>16</sup> Devoted Bielefeldt readers may feel that I overlooked Bielefeldt's point in this paragraph. He overlooked mine though, so there you go.

contrast with the so-called pillars that the ex-Dogen Buddhist preacher wrote about in that book which he should have titled *Three Pillars of Dogen Buddhism According the Kapleau Before He Got Excommunicated*. Not only did this defrocked Dogen Buddhist preacher fail to quote Zen Masters, as many of Dogen's followers do, he failed to take the teachings of the Masters into account when he titled his book. These Some Four Pillars of Zen, in contrast, will actually provide a context for discussions about Zen teachings and practice.

These Cases involve Zen Masters rejecting what religions cling to in various ways while at the same time not embracing any sort of nihilism. I know that later people will complain that I built some kind of house with four pillars and turned words into doctrine, but since I won't agree to a roof, what will they accomplish?

If people claim to tell you what Zen Masters teach in absolute terms but can't quote Zen Masters, then they are mistaken. If they insist, then they aren't honest. Tell them to read Huangbo.

### *The first pillar - Xingshan's Buddha-less Nature*

Xingshan<sup>17</sup> [Ikan] was one of Mazu's (755-817) family. This text is from Blyth's treatment of Joshu's Mu in his Wumenguan (the Gateless Barrier of the Zen Lineage).

Monk: "Has the dog the Buddha nature or not?"

Xingshan : "Yes,"

Monk: "Have you it or not?"

Xingshan : "I have not."

Monk: "All existent creatures have the Buddha-Natures;  
how is it that you have not?"

Xingshan : "I don't belong to all existent creatures."

Monk: "You say you don't belong to all existent creatures."

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<sup>17</sup> Blyth had this Xingshan as an heir of Mazu

This "You," is it a Buddha or not?"

Xingshan : "It is not a Buddha."

Monk: "What sort of thing, in the last resort, is this 'You'?"

Xingshan : "It is not a thing."

Monk: "Can it be perceived or thought of?"

Xingshan : "Thought cannot attain to it; it cannot be fathomed. For this reason, it is said to be a mystery."

I'm using this Case to touch on two themes in the Zen lineage, the Zen ambivalence with regard to any doctrine, here specifically the Buddha-nature doctrine, and ambiguity regarding the nature of enlightenment, which is sometimes referred to as "the mystery".

In this Case dogs have the Buddha- nature, but Zen Masters don't. In this Case the self cannot be fathomed, whereas the Buddha nature of the dog is an open and shut Case. Note that this Xingshan was an heir of Mazu, alive during Zhaozhou's lifetime.

The no-nonsense reader may recognize that the self-nature and seeing the self-nature might be easily filed together under a single ambiguity, and while I don't disagree with that, here I am calling out the conflict between what some Buddhists believe and what Zen Masters teach.

To the degree that Dogen Buddhists have a common doctrine, as far as I know, it is Buddhist. While scholars like Hakamaya, from the Dogen Buddhist movement called Critical Buddhism, might firmly insist on Buddhist doctrines.<sup>18</sup> It turns out that other sincere Dogen followers may not. I'm not sure the argument can be made about what Dogen actually believed, given that so much of his work is tied up in fraud and plagiarism for the purposes of consolidating religious power.

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<sup>18</sup> Again, if you haven't read Swanson's essay titled *Why They Say Zen is Not Buddhism* then why do I keep talking about it?

[http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/What\\_and\\_why\\_of\\_Critical\\_Buddhism\\_1.pdf](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/What_and_why_of_Critical_Buddhism_1.pdf)

*The second pillar – Chih's No Seeing, No Seer, Nothing Seen*

This next dialogue I think is Guizong Zhichang, one of Baizhang's, who may be this Chih of Yun-chu of the eighth century. It appears in D.T. Suzuki's essay *Zen and the Unconscious* which can be found in *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki* p.206, and again in Suzuki's *Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, p.78.

A monk asked Chih of Yun-chu of the eighth century,  
'What is meant by seeing into one's Self-nature and becoming a Buddha?'

Chih: 'This Nature is from the first pure and undefiled, serene and undisturbed. It belongs to no categories of duality such as being and non-being, pure and defiled, long and short, taking-in and giving-up; the Body remains in its suchness. To have a clear insight into this is to see into one's Self-nature. Self-nature is the Buddha, and the Buddha is Self-nature. Therefore, seeing into one's Self-nature is becoming the Buddha.'

Monk: 'If Self-nature is pure, and belongs to no categories of duality such as being and non-being, etc., where does this seeing take place ? '

Chih: 'There is a seeing, but nothing seen.'

Monk: 'If there is nothing seen, how can we say that there is any seeing at all?'

Chih: 'In fact there is no trace of seeing.'

Monk: 'In such a seeing, whose seeing is it?'

Chih: 'There is no seer, either.'

Monk: 'Where do we ultimately come to?'

Chih: 'Do you know that it is because of erroneous discrimination that one conceives of a being, and

hence the separation of subject and object. This is known as a confused view. For in accordance with this view one is involved in complexities and falls into the path of birth and death. Those with a clearer insight are not like this one. Seeing may go on all day, and yet there is nothing seen by them. You may seek for traces of seeing in them, but nothing, either of the Body or of the Use, is discoverable here. The duality of subject and object is gone—which is called the seeing into Self-nature.'

I don't know what people are looking for when they take up Zen study if it isn't this.

I'm also not sure what sort of doctrine anyone could derive from this. How anyone could claim to be practicing for it? How anyone could claim a moral authority from attaining it?

### *The third pillar – Huangbo's No Mind, No Dharma*

This comes from Huangbo – Blofeld's *Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, p.59. It specifically address transmission, which in some religions has been reduced to simply a step in the ordination process.

Q: If there is nothing on which to lay hold, how is the Dharma to be transmitted?

A: It is a transmission of Mind with Mind.

Q: If Mind is used for transmission, why do you say that Mind too does not exist?

A: Obtaining no Dharma whatever is called Mind transmission. The understanding of this Mind implies no Mind and no Dharma.

Q: If there is no Mind and no Dharma, what is meant by transmission?

A: You hear people speak of Mind transmission and then you talk of something to be received. So Bodhidharma said:

‘The nature of the Mind when understood,  
No human speech can compass or disclose.  
Enlightenment is naught to be attained,  
And he that gains it does not say he knows.’

If I were to make this clear to you, I doubt if you could stand up to it.

I have been very critical of Seung Sahn’s church, particularly of his eagerness to ordain anyone and everyone he could, calling ordination “Zen transmission”. I don’t mean to marginalize his other misconduct, particularly his sexual misconduct, by focusing on his abuse of the concept of transmission. When you watch Seung Sahn’s priests give talks on youtube, ask yourself, is there no-mind behind these talks? Do these people preach no dharma? Or do they talk about having received something, particularly some truth, that has to be communicated and passed on? If so, that’s not Zen, that’s faith-based Buddhism.

### *The fourth pillar – Mazu’s Mind is Not the Buddha*

Mazu, *Sun Face Buddha*, Dialogue 20, p.78

A monk asked, “Why does the Venerable say that mind is the Buddha?”

The Patriarch said, “To stop small children’s crying.”

The monk asked, “What do you say when they have

stopped crying?"

The Patriarch said, "It is neither mind nor Buddha".

The monk asked, "And when you have someone who does not belong to either of these two, how do you instruct him?"

The Patriarch said, "I tell him that it is not a thing."

The monk asked, "And how about when you suddenly meet someone who is there?"

The Patriarch said, "I teach him to directly realize the Great Way."

How can this be made into doctrine? How can this become a method that can be taught to people? After Mazu's death, why is it that no Zen Master instructed people in this same way?

#### *The other first pillar - Nanquan's Cloud Nail*

-Blyth, Zen and Zen Classics, Volume 3

Nanquan said to a chief monk, "What Sutra are you lecturing on?"

The monk replied, "The Nehan Sutra."

Nanquan said, "Won't you explain it to me?"

The monk said, "If I explain the sutra to you, you should explain Zen to me."

Nanquan said, "A golden ball is not the same as a silver one."

The monk said, "I don't understand."

Nanquan said, "Tell me, can a cloud in the sky be nailed there, or bound there with a rope?"

#### *Other second pillar - Wumen's Staff*

Case 43, Wumenguan, Blyth's translation,

Zen and Zen Classics vol. 4

[Wumen taught] If you call it a [staff], you ignore its absoluteness; if you do not call it a [staff], you ignore its relativity. Without words, without silence, tell me what it is, at once, at once!

Lots of people preach stuff and call it Zen. It's not that they are ignoring Zen Masters, trying to rewrite history, and generally misleading people, it is that they don't know what Zen is. Tell me, what is Wumen teaching here?

*Other third pillar - Zhaozhou's Yes and No (Blyth trans.)*

A monk asked [Zhaozhou] whether a dog had the Buddha nature or not. He said "No !" The monk said, "All creeping things with life have the Buddha-Nature; how can it be that the dog had not?" [Zhaozhou] answered "You are attached to thoughts and emotions arising from karmaic ignorance." Again, a monk asked him, "Has a dog the Buddha-Nature, or not?" [Zhaozhou] answered, "Yes!" The monk said, "You say "Yes, but how did it (the Buddha-Nature) get into this skinbag?" (the dog's body). [Zhaozhou] said, "Knowingly and purposely he sinned."

What does it mean that Zhaozhou gave two answers, two opposite answers? Do you think he was kidding around? Lots of people can contradict themselves, but how many can contradict themselves and win both arguments?

## Part 3: Caodong Soto Zen v Buddhism

**In this part:** *Huineng-Qingyuan the Caodong before Dongshan, Critical Dogen Buddhism, What is Buddhism, What is Caodong/Soto, Questions about what lineage really means, more Caodong/Soto.*

A king of Eastern India invited the twenty-seventh patriarch, Prajnatarā, for a meal. The king asked, "Why don't you recite sutras?" Prajnatarā said, "This poor follower of the way does not stay in the world of subject [the realm of the skandhas; the realms of the body or mind] when breathing in, and has nothing to do with the world of objects [is not caught up in the many externals; doesn't get involved in myriad circumstances] when breathing out. I am always reciting the suchness-sutra in millions and millions of volumes."

(Wansong, *Book of Serenity*, Cleary, trans.)

To begin at the beginning with Qingyuan, from whence all Caodong descends from, here he is talking to none other than the infamous Shenhui, who is the bane of so many who want to conflate Northern School Buddhism with Huineng's Zen:

When Shenhui of Ho Chen came to study with Qingyuan, the master asked where he was coming from, and Shenhui said from Cao Xi.

"What's new in Cao Xi?" asked Qingyuan.

When Shenhui remained silent, Qingyuan said, "Tiles and pebbles are still in your way".

Shenhui asked, "Do you have true gold to give to

others?"

Qingyuan said, "Even if I had some, how would you hold on to it?"

(*Zen's Chinese Heritage*, a partial mistranslation of *Compendium of Five Lamps*, p.49)

According to the Critical [Dogen] Buddhists, Buddhism requires wisdom transmitted through words<sup>19</sup>. Zen Masters reject that sort of Buddhism, but why? The Four Statements of Zen say, "outside words and sentences" or "outside teachings" or "outside scriptures" or whatever, but why? Why do Zen Masters reject the whole game of truths communicated through words? Is it just that words are imprecise? Or is it that "in truth there is no unalterable dharma" and thus no such truth?

The Caodong/Soto lineage has often been portrayed as separate from the other lineages of Huineng, but not only is there no evidence of this, the misinterpreted quotes from the Caodong/Soto lineage that religious apologists pretend is evidence deliberately ignore the many examples of Caodong/Soto intermingling, in teachings, traditions, and even transmission, with their dharma cousins. Here is Dongshan recounting for Guishan, from the Nanyue-Mazu line, a Case involving a third line of Huineng's dharma heirs, "National Teacher" Nanyang. We can see the three different lines of Huineng continued to intermingle without distinction in Dongshan's Case below. There is

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<sup>19</sup> Hakamaya lays out three defining characteristics of Buddhism (Heine, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, p13)

1. The Law of Causation... [which doctrinally rejects] the idea of "[self] nature" in Chinese philosophy.
2. The moral imperative to act selflessly [which doctrinally rejects] the idea [in Zen teaching] that 'grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers have all attained Buddhahood'
3. Buddhism requires faith, words, and the use of the [Buddhist wisdom] to choose the truth... the Zen allergy to the use of words is [Zen not Buddhism].

no indication of any separation between Huineng's students in this dialogue. If not here, where?

At the request of Guishan the Master [Dongshan] began:

"A monk asked Hui-chung, 'What sort of thing is the mind of the ancient Buddhas?'"

"The National Teacher replied, 'It's wall and tile rubble.'"

"'Wall and tile rubble! Isn't that something non-sentient?'" asked the monk.

"'It is,'" replied the National Teacher.

"The monk said, 'And yet it can expound the Dharma?'"

"'It is constantly expounding it, radiantly expounding it, expounding it without ceasing,' replied the National Teacher."

"The monk said, 'Then why haven't I heard it?'"

"The National Teacher said, 'You yourself haven't heard it, but this can't hinder those who are able to hear it.'"

"'What sort of person acquires such hearing?' asked the monk."

"'All the sages have acquired such hearing,' replied the National Teacher.

"The monk said, 'Can you hear it, Ho-shang?'"

"'No, I cannot,'" replied the National Teacher.

(Dongshan, *Record of Tung-shan*, Powell trans., p.23)

There are several things going on in this dialogue and one of them is a rejection of the Buddhist doctrines that deny universal Buddhahood. Critical Buddhists in particular, asserting the authority of the Lotus

Sutra, argue that non-sentient beings are not enlightened<sup>20</sup>. Zen Masters don't embrace this doctrine, which again puts Zen at odds with Buddhism. Critical Buddhists also argue that Dogen converted to Buddhism toward the end of his life<sup>21</sup>.

Dongshan is a curious Master, something of a renegade even among Zen Masters, and while there is no evidence of any connection whatsoever between Dogen's brand of Buddhism outlined in *FukanZazenGi*, there is quite a bit of evidence that Dongshan was at home in the heart of Zen that Dogen was so upset by and disrespectful toward:

One day Dongshan asked, "Where are you going?"  
Yunju said, "Tramping on the mountain".  
Dongshan said, "How can the mountain endure?"

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<sup>20</sup> Swanson, *Why They Say Zen is Not Buddhism*:

"The idea of universal Buddhahood led eventual to *hongaku shiso* – a way of thinking that came to include such ideas as the inherent enlightenment of all things (including non-sentient beings such as grasses and trees, rocks and mountains); the identity of samsara and nirvana; nondifferentiation of the indigenous kami and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the transcendence of all dualities, including good and evil – and this ethos grew to be pervasive and unquestioned in much of Japanese religious activity and thought...

Building on the Mahayana idea of the 'identity of samsara and nirvana,' *hongaku shiso* evolved into an ethos of "absolute nonduality" and "total affirmation" of the mundane world. This idea is perhaps best expressed in the [phrase]... *the grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers all attain Buddhahood*, [that] pops up incessantly in Japanese literature, art, theater and so forth...

It is often assumed that [this phrase] is a quote from a Mahayana text, but in fact it is not, at least as far I was able to determine... in fact, at least one passage in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* says exactly the opposite:

"That which is without Buddha-nature is the ground, the tress, gravel, and rocks. That which is other than these non-sentient things is called Buddha-nature."

<sup>21</sup> Heine, *Pruning the Bodi Tree*, p254)"Critical Buddhism, especially the scholarship of Hakamaya Noriaki, maintains that the 12-fascicle text rejects a profound change in Dogen's outlook and expresses a highly critical view of original-enlightenment thought as a misguided absolutization and affirmation of natural existence.

Yunju said, "How can it not endure?"

Dongshan, "If you go on like this, then you'll eventually teach the whole country."

Yunju said, "No I won't."

Dongshan said, "If you go on like this, then your disciples will gain a way of entrance."

Yunju said, "No such way."

Dongshan said, "No such way? I challenge you to show me."

"Yunju said, "If there's such a path, then I'll leave you immediately to go on it."

Dongshan said, "In the future, a thousand or ten thousand people won't be able to grab this disciple."

The contrast between the Zen lineage, which teaches... what? "No such Way"? "Gaining a way of entrance through "No I won't"? and the Dogen Buddhist meditation manual *FukanZazenGi* could not be more apparent. Where Zen Masters demure, Dogen's Buddhism insists. Where Dogen offers meditation posture instruction, Zen Masters offer dialogues that seem to go nowhere, teach nothing, and leave no tracks.

## The Caodong Lineage, Non-linear

Someone recently argued that religious authority is conveyed through unbroken lineage lines. That's not what Zen Masters teach, although churches might depend on that. We could say that there are unbroken lineages in Zen, but I'm not sure what that means. It certainly doesn't mean a transmission of authority or a passing down of a doctrine.

Here's Case 50 from Cleary's translation of *Book of Serenity*<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Be careful when you shop for a copy of *Book of Serenity*. Buddhists have taken out Wansong's teaching and inserted their own, trying to sell their faith under

This dialogue begins with Xuefeng, who was Deshan's heir and the teacher of Yunmen and Xuansha and Baofu and a few others. Later Yantou got involved. Yantou was Xuefeng's dharma brother, also having been enlightened under Deshan. Note that as Wansong recounts it, he keeps interrupting. They like interrupting in the Zen lineage.

When Xuefeng was living in a hut, two monks came to pay respects to him.

*(Wansong: They pursue the fragrance, following the air.)*

Xuefeng, seeing them coming, opened the door, popped out, and said, "What is it?"

*(Wansong: This is still a position of throwing the body; what about the position of hiding the body?)*

A monk also said, "What is it?"

*(Wansong: After all he actually doesn't know.)*

Xuefeng lowered his head and went back inside.

*(Wansong: Better not say he had no words.)*

Later the monk came to Yantou.

*(Wansong: Transmitting a message about what's going on.)*

Yantou asked, "Where have you come from?"

*(Wansong: If you don't drill, no hole.)*

The monk said, "South of the range."

*(Wansong: Here is north of the range.)*

Yantou said, "Did you ever go to Xuefeng?"

*(Wansong: A familiar place is hard to forget.)*

The monk said, "Yes."

*(Wansong: Can't avoid it any more.)*

Yantou asked, "What was said?"

*(Wansong: He doesn't stop until it's vinegar.)*

The monk recounted the preceding story:

*(Wansong: When even a single letter enters the gate of the public domain, eight oxen cannot pull it out.)*

Yantou asked, "What did he say?"

*(Wansong: After all, better lower your head and leave right away.)*

The monk said, "He didn't say anything--he just lowered his head and went back inside."

*(Wansong: If so, you never went to Xuefeng.)*

Yantou said, "Too bad I didn't tell him the last word before.

*(Wansong: And now have you said it yet?)*

If I had told him the last word, no one in the world could affect old Xuefeng."

*(Wansong: Why not say 'I am none other than old Xue?')*

At the end of the summer the monk again brought up the foregoing story and inquired further about it.

*(Wansong: People sober up from good wine slowly.)*

Yantou said, "Why didn't you ask before?"

*(Wansong: He likes to sleep.)*

The monk said, "I didn't dare to take it easily."

*(Wansong: He sure is used to the monasteries.)*

Yantou said, "Though Xuefeng is born of the same lineage as me, he doesn't die of the same lineage as me."

*(Wansong: Those who seek to divide are the first to reach an impasse.)*

If you want to know the last word, 'just this' is it."

*(Wansong: He sells it as he steams it hot.)*

(Case 50 Book of Serenity, Cleary trans.)

Aside from the fact that I like some Wansong whenever I can get him, I draw your attention to "Xuefeng is born of the same lineage as me, he doesn't die of the same lineage as me." I don't know what Yantou is talking about or what the point of Wansong's interruption is, maybe somebody can explain it to me sometime. I thought it might be relevant in a chapter about what lineage means to these sorts of people, so there you are.

Interestingly enough right before that, in Case 49, I kid you not, Wansong, he's Caodong remember, like 100% pure Caodong Zen Master, right before Case 50 which you just read, in Case 49, Wansong talks about a break in lineage that Caodong is famous for:

Wansong says, " I say, Yunyan was with Baizhang for twenty years, yet succeeded to Yaoshan; Dongshan rose to prominence at Nanquan's yet succeeded to Yunyan. Different sprouts of the same kind became luxuriant, making the spiritual roots dense and firm;"

-Case 49 Book of Serenity,  
Cleary trans.

So right there we have sort of a different view of lineage than Buddhists have. I've said it before, I'll say it again, Zen Masters don't follow rules, they don't break rules, they aren't bound by tradition, they don't ignore it. Wansong goes into detail about Dongshan, the Dongshan of Caodong, talking about the hiccup in Dongshan's own dharma heir situation:

As he was conducting a memorial service for Yunyan, a monk asked, "What instruction did you receive at

your late teacher's place?"

Dongshan said, "Although I was there, I didn't receive his instruction."

The monk said, "Then why conduct a service for him?"

Dongshan said, "Even so, how dare I turn my back on him?"

The monk said, "You rose to prominence at Nanquan's—then why do you instead conduct a service for Yunyan?"

Dongshan said, "I do not esteem my later teacher's virtues or his buddhist teaching; I only value the fact that he didn't explain everything for me."

The monk said, "You succeeded to the late teacher; then do you agree with him or not?"

Dongshan said, "I half agree, half don't agree."

The monk said, "Why don't you completely agree?"

Dongshan said, "If I completely agreed, then I would be unfaithful to my late teacher."

-Case 49 Book of Serenity,  
Cleary trans.

Aside from this being antithetical to religious lineage generally, not to mention Buddhism, not to mention Dogen Buddhism, what's the problem? Dongshan can be an heir of whoever he says he is an heir of. Dongshan is a Zen Master. Other people don't get to decide about Dongshan's enlightenment, why should they get to decide who Dongshan is the heir of? Caodong doesn't care what people say. Lineage is between the living, not the dead.

There is another break which is a little less famous, that of Touzi, which a certain Dogen Buddhist Apologist wrote a whole book about but he ended up choking all the way through it. It was awkward. Religious people have to do these ridiculous contortions to make their

faith fit the facts. It hardly seems worth it. Certainly the book was unreadable at a certain point. Needless to say, as a Dogen Buddhist Apologist Schlutter wasn't eager to talk about the Caodong history of broken lineages.

Wansong talks about Touzi though, in Case 64:

“Yunmen personally saw Muzhou, but he offered incense for Xuefeng; Touzi received it personally from Yuanjian, yet he succeeded to the Dharma of Dayang. On the branches of the coral trees, jade flowers bloom; in the forest of sandalwood, golden fruits ripen. But tell me, how do you create?”

-Case 64 Book of Serenity, Cleary trans.

So what's the fuss? Well, lineage is everything for a church like Dogen's. It's the institution's approval that directs the flow of cash from the faithful. Zen Masters don't appear to take much interest in the faithful or their money. Churches can't create, they can only imitate. Creation invariably produces a new religion.

This question comes up in Blue Cliff Record too, right away, in the first Case. Yuanwu opens with a discussion about the authority of history in Zen:

Emperor Wu of Liang later questioned Master Chih. Chih said, “Does your majesty know who [Bodhidharma] is?” The Emperor said, “I don't know.” Tell me, is this (“I don't know”) the same as what Bodhidharma said, or is it different? In appearance it indeed seems the same, but in reality isn't. People often misunderstand and say, “Before, when Bodhidharma

said 'I don't know' he was replying about Ch'an; later, when Emperor answered Master Chih, this referred to the 'knowledge' of mutual acquaintance." This is irrelevant.

Tell me, when Master Chih questioned him, how could Wu have answered? Why didn't he strike Chih dead with a single blow and avoid being seen as a fool? Instead Emperor Wu answered Master Chih sincerely and said, "I don't know." Master Chih saw his chance and acted; he said, "This is the Mahasattva Avalokîtesvara transmitting the Buddha Mind Seal." The Emperor felt regret and was going to send an emissary to bring Bodhidharma back. How stupid! When Chih said, "This is Mahasattva Avalokîtesvara transmitting the Buddha Mind Seal," if Wu had driven him out of the country, this would have amounted to something.

According to tradition, Master Chih died in the year 514, while Bodhidharma came to Liang in 520, since there is a seven year discrepancy, why is it said that the two met? This must be a mistake in the tradition. As to what is recorded in tradition, I will not discuss this matter now. All that's important is to understand the gist of the matter. Tell me, Bodhidharma is Avalokitesvara, Master Chih is Avalokitesvara, but which is the true Avalokitesvara? Since it is Avalokitesvara, why are there two? But why only two? They are legion.

-Yuanwu, Case 1, Blue Cliff Record, Cleary trans.

A mistake in the tradition! Wow! And tell me again, who cares? Is it the same people who are worried about an understanding of the gist

of the matter? Is it the legions? Come on already. Lineage doesn't depend on facts, does it?

So, having dispensed with questions about lineage, how about Touzi Yiqing, who accepted the lineage of a dead man, with some of that old time Zen teaching... you tell me he shouldn't have accepted it:

Master Yuantong took his staff and went into the monk's hall. There he found Touzi Yiqing [who had slept through his appointment] in a deep sleep. Hitting the sleeping platform with his staff, he scolded Touzi, "I don't offer 'leisure rice' here for monks so that they can go to sleep."

Touzi Yiqing woke up and asked, "How would the master prefer that I practice?"

Yuantong said, "Why don't you try practicing Zen?"

Touzi Yiqing said, "Fancy food doesn't interest someone who is sated."

Yuantong said, "But I don't think you've gotten there yet."

Touzi Yiqing said, "What point would there be in waiting until you believe it?"

Yuantong said, "Who have you been studying with?"

Touzi Yiqing said, "Fushan."

Yuantong said, "No wonder you're so obstinate!" They then held each other's hands, laughed, and went to talk in Yuantong's room.

*-Compendium of Five Lamps,*  
Ferguson trans.

That's three different lines of the lineage, right there, as if where they came from mattered in that dialogue.

Here is the other Touzi, Touzi Datong, because I get them

confused so why shouldn't you, and yes, the editors told me it made no sense to include this:

“When Zhaozhou asked, ‘How is it when a man who has died the great death returns to life?’

Touzi Datong immediately said, ‘He must not go by night: he must get there in daylight.’

Direct as sparks struck from stone, like the brilliance of a lightning flash. Only a transcendental man like him could do this.”

-Case 63 Book of Serenity, Cleary trans.

See? There are two Touzies too. There were also two Tongans in Caodong/Soto. Don't take my word for it though.

Tongan, the Elder of the Two Tongans:

A monk asked, "What if one understands everything with one look and then leaves?"

Tongan Daopi said, "Fine. So why have you come back here?"

I took this as yet another commentary on the question of what a sudden school is, and what role cultivation plays. What's your take? Notice how I just kept talking even when it was off topic? I have no shame.

## Caodong Soto Teachings from Book of Serenity

I had this long section with all these rambling quotes, but let's remember I am some bozo on the internet and I'm writing this for you to read on a free pdf, so let's cut right to it: Caodong/Soto, the line

descending from Qinyuan, is best illustrated by what Wansong says Dongshan said, from a book of instruction based on Cases selected Hongzhi, with verses Hongzhi wrote on each Case. Double Caodong, double Soto.

Wansong was a Caodong/Soto Master, and one of the only three Zen Masters to write books of instruction. Thus Wansong's Book of Serenity is an excellent place to go for an idea about what Caodong/Soto means. In that light, here we go... Wansong mentions Dongshan 149 times (but not all of them are Dongshan the First) in *Book of Serenity*<sup>23</sup>, ask yourself how many Dogen Buddhists, claiming to be Caodong, can quote Dongshan even one time.

My purpose here is to give you a feel for Dongshan and Wansong and what it is that they say makes them the Caodong family.

Master Ben of Yungai brought up the story of Dongshan taking away the fruit tray from the head monk Tai and said, "Though Dongshan has the mallet to shatter the void, still he doesn't have the needle and thread to mend it."

Why do people study Zen? To get at what is going on in Cases like this one... and prayer-meditation isn't going to get you there.

According to the fundamental way of the Dongshan succession, if you're still, you sink into stagnant water, if you move, you are limited to the present. Thus, when going outward do not react; when going inward, do not dwell in emptiness. Outwardly not pursuing ramifications, inwardly not abiding in trance, naturally you will get beyond the three sicknesses and two lights

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<sup>23</sup> According to Terebess, the actual title is *Old Man Wansong's Singing Appraisal of Monk Tiantong Jue's Bringing Up the Old Record of Further Inquiries*.

all at once. After that, putting penetrating or not penetrating to one side, examine carefully: 'what breath is there?'--this too is an illness. How can you rest easy? Ask Tiantong to take your pulse.

Aside from the outright broadsides against sitting meditation of all kinds, why ask Tiantong to take your pulse when you want to "rest easy"? Why claim you study Zen if you can't answer?

Thus we know that 'lord and minister, father and son,' as a teaching device, was not particularly first established by Dongshan and Caoshan; father and son Gui and Yang had already carried out this order. If not for Guishan thoroughly checking, Yangshan would have just reeked of gruel and rice in the gate of shadows of a light, ahead of an ass but behind a horse, taking this as his ordinary life--that would have been most regrettable.

Guishan and his heir Yangshan were descendents of Nanquan, and Dongshan was a contemporary of Yangshan. Once again, Caodong is not distinct from Mazu's line.

Dongshan Ji said, " The master of Xiushan responded in this way--why didn't Fayan agree? And then when he questioned further a second time, Fayan just said the same thing, Whereupon Xiushan got it. Tell me, where is the puzzle? If you can see through, I would say you've got something to go on." I say, how could you get it that way?

So Dongshan says *if you can see through, I would say you've got something to go on*, and Dongshan's heir says, "I say, how can you get it that way?" One giving, one taking away, one holding up the carrot, one beating down with the stick. Once again, Zen study is the basis of the conversation.

Daowu bore down on Yunyan, like Foguo urging on Fojian--as it is said, 'Without upset there is no solution, without struggle there is no expression.' Here as Yunyan was sweeping the ground Daowu casually tested him; Yunyan said, "You should know there is one who isn't busy." Good people, as you eat, boil tea, sew and sweep, you should recognize the one not busy--then you will realize the union of mundane reality and enlightened reality; in the Dongshan progression this is called simultaneous inclusion, naturally not wasting any time.

In the Dongshan progression means in the Dongshan lineage; this is a teaching of the Caodong/Soto school of Zen. Not wasting time, simultaneous inclusion, is accomplished by knowing the not busy in eating, making tea, and working. There isn't any sitting meditation, let alone Zazen prayer-meditation, behind this union of mundane reality and enlightened reality.

I say, I wouldn't say this *wouldn't* make it in the school of Deshan, but really it still wouldn't yet in the school of Dongshan. When Xuefeng was traveling, he went to Touzi three times and climbed up to Dongshan nine times. One day as he was cleaning rice, Dongshan asked him "Are you cleaning the grit getting rid of the rice or cleaning the rice getting rid of the grit?" Xuefeng said,

"Grit and rice are gone at once." Dongshan said, "What will the community eat?" Xuefeng then turned over the bowl. Dongshan said, "You've got it, all right, but you need to see someone else before you realize it."

Xuansha and Changqing succeeded to Xuefeng, Luoshan succeeded to Yantou--all of them came from Deshan's gate; therefore one puts down, one uplifts--their words go against but their meanings accord.

*Words go against, but meanings accord.* Again, this is something very much unique to Zen, and confusion over it is why people say there is contradiction and paradox in Zen when the meanings, in reality, accord.

As Wansong unfolded this story, before he had finished reciting it, he unconsciously let out a laugh and said, Yunyan and Daowu were illustrating the active conditions of the Dongshan progression. As for that other bunch of old guys, all their mouths consumed the gold, but none cleared the straits for him. Fortunately there is Tiantong, who comes to the rescue, pulling out the sword:

Tiantong is also known as Hongzhi, who some claim pioneered "silent illumination", supposedly while he wasn't compiling the collection of one hundred Cases/Koans and writing versus for them, which served as the foundation for Wansong's *Book of Serenity*. So the pulling out of the sword is a reference to Tiantong/Hongzhi's verse, which immediately follows. The questioning here of course is likely to start with *how* Yunyan and Daowu illustrated the "active conditions" of the Caodong/Soto lineage... and following on that, how anybody in Dogen's cult could claim to illustrate those conditions.

The Dongshan progression therefore esteems the shift of potential and revolution of state.

Uhhh, yeah. You can handle this one on your own, right?

Yantou said, "Old Dongshan doesn't know good and bad;

This lack of knowledge is a theme all over the Zen lineage, no doubt going back before Huineng was made Sixth Patriarch on the basis of him alone out of five hundred under the Fifth Patriarch not understanding the Buddha Dharma. Religions, including Dogen's, depend on a doctrine that separates good and bad... ignorance of it is anathema to them.

Everywhere they say that Yantou was upholding with one hand and putting down with the other, that Dongshan misconstrued it; they hardly realize that Dongshan's upholding with one hand and putting down with the other is even more distinctly clear.

Case Twenty-two of Book of Serenity is a delightful example of Caodong's, Soto's, capriciousness... not just toward lineage, but toward the teachings generally. Yantou was standing half in and half out of a doorway, asking a question. Later somebody said he was raising one hand and lowering the other as a way of... ahem... "adding" to the meaning. It's a chaotic Case that rivals Zhaozhou's Yes and No About a Dog for merciless attack on doctrine.

Dongshan said, "You should seek some flowers on a withered tree."

What is this "withered tree"? Come on Zen students! Is it the one the dragon curls around?

This is the bloodline of the Dongshan succession; unless you are one within it, it is not easy to know. Using a seal, you don't set it on the wind; if the seal stamps space, it doesn't show any mark.

It is not easy to know - but it is not a seal stamped in space, either.

Commentary: When Dongshan took leave of Yunyan, Dongshan asked, "After your death, if someone asks me if I can describe your reality, how shall I reply?" After a while Yunyan said, "Just this is it." Dongshan sank into thought. Yunyan said, "You are in charge of this great matter; you must be most thoroughgoing." Dongshan left without saying anything more; later, as he was crossing a river he saw his reflection and then for the first time was thoroughly enlightened. Thereupon he composed a verse: Just don't seek from others, or you'll be far estranged from Self. I now go on alone; everywhere I meet It: It now is me; I now am not It...

Dongshan's enlightenment under Nanquan is much discussed but not recorded anywhere that I've found... no idea why. No idea why this "first enlightenment" turned out to be, for all intents and purposes, the only one. I AM NOT SELF is kind of a revolutionary statement... oh, Caodong, you seductive bastard...

One must understand in this way to merge with thusness. When Dongshan was in the community setting

offerings before the image of Yunyan, he retold the foregoing story about describing the reality of Yunyan; then a monk asked, "When Yunyan said, 'Just this is it,' what did he mean?" Dongshan said, "At that time I nearly misunderstood what my late teacher meant." If you go to the pause and 'just this is it' to understand the point, this is just conveying the matter by a different name. That is why he knew the form upon seeing the reflection, and became enlightened just as he crossed the river. The monk said, "Did Yunyan know it is or not?" If you say he absolutely knows it is, then he's an attendant--haven't you heard it said that 'only one who knows it can uphold it'? If you say he absolutely doesn't know it is, here there is gain and loss: there is completely not knowing it is, there is knowing it is then after all not knowing, and there is not knowing it is turning into knowing it is. Dongshan said, "If he didn't know it is, how could he be able to say so? If he did know it is, how could he be willing to say so?"

Why question both sides? Why is there a tradition of questioning both sides in Zen? How is this challenging all sides reflected in those claiming the Zen lineage?

The Huayan school says, "Inner reality is complete, words are partial; when words are born, inner reality is lost." This is 'mystery upon mystery, ever more wondrous.' 'integration and harmonious communion,' the impartial, non-leaking bloodline.

Non-leaking. You heard it here first. When words are born is a

warning. How many heed it? Quote them!

In the teachings there are two gates, natural and cultivated; in Dongshan's lineage this is called 'using the accomplishment to illustrate the state'. Usually we awaken by means of cultivation, entering sagehood from ordinariness--a commoner is directly appointed prime minister. If you're first enlightened and then cultivate afterwards, you enter ordinariness from sagehood--traditional nobility is originally honorable; though drifting destitute in myriad conditions, the basic constitution is still there.

It would be a mistake to assume what this "cultivation" involves; where in the text is a description of it? So, if it isn't a method, what can we say about it from "traditional nobility is originally honorable"?

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the mystery within the mystery?" Zhaozhou said, "How long have you been mystified?" The monk said, "I have been into this mystery for a long time." Zhaozhou said, "Anyone but me might have been mystified to death." Dongshan's Seal in the Mystery says, "Do not take to the road; but if you return, you turn your back on your father."

First, Zhaozhou seems to admit to be continually mystified... what can you do with that? Second, what is this "Dongshan's Seal in the Mystery"?

...Since it fills the cosmos, making a single entity, is there

indeed a mysterious subtlety apart from and beyond the dust of the turmoil? Is there indeed any before and behind, turning toward or turning away? Even if buddhas do not appear in the world, this doesn't cause any lessening; even when buddhas appear in the world, explaining and illustrating, this doesn't cause any increase. The breadth of the ocean of fame, the brightness of the sun of pride, are not worth talking about--all is presumption, exaggeration. As Nanquan and Shashan were working picking bracken for vegetables, Nanquan picked up a stalk and said, "This is a fine offering." Shashan said, "'He' wouldn't take notice of a feast of a hundred delicacies, let alone this." Nanquan said, "Even so, everyone should taste it before they realize." Mingan of Dayang said, "don't go on the path of mind; don't sit in effortless nothingness.

Even if Buddhas appear, no increase! How different from Buddha worshippers trying to "save" the world. And Mingan bring up the rear... don't sit in effortless nothingness! Get a job, zombie meditationers.

In general, when things have edges, they cannot roll freely; if you want to be lively and frisky, without sticking to or depending on anything, just set your eyes on agreement-nonagreement-naturally you will not stay on this shore, nor on that shore, nor in midstream. This is why Dongshan said, "I half agree, half don't agree." This is why Shoushan said, "Agreement cannot be complete."

Just set your eyes on agreement-nonagreement... who can dispute this is a cornerstone of Caodong and Soto Zen?

Chan Master Judun of Longya Mountain in Hunan first called on Cuiwei and Linji, and later called on Dongshan and Deshan. One day he asked Dongshan about the meaning of the founder's coming from the west; Dongshan said, "When the water of the Dong river flows backwards, then I'll tell you." Longya was awakened at these words. Yuanwu said, "At the time when Longya took the meditation brace, how could he have not known that it was to hit him?"

Long story short, Judun of Longya called on lots of people, asked was there any meaning to Bodhidharma whatever, and they asked Longya for stuff, and then Longya gave them the stuff, and then they hit him with stuff, and then Longya said that doesn't mean there was any meaning. Later when Longya was asked if all that hitting made anything clearer, he said oh, yeah, absolutment, but that doesn't mean there was any meaning. The fun classy bit here is Wansong asking, didn't he know he was going to get hit with stuff? Which, you know, sort of puts the ball back into Longya's court on the whole "made things clearer" bit.

Dongshan, in his last instructions to Caoshan, said, "At my late teacher Yunyan's place I was personally sealed with the 'precious mirror [awareness]' in which all matters are comprehended most clearly and essentially. Now I impart it to you; keep it well, and don't let it be cut off. Later, if you meet a true vessel of Dharma, only then should you pass it on. It should be kept hidden, not revealed in words--I think that if it's relegated to current

conventions, it will be hard to contact people later."

Tell me again, where is this mirror seen nowadays? You'll notice I took out "meditation" and put in "awareness". Do you think that worked out okay? Do you?

Dongshan, Master of Xinfeng, said, 'When the verbal teachings of buddhas and patriarchs are like born enemies, you then have some part in study.' If you can't pass beyond them, then you'll be fooled by the buddhas and patriarchs."

How do you pass beyond the words of Wansong? It's five hundred pages.

Chan Master Guangren of Sushan in Fukien called on Dongshan and asked, "Please teach me the word that doesn't yet exist." Dongshan said, "When you don't consent, no one agrees." Sushan said, "Should one take care of it?" Dongshan said, "Can you take care of it now?" Sushan said, "If not, there's no place to avoid." "How is it when not looking up to the sages and not esteeming one's own spirit?"

Notice the steps here...

1. Dharma that hasn't been taught
2. If you don't agree, none agree
3. Can it be cultivated
4. Are you cultivating it with that question?
5. If not, then everything is cultivation
6. Is it cultivation to reject the lineage and your own nature?

What do we make of this? What does this exchange suggest to us

about *how Zen is taught*? What sort of "practice" would help us understand what is going on in this exchange and communicate it to others? Let alone allow us to participate in such an exchange as an equal, rather than as a student.

Dongshan said to the assembly, "It's the beginning of autumn, the end of summer, and you brethren will go, some to the east, some west: you must go where there's not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles.

What kind of pilgrimage is Dongshan suggesting? What kind of practice?

Case 94<sup>24</sup>: When Dongshan was unwell, a monk asked, "You are ill, teacher, but is there anyone who does not get ill?"(Go ahead and explain away.) Dongshan said, "There is."(He emphatically makes a point of it.) The monk said, "Does the one who is not ill look after you?"(Current worldly convention.) Dongshan said, "I have the opportunity to look after him."(A meeting of the fundamental lot.) The monk said, "How is it when you look after him?"(What eye has he to see?) Dongshan said, "Then I don't see that he has any illness."(It's just that he doesn't agree to investigate the temporary.)

Wansong is getting his word in... is that an illness or not?

Commentary: In the original record, the question is "Among the three bodies, which one expounds the

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<sup>24</sup> Cases 49 and 94? Someone is making fun of you.

Dharma?" Dongshan said, "I am always close to this." Chan Master Sushan Ren first asked Dongshan, "Please teach me a word which doesn't yet exist." Dongshan said, "No. No one would agree." Sushan said, "Then can it be approached or not?" Dongshan said, "Can you approach it right now?" Sushan said, "If not, still there's no way to avoid it." Dongshan agreed with him. Later a monk asked Caoshan, "What is the meaning of the late teacher's saying, 'I am always close to this?'" Caoshan said, "If you want my head, cut it off and take it." The monk also asked Xuefeng; Xuefeng hit him with his staff and said, "I too have been to Dongshan."

Have you been to Dongshan? Had Xuefeng? It turned out Xuefeng went to see lots of people, including Dongshan, who wrecked Xuefeng and sent him on his way. While Xuefeng was considered an heir of Deshan, he was really enlightened under Deshan's heir, Quanho, on Turtle Mountain. No joke. So, had Xuefeng been to Deshan?

Oh, wait, wait... Dongshan is "always close" to the question of which of the three bodies expounds the dharma... save us, Wikipedia:

"The doctrine says that a Buddha has three kāyas or bodies:

1. The Dharmakāya, Buddha nature, law and order, or Truth body which embodies the very principle of enlightenment and knows no limits or boundaries;
2. The Saṃbhogakāya, Buddha fields or body of mutual enjoyment which is a body of bliss or clear light manifestation;
3. The Nirmāṇakāya, Buddha incarnation, Emanation, or created body which manifests in time and space."

So, Dongshan expounds the dharma by being close to the question: “which of the three bodies expounds the dharma”? Gotcha. Check. No doubt.

## Part 4: More on the Zen v Buddhism Conversation

**In this part:** *Ox bull, More doubts about “Buddhism”, Translation errors, Scholarship errors, About the Lanka, ewk on Dhyana, What is translation? It’s no, not mu, ewk on this, that, and the other, Zen Masters rejecting sitting meditation, ewk should admit this is just a bunch of unrelated rants that were thrown together.*

I’ve been going over the material with people for several years now and it seems to be getting harder for anybody to add anything reasonable to the Buddhism side of the conversation, facts-wise, why is that?

Anyway, here are the usual comments on the usual disputes that come up year after year as we introduce people to original sources, the basics of research, and why you can’t just go on the internet and say “because church”.

### Enough with the Buddhist Ox herding pictures

Stop pretending self improvement Buddhism as Zen. It’s disgusting. The ten oxherding pictures that Buddhists put forward as a model of Zen practice aren’t Zen. Why? Because the pictures are about attainment through practice, not sudden enlightenment. Now, you say, “well, ewk, the disappearing bull mentions thirty years” and then I say, “You mean like when Zhaozhou said, “just go and sit with this matter for twenty or thirty years... if you do not come to an understanding you can cut my head off” and you say well, Zhaozhou was real old, maybe he would have died by then” and I say, “Zen is the sudden school, even if it isn’t sudden for thirty years”.

Maybe the ten Buddhist bulls came from religious practice called *Samatha*? Who knows; not our business.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samatha#Nine\\_mental\\_abidings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samatha#Nine_mental_abidings)

D.T. Suzuki pointed out that the original Zen ox herding pictures features a *vanishing ox*:

*“Probably the first series was made by Ching-chu (清居, Jp. Seikyo) (11th century), [web 4] who may have been a contemporary of Kuòān Sh Īyu ā n. In Ching-chu's version only five pictures are being used, and the ox's colour changes from dark to white, representing the gradual development of the practitioner, ending in the disappearance of the practitioner. “*

-Readings in Eastern Philosophy: An Open Source Text, Chapter 8. "The Ten Oxherding Pictures" by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki,  
<https://philosophy.lander.edu/oriental/reader/reader/x5038.html>

In fact, *Book of Serenity* references these pictures. Wansong says:

“Chan Master Haosheng of Qingju, in the ox-herding pictures, said at the sixth chapter ,  
"The stage of faith is gradually matured, and one is generally aware of wrong states; although one distinguishes purity and defilage, it is like a sword cutting mud. One still retains the halter - one cannot yet rely on faith; therefore (the ox is) half white, half black."

(Cleary trans, *Book of Serenity*, p. 142)

Suzuki also attributes the Buddhist ten to Kuoan Shihyuan, who has no existent dialogues, as far as I know. His status as a Zen authority is thus an open question.

Here is Nanquan, hundreds of years earlier on the question of ox herding:

When Nanquan was about to pass away, the head monk asked, "After you die, where will you go?"

Nanquan said, "Down the mountain, to be a water buffalo."

"The monk said, "Can I follow you?"

Nanquan said, "If you follow me, you must come with a blade of grass in your mouth."

...and on to...

One day Nanquan saw the bath steward heating the bath and said, "After lunch, invite the water buffalo to bathe."

The bath steward went and invited him; Nanquan said, "Did you bring a rope?"

Zhaozhou pulled Nanquan's nose with his hand.

Nanquan said, "Right, but too rough."

Zhaozhou asked, "Where does one who knows it is go?"

Nanquan said, "To the house of a patron in front of the mountain, to be a water buffalo."

Zhaozhou said, "Thanks for your directions."

Nanquan said, "Last night in the third watch the moon came to the window."

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...and finally...

Nanquan, up in the hall, said, "Since youth I have brought up a water buffalo: when I was herding it east of the valley, I didn't let it eat the water plants of that country; when I was herding it west of the valley, I didn't let it eat the water plants of that country. Now it takes in a little bit anywhere possible, without being seen at all."

Where is the cultivation here? Show me the bull. Where is the practice? Show me the bull. Where is the "returning" to anywhere? Show me the bull.

*"What is Buddhism?"*<sup>25</sup>

When we ask "What is Buddhism?" we aren't starting by defining "Buddhism", What we first assume about the question determines how we answer.. Henie invokes this debate about modern Buddhist studies in his essay "*Critical Buddhism" and the Debate Concerning the 75-fascicle and 12-fascicle Shōbōgenzō Texts.*

*"The Critical Buddhist scholars reexamine many of the major*

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<sup>25</sup> The no-Buddha-in-Buddhism argument as follows, and yes, it's okay to use Wikipedia if it's about Buddhism:

1. "No written records about Gautama have been found from his lifetime or some centuries thereafter."  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama\\_Buddha#cite\\_note-dating-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha#cite_note-dating-9)
2. "The exact date of the Buddha's birth is disputed, with Nepalese authorities favoring 623 B.C., and other traditions favoring more recent dates, around 400 B.C.E. Now we have a shrine structure pointing to the sixth century B.C.E."  
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/11/131125-buddha-birth-nepal-archaeology-science-lumbini-religion-history/>
3. Languages of India are attested from after about 300 B.C.E.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_languages\\_by\\_first\\_written\\_accounts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_languages_by_first_written_accounts)

*developments in East Asian Buddhist thought in terms of their consistency with the fundamental Buddhist philosophy of causality expressed in Pali and early Mahayana Buddhist texts.”*

At the forefront of this is the Dogen Buddhist scholar Hakamaya. Heine summarizes one aspect of Hakamaya’s approach to the debate in a footnote: Hakamaya... “*contrasts the ‘critical’ philosophy of true Buddhism with ‘topical’ philosophies, such as the Kyoto School [] of Nishida Kitaro and Nishitani Keiji, which he considers ‘disguised’ as Buddhist.*”<sup>26</sup> Nishida “*was convinced that it was possible to articulate the East Asian notion of nothingness as the ground of reality in the language of Western philosophy*” (Globalphilosophyresources.com, 2017).

If we assume a perspective like Hakamaya’s, we get a Buddhism that is based on religious texts from India. If we assume a perspective like the Kyoto School, we get a Buddhism that is philosophically compatible with Western Philosophy, and that’s without bringing Zen into the discussion at all.

1. What, historically and textually, is the basis for religion(s) that could be called "Buddhist"?
  - A question for religious studies departments.
2. What, practically, do people believe and practice, and what do they claim *about* their beliefs and practices?

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<sup>26</sup> Faure, one of the Dogen Buddhist Apologists in vogue in Western Scholarship, wasn’t a fan of Kyoto Philosophy, and some insight into Faure’s tendency toward sloppy scholarship can be found in an essay *The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy*, found here:

[http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Philosophical/Putative\\_Fascism.htm](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Philosophical/Putative_Fascism.htm)

- A question for anthropology departments.

The Critical Buddhism movement is attempting to reign in the misleading attempts by religions to claim a "Buddhist" brand *regardless of doctrinal position*, while at the same time highlighting the failure of Western scholars to distinguish between religious studies and anthropology, the failure to distinguish between discussions of systems of belief and descriptions of behavior.

The Critical Buddhism campaign to "keep 'Buddhism' for Buddhists" in turn highlights one of the central questions in [r/Zen](#) for many years: Why do people say "Zen", but refuse to discuss, let alone study, what Zen Masters teach?

It turns out that there are really two reasons for "Buddhism(s) in [r/Zen](#)": a religiously motivated desire to promote church authority, involving obfuscation about catechism and doctrine, or an essentially academic failure to separate discussions *about* history from the study of modern *believers*.

## Zen is not Tibetan Buddhism Either

Various questions and confusions arise at the beginning of conversations about Zen, Buddhism, and Dogen's religion. Generally I find that there are two categories of people, those who aren't well informed on the topic, but are sincere and are interested in facts, and those who aren't who aren't well informed on the topic, but are not sincere nor interested in facts.

There are lots of arguments about what "real Buddhism" is, but most of these arguments depend on aggregating the many claims of people who want to be seen as "Buddhist". In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, Yamaguchi<sup>27</sup> offers this description of the "Buddhism" that made it to Tibet in the eighth century:

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/Indian\\_buddhism.pdf](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/Indian_buddhism.pdf)

“Buddhism. Mo-ho-yen taught that one could attain liberation merely by sitting in meditation... until achieving a “nonconceptual and nonperceptive” state, and that no other practice could achieve such results. In 791 Queen 'Bro bza', beside herself with grief at the loss of her son, took the tonsure, with her consorts, under Mo-ho-yen. This prompted a rapid increase in the number of Mo-ho-yen's followers as people began to turn away from the stricter form of Indian Buddhism, which taught the elimination of human egoism and the practice of altruistic deeds.” (Pruning the Bodhi Tree, p.221)

At a glance, anyone who's read *Wumenguan*, aka *The Gateless Barrier of Zen*, will know that Zen isn't anything to do with the Buddhism that Tibet was importing.

Further, it is essential that everybody acknowledges that we can't talk about what Zen Masters say in the context of this Buddhism. Zen Masters aren't interested in “as you practice, so shall you attain” as Huangbo described the Northern Buddhism of *Mo-ho-yen*, nor do Zen Masters have any interest in the elimination of the self and the practice of merit accruing deeds. There is a record of around 800 years of Zen in China that will not lend itself to those frameworks, and Zen teachings cannot be discussed in relation to those frameworks other than by the rejecting of those religious beliefs.

While this treatise/monograph/book-thingy is concerned primarily with the Caodong/SotoFruhn lineage and the claims and teachings of the Dogen branches of Japanese Buddhism, I take this opportunity to remind whoever reads this stuff that "Zen" is the name given to the lineage of Bodhidharma. As such, Zen is not concerned with the religious myths and holy interpretations of the oral traditions that inspired sacred texts that were attributed to any of the venerated versions of Siddhartha, who historically was an illiterate subsistence farmer whose daddy had the most farms. Zen Masters teach no methods and no practices.

The Four Statements of Zen loosely attributed to Nanquan by

D.T. Suzuki:

"A special transmission outside the Scripture;  
No dependence upon words and letters;  
Direct pointing to the soul of man;  
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of  
Buddhahood." (Suzuki, trans.)

You'll note there is no mention of Dogen's claim that "*the established [means of] investigation is pursuit of the way in seated meditation*" (Bielefeldt, p. 190) in the Four Statements. Dogen's religions rely on a doctrinally established seated posture, and there is no clearer reliance on words and sentences than telling people how to sit. Otherwise, how would you know how to sit the right way and what sort of mental contortions to do in order to avoid doing mental contortions? "Quieting the mind" is Quietism, not Zen.

One phrase I goad people with, "Zen is not Buddhism," continues to be an assertion that cuts away all kinds of faux beliefs (is that what thought-constructed Dharmas are?) I continue to encounter people professing to be Buddhists who struggle to even define "Buddhism" let alone tell me what "Buddhists believe". These sorts of people don't study the Zen family, a family infamous for answering questions with the same careless accuracy as a child throwing a brick through a window.

Those Buddhists who sit on cushions in pews and pray for enlightenment, those Buddhists that call what they like "noble truths" and what they don't like "karma creating," and those Buddhists who believe in the thought constructed dharmas of "causality" and "right thinking" or the pledge to save all sentient beings by any means necessary, for these people "Buddhism is not Zen" is some sort of revolution. Any time you find yourself revolting against facts, you have a problem.

From my perspective it's just literacy.

## Buddhism Is Not A Real Category

Buddhism is a term that emerged in the early 1800's, courtesy of the same colonial British hot shots that declared all the various native peoples of North America and that wildly different lifestyles, traditions, and religions, a homogenous "Indians". The term "Buddhism" has long been understood to have very little scientific value because it lacks any real meaning:

"The use of Such a term as 'Buddhism' appears to be required as soon it is acknowledged that there is more than one sort of Buddhism, even within Southeast Asia.. The degree of plurality that can be found is such that the use of the word "Buddhism" in an unspecified sense has very little heuristic value and can be a source of confusion in comparative studies within the Southeast Asia region. (The same is true, of course, of certain geographical areas where a variety of "Buddhism" is found.) However, opposition to a more precise terminology is likely to come from modern Buddhists who are eager to fall in with ecumenical trends set by other religious traditions; for the purposes of the social and historical sciences, however, comparative analysis demands precise terminology that takes account of the various national forms of Buddhism, rather than simply distinguishing between 'Theravada' and 'Mahayan'. For even within the Theravada, for example, comparison can be made in terms of complexity of historical and organizational tradition (as in Myanmar), compared with relative simplicity of historical and organizational tradition (as in Thailand). ( Buddhist Trends in Southeast Asia, edited by Trevor Ling, 1993)

What's more, the use of the term blurs some very important distinctions between religious apologists wielding the label and the various religious promoting themselves with it.

For a deep dive into these distinctions, look no further than the

question of what justifies claims, faith, and arguments in various contexts:

"How are critical and topical philosophy to be understood? One important aspect of the distinction is epistemological: criticalists and topicalists have different views about how beliefs ought to be acquired or fixed, and about how they out to be justified.

For the [imaginary] topicalist, truths are uncovered, discovered, or revealed... our task as knowing subjects, then, is to conform our opinions and beliefs to the way things are...

[Criticalism] is everything that topicalism is not: beliefs, for the criticalist, are neither fixed, *nor justified by appeal to self-validating sources of authority [self-anointed messiahs, for example] whether external or experiential*; demonstrative argument, based upon careful conceptual distinctions, is essential for justification.

Underlying this debate is a deep disagreement between Schmithausen and Hakamaya as to the significance and reference of the term "Buddhism." Schmithausen wants an inclusive sense:

[Schmithausen:] 'I have good reason to regard as "Buddhism" the whole of the Buddhist tradition, i.e. all movements and groups claiming to be Buddhist, and all ideas and attitudes occurring or documented to have occurred among them.'

But postulating a sense as inclusive as this gives him some uneasy moments. He is aware that such an open definition provides no room for critical judgment, and equating the meaning of the term "Buddhism" with the aggregate of its uses will yield a concept so internally differentiated and

contradictory that it can be of no use for any critical or constructive purposes - not even for those that Schmithausen himself is so concerned about.

[Schmithausen] wants to employ a broadly internationalist epistemology in the service of a broadly positivist historiography... Historiography is always driven by ideology, by a set of critically -or, in a bad case, uncritically - normative decisions about what it is for and how it should be done, decisions that are not themselves given or justified historically."  
(Griffiths, *The Limits of Criticism, Pruning the Bodhi Tree* )

If you read through all that, then you know there certainly is a debate about how to even begin defining "Buddhism", let alone what justification the definition would require.

It's important to understand the other side, which takes a very definitive and limiting stance on defining Buddhism, one people may not agree with, but one that is reasoned, when so few arguments about Buddhism are:

"On the Critical Buddhists' textual basis for true Buddhism: "Although the Pali Canon may, as a whole, be closer to the Buddha's "words" than any other extant textual corpus, it is still mediated by the collective memory of the community that compiled, codified, redacted and transmitted it orally for hundreds of years before ever committing to writing, and, even when finally put into writing, it did not remain static but continued to be modified by the tradition over the ensuing centuries."

(Gregory, *Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?*<sup>28</sup>)

Where does that leave us? I don't care. All we have to establish is that "Buddhism" is not a category that any reasonable person can use to

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/Critical\\_Buddhism\\_Gregory.pdf](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/Critical_Buddhism_Gregory.pdf)

characterize Zen without explicit permission of Zen Masters.

## Failures in Modern Zen Scholarship

One of the premises of this book is that I wanted to write something that would have answered the questions that prompted me to do all the research that resulted in this book in the first place. One question I had at the beginning was why isn't there more scholarship about these questions? Bielefeldt, in the quote I just offered you, acknowledges that the question is a BIG one, and it is only made bigger by the fact that nobody, Bielefeldt included, seems willing to take the question on within the halls of religious studies departments. Could it be a conflict of interest, given the close ties "Zen" scholars have these days with Dogen churches?

Part of the problem with the conversation about the Zen lineage since D.T. Suzuki brought it West is that translation by academics is non-existent. The Cleary family made a business out of it because they could, they don't have any real competition other than Red Pine. So why have people who are paid hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, at least collectively, to further the study of Zen spend so little time discussing Zen? To wit:

1. No critical examination of claims about Zen from religions like Dogen;
2. No credence given to Zen Masters as authorities of their own tradition;;
3. No critical examination of texts, no focus on translation, no emphasis on annotation, no willingness to bluntly acknowledge this history of religious fraud against Zen<sup>29</sup> ;

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<sup>29</sup> For example, with Guishan's *Admonitions*, was obviously not written by Guishan... but where's the debate about these sorts of texts in the greater context of *Gateless Gate* or *Blue Cliff Record*?

1. "The text displays a fairly approach to monastic life and practice, and if it were not for a brief section on Chan there would be little in it to identify it as a product of the Hongzhou school." - *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The*

4. No attempt at cohesive description of Zen teachings (as Hakamaya did for Dogen Buddhism according to Heine's *Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism*<sup>30</sup>);
5. Big and very basic translation errors often leveraged to promote religious views, including words like *mu* and *dhyana*;
6. Claims without substance, like Posecki's "Zen Masters aren't iconoclasts because Huangbo uses the word compassion";
7. Buddhist apologetics misrepresented as Zen scholarship, like some of Schlutter's work, which is really Dogen revisionist history.

On this basis it would be tough to argue that there is any Zen academia in the West at all. Heine, who is sort of a modern day academic version of Alan Watts, occasionally seems to acknowledge this both in tangentially referring to Zen Masters and in criticisms of his field, but that's not the same as having Zen scholars like D.T. Suzuki and R.H. Blyth.

This book you have in your hand is obviously not scholarship. Maybe it's social criticism. I don't know. I'm not even interested in talking about what this is when academia is unable to honestly discuss original Zen sources, let alone thinking critically about the big questions. A reddit religious troll claimed to have written to Bielefeldt

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*Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan* - By Mario Poceski Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies and Chinese Religions University of Florida

2. "This interesting and unusual text, the only Hongzhou school text discovered in the Dunhuang caves, places its primary focus on monastic discipline and the place of morality in Chan practice. This emphasis contrasts sharply with the overall point of view that we associate with Hongzhou Chan, whose best-known writings tend to disparage the conservative orientation of codes of monastic discipline and moral training." - *Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism*, by Steven Heine, Dale S. Wright
3. "...There is no conclusive evidence that Guishan wrote Guishan jingce." - *Guishan jingce (Guishan's Admonitions) and the Ethical Foundations of Chan Practice*, by Mario Poceski

<sup>30</sup>

about something I said and posted his supposed email reply full of non-answers. Even if it was a spoof, it's telling. Look, Bielefeldt knows *FukanZazenGi* isn't a Zen text. If he isn't comfortable saying that publicly, what does that say about his audience?

I'm grateful to Heine. I'm grateful to Bielefeldt. But let's not pretend that Bielefeldt is as plain spoken as Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson of *Pruning the Bodi Tree* fame... and let's not pretend that it isn't a problem of integrity in the industry.

## Intro to Translation Errors

Here is some of the arguments *mostly from other people* that I offer again and again in r/Zen, by topic, for your handy reference:

### *On the original meaning of "dhyana" in Sanskrit:*

1. Secular Buddhist John Peacock (coming after Stephen Batchelor) from the presentation *Uncertain Minds: How the West Misunderstands Buddhism*<sup>31</sup> @ 14:21 - Etymology of a translating error: **No "meditation" in Sanskrit.**
2. Peacock again at 18:30: No "meditation" in Buddhism

"There is no such word for 'meditation' in the lexicon of Buddhism. Buddhists do not meditate. They cultivate... they are engaged in actually bringing something into being... [not what is] very much more from the tradition of Christianity of taking scripture and contemplating it and using it as something edifying to reflect on.

...That's not what is happening in the early texts.

Even the word "meditation" which seems to be very very much almost the prerogative of Buddhism... so much so that Buddhism can be reduced on many occasions in the Western World into a system of meditation... is not actually the full

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXYBtT4uN30>

correct engagement [of textual Buddhism]."

*An introduction to the complexities of translation:*

Often people quote from a random source the claim that a word in one language equals a word in another language. While this might be the case sometimes, it certainly isn't always true, and when it isn't true the conversation about translations gets really complicated very quickly.

In trying to understand who is interested in conversations about translations, like, anywhere, I came across a reference which I include here, from a book called *Chinese Discourse on Translation*. Notice that words like *mu* and *dhyana* are generally mistreated, *mu* in that it isn't translated at all for "mystique" purposes. *Dhyana* is mistranslated as "meditation", and where it use to be meditate-as-in-considering and pondering, it is now assumed to be religious sitting meditation, which we know now is simply incorrect.

Like Vinay & Darbelnet, Loh also identified two general translation methods: *literal translation* (直译) and *free translation* (意译). But Loh did not use the term ‘procedures’ to describe the changes introduced during the translation process; instead, he used the term ‘ways’ (方法) interchangeably with ‘principles and techniques’ (原则与技巧). Arguing that a translator has to understand both the source and target languages well because “translation is a bilingual art” (1958a:11), he proceeded to propose a very detailed model for analyzing changes at the lexical and structural levels, as indicated in Part 2 of Table 2.

<b>General Translation Methods</b>	
<i>literal translation</i> (直译)	<i>free translation</i> (意译)
<b>Translating Words and Expressions</b>	
Part One	<b>Ways for Translating Nouns Denoting Things of Foreign Origin</b>
	<i>transliteration</i> (音译)
	<i>semantic translation</i> (语义翻译)
	<i>combination of transliteration and semantic translation</i> (音译兼语义翻译)
	<i>transliteration plus semantic translation</i> (音译加语义翻译)
	<i>symbolic translation with a semantic explanation</i> (符形翻译加语义注释)
Part Two	<b>Change of Parts of Speech in the Translation Process</b>
	relatives, demonstratives, indefinites, interrogatives, articles, verbs, modifiers, numerals, connectives

*Table 2. Loh's Shift Model (1958a)*

From *Chinese Discourses on Translation*, p355

Obviously then you can understand that when people say “comes from the word” or something like that it, this may hide a multitude of errors... comes from how? Transliterated? Can we have examples of usage? No, of course not. That would mean quoting Zen Masters.

## *Mu: It's just "no"*

Often translators have left "mu" untranslated in Zhaozhou's answer about the dog having the Buddha nature. "Mu" is "have not" or "no". It is commonly translated as such everywhere, even in the same books<sup>32</sup> where we find the mystical "mu". Not translating it just makes it seem sacred.

"Iriya Yoshitaka says, "I have held doubts for some time with regard to the the way Zhaozhou's Mu has been dealt with previously. To the question, "Does the dog have the Buddha-nature?", Zhaozhou replied affirmatively as well as negatively. However, Zen adherents in Japan have rendered the koan exclusively in terms of his negative response, and completely ignored the affirmative one. Moreover, it has been the custom from the outset to reject the affirmative response as superficial compared to the negative one. It seems that the *Wumenguan* is responsible for this particularly."

(Heine, *Like Cats and Dogs*, p. 20)

## Understanding the Lanka

"[In the Lankavatara Sutra] we find an entire section devoted to an oddly un-Buddhistic glorification of atman. In these verses, not only is the idea of atman promoted as if it were "good Buddhism", but rebuttals also are offered to some

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<sup>32</sup> About "no" in Zen texts:

1. According to Blyth, Mumon's name means "No gate."
2. Zhaozhou says "No" but then elsewhere "Yes" to the question of Buddha nature. Yes is the opposite of no... what's the opposite of mu?
3. Another Master says he doesn't have the Buddha nature himself. Can we accept "no" on those grounds?
4. What does Mumon mean, "Barrier of Have Not Gate"? He uses this as his title, he repeats it in the beginning of his book... Zen takes no gate as the gate. He doesn't mean "mu gate", right?

of the typical Buddhist arguments against the self... To be fair to the Lankavatara, it also offers many verses denouncing the atman and proclaiming anatman, but this only adds to the ambivalence.

Thus the Lankāpatāra verse poses the paradox that those who functionally follow the Tathagata are acting without acting, i.e., their action does not produce karma. More specifically, it is claiming that "purity" cannot be achieved through karmic means, since purity signifies, by definition, the absence of karma. The point is methodological, procedural. D.T. Suzuki, accurately reflecting the East Asian tradition that would be disposed to interpret these ideas essentialistically, not only so interprets it but also actually translates the above passage accordingly:

The pure (essence of Tathagatahood is not obtained by body, speech, and thought; the essence of Tathagatahood Ootram tḡthāgatam) being pure is devoid of doings. (insertions by Suzuki, Lankāvatāra, 258)

Suzuki has not only essentialized the verse, he has also obscured its basic point—the overcoming of karmic-activity. "Purity" becomes the property of an essentializing ontological being, perhaps even an essential property, rather than the characterization of a methodological and behavioral condition."

Lusthaus, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, p.47-49

## The Incompatibility of Zen and Buddhism

The problems are several, and to some of the Buddhists I encounter initially these differences seem minor, almost (to them) not worth discussing. It turns out though that the more we discuss these differences the less and less minor they seem, both individually and in total, and the result often is that Buddhist cease making claims about Zen altogether.

The Gautama figure Zen Masters talk about is doctrinally incompatible with versions from religious Buddhisms. For example, where Nanquan teaches “outside words and sentences”, Critical Dogen Buddhist Hakamaya insists that Buddhism requires wisdom conveyed in words.

The Gautama that Zen Masters talk about is reported to have said/done things that are not found and not tolerated in versions from religious Buddhisms. The easy example here is the Zen Flower Sermon Sutra<sup>33</sup>. It doesn't appear in any Indian text, and it's hard to imagine how it could be considered compatible with the Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths teachings.

The teachings of the Gautama that Zen Masters talk about are put in a radically different context than in religious Buddhisms, including even a redefinition of what would otherwise be traditionally religious terms. The famous example I'm sure we are all familiar with is Huangbo redefining compassion as seeing people as not needing to be saved, which is not very Buddhist of him. Zhaozhou plays with the meaning of *ichchantika* and says he rewrites the sutras (with help from his friends). Yunmen insists that Buddha is toilet paper, and famous Yangshan tells his teacher Guishan that the sutras are the teachings of the devil.

Much like doctrines on karma turn out to be a contradictory hodgepodge of conflicting supernatural beliefs, the stories about Buddha turn out to be conflicting accounts often with supernatural elements that are treated as historical fact, including his level of education and his status as royalty.

Insisting that there is only one possible version of Buddha is a necessary requirement to sustain the myth that there is a "Buddhism" to begin with.

The easy litmus test for all this is when Buddhists talk about Zen do they address points 1-3 above? Or simply insist on "one Buddha to rule all Buddhism"?

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<sup>33</sup> Case six from Wumenguan, the No-Gate Gate, The Gateless Barrier. Since it's about Buddha transmitting the dharma, I'd say it's a sutra. Who is going to disagree? Buddhists?

## Alternately Translating dhyana

As a translation for chan/zen/dhyana in Zen texts, I suggest “Reigning Awareness”, that is, the authority of the Buddha nature rather than the authority of scriptures and divine wisdom.

The master [Zhaozhou] once came to T'ung-kuan pass.

The guard at Tung-kuan asked, "Do you know you are at T'ung-kuan pass?"

The master said, "I know it."

The guard said, "Those who have a passport can be let to pass; those who have no passport cannot be let to pass."

The master said, "What about it when the emperor's coach happens to come?"

The guard said, ""It must still be checked to pass through."

The master said, "You want to start a revolution."

This point is further underscored by Zhaozhou elsewhere in the text:

"Zhaozhou said, "Bodhidharma has come, so here we are all patriarchs. "

and

"Zhaozhou said, "Heaven above, earth below, ONLY I

ALONE AM HONORED."

(Recorded Sayings of Joshu [Zhaozhou], Green trans,)

## Zen Masters Rejecting Meditation

There are so many examples of Zen Master ridiculing meditation, people who practice meditation, and warning about the dangers of meditation that literally any Zen text can be used an example. Here are some popular teachings against meditation, thanks and credit to /r/ZenSangha, culled mostly from texts found in the Appendix: Get Started.

Remember that while Buddhists claim the Zen lineage has "schools" with different teachings, Zen Masters repeatedly reject this claim. Caodong and Soto is indistinguishable from the rest of Zen, both historically and doctrinally.

Dongshan, Founder of Caodong and Soto Zen: After Ch'in-shan had been doing sitting mediation together with Yen-t'ou and Hsueh-feng, the Master [Dongshan] brought them tea. However, Ch'inshan had closed his eyes. "Where did you go?" asked the Master. "I entered samādhi," said Ch'in-shan. "Samādhi has no entrance. Where did you enter from?" asked the Master.

Yantou: When I was traveling in the past, I called on the adepts in one or two places. They just taught sustained concentration day and night, sitting until you get calluses on

your behind. Mouths drooling, from the outset they go to the pitch black darkness inside the belly of the primordial Buddha and say 'I am sitting in meditation to preserve it.' At such a time, there is still craving there.

Xuansha: It cannot be said that you will hit the mark by fasting, discipline, *constant sitting* without reclining, stopping the mind, meditating on emptiness, freezing the spirit, or entering concentration—what connection is there?

[Huineng, the 6th] patriarch said, "The Way is realized by mind—how could it be in sitting?"

Huineng: "To concentrate the mind on quietness is a disease of the mind, and not Zen at all. What an idea, restricting the body to sitting all the time! That is useless. Listen to my verse:

To sit and not lie down during one's life-time  
To lie and never sit during one's death-time,  
Why should we thus task  
This stinking bag of bones?"

Linji: Just be able to dissolve past habits according to

circumstances, going when you need to go, sitting when you need to sit, without any thought of seeking buddhahood. Why so? An ancient said, 'If you're going to act in contrived ways to seek buddhahood, then buddhahood is a major sign of birth and death.'

Touzi: If you question me, I reply accordingly, but I have no mysterious subtleties for you. And I don't have you dwell figuring. I never speak of transcendence or immanence, or the existence of Buddha, or Dharma, or ordinary or holy. And I don't maintain sitting to bind you people.

Zhenjing: [Zen] does not go along with human sentiments. Elders everywhere talk big, all saying, 'I know how to meditate, I know the Way!' But tell me, do they understand or not? For no reason they sit in pits of crap fooling spirits and ghosts.

Deshan: If you say you can attain by entering concentration, stilling the spirit, quieting down thoughts, well, some cultists have also managed to get into states of tremendous concentration seeming to last eighty thousand eons, but are they enlightened? Obviously they are

mesmerized by false notions.

Ch'eng-ku: It is essential for you to cease and desist from your previously held knowledge, opinions, interpretations, and understandings. It is not accomplished by stopping the mind; temporary relinquishment is not the way - it fools you to wasting body and mind, without accomplishing anything at all in the end... I suggest to you that nothing compares to ceasing and desisting. There is nowhere for you to apply your mind. Just be like an imbecile twenty-four hours a day. You have to be spontaneous and buoyant, your mind like space, yet without any measurement of space.

Mazu: Of you try to sit like buddha you are just killing Buddha... no cultivation and not sitting is the Tathagata's pure meditation.

Foyan: People in error attach recognition to a lifetime of cessation. Indeed, they "stop" not only for one lifetime, but for a thousand lifetimes, myriad lifetimes. As for the spiritually sharp, they should know how to experientially investigate who "this person" is, directly seeking an insight."

Foyan: "You should simply step back and study through total experience. How do you step back? I am not telling you to sit on a bench with your eyes closed, rigidly suppressing body and mind, like earth or wood. That will never have any usefulness, even in a million years."

Huangbo: Since you are fundamentally complete you should not try to supplement that perfection by such meaningless practices."

Huangbo "If you students of the Way do not awake to this Mind substance, you will overlay Mind with conceptual thought, you will seek the Buddha outside yourselves, and you will remain attached to forms, pious practices, and so on, all of which are harmful and not at all the way to supreme knowledge."

Huangbo: "To hold that there is something born and to try to eliminate it, that is to fall among the [the Buddhists].

Huangbo: "So long as you are concerned with 'by means of' you will always be depending on something false."

Huangbo on why Shenhsiu (Northern School Buddhism) was not considered enlightened: "Because he still indulged in conceptual thought- in a dharma of activity. To him 'as you practice so shall you attain' was a reality."

Master Nanquan said to an assembly, The Burning Lamp Buddha said it—if what is thought up by mental descriptions produces things, they are empty, artificial, all unreal. Why? Even mind has no existence—how can it produce things? They are like shadows of forms dividing up empty space, like someone putting sound in a box, and like blowing into a net trying to inflate it. Therefore an old adept said, “It is not mind, not Buddha, not a thing,” teaching you how to practice.<sup>34</sup>

Master Shunji was asked by a monk, “What is someone engaged in great practice like?” He said, “Wearing stocks and

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<sup>34</sup>CASE 27. NANSEN'S NO MIND, NO BUDDHA

A monk asked Nansen, "Is there any teaching no master has ever preached before?" Nansen replied, "Yes, there is." "What is it?" asked the monk.

Nansen answered, "It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not things."

-Wumenguan (Gateless Barrier), Shimomisse trans.

... meanwhile...

"A monk asked why the Master [Mazu] maintained, "The Mind is the Buddha." The Master answered, "Because I want to stop the crying of a baby." The monk persisted, "When the crying has stopped, what is it then?" "Not Mind, not Buddha", was the answer." (Chang, 1971)

chains.” The monk asked, “What about someone creating a lot of karma?” He said, “Practicing meditation, entering concentration.” The monk was speechless. Shunji then said, “You ask me about good—good does not follow evil. You ask me about evil—evil does not follow good. Therefore it is said that good and evil are like floating clouds, arising and disappearing, both having no abode.”

The doctrinal teacher Yinzong asked workman Lu, “When you were at Huangmei, what did he teach you to pass on the transmission?” Lu said, “What he taught was just about seeing essential nature to become a Buddha; he didn’t talk about meditation concentration, liberation, no thought, or no contrivance.” Yinzong said, “Why didn’t he talk about meditation concentration, liberation, no thought, or no contrivance?” Lu said, “Because these are dualisms, [not Zen] nondualism.”

Ce knew that Huang’s attainment was not consummate, so he went and asked him, “What are you doing sitting here?” He said, “Entering concentration.” Ce said, “You say you are

entering concentration—mindful or mindless? If mindful, all creatures would have attained concentration; if mindless, all plants and trees would have attained concentration.” Huang said, “When I actually go into concentration, I don’t see the existence of any mind that is there or not.” Ce said, “If you don’t see the existence of any mind present or absent, this is constant concentration—how could there be coming out or going in? If there is exit and entry, this is not great concentration.” Huang was at a loss.

Master Shitou said to an assembly, “My teaching is the transmission of past Buddhas; it does not discuss meditation or diligence, just arriving at the knowledge and insight of Buddhas. Mind itself is Buddha—mind, Buddha, living beings, enlightenment and affliction—the names are different but the essence is one. You should know the spiritual essence of your own mind is beyond annihilation and eternity, not defiled or pure, profoundly calm and perfectly complete, equal in ordinary people and saints. Its responsive function has no standard method; it is beyond thought, ideation, and

cognition. The three realms and six courses of existence are only manifestations of your own mind. How could the moon in water or images in a mirror have any origin or passing away? If you are able to know this, you lack nothing.”

THIS IS THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, BTW

Zen Masters don't teach sitting meditation.

## Postscript

Bielefeldt used source texts to prove that Dogen plagiarized and committed fraud when he cobbled together *Fukanzazengi*, establishing that *FukanZazenGi* was a text in the tradition of the *Book of Mormon* and the Scientology Red Books. But there was already plenty of evidence that Dogen was a fraud in Rujing's records, Caodong records generally, and Zen history in the aggregate. All that without delving into Dogen's anti-historical claims, questions about the authenticity of his transmission certificate, and uncertainty about Dogen's mental health at the time of his early death. And all that without getting into the catechism of Dogen's supposed religion, the debates about it being so explosive they fueled the Critical Buddhism movement in the 1900's.

On the one hand, humanity owes a great debt to the Japanese people, Buddhists in particular, Dogen Buddhists particularly, for the preservation and occasional affection toward Zen texts which they preserved and later shared with the West. On the other hand, that Dogen Buddhists in particular used these texts to further the aims of a religious cult that has matured so little in such a long time is intolerable.

I invite Dogen Buddhists everywhere to establish a catechism for themselves and teach it to their parishioners. I invite them to call their religion what it is, so that a dialogue about the differences between Dogen Buddhism, Buddhism, and Zen can benefit everyone. It has been said in the West that “Sunlight is the best of disinfectants” but more than that... sunlight is required for healthy growth<sup>35</sup>.

We ended up here because lots of Redditors helped with edits, complaints, many many suggestions about books to read, and no end

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<sup>35</sup> One of my editors suggested this, which I had completely forgotten: “Cheaters put on affectations and say they have a special piece of adept’s clothing, but they don’t dare to bring it out to dry in the sun for fear that someone will see it and they’ll lose their reputation as a person of the Way. Their plan is just to have people ooh and aah, so why not just carry on aiming at your mind?” -Dahui, the Real Shobogenzo

of people with integrity willing to ask questions and people without integrity who couldn't answer questions. Everybody has a community; what it looks like is up to you.

## Appendix: Sex Predators and Their Lineages

Followers of these religious leaders claim that people who use religious authority to start secret sexual relationships with their students can transmit the Dharma of Zen Patriarchs, and that's ridiculous.

### *Seung Sahn*

- According to author Timothy Miller, “the Kwan Um organization has had to struggle with disclosures of controversial sexual conduct on the part of its leader; Seung Sahn was generally understood by his followers to be a celibate monk, and the revelation that he had had affairs with female students caused some members to leave the movement.”  
...Zen Master Seung Sahn did admit publicly the nature of the relationships and did two repentance ceremonies. The Kwan Um School of Zen has since then developed and enforced an ethics committee that has very strict guidelines for teacher/student relationships and consequences for unethical behavior of any member of the school.
- <http://www.dontknowfilm.com/?p=1134>

### *Shunryu Suzuki (Dogen Buddhist)*

- Promoted sex predator Richard Baker, claimed to have given him Dharma Transmission
- "In the 1960s, four major [Japanese Buddhist] teachers came to the United States from Japan: Shunryu Suzuki, Taizan Maezumi, Joshu Sasaki, and Eido Shimano. Andy Afbale, one of Shimano's former head monks, called these four the “major missionaries” of [Japanese Buddhism], as they had all received “transmission” from leading Japanese teachers... And three of the four... have

caused major public sex scandals... The only one of the four whose reputation was unblemished, Shunryu Suzuki of the San Francisco Zen Center, gave his sangha over to a man named Richard Baker, who was later embroiled in a sex scandal of his own, resigned from his abbacy, and became the subject of a book with the appropriately suggestive title *Shoes Outside the Door*."

<https://newrepublic.com/article/115613/zen-buddhist-sex-controversies-america-excerpt>

- [https://www.reddit.com/r/zen/comments/7ur8q9/foyan\\_rzen\\_fake\\_teachers\\_new\\_reddit\\_accounts\\_sex/](https://www.reddit.com/r/zen/comments/7ur8q9/foyan_rzen_fake_teachers_new_reddit_accounts_sex/)

### *Richard Baker (Dogen Buddhist)*

- Dogen Buddhist, ordained by Shunryu Suzuki
- "In the end, Baker's problems at the Zen Center weren't so much about his seven or eight sexual affairs over a 20-year span (Chapter 23, if you get impatient). They weren't so much about about money (Chapter 27, if that's your cup of tea). It was more about power, about finding another way to govern and manage an operation that was never sure if it was a California commune, a Japanese monastery or a New Age business."
  - <https://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Meditating-on-a-20-year-old-scandal-An-2857821.php>
  - <http://killingthebuddha.com/mag/exegesis/sex-shoes-and-california-zen/>
  - Baker was later "pardoned" by Thich Hahn:  
<http://zen.viabloga.com/files/lachs2.pdf>
- "There was an apparent moment of jiriki in September of 1983, when Baker sent a letter to the Center, apologizing to his best friend and the other people he may have hurt. He was writing from France while staying at the Center of the world famous Vietnamese Zen master and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hahn. A few weeks later Nhat Hahn wrote a letter to the SFZC exhorting

the community to assist and support Richard while “endorsing the sincerity of Richard, whom he considered absolutely trustworthy.” Interestingly, Nhat Hahn attended the peace conference at Tassajara where Baker and Anna [were] openly displaying their affair... Nhat Hahn never wrote to the Board of Directors of the SFZC to ask them about Richard and Anna, to ask what they thought happened, what was their View of the story, if there were other problems, how long things had been troubling people, and so on. Yet, he had just written vouching for Baker’s sincerity and trustworthiness.”

### *Taizan Maezumi (Dogen Buddhist)*

- [Maezumi, affiliated with another West Coast zendo, the Zen Center of Los Angeles, was a philanderer and an alcoholic, as the scholar Dale S. Wright has detailed at length.](#)
  - Adyashanti, born Stephen Gray, studied Zen Buddhism under the guidance of his Zen teacher Arvis Joen Justi for fourteen years.[1] Justi was a student of Taizan Maezumi Roshi of the Zen Center of Los Angeles.
  - Joko Beck was given dharma transmission by Maezumi, and then when she found out he was a sex predator, she self-certified.
- Ordained in Sōtō, Rinzai, and Sanbo Kyodan. Student of Dogen priest Hakuun Yasutani, who was accused of hate speech.

### *Dainin Katagiri (Dogen Buddhist)*

- [Detailed in Goldberg's book \*The Great Failure\*](#)
- "As [Goldberg's] work of reconstructing factual truth began to be noticed inside the American [Dogen Buddhist] community (the community which had believed Katagiri to be one of the good gurus who had not sexually abused his disciples), a wide variety of responses began to manifest in others' relationships

with her. In her Beliefnet interview with Lisa Schneider, Goldberg noted that her decision to write about Dainin Katagiri's sexual transgressions has cost her many friends inside the [Dogen Buddhist] community. She interprets this response as happening because other [Dogen Buddhist] practitioners wish to protect their teacher's image and his reputation. Parenthetically, I found Ford's 2006 very interesting in light of Goldberg's commentary about community denial. While he is quite forthright about Richard Baker's sexual misconduct at the San Francisco Zen Center, there is no mention of Dainin Katagiri's in Minnesota. -*Living on the Edge of the Edge: Letters to a Younger Colleague*

### *Joshu Sasaki (Hakuin Buddhist)*

- <https://newrepublic.com/article/115613/zen-buddhist-sex-controversies-america-excerpt>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/12/world/asia/zen-buddhists-roiled-by-accusations-against-teacher.html>
- <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/joshu-sasaki-roshi-rinzai-zen-master-dies-107/>
- "They said he would tell them that sexual contact with a Zen master, or roshi, like him would help them attain new levels of "non-attachment"
  - <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/joshu-sasaki-a-zen-master-tarnished-by-abuse-claims-dies-at-107.html>

### *Eido Shimano (Hakuin Buddhist)*

- <https://newrepublic.com/article/115613/zen-buddhist-sex-controversies-america-excerpt>
  - "Shimano has spent 50 years preying sexually on his students. He may have slept with dozens; I personally

have identified over a dozen, and spoken to many of them. Shimano's womanizing is of the sleaziest sort: He is married, and he has often picked for his mistresses much younger and disturbed women, the kind particularly susceptible to his twisted charisma."

- <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-shocking-scandal-at-the-heart-of-american-zen?ref=scroll>
- Sex predators and guru worship:  
<https://tricycle.org/magazine/bernhard-porksen/#comment-4465061331>

### *Togen Sumi (Dogen Buddhist)*

- <http://www.cuke.com/dchad/writ/short/sumi.html>
- Togen Sumi called his sexual assaults "koans", apparently.

### *Genpo Merzel (Dogen Buddhist)*

- Student of Taizan Maezumi
- Had ongoing relationships with numerous students since 1988, mostly while married.
- Forty-four American Buddhist teachers wrote a letter suggesting that Merzel take a minimum one-year break from teaching and seek therapy.
- Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis\\_Merzel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Merzel)

### *Osho*

- "The book reveals some scandalous details about Osho and life in his communes. It shows him as an exploitative and manipulative guru who used the respect and goodwill he commanded to expand his fortune. Sheela describes how he carried on a long-standing sexual relationship with his attendant, Christine Woolf, a suicidal British national whom he

renamed Vivek, and hints at his multiple sexual liaisons with other sanyasins. When Vivek became pregnant with Osho's child, which Sheela claims Vivek planned on purpose to teach the guru a lesson, Osho got the pregnancy aborted and Vivek sterilised."

- <http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/world/an-affair-to-remember>
- <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-shocking-scandal-at-the-heart-of-american-zen?ref=scroll>

I mean, come on... any of these people as more authoritative on Zen than a book written by a real Zen Master? How so, people? How so?

## Appendix: Hakuin Wasn't A Zen Master Either

### *1. Hakuin's Secret Bible - Real Koans Don't Have Answers*

Hakuin established ritual answers to pseudo koan questions that "proved" enlightenment. You can read all about it in a secret manual leaked to the real world in the early 1900's, published in English as *Sound of One Hand*, Hoffman translator.

- There are no Cases/koans about enlightenments which are certified by demonstrating memorization
- Zen Masters repeatedly warn against "dead words", which are written or spoken regurgitations of what somebody else meant at some other time.
- In Zen tradition, comments upon enlightenment are characterized by the unique, personal, and contextually revolutionary

### *2. Hakuin's "One Hand Clapping" is not a Case/koan at all*

- Cases/koans starting with questions generally always contain a solicitation for information on a basic level; traditional examples include:
  - Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?
  - What do they teach where you come from?
  - What happened at place ABC or during event XYZ?
  - Cases/koans with opening question are never paradoxical on a basic level, "one hand clapping" is obviously a basic paradox.
  - Cases/koans traditionally *solicit* a conversation, and often obviously demand a unique contextual answer.

### *3. Zen Masters Don't Need Answer Keys*

There are explicit warnings against “study guide answers” in Zen texts (much like the explicit warnings against sitting meditation). I’m not aware of a single Rinzai Hakuin Buddhist who has spoken out publicly about the corruption of the lineage in the church or condemned the fraud of a secret answer key bible, let alone denounced Hakuin as a fraud.

- Sutra study ridiculed, Case/koan memorization referred as eating/drinking piss/vomit of other people.
- Zen Masters rarely repeat what others have said as a final answer, and when this does happen it is often shocking and ambiguous.
- When quotes are used as answers, Zen Masters often become more aggressive and ask more questions.

. The Hakuin priest who writes the forward to the modern translation starts this way:

"When the Japanese edition of this book, *Gendai Sōjizen Hyōron* ("A Critique of Present-day Pseudo-Zen"), was first published in 1916, it caused a great sensation. The reason for this lay in the fact that the koans and their answers had been secretly transmitted from master to pupil in the Rinzai sect since the origination of the koan-teaching system in Japan by Zen Master Hakuin (1686-1769). This publication of the "secrets" of Zen seems to have embarrassed many masters at that time. Furthermore, I have heard that the recent appearance of photocopies of this 1916 edition has caused alarm among Zen masters of today...

The fact that this secret answer key bible caused alarm in Japan, which isn't a bedrock of Zen study by any means, gives an indication of how

huge a breach of trust this secret answer key bible was. Anyone who still thinks Hakuin was an enlightened Zen Master can feel free to use that secret answer key bible to certify themselves before they come on by /r/Zen.

## Appendix: Who Wrote What Dogen Plagiarized?

The author of the text Dogen heavily plagiarized from in writing *FukanZazenGi* is unknown, and isn't linked to any known Zen Master. All this from Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*:

“The provenance of the Tso-ch'an i is [UNKNOWN]:

- It is usually thought to have been composed as a section of the Ch'an-yüan ch'ing-kuei, the Ch'an monastic code compiled by Tsung-tse in 1103...
- The association of the manual with Tsung-tse's code is based on its inclusion in a revised and enlarged edition of the code published in 1202
- There is, however, a variant text of the Ch'an-yüan ch'ing-kuei that does not contain the Tso-ch'an i... based on a Northern Sung text printed in 1111... it strongly suggests that Tsung-tse's original text of the Ch'an-yüan ch'ing-kuei did not include the meditation manual.
- [SINCE] the Tso-ch'an i was not written as a part of Tsung-tse's monastic code, we cannot be certain of its date or, indeed, of its authorship. “

Those of you with complaints about page numbers, read the book. Those of you that don't want to, you can use google books to search Bielefeldt's book and many others for keywords. Then you can come visit me on Reddit and tell me all about how many mistakes I made, and what that proves, and we can see how that goes for you.

## Appendix: Sesame Street, Slander, and Zen

In response to a claim that the meme wherein Bert asks Ernie, “How do I look, Ernie?” and Ernie replying, “You look with your eyes, Bert” was somehow “Zen”...

Herein lies the confusion for people, particularly Buddhists and New Agers. What it means to "see", without some context, can be seen as, well, almost anything, especially by religious people, even more so by unaffiliated illiterate religious people who make it up as they go along. Each particular group makes a claim that is a little different, but when we run it through the Sesame Street metaphor algorithm, look what happens:

1. Dogen's church claims Zazen prayer-meditation is the same "seeing" that Ernie is referring to in the quote. So what if Dogen didn't meet Ernie as Dogen claimed he did. So what if Dogen lied about appearing with Ernie in episodes of Sesame Street filmed before a live studio audience. So what if Dogen copied entire episodes of Sesame Street and got his followers to re-enact them, claiming these re-enactments were the original Sesame Street.
2. New Agers claim that, using only the context of this one single Ernie quote, they have seen the exact same thing that Ernie must have seen, and therefore have the same view that Ernie has. New Agers will not consider other Sesame Street episodes might have bearing on their claim. New Agers will refuse to discuss any episodes of Sesame Street, let alone any episode with Bert and Ernie, let alone the episode the quote is taken from.
3. Buddhists (or those claiming to be Buddhists and proselytizing for faith-based Buddhism) make several claims about Bert

and/or Ernie, including:

- a. Buddhists have a set of Holy Bibles mentioning somebody named "Ernie". They claim it's the same "Ernie" from Sesame Street, and thus their Holy Bibles are more authoritative regarding Ernie than Ernie quotes, more authoritative than any episode of Sesame Street involving Ernie.
  - b. Buddhists believe that Bert is suffering from the interfaith trinity of gnostic fail, Sin-Delusion-Ignorance, and that any discussion of Bert, Ernie, or Sesame Street must be reinterpreted to accord with Buddhist views on Sin-Delusion-Ignorance.
  - c. Buddhists claim that Ernie is now, and has originally been, a "Buddhist", and while they can't define "Buddhist", they insist that Ernie be interpreted solely in the context of "Buddhist".
  - d. Buddhists insist that everything Ernie says was already said in their Holy Sutra Bibles, thus no discussion of what Ernie says in any episode of Sesame Street is worth discussing; they advise us to study sutras and forget about Zen.
4. Psychonauts and other substance experiencers wander into the discussion and say they got high and totally understood what Ernie is talking about but don't seem to have ever watched a single @#\$%ing episode of Sesame Street.
  5. Meditation over-enthusiasts claim that Ernie was meditating right before he said what he said in the OP, that the only way to understand Ernie is through meditation, and while they admit they aren't interested in watching Ernie or Sesame Street or discussing anything related to Ernie, they demand the right to interrupt any conversation with derails about religious meditative practices that Ernie "very likely" used a thousand years ago, often simply reading aloud at top volume from

books about meditation.

6. Self-anointed messiahs claim to *be* Ernie. They refuse to discuss Ernie or any episode of Sesame Street, but they would like to offer their personal accounts of experiences they claim are identical to Ernie's, teachings they claim are identical to Ernie's, and they refuse to be questioned about any of their claims. Also they know gurus, teachers, mystics, and martial artists who are authentic Ernies. But they can't say who.

## Appendix: Zen Text Reading List

This started as a list of what I had read myself, morphed through discussion and religious people trying to take down the list, and ended up like this:

### 1. New to Zen reading list

1. [Sayings of Zen Master Joshu- Green Translation](#)
  - Joshu (Zhaozhou) is known for his short, one or two sentence answers to questions about Zen study.
2. [Mumonkan, a book of instruction, poetry and Cases for novices written by Zen Master Mumon \(Wumen\) or alt translation.](#)
  - Perhaps the single most famous Zen text, it is an alarmingly short book, made more alarming by it's lack of instruction and complexity.
  - R.H. Blyth's *Zen and Zen Classics* series, particularly volumes 2, 3, and 4 (Mumonkan), are essential texts for anyone new to Zen. These books are out of print, the Japanese publisher has gone out of business, but sites like Terebess.hu hosts electronic copies and random Redditors may also be able to direct you to electronic versions.
3. [Zen Teaching of Huang Po](#)
  - For anyone familiar with Buddhist doctrines, Huangbo's sayings and lectures serve as an excellent introduction to Zen and how Zen is incompatible with Buddhism.
4. Give it up for the Legendary Yunmen! Back in Print! Still short, pithy, and smack talky!  
<http://www.amazon.com/Master-Yunmen-From-Record-Clouds/dp/1568360053>

## 2. Overview of the flavor of Zen:

- R.H. Blyth: Zen and Zen Classics, Volume 2: Huineng to Yunmen
- R.H. Blyth: Zen and Zen Classics, Volume 3: Dongshan and Mazu and their heirs
- R.H. Blyth: Zen and Zen Classics, Volume 4: Mumonkan (Wumenguan), The penultimate Zen text

## 3. Shorter Zen texts

- In order of the complexity of the language, references, constructions from less to more.
1. Sayings texts, Zhaozhou (Joshu), Yunmen (Ummon), the book by Wumen (Mumon) called The Gateless Gate. Also the poem by the 3rd Patriarch, *Faith In Mind*.
  2. The sayings with lectures texts, Foyan and after that, Huangbo (Huang Po).
  3. The books written by Zen Masters Yuanwu (Blue Cliff Record) and Wansong (Book of Serenity, Cleary trans.)
  4. The Platform Sutra, the bodhidharma attributed texts, stuff from Dunhuang.

## 4. Books Written by Real Zen Masters

1. [Mumonkan, a book of instruction, poetry and Cases for novices written by Zen Master Mumon \(Wumen\) and a poorer translation w/ Chinese](#)
  - Perhaps the single most famous Zen text it is an alarming short book, made more alarming by it's lack of instruction and complexity.
2. [Book of Serenity](#)

- Written by Wansong, this is the definitive text on the Caodong lineage. Buddhist priests in the last few decades have been trying to republish the book deleting Wansong's text and inserting religious sermons.
3. [Blue Cliff Record](#)
- Written by Yuanwu, this is very long and very famous book of Zen instruction, Cases and poems in the same format as Book of Serenity.

### 5. Zen texts available in audio format

1. *Instant Zen* is an Amazon Audible book.
2. Kindle Fire text-to-speech, confirmed on Cleary's translation of Dahui's Shobogenzo:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Treasury-Eye-True-Teaching-I-ebook/dp/B01N3BJK1Y/>
3. Kindle Fire text-to-speech, confirmed on Cleary's translation of Book of Serenity by Wansong:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Book-Serenity-I-Thomas-Cleary-ebook/dp/B01N4SYZVB/>
  - Note: The commentary and the text are read in the same voice, so you'll have to remember to glance at the text to make sense of the commentary on the Cases and Poems.

### 6. Examples Zen Texts that reject Buddhist doctrines

1. [Huangbo](#)
2. [Foyan - Instant Zen](#)
3. [Yunmen](#)

## 7. Zen texts with the most jokes

1. Joshu (Zhaozhou)
2. Layman Pang
3. Yunmen

## 8. Mellow Zen Reading

(especially if you skip right to the Zen sections)

1. [Foyan - Instant Zen](#) - Instant Zen
2. Mazu - Sun Face Buddha
3. Zhaozhou - Sayings of Zen Master Joshu

## 9. Why Japanese "Zen-Buddhism" is not Zen

1. Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*: Dogen didn't study Zen, Dogen invented Zazen prayer-meditation, Dogen was a fraud and a plagiarist.
2. *The Sound of One Hand*, Hoffmann tras.: Hakuin's "answer key" to Zen koans, kept secret until publication in 1918, provides the answers monks have to give to get certified by the Rinzai church.
3. *Pruning The Bodhi Tree*: A collection of essays about the doctrinal basis of Japanese Buddhism, the irreconcilable conflicts with Zen, and the attempt at a Critical Buddhist reformation.
4. *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* by D.T. Suzuki. Exploring why "Zen" never meant "meditation"
  - [https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.57108/2015.57108.Zen-Doctrine-Of-No-Mind\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.57108/2015.57108.Zen-Doctrine-Of-No-Mind_djvu.txt)
  - See also [r/zen/wiki/dhyana](https://r/zen/wiki/dhyana)

## 10. *If You Are Full of Ambition*

1. Dahui's Shobogenzo, Vol. 1-2:
  - Volume 1:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Treasury-Eye-True-Teaching-I-ebook/dp/B01N3BJK1Y/>
  - Volume 2:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Treasury-Eye-True-Teaching-II-ebook/dp/B06XPMTL23/>
2. Blue Cliff Record, Cleary trans.
3. Book of Serenity, Cleary trans.

## 11. *Texts from the real Caodong/Soto lineage*

1. Wansong's *Book of Serenity*, translated by Cleary  
<https://www.amazon.com/Book-Serenity-One-Hundred-Dialogues/dp/1570623813>
  - Book of Serenity was written by Wansong himself
  - Other books having that title are not Zen texts, regardless of religious claims
2. Dongshan's *Recorded Sayings of Tung-shan*.  
<https://www.amazon.com/Record-Tung-Shan-Classics-Asian-Buddhism/dp/0824810708>
  - Dongshan, aka Tung-shan, was the first Caodong Master. Caodong comes from "Caoshan + Dongshan". Caoshan was one of Dongshan's dharma heirs.
3. *Zen and Zen Classics, Vol. 3*, by R.H. Blyth

## Appendix: Meditation is like Cardio

What if all the scientific studies about sitting meditation all point to the same basic fact, that meditation is just a kind of exercise like cardio and weights? Hit the gym, people, but don't forget that every exercise poses risks of injury:

### **Meditation and delusions of grandeur:**

“When students were evaluated in the hour after their yoga class, they showed significantly higher self-enhancement, according to all three measures, than when they hadn't done yoga in the previous 24 hours... A second study of 162 people who practiced meditation, recruited through Facebook groups devoted to meditation, found that the practice had similar impacts on self-enhancement as yoga.”

- <https://qz.com/1307380/yoga-and-meditation-boost-your-ego-say-psychology-researchers>
- (2018) Mind-body practices and the self: yoga and meditation do not quiet the ego, but instead boost self-enhancement. Psychological Science, 1-22.

### **Westerners ignore dangers of meditation:**

“In Eastern religious traditions, difficulties associated with meditation are acknowledged, and are usually understood to be milestones on the path to enlightenment, the result of improper practice, or due to individual differences. However, in a Western secular context, negative effects associated with meditation have largely been overlooked.”

- [The Dark Side of Dharma: Why Have Adverse Effects of Meditation Been Ignored in](#)

[Contemporary Western Secular Contexts?, Anna Lutkajtis, 5 Apr 2019](#)

**Mindfulness can blunt moral reactions:**

“The study, published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, provides preliminary evidence that brief mindfulness exercises can blunt moral reactions to harm...

‘Mindfulness — without being embedded in an ethical context — may thus have downsides regarding interpersonal and moral behavior that have been so far ignored by researchers and also practitioners,’ Schindler told PsyPost.”

- <https://www.psypost.org/2019/08/study-indicates-a-brief-mindfulness-meditation-exercise-results-in-blunted-moral-reactions-54245>
- [Potential negative consequences of mindfulness in the moral domain, Schindler, Pfattheicher, Reinhard, January 2019](#)

## Appendix: Learn Your Catechism, Buddhisms

I more or less copied these from the introduction in an essay by the able Ms. Jacqueline Stone titled, “Review: Some Reflections on Critical Buddhism” in which she discusses fan favorite *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*.

If you don’t know what you believe and what text the belief is based on, then how can you call yourself anything? So dig in, my friends.

1. Non-self (anatman)
2. Dependent origination (pratitya samutpada)
3. Universal Buddha nature
4. ([Tathagata-garbha](#)) aka original enlightenment,
5. The nonduality as defined by the Vimalakirti Sutra

## Memorial To the Throne



I finished this book in the shadow of Wansong's pagoda in Beijing.  
Wansong's book wasn't in the gift shop.

Long may he reign.