

Dogen's Fascicle on the
"Eight Awakenings of Great People":
八大人覺

His Last Set of Instructions, written in 1253

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Message re: Nonduality and Morality

- **Regarding life and death, meditation and activities, speech and silence, etc. in relation to right and wrong, heaven and hell, karmic rewards and punishments**

Zhaozhou's Koan on "Going to Hell"

An official asks Zhaozhou, "Does a teacher go to hell or not?"

The master says, "I'm the first to go."

Official, "You're a truly virtuous person, why would you go to hell?"

Master, "If I didn't go [to hell], who would there be to teach you?"

官人問和尚還入地獄否。師云。老僧未上入。曰大善知識為什麼入地獄。師云。若不入阿誰教化汝。

According to tradition, Linji and others have said that pure lands and hells are all located right here-and-now, but Zhaozhou is capable of moving about freely within these realms.

Dogen's Unity of Meditation and Precepts

Dignified Demeanor of Practicing Buddhas



Meditation



Daily Chores

Last Instructions

- **How Dogen borrows from a popular Chinese Buddhist apocryphal sutra he did not necessarily introduce to Japan (it was used in Tendai rituals) – but he helped make it a mainstream idea regarding the anticipation of one's death in the Zen tradition**

**Delivery of the
"Hachi Dainin Gaku" Fascicle**



“The buddhas are great people. What a great person understands is called “the eight awakenings of great people.” Understanding these teachings leads to nirvāṇa. They are the final instructions of our original master, the Buddha Śākyamuni, delivered at midnight before he entered parinirvāṇa.”

- Dogen, “Hachi dainin gaku”

“Disciples to whom the dharma is bequeathed should recite (receive) and retain it with the utmost respect (bowing their heads down deeply).”

”Kuyō shobutsu”

“Now let’s stop talking and not say anymore. The time’s come for me to enter *parinirvāṇa*, and these are my last instructions.”

**– *Fo yijiao jing / Butsu yuikyōgyō* 佛遺教經,
Śākyamuni’s midnight sermon before parinnirvana**



佛垂般涅槃略說教誡經 佛遺教經



Other Relevant Mahayana Sutras

- 1. 遺教經 = The Sutra of Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching
- 2. 四十二章經 = The Sutra of Forty-two Sections
- 3. 圓覺經 = The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment
- 4. 十善業道經 = The Buddhābhasita dasabhadra karmamarga Sutra
- 5. 阿彌陀經 = The Smaller Sukhavati-vyūha Sutra
- 6. 觀無量壽佛經 = The Sutra of Visualizing Buddha
- 7. 樂師經 = The Sutra of the Master of Healing
- 8. 地藏經 = The Kṣitigarbha (Jizō) Bodhisattva Sutra

Fascicles on Precepts

“Thirty-seven Factors of Wisdom” *Sanjūshichi hon bodai bunpō* 三十七品菩提分法

“Four Methods of the Bodhisattva” *Bodaisatta shishōhō* 菩提薩埵四攝法

Giving, kind speech, beneficial acts, cooperation 布施 愛語 利行 同事

“Washing the Face” *Senmen* 洗面

“Washing and Purifying” *Senjō* 洗淨

12-Fascicles Collection

***“Receiving the (Sixteen) Precepts” *Jukai* 受戒

***“Hundred & Eight Gateways to Illumining the Dharma”

Ippyakuhachi hōmyōmon 一百八法明門

***“Eight Awakenings of Great People” 八大人覺

*** = 12-Fascicles Collection

The “Hachi dainin gaku” Colophon

The most important passage regarding the reasons behind Dōgen’s composition of the *12-Fascicles Collection* is the postscript written by Ejō for the final fascicle::

The colophon [by Dōgen] states that it was written at Eiheiji temple on the sixth day of the first month of 1253. Now, on the day prior to the end of the summer retreat in 1255, I’ve asked the temple secretary Gien to complete the copying and compare it with the original. This text is a draft from the time of our late teacher’s final illness. According to his words, he intended to rewrite all the Kana Shōbōgenzō texts previously composed and combine them with new drafts to compile a total of one hundred fascicles.

This fascicle that he already drafted was to be the twelfth fascicle. After that, his illness gradually worsened, and he stopped working on the drafts. Therefore, these drafts were our late teacher’s final instructions. It is most unfortunate that we cannot see the drafts of all one hundred fascicles. Those who admire and cherish our late teacher should honor this twelfth fascicle [or, the twelve fascicles], which cites the last teaching of the Buddha [from the Fo yijiao jing, J. Yuikyōkyō] and is the last instruction bequeathed by our late teacher: Recorded by Ejō.

Dōgen's Intentions

Ejō's annotation makes several crucial though ambiguous points for understanding the motives and results of the *12-Fascicles Collection* in relation to the older and longer versions of the *Treasury*.

- Dōgen wanted to rewrite the entire work and had a goal of reaching 100 fascicles, which fell well short due to the severity of his illness in the last half year of his life.
- For modern scholar Ishii Shūdō this means, “I [Dōgen] have completed revising the Old Draft (75-Fascicles) and have started the New Draft (12-Fascicles).”
- Note that the twelfth fascicle is almost entirely a quotation from the *Dasheng yizhang* perhaps the most influential encyclopedia of Mahāyāna that was written by Jingying Huiyuan (523–592) and was extensively cited by traditional exegetes throughout East Asia).
- Huiyuan presents a synopsis of the notion of eight awakenings from the middle section of the *Fo yijiao jing* 佛遺教經, a text supposedly expressing Buddha's sermon given at midnight before he entered parinirvana and used for centuries in ritual practices, especially for Nehan-e (涅槃会).

The Eight Great Awakenings Described in the “Buddha’s Last Instructions Sutra”

| | 8 AWAKENINGS | MEANING |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Having few desires | Minimize what you ask for, don’t covet. |
| 2 | Finding contentment | Be satisfied with whatever you get. |
| 3 | Peace and quiet | Wish for silence, leave the world to seek liberation. |
| 4 | Diligent effort | Work hard at your tasks and keep doing it. |
| 5 | Don’t neglect mindfulness | Be careful. Pay attention to your actions and don’t lose their object and purpose. |
| 6 | Practicing meditation | Concentration to attain deep samadhi. |
| 7 | Cultivating wisdom | Three wisdoms of hearing, considering, and cultivating, or testifying to the Dharma through actions |
| 8 | No idle chatter | Don’t get caught up in frivolous words, empty conversations, or futile metaphysical arguments. |

Also, Dogen says, “8 times 8 equals 64”!

Final Paragraphs of "Eight Awakenings"

To encounter the buddha dharma is difficult, even in countless kalpas. To receive a human body is likewise difficult. And even while having received a human body, it is good to have a human body of the three continents; and, among them, the human body of the southern continent is best, for we can see the Buddha and hear his dharma, leave home and attain the way.

Those who entered nirvāṇa before the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, who died before him, did not hear, did not learn these eight understandings of great people; that we now see and hear them, learn and study them is due to the power of good roots planted in past lives.

Learning and studying them now, we enhance them in life after life; we shall surely reach unexcelled bodhi and teach them to living beings. In this, we shall be the same as the Buddha Śākyamuni, without any difference between us.

Key Ideas in Dogen's "12-Fascicles"

- Karma **BUT NOT: buddha-nature, genjōkōan, etc.**
- Causality
- Good Roots and Actions
- Unwholesome Actions
- Recompense/Retribution
- Repentance
- Reversals of Fortune
- Karmic disruptions (miracles)

Situating “8 Awakenings” in Dōgen’s Life

- **When and why he wrote this text and the role it plays in understanding the *Shōbōgenzō* as well as his overall writings and teachings**

Dogen Timeline

- **1233 Establishes Koshoji temple in outskirts of Kyoto**
- **1243 Moves to the Mountains of Echizen Province**
- **1244 New Temple Built, first named Daibutsuji**
- **1245 Resumes Delivery of Dharma Hall Discourses**
- **1246 Renames temple Eiheiiji; last fascicle of Shobogenzo (“Home Departure”)**
- **1247 Goes to visit Shogun in Kamakura*** = “Late Late Dōgen”**
- **1248 Returns and Apologizes to his monks*****
- **1249 Miraculous Occurrences at Eiheiiji**
- **1250 Receives New Buddhist Canon from Hatano*****
- **1252 Stops Writing or Lecturing activities**
- **1253 Writes “Eight Awakenings of Great People,” plus others in 12-Fascicles*****

Dogen's Diverse sets of Followers Using his Shōbōgenzō Manuscripts

- a) Eihei-ji: Ejō (2nd) and Gien (4th) – various manuscripts (75, 60, 28, 12 + 83, 84, 89)
- b) Hōkyō-ji (nearby): Jakuen (1st), Giun (2nd, Eihei-ji 5th), Sōgō (9th) – 60 with Verses
- c) Daijō-ji (Kanazawa): Gikai (1st, 3rd Eihei-ji) and Keizan (2nd, Yōkō-ji 1st) – 75+12***
- d) Yōkō-ji (Kyoto): Senne (1st) and Kyōgō (2nd) – 75 with *Kikigakiōshō* prose comments
- e) Nyorai-ji (Kyushu): Giin (1st) – unclear (but Daichi Sōkai read 75)

An historical overview:

- Late Medieval – 60-Fascicles favored, although 75-Fascicles remained viable
- Early Modern – revival of 75-Fascicles but main goal was production of 95-Fascicles
- Meiji – Main Temple Edition (95) widely disseminated, plus *Shushōgi* in 1891
- Revolution I. 1970 – standard edition of 75+12=87 plus 16 miscellaneous fascicles***
- Revolution II. 1980s-present – reinterpret the newly reconstructed manuscripts***

Passage from “Keisei sanshoku,” (“Sounds of Valleys, Colors of Mnts”) 1240

Passage from an early fascicle in the *75-Fascicles Treasury* begins with an elegant verse by Chinese poet Su Dongpo on celebrating nature for, in effect, preaching the dharma. But the second half switches to a lament about the unethical state of Japanese Buddhism and a critique of clerics who seek fame and profit by warning his readers against “the dogs that lick the dry bone” of worldly fortune. Dōgen includes a discussion of repentance:

If both the mind and flesh falter and lose faith, with sincerity one should repent before Buddha. At such times, the merit of repenting before Buddha will save and cleanse us. This merit will grow into pure faith and diligence free of obstacles. When pure faith appears, self and other are similarly transformed. These benefits cover all sentient and the insentient beings. The point is:

I pray that, although I have accumulated unwholesome deeds in the past and there are causes and conditions obstructing the way, buddhas and ancestors who have attained the way of Buddha will take pity on me, liberate me from the bonds of my deeds, and remove hindrances to studying the way. Their merit and teachings will pervade the inexhaustible dharma realms, and they will act with compassion toward me.

Crucial Discourse in *Extensive Record*

***Eihei kōroku* 3.251, 1248, the first sermon after returning to Eiheiji from an unsuccessful trip to visit Hōjō Tokiyori in Kamakura, Dōgen tries to reassure his upset followers:**

Some of you may have questions about the purpose of these travels. It may sound like I value worldly people and take lightly monks. Moreover, some of you may ask whether I presented some dharma that I never expounded and that you have not heard before.

However, there was no dharma preached that I have not previously expounded or that you have not heard. I merely explained that people who practice virtue improve and those who produce unwholesomeness weaken, so they should clarify the cause and experience the effects by throwing away the tile [mundane affairs] and taking up only the jewel [Dharma]...

How many errors have I made in my effort to cultivate the way! Today, I deeply regret seeming like a water buffalo... This mountain monk was away for over half a year. I was like a solitary wheel placed in vast space. Today I return and the novices [literally “clouds”] are feeling joyful. My love for these mountains is greater than before.

Another *Extensive Record* Passage (5.381 from 1250)

Also included in the “Shizen biku” (“4 Stages of Meditation”) fascicle, it cites how Śāriputra declines a 120-year-old man, Śrīvaddhi, into the bhikṣu order, but the Buddha does accept him:

“Buddha said that Śrīvaddhi should be given home-leaver ordination, so how could this not be proper? Therefore, he is allowed to leave home and to receive the complete precepts. In previous lives, he has already planted seeds of affinity for ordination and has swallowed the dharma hook like a fish swallowing a hook, so he would certainly leave home. Śrīvaddhi must have practiced and accumulated many good virtues. Day and night he diligently practiced by reading and reciting the sūtras, the Vinaya, and Abhidharma, thus deeply penetrating the scriptural treasury.”

Dogen: If even using Śāriputra’s wisdom a true state can’t be attained, how much more so for the level of wisdom of less knowledgeable people. If even those searching with wisdom can’t meet the requirement, how could those searching with the seeds of upside-down views attain the great way of buddha ancestors?

My fellows, make no mistake! Don’t you know that an ancient person said, “Mind is not Buddha, wisdom is not the way.” Great assembly, do you want to clearly understand this point? After a pause Dogen: “True dharma for monks, ‘Don’t go to bed before your teacher.’”

From “Sanjigō” (“Karma in 3 Times”), 1253

As the saying of the World-Honored One shows, once virtuous or unwholesome karma is created, the effects endure throughout hundreds of thousands of kalpas. When facing causes and conditions, we realize this. Therefore, as for unwholesome actions, if we repent, they're extinguished, and a weighty load is transformed into a lesser burden. Virtuous actions if we rejoice in them, are continually enhanced, and this endures, as recompense is never denied.

世尊のしめしますがごときは、善惡の業、つくりをはりぬれば、たとひ百千萬劫をふといふとも、不亡なり。もし因縁にあへば、かならず感得す。しかあれば、惡業は、懺悔すれば滅す、また轉重輕受す。善業は、隨喜すればいよいよ増長するなり、これを不亡といふなり、その報、なきにはあらず。

This passage considers whether Dōgen refers to the act of repentance as genuinely critical self-reflection (力行反省) leading to self-transformation or as a kind of mechanical process driven by the external factor of petitioning deities or depending on causality to enable eventual positive results. According to several scholars, the 12-Fascicles version reflects conditionality in referring to eliminating bad karma, suggesting that repentance must be a sincere internal contemplative process based on self-responsibility.

