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THE TIANTAI ROOTS OF DŌGEN'S PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

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The *Fukan zazengi*, usually thought to be one of the first pieces of writing undertaken by Dōgen upon his return from China, opens with a passage that contains, in kernel, his response to the “great doubt” that motivated his quest to China in the first place. That doubt took the form of a question: if, as Buddhist teachings maintain, human beings are originally endowed with the dharma nature, why has it been necessary for the Buddhas of all ages to seek enlightenment and engage in spiritual practice at all?¹ This question can be seen as posing a problem about what is perhaps the fundamental teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism itself, the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, delusion and enlightenment, emphasized above all in the Madhyamaka tradition. For the question is, in essence, how is it possible for beings simultaneously to be enlightened and yet have the characteristics of delusion that make practice necessary? Strikingly, the passage from the *Fukan zazengi* offers no direct answer to this fundamental doubt. Dōgen’s response is simply to point to the exemplary, strenuous practice of Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma, and to comment thus:

When even the ancient sages were like this, how could men today dispense with pursuing the way? Therefore, stop the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing after talk; study the backward step of turning the light and shining it back.²

This response might seem to reflect a wholly negative appraisal of the ability of the intellect and of language to answer the question posed, which is to say, to grasp the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa that constitutes the very nature of the buddhadharma. Such an “antidiscursive” interpretation would be in line with the once standard view that the Zen/Chan tradition quite generally took a wholly negative view of the ability of language and reason to gain access to the dharma, and indeed viewed them as nothing but hindrances to liberation. This interpretation might be thought to gain further support from Dōgen’s frequent use of apparently “illogical” language of the kind typically associated with kōans, the purpose of which, according to the antidiscursive view, is precisely to induce an experience of awakening by frustrating the intellect. Apart from his much-discussed use of paradoxical-sounding poetic language—phrases like “the green mountains are always walking”—Dōgen commonly has recourse to statements that appear to be paradoxical in a stricter philosophical sense, in that they seem to assert genuine logical contradictions. Witness the opening of what is perhaps the seminal statement of his point of view, the *Genjō kōan*:

As all things are buddha-dharma, there is delusion and realization, practice, and birth and death, and there are buddhas and sentient beings.

As the myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no sentient being, no birth and death.³

According to the antidiscursive picture, Dōgen's reliance on such apparently contradictory statements at crucial moments of teaching reflects the view that language is something we must get *past* in order to achieve true understanding. The point of such statements would be, according to this view, that when the intellect seeks to understand the fundamental nature of the buddha-dharma, it inevitably lapses into contradiction, into sheer nonsense.

Appealing as the antidiscursive picture might be, though, we cannot simply interpret Dōgen as holding that language and thought are wholly excluded from grasping the ultimate reality of the buddha-dharma. There are many passages in his writings that affirm thinking as a tool for studying the dharma, and language as capable of expressing the dharma. This should not be surprising, given Dōgen's views concerning the oneness of practice and enlightenment, means and end. Thus, for instance, in the *Shinjin gakudō*, he writes: "Sometimes you study the way by casting off the mind. Sometimes you study the way by taking up the mind. Either way, study the way with thinking, and study the way with not-thinking."⁴ About language he says, at one point: "The words of Zhaozhou, an ancient buddha, are realization of buddha-dharma, intimate words of himself."⁵ It is because of statements like these that recent studies of Dōgen have tended to emphasize the positive role he ascribes to language, both in its capacity to express the reality of the buddha-dharma and in its ability to promote liberation.⁶ Such an interpretation is surely on the right track; it marks an important corrective to the earlier misconception about the Zen/Chan tradition's attitude toward language. And yet it is questionable whether recent accounts of Dōgen have done enough to explain the significance of more negative evaluations of language such as the one in the *Fukan zazengi*: "stop the intellectual practice of investigating words and chasing after talk." In what sense exactly is Dōgen criticizing language in such statements, and how are we to reconcile these critical pronouncements with his more positive overall evaluation?

What I want to argue here is that while Dōgen's final appraisal of language is clearly positive, this positive aspect of his view presupposes a more fundamentally negative outlook on the ability of language to grasp the reality of the buddha-dharma. More specifically, I will suggest that what Dōgen is critical of is a prevalent—indeed commonsensical—conception of the relation between language and the ultimate reality, one according to which reality is transparently available to language. This conception I will refer to as a *representationalist* view of language and thought, by which I mean a view for which the proper function of language and thought is to represent an independently existing reality.⁷ It is in fact the rejection of the representationalist view that makes possible Dōgen's ultimately positive conception of language, and we can gain a better understanding of the nature of the positive conception by seeing it as arising from that source. In short, while language

and thought are not wholly excluded from reality, for Dōgen, neither can they grasp it transparently in the way we usually take them to do.

We can best understand the negative aspect of Dōgen's view of language and thought by returning to the question of whether the many paradoxical-sounding statements that fill his writings are intended to be genuinely illogical or not. My focus here will be on cases of apparent logical contradiction, such as that which appears in the *Genjō kōan*. As we shall see, we have good reason to think that statements of this kind are not meant to be genuinely contradictory, as they would be in the anti-discursive view. Nonetheless, I will suggest that we can find in them the more moderate critique of the ability of language and thought to grasp the buddha-dharma, which is embodied in antirepresentationalism. Arguably, the type of apparently contradictory statements I am interested in here have their ultimate source in the Madhyamaka doctrine of the two truths, one statement reflecting conventional truth (*samvṛtisatya*), the other the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*). It will be helpful, then, to investigate the influence of Madhyamaka philosophy on Dōgen's conception of language and thought. It seems likely that the most direct source of this influence on Dōgen was the interpretation given to Madhyamaka by the school of Buddhism that was dominant in Japan in his time and into which he was first ordained, that is, Tendai. Indeed, I will suggest that when we look more closely at Dōgen's attitude toward language and thought, we find the imprint not so much of Indian Madhyamaka philosophy but of the particular structures of thought elaborated from it by the Tendai school and its Chinese ancestor Tiantai. While there are of course many fundamental differences of orientation between Dōgen's Buddhism and that of Tendai and Tiantai, the latter systems clearly had a deep impact on Dōgen's thinking.

The Limits of Language and Thought in Tiantai Philosophy

The Tendai Buddhism known to Dōgen was, for all of the developments it underwent in its importation to Japan, very much founded on the Tiantai system as it was developed in China some six centuries earlier, with its sophisticated classification of levels of truth and its heavy reliance on the *Lotus Sūtra* as the foundation of many of its doctrines. The great importance of the Tiantai orientation as part of the background of Dōgen's thought can be suggested in a schematic way simply by noting his frequent reliance on the *Lotus Sūtra* (in Kumārajīva's translation) in setting out his teachings. As a recent catalog of these references in the *Shōbōgenzō* has made clear, and as one would expect for someone with his training, Dōgen depends on the *Lotus Sūtra* perhaps more than any other single scriptural text, referring repeatedly to passages in almost every one of its chapters in the course of his work.⁸ The thinker usually regarded as the central figure in the development of the intellectual foundations of Tiantai was the sixth-century scholar Zhiyi. The Tendai school in Japan relied closely on the writings of Zhiyi, both philosophical works and meditation manuals,⁹ and Dōgen would certainly have known their doctrines, and probably the texts as well. In searching out more specific traces of Tiantai influence on Dōgen's thinking I will thus focus on parallels with the system of thought developed by Zhiyi, and in

particular with his philosophical work, the *Fa hua hsüan i*. We should turn first, then, to a consideration of some of the central features of Zhiyi's views.

Zhiyi's Tiantai system, as has recently been argued by Paul Swanson, can readily be seen to be as much an heir to the tradition of Madhyamaka thought in China as the Sanlun school.¹⁰ Zhiyi's conception of "three truths" is, indeed, quite evidently an interpretation or development of Nāgārjuna's doctrine of the two truths. The latter notion, most explicitly stated at *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24 : 8, holds that it is necessary to speak of two kinds of truth: worldly, conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*), which can be thought of broadly as what is embodied in our everyday, common-sense experience of the world, and supreme or ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*), which is understood as emptiness, traditionally explained as the absence of *svabhāva*, "own-being" or independent existence, in all things.

Zhiyi's notion of the three truths as stated in the *Fa hua hsüan i* derives more directly, though, from a closely related verse (18) from the same chapter of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Zhiyi relied for his interpretation of this verse on the translation of Kumārajīva, which in Swanson's rendering reads:

All things which arise through conditioned co-arising
I explain as emptiness.
Again, it is a conventional designation.
Again, it is the meaning of the Middle Path.

This verse is readily understood as an equation between the concept of conditioned co-arising and each of the three concepts in the following lines; in Zhiyi's interpretation, then, it becomes a statement of the three truths, three ways of viewing a single reality. The first is the truth of conventional designation, which he often identifies with the worldly truth of Nāgārjuna's scheme.¹¹ The second is the truth of emptiness, which is equated with Nāgārjuna's ultimate truth and is also called the "real truth." And the last is the truth of the Middle, which is the view in which the first two truths are recognized to be identical.¹²

What I want to emphasize about Zhiyi's views here is his conception of the relation between the three truths—and more broadly, conceptual views in general—and the ultimate reality of the buddha-dharma. This conception might be viewed as involving three claims, which I will consider in turn.

The Nature of the Three Truths

The first of these claims concerns the role of the three truths in the highest teaching concerning the dharma, what Zhiyi calls the "Perfect Teaching" embodied in the *Lotus Sūtra*. It is important to recognize that for Zhiyi, the three truths are not conceived in such a way that the Perfect Teaching concerning the buddha-dharma is captured by any one of them. It is not simply that reality is identified with emptiness, or even with the Middle. The reason for introducing the notion of the Middle is not, then, that it describes reality accurately while the first two truths do not; rather, the Perfect Teaching for Zhiyi is one that incorporates all three of the truths as essential elements of its description of reality. As he puts it:

The Perfect threefold truth is that it is not only the Middle Path which completely includes the Buddha-dharma, but also the real and the mundane [truths]. This threefold truth is perfectly integrated; one-in-three and three-in-one.¹³

This Perfect Teaching represents the highest of Zhiyi's classifications of Buddhist views into the "Fourfold Teachings." These comprise, in ascending order of sophistication, the "Tripiṭaka" teaching embodied, according to him, in Hīnayāna Buddhism; the "shared" teaching exemplified by the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*; the "distinct" teaching that is unique to Mahāyāna Buddhism and not shared with Hīnayāna; and finally the Perfect Teaching itself, the teaching embodied in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Much of the point of this classification, as with Zhiyi's classification of views into the "five periods," is to transcend lower views in which reality is identified with one of the three truths or some other view. For instance, the "distinct teaching" is characterized as that which identifies reality with the Middle.¹⁴ It is true, of course, that the notion of the Middle represents an advance over mistaken interpretations of the first two truths, but this is not to say that it is itself an adequate representation of reality.¹⁵

The doctrine that there are three "truths" can be seen as a way of expressing a conception of what the most adequate linguistic account of reality must be like: it must include several irreducible, and at least apparently incompatible, components. The Perfect Teaching cannot be captured by any one of the three truths, but only by the conjunction of all three. This suggests that for Zhiyi, none of the three truths can be expressed in terms of any of the others; they are in this sense irreducible. The concept of emptiness cannot be expressed in terms of the concept of conventional designation, nor vice versa, and for Zhiyi at least, the notion of the identity of the two must be expressed independently as well. Further, at least prima facie—we will return to this issue later on—it looks as though the Perfect Teaching is in fact the affirmation of three claims that are logically incompatible. The first truth apparently affirms the reality of certain distinctions, while the second seems to deny their reality. And since the middle affirms both of the first two truths, despite their apparent incompatibility, it in turn seems to be both internally inconsistent and incompatible with either of the others.

Antirepresentationalism

The second claim I want to draw out of Zhiyi's views is that his system involves a rejection of what I referred to above as a representationalist view of language and thought. This becomes apparent when we consider an additional doctrine Zhiyi puts forth about truth, namely what he speaks of as the doctrine of "no truth." Ultimately, for Zhiyi, the three truths are one, since, as we have seen, he follows Nāgārjuna in identifying emptiness and conventional existence. But Zhiyi goes further in stating that ultimately this "one truth" is in fact "no truth," and one of the advantages of the Perfect Teaching over the lesser teachings is precisely that it recognizes this. He explains the notion of "no truth" by saying that while each of the three truths is conceptually formulated, ultimately the buddha-dharma, being empty and without distinctions, is "beyond conceptual understanding."¹⁶ Thus, for him,

“Each and every [truth] is [ultimately] inexpressible.”¹⁷ The idea, clearly, is that it is wrong to think that any of the three truths adequately captures the reality of the buddha-dharma, and even, indeed, that all of them together do.

Zhiyi makes this point concerning *all* conceptual views whatsoever, including the Perfect Teaching. It certainly applies to the “Tentative Teachings,” those that fall short of the Perfect Teaching.¹⁸ All of the Tentative Teachings he classes under the category of “expedient means,” which, while not fully capturing the dharma, enable beings of limited understanding to reach the next level of the teachings.¹⁹ But even the Perfect Teaching cannot be considered to capture the dharma adequately. Though it manifests the highest teaching concerning reality and does not contain expedient means, because reality is ultimately inexpressible, it is itself an imperfect means of capturing the dharma. And, indeed, for Zhiyi even the doctrine of no truth itself cannot be considered to capture ultimate reality. For it is viewed as a teaching aimed at a specific purpose—to free those of incomplete attainment from their attachment to the words of the Perfect Teaching—rather than as a way of adequately capturing the nature of reality. For those who do have attainment, such a teaching is unnecessary.²⁰

The doctrine of “no truth” clearly has an important bearing on Zhiyi’s views concerning the relations between language, thought, and reality, but what exactly does this doctrine claim? One of the important contrasts Zhiyi draws between the Perfect Teaching and the lowest teaching, the Tripiṭaka Teaching of Hīnayāna Buddhism, is that the former adopts the doctrine of “no truth,” while the latter does not. Now a central mistake of the Tripiṭaka Teaching, he claims, is that it interprets the truth of conventional designation as asserting the “real existence” of the mundane world, and the truth of emptiness as referring to “the extinction of real existence.”²¹ What Zhiyi clearly means by “real existence” here is the traditional notion of *svabhāva* or own-being, which we might think of as the idea that the objects and other entities in the world exist with their essential natures independently of other entities, including the minds and linguistic concepts used to cognize them. And similarly what he means by the notion of “the extinction of real existence” is clearly the extinction of *svabhāva*; that is, he views the Tripiṭaka Teaching as adopting the nihilistic interpretation of emptiness as nonexistence.

In contrast, Zhiyi makes it clear that part of the superiority of the Perfect Teaching is that it completely transcends the interpretation of the truths in terms of the notion of *svabhāva*. What allows the Perfect Teaching to do this is precisely its acceptance of the doctrine of “no truth.” If no conceptual views adequately capture reality, it will not make sense to suppose that there is an independent reality exactly corresponding to our usual conceptual views. We can thus see that if the doctrine of “no truth” is a rejection of the idea that any conceptual view can adequately grasp reality, the notion of “reality” involved in this rejection is that adopted by the *svabhāva*-oriented Tripiṭaka Teaching. The idea of “no truth” is thus specifically a rejection of the notion that conceptual views can capture the reality of the world conceived as *svabhāva*—not, as we shall see, a denial that they can convey the buddha-dharma in any way at all.

While it might seem natural for a contemporary Western interpreter to construe the notion of “no truth,” thus understood, as embodying a form of global antirealism, I would suggest that it is better seen as a rejection of the whole distinction between realism and antirealism itself, that is, as a variety of antirepresentationalism.²² Representationalism, in the sense I have in mind, is the view that statements and thoughts have their normative values—truth and falsity for statements, and veridicality or non-veridicality for thoughts—by virtue of whether or not they correctly represent facts about entities that have their essential natures independent of other objects, minds, and language. Realism concerning any type of statement or thought, on the other hand, might be conceived as a specific variety of representationalism that accepts, beyond the representationalist claim, the view that the statement in question is in fact true (or, for thought, veridical) rather than false. It holds, that is, that corresponding to the statements viewed realistically there are indeed facts that are independent in the specified sense. Antirealism about any area of discourse, in this sense, is still a variety of representationalism—it accepts that the function of language and thought in this domain is indeed to represent an independent reality—but holds that in fact there is no such reality, so that the statements turn out to be false (the thoughts nonveridical).

According to Zhiyi, the Tripiṭaka Teaching embodies a realist outlook in at least some areas, since it affirms that some of our conventional designations are true of an independent reality, and hence it is also a form of representationalism. But Zhiyi’s attack on the Tripiṭaka view is best thought of not as a denial of realism but as the rejection of representationalism itself. As we have seen, Zhiyi rejects not only the Tripiṭaka’s view that (some) things in the world have “real existence,” in the sense of being *svabhāva*, but also their assertion of the “extinction of all existence,” that is, the denial that things exist as *svabhāva*. What he rejects is the interpretation of the three truths in terms of the notion of *svabhāva* or “independent existence” itself, which is to say, the interpretation that language and thought work by trying to fix on independent existence. Further, if the doctrine of “no truth” involved a form of antirealism, and so an acceptance of representationalism, then Zhiyi’s view would be that though the function of language and thought is to represent an independent reality, in fact there is no such reality. He would thus have to hold that language and thought have no bearing on reality at all, that all talk of truth and of understanding reality is empty. But this is clearly not his perspective. He does not in fact simply say that all conceptual views are false. As we have seen, he is inclined to speak of the three “truths,” and he accepts as well that some conceptual distinctions can promote understanding better than others—for instance, that the Perfect Teaching is preferable to the Tripiṭaka Teaching. This is in fact for him the function of conceptual distinctions; as he puts it, “distinctions are made in order to facilitate understanding.”²³

It will be important for our purposes here to note one further feature of Zhiyi’s antirepresentationalism, a point that concerns the truth of conventional designation. Zhiyi appears to hold what might be called a minimalist form of antirepresentationalism—minimalist in that it offers only the most minimal account of the nature of (conventional) truth. The truth of conventional designation is the affir-

mation that the things in the world to which we apply our everyday designations do have the features we describe them as having. Grass grows in spring, and leaves fall in autumn. But, as we have seen, the doctrine of “no truth” entails that what grounds these conventional designations, what makes these statements true, cannot be facts about grass and leaves conceived as *svabhāva*.

What, then, *does* ground these statements? It is significant that Zhiyi—following Nāgārjuna—does not propose any positive theory in order to explain how conventional designations get their grip. Though the doctrine of no truth rejects the *svabhāva* theory’s account of how the truth of conventional designation is grounded, Zhiyi proposes no alternative to it, no positive account of what reality must be like in order that certain statements should be true. This is not to say, of course, that Zhiyi’s theory of the three truths is in any sense an insubstantial one: much of the *Fa hua hsüan i* and the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* are devoted to a detailed discussion of the nature of the conventional truth and the other truths, and to defending his conception against alternative views. It is only to make the specific point that he does not give us any philosophical account of what it is for conventional statements to be true, given that their truth does not consist in their correspondence to an independently existing reality. It seems plausible to take this as reflecting the attitude that it is not possible to give a philosophical account of what it is for such statements to be true. In this sense I take Zhiyi to be committed not only to the rejection of the representationalist conception of truth, but to a quite minimal conception of truth as well.

Are the Three Truths Contradictory?

The final point I want to emphasize in Zhiyi’s views concerns the question of whether the apparent contradictions involved in the joint affirmation of the three truths are genuine logical contradictions. The most evident sense of paradox within the three truths arises from the apparent conflict between the first two, the truth of conventional designation and the truth of emptiness. On the face of things it may seem that the joint assertion of these two truths will generate straightforward logical contradictions. One might reason as follows. To say that all things are empty, for Zhiyi, is to say that the differences between things are not real, that reality is essentially undifferentiated. To say that our conventional designations of things are true, on the other hand, is to say that in fact there are essential differences between things. It seems, for instance, that from the perspective of conventional designation, my pen and my desk would be distinct, independent entities, while from the perspective of emptiness, it would be false to say they are two independent entities. And to say both that the pen exists independently of the desk and that it is not the case that the pen exists independently of the desk seems to be a logical contradiction.

Nonetheless I do not think that Zhiyi can have meant the assertion of the first two truths in the context of the Perfect Teaching to entail a strict contradiction. After all, the third truth is the truth that the first two truths are identical; the first two truths are not only consistent with each other, they are formulations of the same truth. So it doesn’t seem plausible to interpret him as holding the view that the first two truths are simply self-contradictory. What, then, is the import of the fact that Zhiyi chooses

to express these truths in an apparently paradoxical manner? Is this paradoxical form of expression simply intended for rhetorical effect, so that it would be possible to express the Perfect Teaching without resorting as he does to apparent contradictions, to capture the import of all three truths in a single “truth” that had no appearance of paradox?

We need not draw such a conclusion, and I would argue that we would miss much of the significance of Zhiyi’s views if we did. The key to seeing this point lies in what we called above Zhiyi’s minimalist conception of (conventional) truth. Consider again the contrast between the Perfect Teaching and the Tripiṭaka Teaching. As we have seen, the Tripiṭaka Teaching embodies a representationalist perspective, and it is this perspective that is repudiated by the Perfect Teaching. Notice now that while it is implausible to view the truth of conventional designation and the truth of emptiness as interpreted by the Perfect Teaching as genuinely contradictory, as interpreted in the representationalist, Tripiṭaka manner, these two truths would in fact be contradictory. For in the latter interpretation, the truth of conventional designation says that things in the world exist as *svabhāva*, as independent entities, while the truth of emptiness says that they do not exist as independent entities—which means, given the explication of existence as *svabhāva*, that they do not exist at all. In contrast, the Perfect Teaching rejects the whole notion of *svabhāva* as incoherent, and precisely for this reason it can interpret the first two truths in such a way that they are not contradictory. How might we express the Perfect Teaching’s interpretation of these two truths? The truth of emptiness might be viewed simply as affirming *pratīyasamutpāda*, the dependent co-arising of phenomena—that is, as simply the rejection of the view that phenomena exist with their essential natures independently. And the truth of conventional designation might be said to emphasize that—despite the truth of emptiness—the distinctions we draw concerning things in the world do have an irreducible legitimacy, though this legitimacy does not derive from facts about the things in question conceived as *svabhāva*. Under such an interpretation the two truths are entirely consistent.

And yet, while the first two truths are consistent as interpreted by the Perfect Teaching, it is the fact that they would be contradictory under the Tripiṭaka interpretation that provides the key to the significance of Zhiyi’s paradoxical mode of expression. I would argue that this *apparently* paradoxical mode of expression is actually essential to the Perfect Teaching in a quite strong way. Zhiyi emphasizes that the Perfect Teaching depends on the Tripiṭaka Teaching and other lower teachings in a crucial way, in that each lower teaching prepares the thinker for the teaching at the next level. But the dependence here is not just a superficial one. In fact it would not be possible to understand the Perfect Teaching without understanding the Tripiṭaka Teaching, with its contradictory interpretation of the first two truths. For consider what is involved in Zhiyi’s minimalist approach to conventional truth. While the rejection of the *svabhāva* theory entails that our conventional designations do not gain their normative values by virtue of facts about objects viewed as *svabhāva*, Zhiyi provides no alternative positive account of what might ground these designations. What this means is that the Perfect Teaching does not simply involve a rejection of

the Tripiṭaka Teaching's *svabhāva*-oriented interpretation of the conventional truth. In fact it amounts to *nothing more* than the denial of that interpretation, for it offers no characterization of what grounds the truth of conventional statements other than saying that this grounding is *not* supplied by facts about *svabhāva* entities.

Zhiyi's doctrine of the truth of conventional designation is thus purely negative; it has no content beyond the denial of the representationalist interpretation of that truth. For this reason, the only way to express Zhiyi's Perfect Teaching is by stating the truths of conventional designation and emptiness in the contradictory form that they would have on a representationalist reading, and then rejecting that representationalist interpretation. In this sense, though there is no genuine contradiction in Zhiyi's views, the appearance of paradox, far from being mere embellishment, is essential to his position.²⁴

The Limits of Language and Thought in Dōgen

When we turn to a consideration of Dōgen's writings with Zhiyi's system in mind, the traces of his Tiantai intellectual inheritance quickly become evident. We can, I would suggest, find in Dōgen ideas about the relation of language and thought to the dharma that closely parallel the three claims I have identified in Zhiyi's system. We should emphasize first that this system is one with which we can be confident that Dōgen was quite familiar. As noted earlier, the Tendai school formed the background within which Dōgen was first formally introduced to the teachings of the Buddha. In addition to being first ordained in the Tendai monasteries of Mt. Hiei, we know that after descending Mt. Hiei, his first teacher, whom he venerated highly, was a Tendai master.²⁵ We can also find in Dōgen's writings periodic references to the Tendai school and its doctrines and practices, and in fact to Zhiyi as well. While these explicit references are relatively few, it will be helpful, before going on to consider the parallels between Zhiyi's and Dōgen's views on language and thought, to consider what light they shed on Dōgen's attitude toward Zhiyi and his school.

Consider first Dōgen's attitude toward the doctrines, as opposed to the practices, of the Tendai school. It might at first sight appear that Dōgen was quite critical of Tendai doctrine very generally. In the *Bendō wa* he responds to a question about the validity of the Tendai, Kegon, and Shingon schools with a condemnation of "scholars who count letters," saying that they are incapable of transmitting the authentic buddha-dharma.²⁶ But it would seem from the surrounding context that what Dōgen is criticizing here is not Tendai and the other doctrines per se, but scholasticism concerning any doctrine. For he is equally critical of attachment to views that he himself would advocate. Thus, he says in the same passage that both the Shingon teaching that "Mind itself is buddha" and his own "Sitting itself is becoming buddha" are mere "reflections"; we should not get caught up with "the splendor of the words." Similarly he criticizes the tendency to take up views such as the twelve-fold chain of causation—of which he himself makes use elsewhere—and regard contemplation of them as itself the correct practice.²⁷

What runs through these points is not a criticism of Tendai doctrines or any other doctrines in themselves, but rather an emphasis on meditation practice as the crucial activity in the Way of the Buddha, and a criticism of activities in which speculation on words itself becomes the main practice. What he says, finally, in response to the question concerning Tendai, Kegon, and Shingon, is that “in the buddha’s house we do not discuss superiority or inferiority of the teaching; nor do we concern ourselves with the depth or shallowness of the dharma, but only with the genuineness or falseness of the practice.”²⁸ It may well be that he took a certain scholasticism to be characteristic of the Tendai school, but this is not to impugn their doctrines themselves. If we can discover in Dōgen’s references to Tendai an attitude critical of the school, then it is at the more fundamental level of a difference in outlook rather than merely a disagreement over teachings. Whereas Zhiyi delights in elaborate systems of classification and technical comparisons, Dōgen eschews these and emphasizes instead the nonverbal practice of zazen and the “teaching that is not concerned with theories.”²⁹ This difference is one that must be borne in mind as we consider the way in which Dōgen and Zhiyi share certain attitudes toward language and thought.

On the subject of Tendai practices themselves, Dōgen’s comments seem to display some ambivalence. On the one hand, Dōgen sometimes refers to Zhiyi’s popular meditation manual, the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, with some respect, and indeed in the *Hōkyō-ki* refers to Zhiyi himself as the best of the scholastic masters.³⁰ He also occasionally makes reference to Zhiyi’s notion that each thought contains the three thousand realms, and at one point refers to the practice of this doctrine as an “excellent practice.”³¹ On the other hand, Dōgen appears critical of what are perhaps the most central Tendai practices. So, for instance, in the *Bendō wa* he maintains that it is contrary to the Way to practice, in addition to zazen, the chanting of mantras, and śamatha-vipaśyanā meditation, the latter of these being an important Tendai practice and the core of the practice Zhiyi recommends in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* and the *Hsiao chih-kuan*.³² While Dōgen may have accepted some aspects of Tendai practice, then, his overall orientation toward practice seems to have been fundamentally different.

Despite his critical attitude toward Tendai scholasticism and some aspects of Tendai practice, however, it is possible to discern in Dōgen’s conception of language and thought a strong imprint of Zhiyi’s views. The aspects of Dōgen’s outlook that run parallel to those of Zhiyi are fundamental ones, concerning both the overall form of his teaching of the dharma and his attitude toward conceptual expressions in general. Dōgen does not, given his attitude toward systematic theorizing, make explicit use of anything like the notion of the three truths. And yet one cannot but be struck by his tendency to present the dharma concerning various topics sequentially from a series of perspectives that seem to be precisely those with which we are familiar from our consideration of Zhiyi: conventional designation, emptiness, and the identity of these two—as well as a perspective corresponding to that of “no truth.” What should be noted is that in addressing these issues concerning the relation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, Dōgen does not simply make use of an opposition between two truths, as did the Madhyamaka tradition, but rather employs a framework of

three—or really four—perspectives similar to that of Zhiyi’s interpretation. And implicit in this type of treatment as well is a set of beliefs concerning the relation of language and thought to the dharma that is akin in many ways to what we have seen in Zhiyi. While Dōgen, as we shall see, did modify Zhiyi’s view in some important respects, its influence is there to be seen.

What is perhaps the most striking example of this kind of parallel appears in the opening passage of the *Genjō kōan*, part of which we noted at the outset. More fully, that passage reads:

As all things are buddha-dharma, there is delusion and realization, practice, and birth and death, and there are buddhas and sentient beings.

As the myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddha, no sentient being, no birth and death.

The buddha way is, basically, leaping clear of the many and the one; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas.

Yet in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread.³³

Commentators have differed on the significance of these lines. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe view the first sentence as the fundamental statement of Dōgen’s standpoint—that the buddha-dharma is an equality beyond all discrimination and duality that nonetheless affirms the differentiation between things as the ultimate reality.³⁴ The second line they see as specifying that the affirmation of opposites in the first line includes the negation of all dichotomy, and they then take the third to be a clarification of the first on that basis. Finally, they understand the last sentence as an affirmation not just of enlightenment (flowers) and delusion (weeds), but of the human feelings of yearning for the one and aversion to the other.

Such an interpretation, though, seems to miss some of the significance of the relations between the four sentences. For what is most striking about the first three sentences is the near repetition of the lists of objects that form their latter halves. The second line clearly represents a view in which the elements listed in the first are negated. This naturally suggests that the elements of the third have been similarly transformed in some manner, so that the sentences form a progression. On the other hand, there would seem little reason for such repetition if the third sentence were, as Waddell and Abe have it, merely a restatement of the first. Nor is it easy to find in the first the notion of a transcendence of duality that these commentators would have us place there.

If the first three sentences are viewed as a kind of progression, though, one is immediately struck by the parallel to Zhiyi’s three truths. In the first, as in Zhiyi’s truth of conventional designation, the differences between entities are affirmed. The second statement clearly represents a perspective of emptiness in which individual differences are said not really to exist. And the third, like Zhiyi’s Middle, articulates a perspective that transcends, by incorporating, the perspective of the first sentence and that of the second, that is, the many and the one. Here, just as for Zhiyi, the

differences between things reappear, now not as differences between wholly independent entities, but as relative differences against the background of emptiness. As to the controversial fourth sentence, I will return to it a bit later, since it raises further issues. The striking similarity between the three perspectives articulated by Dōgen's and Zhiyi's three truths should not, perhaps, be too surprising. One can readily imagine that the dialectical structure of the three truths must have seemed as natural and commonplace to one trained in the teachings of Tendai, as Dōgen was, as the structure of the Hegelian dialectic is to one trained today in Western philosophy.³⁵

The *Genjō kōan* is by no means alone among Dōgen's writings in evidencing structures of thought that parallel that of the three truths. Dōgen makes use of some or all of the perspectives embodied in the three truths to clarify issues in many of his works. Another systematic application of the three perspectives occurs in the *Shōji*, where Dōgen refers to the matter of birth and death from a series of perspectives that would seem to be of the kind we have just considered.³⁶ The work is a commentary on two apparently contradictory utterances attributed to Chinese masters: Jiashan's "Because a buddha is in birth and death, there is no birth and death" and Dingshan's "Because a buddha is not in birth and death, a buddha is not deluded by birth and death." Dōgen begins by urging us to seek to understand these statements, saying "Those who want to be free from birth and death should understand the meaning of these words [i.e., of 'birth' and 'death']." Notice that here birth and death are conceived of as real things, and things that people desire to escape. He goes on, however, to refer to them from a standpoint which can only be that of emptiness: "Just understand that birth-and-death is itself nirvāṇa. There is nothing such as birth and death to be avoided; there is nothing such as nirvāṇa to be sought." Following this again is a perspective in which differences exist, but now against the background of emptiness: "In birth there is nothing but birth and in death there is nothing but death." And here, Dōgen makes a final move that draws back from all of the previous statements in a way reminiscent of Zhiyi's final retreat to the idea of "no truth": "However, do not analyze or speak about it. Just set aside your body and mind, forget about them, and throw them into the house of the buddha; then all is done by buddha."

The parallelism of thought structure between Dōgen and Zhiyi that we have noticed here is not just a superficial one. For it is evident that what informs this structure in Dōgen's case is a set of beliefs concerning the relation of language and thought to reality that is quite similar to the three claims that we found in Zhiyi. First, the texts we have considered clearly present what is intended to be Dōgen's fundamental teaching concerning the buddha-dharma, and the form this teaching takes is not the assertion of some single doctrine concerning reality, but rather a conjunction of three—or ultimately four—views. It seems natural to interpret Dōgen as viewing the perspectives of conventional designation, emptiness, and the "Middle" as irreducible to one another. For he makes use of these views with a good deal of consistency, and like Zhiyi he does not propose any overarching theoretical perspective that would reconcile them other than that of the Middle itself, which is not a reductive conception in that it cannot be understood independently of the other two

truths. Dōgen's treatment of the issue suggests that, like Zhiyi, he took the nature of ultimate reality to be such that the best possible conceptual account of it must comprise a series of distinct, irreducible views that are at least apparently contradictory.

Similarly, we can find in Dōgen's views an attitude toward language and thought analogous to what we referred to in our discussion of Zhiyi as a minimalist form of antirepresentationalism. As was the case for Zhiyi, what underlies this attitude in Dōgen is the notion that no conceptual view can ever adequately grasp the truth of the buddha-dharma. It is an important facet of Dōgen's teaching that enlightenment is not to be achieved by understanding, but only in the activity of practice, which transcends understanding. Thus, for instance, he refers to practice and enlightenment as "the Dharma which is prior to understanding and analysis."³⁷ Similarly, he says that the Buddha realm is inconceivable,³⁸ and speaks of "pure one-taste Zen beyond words."³⁹ Such an attitude was also evident in our discussion above of Dōgen's criticisms of the scholastic tendencies of Tendai, Shingon, and Kegon. He refers to the conceptual views of these schools, and indeed all conceptual views, as "mere reflections" incapable of adequately capturing reality, and it is for this reason presumably that he criticizes the scholars' attachment to the "splendor of words."

Now Dōgen's point in such critical statements cannot be to insist that language and thought have no bearing on the dharma in any sense at all. As we noted earlier—and we shall consider the issue in more detail in a moment—he also often speaks of language and thought as in some sense capable of expressing the dharma. The point of speaking of the dharma as being prior to understanding and beyond words, then, must be to reject one particular conception of how understanding and language might function to reveal the ultimate reality—namely, by transparently representing reality conceived as an independently existing entity. What he rejects, that is, is a representationalist understanding of language and thought. And the way in which Dōgen rejects representationalism seems analogous to Zhiyi's position, as well, in that he takes a minimalist attitude toward the nature of conventional truth. While he clearly rejects the view that the truth of our conventional statements consists in their representing an independent reality, he offers no positive account of what does ground their truth—he merely affirms that they are true, while at the same time undermining the notion that they adequately capture an independent reality. In short, his view has all of the marks that we have associated with the minimal antirepresentationalist account.

This brings us to the final point of comparison between Dōgen and Zhiyi. There is reason to think that Dōgen held the same attitude toward the apparent contradictions between the "three truths" that we found in Zhiyi—that is, that while these seeming paradoxes do not represent genuine contradictions, the recognition that they would be contradictory if interpreted in a representationalist manner is essential to a proper understanding of the dharma. Though Dōgen does not explicitly address this issue, we can find at least indirect evidence of such an attitude in his writings. That he does not regard statements corresponding to the three truths as genuinely contradictory is suggested by his treatment of the apparent contradictions in the *Genjō kōan* and *Shōji* that we noted above. If, for instance, Dōgen regarded the

statement that there is birth and death and the statement that there is no birth and death as genuinely contradictory, there would be nothing about them to understand, since in standard accounts a genuine contradiction asserts nothing. But rather than treating such apparent paradoxes as wholly empty of meaning, he devotes considerable space to discussing their meanings, and urges us to study them for ourselves, as if the perplexity they initially provoke is itself an important tool in coming to a proper understanding of the dharma.

It is also instructive to note, in this context, Dōgen's attitude toward another type of Zen communication often regarded as illogical, namely kōan stories. As has often been pointed out, Dōgen vehemently rejects the interpretation of kōan stories as wholly illogical uses of language designed to break the grip of rationality on the mind of the aspirant.⁴⁰ In the *Mountains and Waters Sūtra*, for instance, he rails against those who "consider Huangbo's staff and Linji's shout as beyond logic and unconcerned with thought."⁴¹ If this is his view concerning this type of paradoxical utterance, it would be natural for him to take a similar view concerning the apparent contradictions between the three truths. However, we also have reason to think that Dōgen would regard the appearance of contradiction in his statements of the three perspectives as essential to his teaching of the dharma. This is simply a consequence of his adoption of a minimalist form of antirepresentationalism, if we are indeed right to suppose that this is his view. Since Dōgen offers no positive account of the three truths, but only presents them in the apparently contradictory form they would have following a representationalist interpretation and then signals his rejection of that interpretation, the apparent contradictions are in this sense essential to his view.

Language and Thought as Expressing the Dharma

We have so far focused entirely on the parallels between Zhiyi's and Dōgen's negative views concerning the relation of language and thought to reality. I have suggested that we can find in Dōgen's writings not only the same "tripartite plus one" scheme for understanding the dharma that we see in Zhiyi but also, underlying this structure, an analogous critique of the idea that language and thought transparently give access to an independent reality. But it is also important to recognize that in both Zhiyi and Dōgen this critique of representationalism in fact paves the way for an ultimately positive view of the ability of language and thought to convey the dharma in a different way.

Consider first the case of Zhiyi. It might seem that given the thrust of the doctrine of "no truth"—that no conceptually formulated teaching adequately represents reality—Zhiyi must hold that language and thought are barriers to the understanding of the dharma, rather than means to it. But recall that, as I interpreted it above, what is rejected by the doctrine of "no truth" is not the view that language and thought can convey the dharma in any way at all, but only that they serve to represent the reality of the world conceived as *svabhāva*. I want to suggest now that, in fact, Zhiyi is most plausibly interpreted as holding that language and thought can, in a different sense, convey the buddha-dharma.

As we saw earlier, Zhiyi emphasizes that all of the teachings, even the teaching of “no truth,” are aimed at a specific purpose: to help aspirants of different levels toward full liberation. This notion that the normative standards for evaluating the teachings are relative to different purposes has strongly pragmatic overtones, but there are several ways in which such an idea can be interpreted. We might, first, interpret it as saying that all teachings fail to capture reality in any way at all, that they derive their normative standards wholly from whether or not they fulfill their assigned purposes. On the other hand, we might view it as saying that the normative standards for the teachings derive *in part*, but not wholly, from the relevant purposes—that the teachings have a component of purpose-relativity, but that they also in some way reflect the constraints of reality. The reading of Zhiyi I offered above lends support to the second of these interpretations. If I am right to view the doctrine of “no truth” as specifically a rejection of the *svabhāva* theory, and what distinguishes that theory is the notion that the normative standards for language and thought derive *wholly* from an independent reality, then the doctrine of “no truth” is clearly compatible with the idea that these normative standards derive in part from reality, though they contain an element of purpose-relativity as well.

There are, I would suggest, several additional reasons for thinking that Zhiyi must have had some such view in mind, rather than the view that the teachings entirely fail to capture reality. First, as we noted earlier, Zhiyi speaks of conceptual distinctions as “aimed to facilitate understanding,” and not as aimed merely to promote liberation. Second, the idea that conceptual teachings wholly fail to reflect reality seems to conflict with Zhiyi’s identification of the conventional truth with the real truth and the truth of the middle. There is, I think, a good deal of uncertainty about how to understand this identification. But however one understands it, surely it precludes the idea that the conventional truth has no purchase at all on ultimate reality. Of course, if the interpretation I have suggested here is right, the reality that is conveyed in some way by all of the teachings will not be the wholly independent reality conceived by the *svabhāva* theory. Given the dependence of each of the teachings on human purposes, the reality they convey will not be wholly independent of human purposes. But this is not to say that the teachings will be wholly independent of reality, wholly unconstrained by it, either. The reality in question could instead be pictured, in accord with the doctrine of *pratīyasamutpāda*, as an interdependence of world, mind, and language.

In Dōgen’s writings, the notion that language can in some way convey the buddha-dharma finds an even more explicit affirmation than in Zhiyi—though, I will suggest, it receives from him a rather different emphasis. As we noted at the outset, Dōgen holds that language can itself—if used in the right spirit—be the realization of the dharma. He also says that used appropriately, words can partake of nonduality: “What is called ‘the entire universe’ is undivided from the moment, the ages, mind, and words.”⁴² Presumably for this reason, language may be used as a means of liberation. As he puts it, “discriminating thought is words and phrases, and . . . words and phrases liberate discriminating thought.”⁴³ Dōgen sometimes refers to speech—and nonverbal actions as well—which realize the dharma in this way as

“expressions” (*dōtoku*).⁴⁴ Since every aspect of the universe represents, in his conception, the “speech,” the “sūtras,” of the Buddha-nature, words cannot be excluded from this.⁴⁵ The conception of language embodied in all of these positive descriptions—we might call it an expressive conception—differs from the representationalist view in that while representationalism pictures language as aiming to capture an independent reality, the expressive conception views language as nondually related to the reality it expresses. Thus, for both Zhiyi and Dōgen, while words cannot transparently represent reality conceived as an independent entity, they can nonetheless *express* the reality of the dharma, now conceived as nondually related to the knowing subject.

Despite this shared conception of the liberative potential of language, however, it does seem that Dōgen and Zhiyi have quite different attitudes concerning the kind of language that is most effective in promoting liberation. The experience of reading Dōgen is very different from that of reading Zhiyi, and in part this difference clearly derives from the different evaluations that, as we noted earlier, they offer of the importance of systematic speculation. Zhiyi’s prescribed treatment for the ailment of attachment to fixed views is the doctrine of “no truth,” which might itself be considered another philosophical teaching.⁴⁶ The type of language that Dōgen tends to emphasize as capable of liberating us from attachments is of a quite different kind, the imagistic and poetic language of kōans. Dōgen’s frequent appeal to kōan language as an important element of practice is well known. That he regards the function of such language as being to free us from attachments is suggested in a striking passage in which he reflects on the enigmatic phrases “Green mountains are always walking” and “Eastern mountains travel on water.” Dōgen writes: “Set words and phrases are not the words of liberation. There is something free from all of these understandings: ‘Green mountains are always walking,’ and ‘Eastern mountains travel on water.’”⁴⁷ Notice that Dōgen does not here *explain* what it is that is free from set words and phrases, but simply *uses* the freeing expressions; the implication would seem to be that it is the actual use of such phrases as expressions of Buddha-nature, rather than any systematic speculation about them, that is liberating.

The expressions in question are represented as liberating us from “set words and phrases,” but what is meant by this latter notion? Given that the relevant expressions are examples of highly poetic kōan language, one might be tempted to think that what he means by “set words and phrases” is simply literal language. But it would be wrong, given what we have seen of Dōgen’s broader views, to conclude that for him only poetic language can be liberative, and all literally expressed views, or at any rate all literal philosophical views, are deluded. As we have seen, Dōgen clearly accepts that some literal philosophical views—for example, his own notion that “Sitting itself is becoming Buddha”—can serve the goal of liberation, if used in the right spirit. I would suggest that “set words and phrases” is more plausibly read as meaning words that have become entrenched in habit and subject to attachment. Presumably, one can become attached to a metaphor and remain (for a time, anyway) unattached to a philosophical theory that jolts one out of habitual patterns of thinking.

If this is right, then for Dōgen, as for Zhiyi, a liberative use of words is one that frees us from attachments, and either literal philosophical language or poetic language can potentially serve this goal. Where the two seem to differ is in their views on which type of language is in fact more effective in dissolving attachments. Judging from their practice, for Dōgen language analogous to that used in *kōans*, with its appeal to the emotions and to personal experience, has the potential to jolt us out of attachments more reliably or more deeply than the kind of philosophical language emphasized by Zhiyi.

This difference between Zhiyi and Dōgen can be strikingly illustrated by returning to the final line from the opening of the *Genjō kōan* noted earlier: “Yet in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread.” Once again, commentators have differed on the significance of this line. Some have viewed it, as Steven Heine has shown, as expressing an unenlightened perspective in contrast with the Buddhist teachings of the first three lines, a perspective of attachment, longing, and regret. Others—Heine himself included—have seen it instead as an affirmation of our emotional responses and attachments themselves, and, because of this emphasis on a personal encounter with impermanence, as a critique of the eternalist and scholastic tendencies of Tiantai philosophy.⁴⁸ This latter interpretation seems to accord much better with Dōgen’s emphasis on the oneness of practice and enlightenment. And if we are right to view the first three lines of the passage as expressing the doctrine of the three truths, with its inherently progressive tendency, then the placement of this final line at the end of the passage rather than at the beginning may lend further support to this reading as well. If we do regard the final line in this light, the fact that this line follows an expression of the three truths gains a new significance. For this is precisely the position reserved by Zhiyi for the doctrine of “no truth.” Whereas Zhiyi seeks to overcome any attachment to the teachings by appealing to another philosophical doctrine, Dōgen appeals to a type of language that draws personal experience and emotional reactions into practice itself.

The central point for which I have argued here, however, is that the positive conception of language and thought that we can find in Dōgen—a vision of them as capable of conveying the dharma and as potentially liberative—presupposes a more negative attitude toward them, and in this sense this negative component of Dōgen’s view is the more foundational. The negative component of his view is a rejection of the representationalist conception of language and thought, a conception that takes these human capacities to function by representing a reality that has its nature independent of human knowers. Such a representationalist view, we might say, pictures language as describing reality “from the outside.” In contrast, the liberative conception sees language as nondually, or internally, related to the reality it describes. It was only once the notion of language as representing reality from the outside was discarded by Dōgen that the conception of it as expressing the buddha-dharma from the inside could emerge. If we can find in Dōgen a vision of the liberative capacities of language, then, such a view rests on the sharp critique of its fundamental relation to the dharma that, through Zhiyi, had become foundational to his outlook.

Notes

- 1 – This way of formulating the question derives from an early biography of Dōgen. See Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 25.
- 2 – Here and throughout, I quote from Carl Bielefeldt's translation of the Koroku version of the *Fukan zazengi*. See Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 176.
- 3 – *Genjō kōan* (Actualizing the fundamental point), in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi et al. (New York: North Point Press, 1985), p. 69.
- 4 – *Shinjin gakudō* (Body-and-mind study the way), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 87.
- 5 – *Kattō* (Twining vines), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 173.
- 6 – So, for instance, Hee-jin Kim writes: "This means that words and letters (i.e. language and symbols) . . . are given a positive significance in the total scheme of spiritual things. In short, they are no longer means to an end but that means which embodies the end in it. . . . Thus, the sūtras, words, silence . . . all these are the possibilities of expression that are in turn the activities of absolute emptiness and the Buddha-nature" (Kim, *Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist*, p. 102). Similarly, Steven Heine argues for the view that "Dōgen maintains, in contrast to an exclusive emphasis on the priority of silence, that language is a necessary and effective means of conveying the Dharma" (Steven Heine, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994], p. 5).
- 7 – As I explain further below, I draw the term "representationalism" from Richard Rorty's discussion of the contrast between representationalism and realism. However, I do not intend the notion of representationalism that I use here to correspond in any close way to Rorty's. See especially his "Introduction: Anti-representationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Liberalism," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 8 – See the appendix "Lotus Sūtra References," in *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, book 1, trans. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross (Woking, England: Windbell Publications, 1994), pp. 293–321.
- 9 – See Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, pp. 71–72.
- 10 – Paul Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989), passim, but especially chaps. 1 and 7.
- 11 – For this and the following identifications by Zhiyi, see, for instance, *Fa hua hsüan i 704c26 ff.*, in Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, pp. 253–254.

12 – Somewhat confusingly, in his *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, Zhiyi also associates this same verse from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* with another system of classification, the “Fourfold Four Noble Truths,” in which each line of the verse is associated with one level of interpretation of the doctrine of the four noble truths. Thus, the first line is associated with what he calls the “Arising and Perishing” interpretation, the second with the “Non-arising and Perishing” interpretation, the third with the “Innumerable” interpretation, and the last with the “Unconstructed” interpretation. But this fourfold scheme should not be viewed as construing Nāgārjuna’s verse as establishing a system of four truths rather than the three of the *Fa hua hsüan i*, for even in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* Zhiyi continues to speak of three truths, the same three that he identifies in the *Fa hua hsüan i*. The two systems of classification run, so to speak, orthogonally. See Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, trans., *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i’s Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), pp. 162–163, 176–178, 209.

While it has sometimes been suggested that this doctrine of Zhiyi’s represents a misunderstanding of the Nāgārjunian view on which it is based, it is perhaps better viewed as simply an elucidation that aims to capture essentially the same point. Swanson cites a number of historical factors, which we need not go into here, as reasons for the latter interpretation (see pp. 13–14), but the structure of the ideas themselves that are involved supplies additional reasons. It is clear from *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24:18 that for Nāgārjuna conventional existence and emptiness are to be identified. And so it may seem otiose to invoke this identity itself as a third truth: given a correct understanding, it would not be possible to understand emptiness as anything other than conventional existence. But Zhiyi’s third truth, the Middle, is certainly not contrary to the import of Nāgārjuna’s doctrine. It would seem rather that the intention behind listing the three truths separately is just to guard ever more carefully against possible misinterpretations of the first two truths.

13 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in Swanson, *Foundations of T’ien-t’ai Philosophy*, p. 253.

14 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in *ibid.*, p. 241.

15 – It should be noted that the relationship between the three truths and the reality of the buddha-dharma is not, according to Zhiyi, a relation of parts to whole. In the quotation just given in the main text, it will be noticed, Zhiyi says not that the Perfect Teaching views the buddha-dharma as containing each of the three truths, but that it sees each of the three truths as containing the whole of the buddha-dharma. This is what is meant by saying that the three truths are regarded here as perfectly integrated or interpenetrating: each of the three truths is viewed as containing both of the others, and indeed as incorporating all of reality. The three truths, then, cannot be viewed as parts of one encompassing reality. They are, I would suggest, perhaps better viewed as something like different modes of conceiving and experiencing the whole of reality.

- 16 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, p. 182.
- 17 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in *ibid.*, p. 255.
- 18 – On the distinction between the Perfect Teaching and the Tentative Teachings, see *Fa hua hsüan i*, 691a26 ff., in *ibid.*, p. 166; cf. also 693b26 ff., in *ibid.*, pp. 181–182.
- 19 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in *ibid.*, pp. 200–201.
- 20 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in *ibid.*, p. 256.
- 21 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in *ibid.*, p. 239. More specifically, the view that the conventional truth is real existence and that emptiness is the extinction of real existence is the first in a categorization of seven interpretations of the two truths, and this interpretation is later identified as that of the Tripiṭaka Teaching. See *ibid.*, p. 245.
- 22 – The distinction I employ here between representationalism and realism is indebted most directly to Richard Rorty, but my versions of these doctrines differ from his, and I do not mean to assert any strict similarity between Zhiyi's views and antirepresentationalism as articulated and defended by Rorty. In particular, antirepresentationalism for Rorty is not the rejection of the idea that language represents a reality that *exists independently*, in the sense I have described, but rather of the idea that language represents “any nonlinguistic items” at all (Rorty, “Introduction: Antirepresentationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Liberalism,” p. 2). One could be an antirepresentationalist in my sense, but not in Rorty's, and still accept that language and thought represent a reality that is in some sense dependent on the mind. My discussion of the distinction between realism and representationalism is also indebted to a related but slightly different distinction drawn by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord between cognitivism and realism. See his “Introduction: The Many Moral Realisms,” in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).
- 23 – *Fa hua hsüan i*, in Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, p. 180.
- 24 – It is true that Zhiyi does give one positive description of the first two truths, beyond merely stating the *svabhāva*-oriented Tripiṭaka interpretation of them and then rejecting it—namely, that each of them is identical to *pratīyasamutpāda*, dependent co-origination. But clearly this description just amounts to another way of denying the Tripiṭaka interpretation. After all, to assert the causal interdependence of all things is equivalent to denying that things exist independently, as *svabhāva*.
- 25 – See Takashi James Kodera, *Dōgen's Formative Years in China: An Historical Study and Annotated Translation of the Hōkyō-ki* (Boulder: Prajna Press, 1980), p. 25.

- 26 – *Bendō wa* (On the endeavor of the way), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 149.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 28 – *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 29 – *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- 30 – Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, p. 72 and 72 n.
- 31 – *Gakudō yōjin-shū* (Guidelines for studying the way), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 32.
- 32 – *Bendō wa*, in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 155. For Zhiyi's account of śamatha-vipaśyanā, see Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, pp. 79–80.
- 33 – *Genjō kōan*, in *ibid.*, p. 69.
- 34 – “Shōbōgenzō Genjokōan,” trans. and introduction by Norman Wadell and Abe Masao, *Eastern Buddhist* 5 (2) (October 1972): 131–32.
- 35 – In his highly illuminating survey of recent Japanese and English translations of and commentaries on the opening passage of the *Genjokōan*, Steven Heine concurs with this interpretation of the first three lines of the passage as expressing the Tendai doctrine of the three truths. See “Multiple Dimensions of Impermanence in Dōgen's ‘Genjokōan,’” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2) (Spring 1982): 42–62. My reading of this passage is also indebted to the interpretation of Dōgen given by Gudo Wafu Nishijima, in *Three Philosophies and One Reality* (Tokyo: Windbell Publications, 1987), pp. 2–7. A not dissimilar interpretation of the import of these lines, though not of their indebtedness to Zhiyi, is offered by Tanahashi in *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 17.
- 36 – *Shōji*, in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, pp. 74–75.
- 37 – *Fukan zazengi*, in the translation of Francis Dojun Cook, *How to Raise an Ox: Zen Practice as Taught in Zen Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō, Including Ten Newly Translated Essays* (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978), p. 97.
- 38 – *Bendō wa*, in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 148.
- 39 – *Tenzo kyōkun* (Instructions for the Tenzo), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 61.
- 40 – For an account of Dōgen's view of kōan language that emphasizes this point, see, for instance, Hee-jin Kim, “‘The Reason of Words and Letters,’” in William R. LaFleur, ed., *Dōgen Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985).
- 41 – *Sansui-kyō* (Mountains and waters sūtra), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 100.

- 42 – *Yuibutsu yobutsu* (Only Buddha and Buddha), in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, pp. 163–164.
- 43 – Quoted in Kim, “The Reason of Words and Letters,” p. 58.
- 44 – See especially the *Shōbōgenzō*, *Dōtoku* fascicle.
- 45 – That the entire universe constitutes the sūtras and is to be studied accordingly is a theme of a number of fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō*, notably *Keisei sanshoku* (The sounds of the valley streams, the Forms of the mountains). So, too, Dōgen writes, in *Nyorai zenshin*: “All-things-themselves-are-ultimate-reality here and now constitutes the sūtras” (quoted in Kim, *Dōgen Kigen—Mystical Realist*, p. 98).
- 46 – So Zhiyi writes: “It is necessary to say ‘no-truth’ for the sake of those who have not fulfilled attainment, and in their attachments give rise to delusion. For those who have real attainment, there is [a positive truth]; for those [lost] in vain speculation, there is none” (*Fa hua hsüan i*, in Swanson, *Foundations of T’ien-t’ai Philosophy*, p. 256).
- 47 – *Sansui-kyō*, in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 99.
- 48 – See Heine, “Multiple Dimensions of Impermanence in Dōgen’s ‘Genjokōan.’”