

# An Analysis of Dōgen's "Casting Off Body and Mind"

Shigenori Nagatomo

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

IN THIS ARTICLE, I shall offer a philosophical analysis of Dōgen's experience of "casting off the body and the mind" (*shinjin totsuraku*) by examining an experience of "just sitting" (*shikan taza*) with a primary emphasis upon its epistemological aspect. In this examination, my concern is not of articulating a particular event of Dōgen's experience, but rather its general meaning.

The linguistic expression, "*shinjin totsuraku*," is expressive of an event that is marked off from the everyday event. It was, therefore, an extraordinary experience for Dōgen. Philosophically, this may be taken to mean that there are transformations, in the process of "just sitting," from a *provisionally dualistic* tendency which characterizes the everyday mode of existence to a non-dualistic stance which is achieved in Dōgen's experience of "casting off the body and the mind."<sup>1</sup> It follows from this that what is cast off is the functions of the body and the mind operative in the everyday body-image. While interpreting the experience of "casting off the body and the mind" in this manner, I shall advance a thesis that the judgement operative in, and generative of, this experience may be characterized as "attunement" in which the act aspect of this judgement is *somatic* in character in contrast to the intellectual judgement in which the act aspect of the judgement is *cogito* allegedly divorced from the body. This will be examined in light of the experience of "felt inter-resonance" (*kannō dōkō*).

## 1.2 TRANSFORMATION OF SYNTHETIC FUNCTION

Although, generally speaking, there are a number of individual variations of what triggers an occasion for satori, there is agreement that it must be experienced as a relaxed, perhaps even ecstatic, period "after the extreme tension."<sup>2</sup> In Dōgen's case, we are told that the release came upon *hearing* the words spoken by Nyojō. This kind of altered response to stimulus in reaching satori is not unusual.

<sup>1</sup>YUASA Yasuo, "Contemporary Science and An Eastern Mind-Body Theory," delivered at The Joint Japanese-French International Conference held at the University of Tsukuba, Japan, in November, 1984.

<sup>2</sup>TAZATO Yakumu, *Shidōsha o Kitaeru Dōgen Zen no Kenkyū*, (Kyoto: PHP Kenkyujo, 1983).

We know from the Zen tradition, for example, that Kyōgen Shikan had a great satori upon hearing a stone hitting bamboo. Under normal circumstances, however, without a prolonged period of sitting via a process of sedimentation, this kind of event cannot be an occasion which triggers a satori. Among other things, this suggests that the meditator's readiness to activate auditory perception is unusually heightened at a time immediately prior to satori experience. Of the five sensory organs, the ears are more open to the external world in a deepened sitting than the remaining senses, and hence are most susceptible to stimulation. The manner of responding to sounds coming from the external world, however, is set off from a direct reaction to the sounds, since the meditator is in the deep state of "non-thinking" (*hishiryō*), which I interpret to be a *somatic* negation in the sense that the body's readiness to respond to external stimuli is arrested through the process of sedimentation. In the meditator's initial phase of "non-thinking," he receives the sounds via auditory perception, but he *is not moved* to respond to them. As he advances deeper into the mode of "non-thinking," however, the sounds he hears could occasion the breaking of the barrier between hearing sounds and sounds that are heard. Alternatively, this might be expressed as follows: the auditory affectivity in its readiness for operation is initially brought to zero in an advanced stage of "non-thinking," but the suppressed affectivity bursts into full operation upon being triggered. At such time, the meditator *feels* that there is no difference between hearing the sounds and the sounds that are heard. That is, he achieves a oneness with them. We may consider this a practical consequence of what Dōgen calls "transforming the body upon turning the brain" (*yakushin kainō*).

This does not mean, however, that among the five sensory perceptions, only the auditory perception is accentuated, although it would seem that it functioned to occasion satori in Dōgen's case. For example, Reiun is said to have had a satori upon *seeing* the blossoming of a peach tree,<sup>3</sup> which suggests a heightened visual perception. Generally speaking, however, it would be reasonable to assume that the synthetic center for all five sensory perceptions is brought to a heightened affective mode—the "synthetic center" which Aristotle calls the organ of "common sense" (*sensus communis*), and which he regarded as common to all sensory perceptions.<sup>4</sup> In order to substantiate the contention that the synthetic function for all of the five sensory perceptions is *heightened* in samadhic awareness via its affective mode, we shall now examine Dōgen's analysis of the confirmatory experience of Dōzan, the first patriarch of the Sōtō line.

Referring to Dōzan's confirmatory experience, an experience in which he is said to have attained satori by "hearing the voice with the eyes," Dōgen writes:<sup>5</sup>

In studying the first patriarch's expression of "hearing the voices with the eyes," the eye is the organ [through which] the voices of insentient beings preaching dharmas are heard. The eye is the presencing voices of the insentient beings preaching dharmas. You ought to study your eyes extensively. Because *hearing* the voice with the eyes is the same as hearing the voice with the ears, they are yet different. You should not

<sup>3</sup>"*Keisei Sanshoku*," in *Dōgen*, ed. TERADA Tōru, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), p. 292. Hereafter, abbreviated as *Dōgen*.

<sup>4</sup>See Aristotle's *De Somno et Vigilia*, Chap. 2, 455a–22, and *De Anima*, 431a 20–431b.

<sup>5</sup>"*Mujō Seppō*," in *Dōgen*, vol. 2, p. 69.

understand that there is the organ of the ears in the eyes, nor should you understand the eyes and the ears stand in the relation of interchangeability, nor should you understand the voice presences in the midst of the eyes (emphasis added).

Ordinarily, our ear is the auditory organ, but what Dōgen claims in this passage is that one can also hear with the eyes! Many are tempted to dismiss the latter as Zen nonsense, for most of us have not heard of, let alone witnessed, such a seemingly confused experience, and, therefore, would regard it as an improper use of the language, a semantic confusion, or at best an attempt to be metaphorical. I, however, interpret it to be an instance of synesthesia, in which there is indeed a "confusion," and an exchange of sensory faculties.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, it is a "confusion" insofar as we take the five sensory faculties to have their own fixed, and determinately assigned functions without potentially interacting with each other. According to Dōgen, this notion of exclusive function arises because ordinary people "have not clarified on their own the extreme limit of [their] body and mind."<sup>7</sup> What the above quotation implies is that the five sensory faculties do not have fixed and determined functions; but rather these functions can be modified or interchanged. Hence, this allows flexibility in such a way that sensory perceptions can be interacting among the functions of sensory perception, when the body and the mind are brought to "the extreme limit" in the practice of just sitting. If this does indeed take place, "confusion" is an inappropriate word to describe the synesthesia which is said to have occurred, for example, in Dōzan's experience of satori.

This special use of synesthesia to describe an experience of satori will become clear when we recognize that the perception of the eye can be different from, and yet be the same as, that of the ear. Dōgen demonstrates that he is not unaware of the difference in function between the eyes and the ears as they operate in our everyday existence, when he states: "Since hearing the voice with the eyes is the same as hearing the voice with the ears, they are yet *different*" (emphasis added). What is affirmed as the "same" must be the somatic act of hearing in samadhi awareness, where "somatic act," in sharp contrast with *cogito* as act, indicates the whole involvement of a person, while the "difference" must mean the individual function of each sensory organ. Since, however, Dōgen does not elaborate on the "mechanism" of synesthesia, we may derive, instead, its philosophical meaning by way of Aristotle's concept of *sensus communis*, as a way of approaching an understanding of Dōgen's experience of "casting off the body and the mind."

As Aristotle points out in his discussion of *sensus communis*, there is a synthetic function *common* to all five sensory organs. This synthetic function, in normal and natural circumstances, must serve as a guide to direct a stimulus to a specified sensory organ, which implies that there must be an individual circuit unique to a specific sensory organ. (Indeed, this function of directing is part of the larger function of what is referred to as the empirical ego which forms a *center* for our perceptual, everyday consciousness.) In light of this, it would appear that the circuits for the eyes and the ears, for example, are separate in normal, and natural

<sup>6</sup>See, for instance, Lawrence E. Marks' "On Colored-Hearing Synesthesia: Cross-Modal Translations of Sensory Dimension," in the *Psychological Bulletin* (May, 1975), pp. 303-27.

<sup>7</sup>"*Mujō Seppo*," in *Dōgen*, vol. 2, p. 67.

circumstances, and this prevents an auditory perception from entering into the circuit of visual perception, and vice versa. This must be the case with respect to all of the five sensory perceptions. If in fact it were otherwise, there would be "confusion." These individual circuits, in my understanding, account for the meaning of the difference between the eyes and the ears. But in Dōzan's case, in the case of synesthesia induced in samadhic consciousness, the separation of the circuits must break down, allowing him to establish an interaction between otherwise closed circuits, or to create a link between them. Perhaps more accurately, by breaking down the circuits which normally separate the two sensory perceptions, a new circuit via a harmonization of all sensory perceptions is created which allows interaction between the closed, separate circuits of all of the five sensory perceptions. When this harmonization is actually lived, the meditator feels that his everyday sensory, *somatic* self is indeed "cast off." The term which Dōgen uses to describe this lived experience is no-body (*mushin*), meaning that there is no lived feeling of one's own object-body which is opposed to the mind, where the "object-body" is that body which we objectify through our senses.

The preceding analysis of Dōzan's confirmatory experience via synesthesia should *not* suggest that every case of confirmatory experience of satori is obtained via synesthesia. The value of this type of analysis, however, lies in leading us to a general analysis of the *act* aspect of the synthetic function. Consequently, we must take the position that the act aspect of synthetic function is more significant than an analysis of the alteration of sensory circuits. We can, for example, imagine that the creation of a new circuit via the harmonization of all sensory organs would affect the manner in which synthesis functions, when, for example, it is a synthesis of judging the sounds as sounds. Insofar as the sounds are identified as sounds regardless of which sensory organ is employed, the power of recognizing the external stimuli (i.e., the synthetic function), in general, must not be impaired, while at the same time, the mode or manner employed in recognizing these external stimuli must be transformed.

What, then, is the mode of synthesis operative at the moment when "casting off the body and the mind" occurs? It is worth while to point out that the *manner* of recognizing an external stimulus must be radically different from the one operative in a normal, natural situation. Most importantly, what distinguishes this type of perception from everyday, normal perception is the degree of *affectivity*. In the extraordinary experience of "casting off the body and mind," the synthetic function is charged with a power much stronger than the normal, everyday power in creating a new circuit which harmonizes all sensory perceptions, since the power which would otherwise be used in the activation of the sensory organs is reserved via a process of sedimentation. This infusion of power occurs partly because the activation of perceptual consciousness is lowered in samadhic awareness, and hence the power of synthesis is also weakened prior to the experience in question, without, however, losing its synthetic function. If the power of synthesis is unfortunately lost, pathological phenomena (e.g., Zen sickness) would be experienced. Because of this contingency, the practice of "just sitting" has its threatening side.

The power of synthetic function which we have been discussing is *a form of judgement*. Consider the following simple, everyday example. Upon seeing a

