

THE ROLE OF COMPASSION IN ACTUALIZING DŌGEN'S ZEN

George Wrisley
The University of North Georgia

Introduction

The thirteen-century Japanese Zen Master Dōgen is renowned as a towering religious *and* philosophical figure. After returning from China in 1227, with four years pursuing the authentic Buddha Dharma, he founded the Sōtō Zen school of Buddhism. The other main school of Zen in Japan, Rinzai, is often compared with Dōgen's, as Rinzai, unlike the latter, is often understood to view kōans as an essential means to unlocking experiential insight in the context of meditation.¹ In contrast, Dōgen is usually understood to insist on *shikantaza*, or “just sitting,” an activity of radical presence to, and letting go of, whatever may arise. In the context of this controversy regarding *zazen* (seated meditation), the emphasis is on how best to unlock the *experiential* realization of enlightenment, where a central aspect of such experience is the apprehension of *sunyata* (emptiness).²

As important as these issues are, there is much more to Dōgen's conception of Zen practice, and much more that is of interest to Western thought. In particular, by turning our focus from *zazen* to compassionate activity (on and off the cushion), we can turn away from a one-sided focus on experience and to a more multifaceted and comprehensive account of Zen practice, one that has activity – *doing* – at its center. This is particularly important as a corrective to the emphasis on experience in understanding Dōgen's Zen, but also because it provides an interesting perspective of how profound emptiness is in the way it transforms everything, including such common “items” as compassion.

Comparisons of Western and Japanese ideas and concepts may bear fruit because of the starkness of the contrast – for example, the wabi-sabi aesthetic with a Western one focused “simply” on beauty – but it may also

¹ For an excellent discussion of Dōgen and the kōan tradition, see Steven Heine, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

² The nature of *zazen* can be seen to go beyond “mere” seated meditation. That is, everyday activity can become *zazen*, so long as this is not understood as negating the need to practice seated meditation of *shikantaza*.

bear fruit by way of challenging us to reconsider our understanding of our own concepts and practices. I believe this latter is the case with compassion, as we will see in what follows, when we apply Dōgen's understanding of Zen and, more specifically, emptiness, to it.

The central question this analysis attempts to answer is: What exactly is the role of compassion in the experience of one practicing Dōgen's Zen, especially given the usual emphasis of *zazen* and *shikantaza* in discussions of Dōgen's thought? As the question concerns experience, one of the main contentions of this study – and contrary to much of what has been written in the twentieth century about Zen, both in Japan and out – is that Dōgen's Zen is not primarily concerned with cultivating the *experience* of enlightenment, but rather, the *enactment* and *realization of enlightenment* through bodily activities (ones, of course, accompanied by focused attention/intention). One of the most central is *zazen*, but the other, upon which we will focus, is compassion. Compassion and *prajna*, or “wisdom beyond wisdom,” are the dual aspects of the heart of the bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism – in Dōgen's Zen. In answer to the central question above, I will argue that the Middle Way of Dōgen's Zen is the *expression* of the *two* sides of reality, form, and emptiness, through the *single* activity of embodied compassion. Thus, the first part of this study will focus extensively on reconstructing, in Western philosophical terms, Dōgen's views of emptiness and how his Zen is not a matter of lingering in emptiness, but, as Nishiari Bokusan comments, “There is a point in which you jump off both form and emptiness, and do not abide there.”³ This “jumping off” is enacted, at least in part, through compassionate activity, or so I will argue, in the last part of this analysis.

Emotion and Religious Experience

As a Western scholar, two of the most significant issues regarding emotion and religious experience would seem to be the: (1) “Does religious experience provide evidence for religious belief?”⁴ or rather, does emotional

³ Nishiari Bokusan, “Commentary on Dogen's Genjo Koan,” in Sojun Mel Weitsman and Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., *Dogen's Genjo Koan: Three Commentaries* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2011), 33.

⁴ According to Keith E. Yandell, this is “[t]he basic question this book tries to answer.” See Yandell, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.

experience provide access to religious truth?; and (2) given the often assumed non/ir-rationality of emotion, what is the relationship between emotion and rationality (including the rational justification) of religious belief? However, approaching Dōgen's Zen and the role of compassion in it, with these questions as central, is problematic. Regarding the first issue, while we might interpret such practices as *zazen* and compassionate activity as means of epistemic access to the truths of Buddhist doctrine, Dōgen vehemently rejects an understanding of these Buddhist practices in means-ends terms. This discussion, then, explains how enlightenment is not the consequence of protracted practice; instead, practice *is* realization: "Know that buddhas in the buddha way do not wait for awakening."⁵ As for the second issue, for instance, Dōgen indeed seems to affirm that, "When emotions arise, wisdom [*prajna*] is pushed aside,"⁶ and elsewhere he warns against our emotions being unmanageable, running away like monkeys swinging through the trees.⁷ Nevertheless, these warnings are not, and in fact, cannot be a part of a wholesale rejection of emotions as either non/ir-rational or as impediments to enlightenment. As for the latter, this is because compassion, as a complex emotion, is so essential to the bodhisattva ideal.

Regarding the non/ir-rationality of emotion, we must be clear about the differences between the Japanese and English/European languages. While in English we might naturally associate reason with the mind and emotion with the heart, this is not so clearly the case in Japanese. The Japanese character found in Dōgen's Zen that tends to get translated as "mind" is *shin* 心 – for example, in his phrase, *shinjindatsuraku* 身心脱落 "dropping away of body and mind."⁸ However, 心 can also be translated as "heart" (and read as *kokoro* instead of *shin*), but, as Thomas P. Kasulis notes, it is often translated as "heart and mind" because of the complexities of the character's possible meanings and associations. According to Kasulis, 心 can

⁵ Refer to Dōgen's fascicle, "Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" in Kazuaki Tanahashi 棚橋一晃, ed. and trans., *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo* (Boston: Shambhala, 2012), 260.

⁶ See "One Bright Pearl" fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 36.

⁷ Kōshō Uchiyama, *How to Cook Your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, trans. Thomas Wright (Boston: Shambhala, 2005), 7.

⁸ Found in various places in Dōgen's work, but a common example is in "Genjōkōan." See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 30.

be seen as denying the usual Western dichotomies of reason and emotion and body and mind. Speaking of kokoro 心 in the context of Shinto, Kasulis writes:

If one has to try to find a single English translation, the “mindful heart” might be a bit closer to the mark – especially if we remember that the mindful heart is not separate from the body. Because the mindful heart is an interdependent complex of responsiveness, *kokoro* can never be just a blind emotion.⁹

In broad agreement with what Kasulis writes, Roger Ames and David Hall also comment on 心 in the context of the Chinese *Daodejing*.¹⁰ In particular, they emphasize the inseparability of mind and heart, and, thus, too, reason and feeling, in the classical Daoist worldview.¹¹ While there is some distance between the *Daodejing* and Dōgen, it still an integral part of the cultural and philosophical history that helped shape Dōgen’s own philosophical and literary context; and, as we see with Kasulis, this broadly conceived inseparability between the cognitive and affective is alive in the Japanese understanding of 心 as well. So, we do not have a clear distinction seemingly found in Plato, for example, between the rational and affective parts of the “soul.” Nor do we have what motivates Robert C. Solomon, for example, so centrally as in *The Passions*, the notion that the underlying theme of Western philosophy is, “The wisdom of reason against the treachery and temptations of the passions.”¹²

A further complication concerns the status of compassion *qua* emotion. As Ronald de Sousa notes, compassion, like love and benevolence,

⁹ Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁰ The Japanese language consists in part in a syllabic writing system (*kana*) together with characters borrowed from the Chinese (*kanji*).

¹¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 26.

¹² Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 11.

are names of *both* virtues and emotions.¹³ It is this dual aspect that makes compassion so interesting and useful to consider in the context of Dōgen's Zen. As we were with the Japanese 心, we must be careful not to uncritically regard the Japanese *jihī* 慈悲, which is translated as "compassion" in Dōgen's writings, as synonymous in every respect with the English "compassion." However, given what is said about the bodhisattva in Dōgen's writings, *jihī* 慈悲 does seem to fit well with Lawrence Blum's helpful and thorough analysis of the English "compassion." Blum writes of the complexity of compassion as not simply a feeling but an emotional attitude that attempts to inhabit the position of the other imaginatively.¹⁴ Most importantly, he notes that "Characteristically...compassion requires the disposition to perform beneficent actions, and to perform them because the agent has had a certain sort of imaginative reconstruction of someone's condition and has a concern for his good."¹⁵ As we will explore, this is vital to the activities of the bodhisattva, yet, what this comes to will be reconfigured in the context of Dōgen's understanding of emptiness.¹⁶

Dōgen, Non-Duality, and Expressing Two Sides of Reality

Before we can understand the way compassion enacts and goes beyond the non-dual duality of self and world, we must understand something of Dōgen's views on non-duality more generally – views well-characterized by the expression, "Not one, not two; not the same, not different." To

¹³ Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014), ed. Edward N. Zalta (accessed May 25, 2020, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/emotion/>), section 10.

¹⁴ Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 509. For further important discussions of compassion see Solomon, *The Passions*, 207, 280–284; and Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); For a discussion of Nussbaum's analysis of compassion, see Jeremiah Conway, "A Buddhist Critique of Nussbaum's Account of Compassion" *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8/1 (2001), 7–12.

¹⁵ Blum, "Compassion," 513.

¹⁶ Instead of "reconfigured," we might use the distinction between *deconstructive* and *reconstructive* aspects of Dōgen's understanding of emptiness. Refer to Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection on His View of Zen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), chapter 3.

understand what this comes to and the way it transforms compassion, we need to turn to Dōgen's understanding of emptiness. A thorough treatment of Dōgen's views on emptiness is, of course, not possible here; thus, we will strive to understand the broad strokes without attempting thereby to offer a defense or argument in favor or opposition of them.

Kazuaki Tanahashi notes that the *Heart Sutra* is "regarded as a brief condensation of the entire Mahayana teaching of *shunyata* (emptiness or boundlessness)."¹⁷ Perhaps most famous for its lines claiming that form is emptiness and emptiness is form, it specifies that all dharmas (things/phenomena) are empty. Grasping this emptiness through Buddhist practice is *prajna* or wisdom beyond wisdom. Manifesting *prajna* is the seeing/living beyond dualistic views of self and other, and other and other. This itself is enlightenment – the realization of the non-duality of all dharmas and, ultimately, the enactment and transcending of this non-duality.

Understanding enlightenment as the manifestation of *prajna*, *qua* emptiness, what exactly is emptiness for Dōgen? And how exactly does one manifest it? Lastly, how is it the manifestation of non-duality, and how does one enact and transcend this non-duality? To begin to answer these questions, let us look at what we should think of as the two main aspects of emptiness: (1) transitoriness of all dharmas/things; and (2) the interdependence of all things/dharmas through causal and conceptual/logical conditions.

Beginning with transitoriness: What is it that justifies our saying the (numerically) one and same person, Dōgen, was born in 1200 and died in 1253? In Hinduism, we might appeal to the idea of the *atman* – described, for example, in the *Bhagavad Gita* – as "imperishable and unchanging," perduring through the ever-changing conditions of the body-mind, and taking on new body-minds as we take on new clothes.¹⁸ Yet, Buddhism denies that very thing, i.e., some unchanging substance or essence, making a person self-same over time. As Dōgen writes in his revered fascicle, "Genjōkōan": "If you examine myriad things with a confused body and mind, you might suppose your mind and essence are permanent. When you practice intimately and return to where you are [the present moment, particularly in *zazen*], it

¹⁷ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, liv.

¹⁸ Stephen Mitchell, *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 48.

will be clear that nothing at all has an unchanging self.”¹⁹ We see here in Dōgen the usual Mahayana extension of the early Buddhist denial of an *atman* to everything else. None of the myriad things is self-identical over time. This is one key aspect of emptiness. Each moment is birth and death – the “self,” which consists of the five skandhas (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness), “is born and perishes moment by moment without ceasing.”²⁰

The other aspect of emptiness is the interdependent nature of everything, both diachronically and synchronically. Each moment (synchronically) is an interdependent whole that arises (diachronically) from past causes and conditions. This is one way of understanding the central Mahayana (Madhyamika-influenced), Zen notion of dependent origination. In Dōgen, we see it referred to in a variety of ways that show the causal and conceptual/logical interdependence of all dharmas/things. For example, in the “Mountain and Waters Sutra,” Dōgen points out that when the mountains give birth to a stone child at night, not only is a child born but so is a parent – the parent only being such in relation to the child. Thus, Dōgen says the parent becomes a child. As such, the parent and child are not separate in his view. This example, of course, is not merely about literal mothers and children but rather about how each moment gives birth to the next. “Parent” and “child” mutually condition one another in such a way that linear time as a succession of moments whose being is related to other moments but “self-contained” falls apart. *This* moment conditions the next but also is what it is in relation to what comes after.

We should note here further that Dōgen’s language often/usually functions on multiple levels. “Mountain” means mountain, but it also can mean nature and the state of meditation.²¹ Moreover, night often represents non-duality. So when Dōgen says that, “A stone woman gives birth to a child at night means that the moment when a barren woman gives birth to a child is called night” we can read him as saying, in part, that when the mother gives birth to the child thus being herself born as a mother, mother and child are not separate, they are non-dual. And the non-duality of mother and child here represents a kind of conceptual/logical inseparability as much as a causal one.

¹⁹ See “Actualizing the Fundamental Point” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 30. Interpolation added.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 803, “Virtue of Home Leaving” fascicle.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1072, “Glossary.”

This kind of relationship manifests throughout the world and is seen in the relationship between past and present Buddhas (enlightened beings), nature and the person, the mountains, and the person, but ultimately between the “individual” and her world. In a particularly pregnant passage in the fascicle “Total Dynamism,” Dōgen writes:

Reflect quietly: As for this present birth and all the dharmas that arise in conjunction with it, should we or should we not construe the dharmas as one with birth? There is not a moment or a dharma that is not one with birth; nor is there an event or a mind that is not one with birth.²²

Birth is just this ever-present moment in which all things inseparably arise together. Remember that birth here can mean one’s literal birth but also the moment to moment birth that each *dharma* undergoes, i.e. life. We can gain some further understanding of what Dōgen from this same fascicle:

Birth is like a person riding in a boat. Although the person prepares the sails, steers the course, and poles the boat along, it is the boat which carries him/her, and without which s/he cannot ride. By riding in a boat, s/he makes this boat a boat.²³

The point here is not (simply) that an artifact is a boat instead of a shelter because of how it is used. Rather, we see Dōgen expressing the mutual dependence between a person and “her” world. Without the world of objects and persons, etc., I could not have a life. But it is in relation to me and my activities that the world is what it is (causally, conceptually/logically, perspectively). Yet again, in “Total Dynamism,” Dōgen continues:

By riding in a boat, one makes this boat a boat. We must consider this moment. At such a moment, there is nothing

²² See “Total Dynamism” fascicle in Hee-Jim Kim, trans., *Flowers of Emptiness: Selections from Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 242–243.

²³ Ibid.

but the boat's world. The heavens, the water, and the shore all become the boat's time, which is never the same as the time that is not the boat. By the same token, birth is what I give birth to, and I am what birth makes me. When one rides in a boat, one's body-mind and the dependent and proper rewards of karma are altogether the boat's dynamic working; the entire great earth and the entire empty sky are altogether the boat's dynamic working. Such is the I that is birth, the birth that is I.²⁴

The true self is not some unchanging, eternal *atman* perduring moment to moment, passed on body to body. The true self is "my" world of undivided, total, and dynamic activity, and I only realize it through practicing enlightenment, practicing emptiness, i.e., selflessness. But it is only "my" world given the particular perspective on it I have, given the positionality of my body, given my activities. Here we have a kind of breakdown of a clear distinction between realism and a solipsistic idealism. I make birth my birth through my activities in the world of "my boat," and this world is not the same as the world that is "not the boat's," with *this* sky and *this* water and *this* shore. However, at the same time, I must open up to the ways the world manifests and unfolds, not trying to control them, not taking my world as absolute.²⁵ What we have seen so far helps us to understand Dōgen's all-important formulation of enlightenment: "To carry the self forward and illuminate the myriad things is delusion. That myriads things come forth and illuminate the self is awakening."²⁶ The "self" of the first line is the small, egoistic self, which suffers the pains of old age, sickness, and death. The "self" in the second line is the true self that is the selfless unfolding of the world as it is in emptiness, i.e., arising only through the vast interdependent web of causes and conditions. One upshot is that where we may be tempted to ask: "Is this world of mine, mine alone, i.e., separate from your world seen from your perspective?" Here, the question breaks down, since, for Dōgen, an answer must go along these lines:

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cf. "Only a Buddha and a Buddha" fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 880.

²⁶ See "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" ("Genjōkōan") fascicle. Ibid., 29.

The entire great earth and the entire empty sky are all within birth and all within death. This does not mean, however, that one totally actualizes the entire great earth and the entire empty sky as a fixed entity in birth and death. Though not identical, they [the entire great earth and the entire empty sky] are not different; though not different, they are not one; though not one, they are not many.²⁷

At this point, Dōgen addresses the non-dual relationship between birth and death, and the great earth and the empty sky, and the same holds for the synchronic and diachronic relationships between self and other. My life on Dōgen's view, then, is everything I encounter, and all that I encounter (causally and conceptually/logically) conditions me, I (causally and conceptually/logically) condition it, and everything else conditions everything else in the same way. One "thing" I encounter is your life and the lives of others. All of this is non-dual in emptiness in the way we have seen above.

Most notably, in our understanding of the role of compassion in Dōgen's Zen, the nature of emptiness implies neither that "I" am nothing nor that nothing exists. I am a living, breathing, thinking, acting individual, different from other individuals; to deny this is to fall into the opposite danger of taking form as exclusive, namely, the impossible: emptiness-without-form.²⁸ Rather, it is "simply" that each dharma, myself and the entire world, constitute the total dynamism of reality – this non-dual situation which is my-our lives. Hence, unity and difference are both diachronic and synchronic. Synchronically, at any given moment, variable *m*, the world consists of discrete "things" (difference) that are simultaneously empty and, as such, form a non-dual whole (unity). Diachronically, a person, each "thing," consists of unique moments, *m*₁, *m*₂, *m*₃, *m*..._n, of birth and death (difference). Yet, they make up a diachronic whole, via causes and conditions, which is my life (unity). But we must be careful in understanding this diachronic, non-dual unity. It is not the unity of a temporal parts theory; that is, it is not that different, completely discrete parts at separate times "add" up to a person

²⁷ See "Total Dynamism" fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 243–244.

²⁸ Perhaps this is a kind of "living in the cave of demons on black mountain." See Norman Waddell and Masao Abe 阿部正雄, trans., *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 33, n. 7.

such that the whole person cannot be said to exist at any given *m*. If anything, Dōgen's view of time might be classified as a kind of presentism – only the present moment exists – but this must be understood in the context of emptiness.²⁹ This can be observed by briefly considering Dōgen's firewood analogy:

Firewood turns to ash; it cannot become firewood again. Still we should not regard ash as succeeding and firewood as preceding. Note that firewood abides in the dharma-situation of firewood and has preceding and succeeding; although there is before and after, it is cut off from before and after. Ash abides in the dharma-situation of ash and has succeeding and preceding. Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it has been turned to ash, human being [*sic*] does not return to birth after death.³⁰

Not returning to birth after death does not simply refer to what we ordinarily call bodily death at the end of a life, but rather the moment by moment birth and death we undergo. At the moment of firewood, we have discreteness, i.e., just firewood, but that discreteness simultaneously contains (causally, logically, conceptually) before, after, and all else. Before, as the conditions that gave rise to that moment. After, as what is conditioned (burned) firewood. All else, as the firewood is both diachronically and synchronically non-dual. Hence, Dōgen writes: “there are myriad forms and hundreds of grasses [all things] throughout the entire Earth, and yet each form

²⁹ As with emptiness, Dōgen's views on time cannot be done justice in this study. For more on this topic, see Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); Hee-Jim Kim, “Existence/Time as the Way of Ascesis: An Analysis of the Basic Structure of Dōgen's Thought,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 11/2 (1978), 43–73; Rein Raud, “The Existential Moment: Rereading Dōgen's Theory of Time,” *Philosophy East & West* 62/2 (2012), 153–173; and for important discussions of Dōgen's views on time, see Masao Abe, *A Study of Dōgen*, ed. Steven Heine (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

³⁰ See “The Realization-kōan” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 52.

of grass and each form itself is the entire Earth.”³¹ And, thus, contrary to temporal parts theory, regarding whether a whole person exists at any given *m*, we should appropriate Dōgen’s wording to express this non-duality of all moments synchronically and diachronically, i.e., each moment in relation to all other moments: “although not one, not different; although not different, not the same; although not the same, not many.”³² Thus, in this radical synchronic and diachronic non-duality, each moment is empty of substantial, independent existence, but nothing is lost.³³ And each moment contains all the rest.

We now turn to Shohaku Okumura, who emphasizes that in Zen, we are the intersection of equality (unity) and inequality (difference). In his commentary on “Genjōkōan,” he writes that the foundational position of Mahayana Buddhism and Zen is seeing the same reality from these two sides: sameness/difference, unity/separation, equality/inequality.³⁴ However, and pivotal to the argument of this analysis, he points out that for, “Dōgen... to see one reality from two sides is not enough; he said we should also *express* these two sides in one action.”³⁵ As Hee-Jin Kim writes, “to see, understand,

³¹ See Dōgen’s fascicle “The Time Being” in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 105. Interpolation added.

³² See “The Mind Itself is Buddha” fascicle. *Ibid.*, 45.

³³ See Dōgen’s explicit treatment of this in “The Time Being.” *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁴ Shohaku Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan: The Key to Dogen’s Shobogenzo* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 18. For a commentary on the various nondual dualities as *indeterminate* aspects of the world to be navigated see George Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva – Passionately Navigating Indeterminacy,” in Robert H. Scott and Gregory Moss, eds., *The Significance of Indeterminacy: Perspectives from Asian and Continental Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

³⁵ Note that these two sides, unity and difference, are often glossed in terms of ‘Two Truths,’ and in the Tendai the third of going beyond them is referred to as “the third truth,” Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 133. The ultimate truth is that things are empty; conventional truth is the illusory claim of self-same, independently existing things perduring. See chapter 9 in Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007) for a helpful yet flawed discussion of the Two Truths. As concerns Dōgen, I follow Kim who sees the two aspects of “conventional truth/reality, i.e., delusion” and “ultimate truth/reality, i.e., enlightenment”

and express buddha-nature [is] tantamount to acting out buddha-nature.”³⁶ Moreover, as Taigen Dan Leighton comments in the introduction to his and Okumura's translation of Dōgen's other main work, *Eihei Kōroku*, “For Dōgen, Buddha nature is not an object to merely see or acquire, but a mode of being that must be actually lived and expressed.”³⁷ In the next section, I argue that the practical way to do this in Dōgen's Zen (in Buddhism) is properly understood through compassion.³⁸

Enlightenment as Activity

There are myriad ways by which Dōgen refers to the “state” of enlightenment: “dropping off the body-mind of the self as well as the body-mind of the other”³⁹ is one of them; realizing the earth as one's true human body is another.⁴⁰ For a variety of reasons, there seems to be some confusion about what this “state” of enlightenment is. Dōgen is (in a sense) quite clear: “Just understand that birth-and-death [living] itself is nirvana, and you will neither hate one as being birth-and-death, nor cherish the other as being

not as ontological opposites, contraries, nor the conventional as a stepping stone to the ultimate, but rather as foci or perspectives on the world of birth and death. See Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, 4.

³⁶ Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 137.

³⁷ Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, ed. and trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 30. See also Taigen Dan Leighton, “Zazen as an Enactment Ritual,” in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2008), 167–184.

³⁸ In correspondence, Eido Frances Carney has expressed concern about an overly *Americanized* compassion, where to be compassionate is first and foremost to be nice, to make people feel good. Whereas, she suggests, and I agree, that compassion must be more in line with Nietzsche's idea of it. That is, we must be willing to help not simply by being nice but by being honest and sometimes allowing pain to be there, if it is productive. See Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva,” 321ff.

³⁹ See “The Realization-kōan” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 52.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Dōgen's fascicle on “Shinjingakudō.”

nirvana. Only then can you be free of birth-and-death.”⁴¹ This human life, moment to moment, wherever, whenever we are, whatever we are doing is nirvana. We are free of birth and death, free of suffering, old age, sickness, and death, when we leap clear of the one and many in the context of everyday tea and rice. From this and from what we have seen so far, I hope it has become clearer how we can, and should, understand enlightenment, this “leaping clear,” as something other than simply a mental state. Instead, I suggest we think of it as more akin to Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*, i.e., a lifelong activity, one that clearly concerns and incorporates various “mental states.” However, enlightenment, particularly in the context of Zen, is often taken to be some “rarified” mental state. Kim is helpful in clarifying the difference in the conception of Zen as the attainment of a mental state versus a practice-oriented life:

often unjustifiably welded into the notion of non-duality has been the most prevalent conception of Zen – largely attributed to D.T. Suzuki – that the essence of Zen consists in the unmediated enlightenment experience (or state of consciousness), totally untainted by ideational and valuational mediations as well as by historical and social conditions. The pure experience (or pure consciousness) – sui generis, ineffable and ahistorical – is as such the universal experiential core from which all religions originate and to which they all return. This is the Zen version of *philosophia perennis*, with added Zen and Japanese flavors. Such a Zen, as I see it, is not Dōgen’s, because nonduality in this view is thoroughly metaphysicized, rarified, and disembodied so much so that it is ineffective, and ineffectual from the standpoint of practice.⁴²

D.T. Suzuki is in the Rinzai school of Japanese Zen, which often emphasizes *kōan* study as a means to achieve *kenshō*, i.e., “seeing the nature” of self/reality, often understood to be a kind of momentary glimpse of enlightenment experience. Okumura comments:

⁴¹ See “Birth and Death” fascicle in Waddell and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, 106. Interpolation added.

⁴² Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, 35.

The term [*kenshō*] appears many times, for example, in the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng. Dōgen, however, did not like this word. In *Shōbōgenzō* [*sic*] *Shizenbiku* (The Bhikshu in the Fourth Dhyana) he writes:

The essence of the Buddha Dharma is never seeing the nature [*kenshō*]. Which of the twenty-eight ancestors of India and the seven buddhas [in the past] said that the Buddha Dharma is simply seeing the nature? Although the term seeing the nature [*kenshō*] appears in the Platform Sutra, that text is a forgery. It is not the writing of a person who received the transmission of the Dharma Treasury.⁴³

We should note that the line from Dōgen here reads that Buddha Dharma is not “*simply* seeing the nature,” where the ‘*simply*’ seems to indicate that while seeing into the nature of things is important, it is not the only thing of importance, nor is it the essence of practice or the essential thing to practice-realization.

Robert H. Sharf does an excellent job discussing the problems with, and lack of justification for, seeing Buddhism and Zen as essentially the cultivation of a (pure) state of consciousness. In reference to the seemingly all-important terms *satori* and *kenshō*, he notes that:

In traditional Chinese Buddhist literature, such terms are used to denote the full comprehension and appreciation of central Buddhist tenets such as emptiness, Buddha-nature, or dependent-origination. There are simply no a priori grounds for conceiving such statements of insight in phenomenological terms.⁴⁴

⁴³ Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 116. Regarding Dōgen’s claim that the Platform Sutra is forgery, it is noted that, “We can safely conjecture that Dōgen must have read an unknown Sung edition of this work that might have been highly idealistically oriented (as compared with the Tunhuang text, which Dōgen was unfamiliar with) ... Be that as it may, Dōgen, [was] an ardent admirer of Hui-nêng.” Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 56.

⁴⁴ Robert H. Sharf, “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience,” *Numen* 42/3 (1995), 249.

Perhaps we should say, not in purely phenomenological terms, for we need not deny a phenomenological aspect outright. While these issues cannot be fully addressed here, it is vital to emphasize the non-phenomenological aspects of enlightenment. First, because as Kim points out, Suzuki emphasizes the essence of Zen as an unmediated, pure, perennial experience, and as Sharf points out: “This approach to Zen exegesis has since been adopted by a number of Japanese intellectuals, including two who have been particularly active in Buddhist-Christian dialogue: Nishitani Keiji and Abe Masao.”⁴⁵ And we should note, too, that Suzuki was one of the most prolific and influential popularizers of Zen in the West.

None of this is to deny the importance of concentration and mindfulness in either Buddhism or Dōgen’s Zen. Nor is it to deny that insight may well occur on the cushion, insight that is vital to realizing the depth of the Dharma. However, concentration and attentiveness – even states of absorption – practiced in meditation, and in daily life, are not pure or bodily practice (engagement with the world).⁴⁶ Moreover, they are simply one more thing to let go of and not be attached to. Kōshō Uchiyama explains: “Whether fantasies arise one after another or whether you sit there with a perfectly clean slate, let go of either one. Seeing both, illusions and realizations, with the same eye is what is critical here.”⁴⁷ “Enlightened” experiences, however insightful, cannot be privileged over other less pleasant ones, where, on pain of failure of achieving those states, one suffers, for that privileging would simply conduce to suffering itself. Privileging the activity of letting go, on the other hand, is different from privileging an experience since we can (correctly) say that if you fail to let go, that will conduce to suffering; that holds for letting go itself – one has to let go of letting go – and practice is letting go, all the way down. Yet this letting go is not value-free, so to speak.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁶ See Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections: Buddhism and the Cultivation of Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 4; and Dale S. Wright, *What is Buddhist Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 8. For more on the question of unmediated experience, refer to Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, chapter 3–4; and Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Kōshō Uchiyama, *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom: Three Fascicles from Shōbōgenzō with Commentaries*, trans. Daitsū Tom Wright and Shōhaku Okumura (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 124.

Rather, it is attentive, *compassionate* activity marked by this radical letting go, in the moment to moment free fall of emptiness, that is the expression of both sides of reality through a single action, thereby jumping off of form and emptiness, and enacting enlightenment.

Compassion as the Heart of the Bodhisattva Ideal

In considering the importance of compassion for Dōgen's Zen, it is not my aim to offer a theory or definition of emotion. One of my objectives is to argue that compassion, as an emotion, goes well beyond a feeling or attitude in that it is fully embodied in the practice of the bodhisattva. Further, in the context of Dōgen's Zen, specifically his understanding of emptiness, the dichotomy of mind/heart/feeling and body, break down.

Dōgen does not have any particular fascicle, or formal or informal talk, that focuses solely on compassion, so we must piece together his views on compassion from those writings which speak to it either explicitly or implicitly. Let us begin with the following:

There is an extremely easy way to become Buddha. If you refrain from all evil, do not cling to birth-and-death; work in deep compassion for all sentient beings, respecting those over you and showing compassion for those below you, without any detesting or desiring, worrying or lamentation – that is Buddhahood. Do not search beyond it.⁴⁸

We see from this short passage that compassion is central to becoming a Buddha. This is not surprising given that Dōgen is writing in the Mahayana tradition, which has as its ideal the bodhisattva. We might well say that the essence of the bodhisattva is given by the bodhisattva's vow. One version of which is:

Beings are numberless; I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them.
The Buddha way is unsurpassable; I vow to realize it.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See "Birth and Death" fascicle in Waddell and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 107.

⁴⁹ Shohaku Okumura, *Living by Vow: A Practical Introduction to Eight Essential Zen Chants and Texts*, ed. Dave Ellison (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 257, n. 7.

According to Kim, “These vows are recited, reflected upon, and meditated on, by monastics, day and night, to such an extent that the lives of monastics are, in essence, the embodiment of vows.”⁵⁰ In Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva takes the world of the other as their body, as they are said to take their vow so seriously that they delay parinirvāna, returning birth after birth to help free sentient beings from suffering. As Kim further notes, there is usually a distinction made between bodhisattvas and Buddhas; however, while Dōgen seems to write in agreement with this view, he ultimately rejects it.⁵¹ Quoting Kim’s translation:

All bodhisattvas are all Buddhas. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are not different types of beings...this bodhisattva and that bodhisattva are not two beings, nor are they distinguished by the self and other, or by the past, present, and future...At the time of the initial desire for enlightenment, one becomes a Buddha...and at the final stage of Buddhahood one [still] becomes a Buddha...The assertion that after becoming a Buddha, one should discontinue spiritual discipline and engage in no further endeavor, is due to an ordinary person’s view that does not yet understand the way of Buddhas and ancestors.⁵²

We see here, again, Dōgen’s identification of practice and enlightenment, as well as the important point that enlightenment is not some final goal or state of mind/being that once achieved requires no further practice. Indeed, Dōgen admonishes us to “go beyond Buddha” in the fascicle, “Going Beyond Buddha,” and references it in his “Genjōkōan”: “there are those who continue realizing beyond realization.”⁵³ Dōgen’s identification of the bodhisattva path with that of being a Buddha is important for our understanding of the role of compassion in his Zen.

There are at least two senses of the bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism, including Dōgen’s, of course. There is the bodhisattva as a model

⁵⁰ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 204.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 204–205.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See “Manifestation of Great Prajna” fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 28.

of practice, one that specifies its end, i.e., the pursuit of liberation for all, but there is also the bodhisattva as an “object of faith and devotion.”⁵⁴ Dōgen venerates the mythical bodhisattva of great compassion, Avalokiteshvara,⁵⁵ who, with her thousand arms with an eye in each palm, is:

“One who perceives the cries of the world,”...This bodhisattva is regarded as the parent of all buddhas. Do not assume that this bodhisattva has not mastered the way as much as buddhas. In fact, Avalokiteshvara was True Dharma Illumination Tathagata in a previous life.⁵⁶

The vast multitude of arms/hands and eyes symbolize Avalokiteshvara's ability and desire to extend “infinite compassion” to all beings.⁵⁷ According to Dōgen's identification of Avalokiteshvara as the “parent of all buddhas,” and given that she is the bodhisattva of great compassion, it is not hard to see why Kim would conclude that, “The essence of the bodhisattva ideal [is] great compassion.” All importantly for our purposes, Kim continues:

[The bodhisattva ideal] was [for Dōgen] the reconciliation of the dualistic opposites of self and nonself, sentient and insentient, Buddhas and sentient beings, man and woman, and so forth. As Dōgen stated, “The way of the bodhisattva is ‘I am Thusness; you are Thusness.’” The identity of “I” and “you” in thusness [emptiness/Buddha-nature], rather than identity in substance, status, or the like, was the fundamental metaphysical and religious ground of great compassion. This was why Dōgen said that when we study ourselves thoroughly, we understand others thoroughly as well; as a result, we cast off the self and other.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 204.

⁵⁵ Avalokiteshvara is also the central speaker in the *Heart Sutra*.

⁵⁶ See “Avalokiteshvara” fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 397–398.

⁵⁷ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 207.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 208. We will explore below what is meant by reconciling these opposites, including what is meant by the reconciliation of the sentient and insentient.

The bodhisattva way, the Buddha Way for Dōgen, is the embodiment of compassion for the suffering of other beings, a suffering that is recognized as one's own, in the dual sense of "just like the kind of suffering I as a human experience" and in the sense of "not one, not two; not the same, not different." Thus, in the context of emptiness, the bodhisattva-defining acts of compassion constitute and express the two sides of reality in a single action. The bodhisattva does not dissolve into the other when they act compassionately, embodying the bodhisattva ideal. Rather, as Kim writes, they reconcile, "the dualistic opposites of self and nonself," thus jumping off of form and emptiness. Let us look at this reconciliation and expression now in more detail.

Enacting Enlightenment Through Compassionate Activity

While there are other Western works that take up issues concerning compassion in Buddhism, a notable one being Jeremiah Conway's short "A Buddhist Critique of Nussbaum's Account of Compassion," their purpose is other than ours. An important, purported aspect of the Western notion of compassion that Conway challenges is the idea that it is deserved only by those who are *not* responsible for their (appropriately intense) suffering. However, as important as these other discussions are, they do not try to specify how it is that compassionate activity in the context of Dōgen's Zen is the expression of the two sides of reality, emptiness (unity) and form (difference), which is our primary concern.

Unity-and-difference characterizes the nature of reality as it unfolds in time. Living in accord with this reality is central to Buddhist practice. The central way to live in accord with it is, as Okumura intimates, to express both sides of reality in every single action. And, again, as Leighton writes, "For Dōgen, Buddha nature is not an object to merely see or acquire, but a mode of being that must be actually lived and expressed."⁵⁹ In the context of (practicing) emptiness, compassion *expresses* both sides of reality because it (a) involves the recognition of an *other* (i.e., difference), but at the same time, (b) that "otherness," that difference, is overcome (in unity) by the acts of compassion actualizing the non-duality between self and other. The latter is achieved through the kind of selflessness expressed in the cognitive, affective, and actional aspects of compassionate activity.

While I have argued that enlightenment experience should not be thought of solely in terms of achieving some sort of pure, undifferentiated

⁵⁹ Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 30.

mental state of oneness with the world, there is clearly a mental or phenomenological aspect to “enlightened” activity. Here we may note two important ones, namely, attentiveness and feelings of care, concern for, or being troubled by, the condition of the other, whether the other is the world at large, a group of beings, a particular person, etc.

Regarding *attentiveness*, an essential aspect of Buddhist practice is the practice of being attentive to the present moment, since that is all that exists and so that is the only “place” one may be effective in one’s compassionate activity (all the while recognizing, at least implicitly, the non-duality of *this* moment and all others).

Turning to *the care and concern* or *being troubled*, it would be a mistake to think that enlightened activity is untroubled, free of pain. For example, in Dharma Hall Discourse 392, Dōgen is recorded as having said, “Whenever it comes to the evening of the ninth and this morning of the tenth and I see the winter snow, I recall that time on Shaoxi Peak at Mount Song, so that deep emotion fills my chest and tears of sadness wet my robe.” This is in regard to the story of the second ancestor Dazu Huike, who, to prove the authenticity of his aspiration for practicing Buddhism to Bodhidharma,⁶⁰ stood in the snow overnight, cutting off his arm and offering it to him.⁶¹ Dōgen is here expressing his deep compassion for his students, his fellow monks, and is saddened by the thought of them not having such a teacher and the thought of his monks not being as committed to the Buddha Dharma as Huike.⁶² In what follows, we will see, as well, a variety of other mental and affective aspects of enacting enlightenment – expressing both aspects of reality, unity, and difference – through compassion.

Returning now to the apparent difference between self and other, Dōgen, in “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance,” makes clear that the bodhisattva’s compassionate activity bridges that apparent duality. The four methods are giving, kind speech, beneficial action, and identity action.⁶³ Let us look briefly at kind speech, beneficial action, and identity action. To

⁶⁰ “Regarded as the Twenty-eighth Indian Ancestor and the First Chinese Ancestor of the Zen tradition” (See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 964, “Glossary.”). Bodhidharma is understood to have brought Chan/Zen Buddhism to China.

⁶¹ Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 351.

⁶² Dōgen is expressing humility here.

⁶³ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 473.

begin, notice that all of these are actions, not simply the cultivation of one's mental state. Regarding kind speech, Dōgen writes, "'Kind speech' means that, upon seeing living beings, first of all, to inspire affectionate thoughts and offer them caring words; in general, it is having no harsh words."⁶⁴ The bodhisattva does this because of the recognition of the universal suffering of all sentient existence and the spontaneous concern for that suffering. Continuing the passage:

In the secular world, there is the etiquette of asking after [others'] well-being; in the way of the buddhas, there is the expression "take care of yourself" and the respectful "I hesitate to inquire [of your health]." To speak filled with thoughts that "she thinks on living beings with affection, as if they were her babies" is "kind speech."⁶⁵

As Carl Bielefeldt notes in a correspondence, the last line contains "a passage from Chapter 11 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, giving Mañjuśrī's description of the daughter of the dragon king." This calls to mind the more generalized compassion (going beyond "mere" speech) that is to be expressed in everything we do. In his "Instructions for the Zen Cook," Dōgen writes:

Rōshin is the mind or attitude of a parent. In the same way that a parent cares for an only child, keep the Three Treasures [Buddha, Dharma, Sangha] in your mind. A parent, irrespective of poverty or difficult circumstances, loves and raises a child with care. How deep is love like this? ... In this same manner, when you handle water, rice, or anything else, you must have the affectionate and caring concern of a parent raising a child.⁶⁶

The cook for the monastery is to oversee every activity with this nurturing, parental mind.⁶⁷ But Dōgen did not intend such an attitude to be simply for

⁶⁴ Carl Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

⁶⁵ See also Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Uchiyama, *How to Cook Your Life*, 18. Interpolation added.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, "Glossary." One of the three minds: *rōshin* (parental mind), *daishin* (big or magnanimous mind), and *kishin* (joyful mind, regardless of the task).

the cook. It is to be the attitude of moment by moment engagement with life, especially when confronting the ubiquitous recalcitrance that characterizes so much of life.

A further example of the kind of care that Dōgen is emphasizing is: “Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha. This in turn allows the Buddha to manifest through the leaf.”⁶⁸ Compassionate activity, concern for the integrity and well-being of all things, does not stop at the sentient; it is extended to all things. This is counter to Blum’s intuition that, “Compassion seems restricted to beings capable of feeling or being harmed.”⁶⁹ Perhaps this is so in ordinary, unenlightened contexts. But for Dōgen, emptiness implies that the boundary between what we ordinarily think of as the sentient and the insentient breaks down.⁷⁰ Mountain colors and valley sounds are themselves Buddha nature; they are the “long broad tongue of the Buddha.” These “insentient” beings “speak” if we are willing to listen. And if we do, we realize the non-duality between them and us, that they are nothing other than the true self.

In addition, in the “Mountains and Waters Sutra” fascicle, Dōgen writes that, “Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient.”⁷¹ To flatfootedly say that the mountains are insentient would be to ignore their non-duality with our lives. To flatfootedly call them sentient would be to ignore that they are, after all, “just” mountains. The same can be said for us in relation to nature. Hence, our being and theirs are entwined – and mindful care and concern, as well as compassion for their well-being, is called for. While they do not precisely suffer, they can be damaged, but more importantly, lack of concern for their integrity through either carelessness, i.e., lack of attentiveness, or treating them merely as means to one’s own ends, both go counter to the buddha way. Similarly, being damaged may produce suffering for human and non-human animals, in which case the damage is non-dual with the suffering.

Returning to “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance,” Dōgen writes about beneficial action that, “Stupid people think that, if they put benefitting others first, their own benefit will be left out. This is not so.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7–8.

⁶⁹ Blum, “Compassion,” 507.

⁷⁰ Consider in this context the “Valley Sounds, Mountain Colors” fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 86–87.

⁷¹ Ibid., 155.

Beneficial action is a single dharma; it universally benefits self and other.”⁷² Here, according to Bielefeldt, “single dharma” means “single thing,” i.e., when we move to benefit others through our actions it is the same as benefitting ourselves.

In the context of Dōgen’s Zen, this “benefitting ourselves,” is ambiguous, but its ambiguity is a further aspect of expressing the two sides of reality, form, and emptiness. That is, in compassionate action, we move to help others, and in so doing we create beneficial (karmic) cause and effect, as shown in the fascicle “Identifying with Cause and Effect”: “Those who act in an unwholesome way decline, and those who act in a wholesome way thrive.”⁷³ But we also benefit the other, the other who is non-dual with ourselves, neither the same nor different, and who is not truly a separate other.

This leads us nicely to “identity action.” “Identity action” is, perhaps, odd sounding. In correspondence, Bielefeldt writes that the Japanese *dōji* 同事 is a standard translation for *samānārthatā*, the bodhisattva virtue “shared concern,” in the sense of “working together” with others. He thus translates it as “working together” instead of “identity action.” One may surmise that the Tanahashi edition uses, “Identity action,” because it is through working together that we (1) identify with the plight of others, and (2) come to have a shared, i.e., non-dual, identity. Dōgen further explains:

“Working together” means not differing. It is not differing from self; it is not differing from the other. For example, the Tathāgata⁷⁴ among humans is the same as humans. From his being the same in the human world, we know that he must be the same in other worlds. When we know “working together,” self and other are one.⁷⁵

⁷² Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

⁷³ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 857.

⁷⁴ This is an honorific for the Buddha. It is Sanskrit for, “one who has thus gone; one who has thus come; or one who has come from thusness” and “thusness,” i.e., things as they are, i.e., emptiness. See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 1126, “Glossary.”

⁷⁵ Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

The Buddha is seen as having more than one “body.”⁷⁶ Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, is the manifested body (*nirmāna-kāya*, *ōjin*). In becoming human, the Buddha took on the pain of old age, sickness, and death, and he did so for our sakes. And just as he did, we collapse the boundary between self and other through our compassionate working together with/for others, and thereby “self and other are one.”

In closing, I would like to mention two issues worthy of note. The first is that it is important to consider the exact nature of the compassionate action found in, “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance,” and Dōgen’s thought more generally. That is, it might be all too easy to think that the compassionate activity of the bodhisattva is simply spreading the dharma, i.e., something akin to proselytizing. This it surely is not.⁷⁷ Think, again, of Dōgen’s notion of “identity action” or “working together” (*dōji* 同事). The bodhisattva takes on the plight of their community for themselves. If we take this seriously, then the bodhisattva does not “remain above the fray” but lives in the midst of others’ suffering. While a bodhisattva/buddha may not experience the “pain of the fray” as suffering in the same way as those who are unenlightened, she nevertheless experiences that pain for herself – both her own in that situation and that of the “other.” Thus, in “working together,” she is moved to minimize the pain/suffering of others, though not “merely” in the sense of attempting to free them from the delusion and ignorance, which is seen as the root of suffering from the Buddhist point of view.

The second issue to note is one raised by Blum. He writes, “Compassion can hurt its recipients. It may, for instance, cause him to

⁷⁶ Stone describes the three bodies of the Buddha, found for example in the *Lotus Sutra*, one of Dōgen’s most beloved Sutras, hence: “the manifested body (*nirmāna-kāya*, *ōjin*), or physical person of the Buddha who appears in this world; the recompense body (*sambhoga-kāya*, *hōjin*), or the wisdom the Buddha has attained through practice, conceived of as a subtle ‘body’; and the Dharma body (*dharma-kāya*, *hosshin*), or the Buddha as personification of ultimate truth. These three ‘bodies’ originally represented attempts to organize different concepts of the Buddha, or to explain the differences among various Buddhas appearing in the sutras.” See Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 184.

⁷⁷ See Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva,” 317ff.

concentrate too much on his plight.”⁷⁸ Compassionate activity can also go awry in a variety of ways, like through ignorance of the details of a situation, for example. In other words, compassion requires wisdom. Such problems are addressed in Dōgen’s Zen, since great compassion (characterized by emptiness) together with *prajna*, wisdom beyond wisdom, is the heart of the bodhisattva ideal, characterizing every movement of body, speech, and thought.

We saw the combination of wisdom and compassion in Dōgen’s discussion of the *Heart Sutra*, where the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, expounds on emptiness and *prajna*, and that wisdom concerns the emptiness of everything, including emptiness, and thus the transcending of all dualities. I have been arguing that a, or perhaps, the central way to do that in Dōgen’s Zen is through properly understood compassionate action, i.e., compassionate action in the context of the teachings of emptiness and *prajna*. It is the wisdom that realizes emptiness through (wisely) discriminating, compassionate action.

⁷⁸ Blum, “Compassion,” 516.