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METAPHYSICS IN DOGEN

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It is my hypothesis that metaphysics is an overlooked but fruitful category for cross-cultural philosophy, and I would like to demonstrate this hypothesis with what may seem an unpromising example, the writings of the Zen Buddhist teacher Dogen Kigen (1200-1253). The first section of this essay introduces a definition of metaphysics that, although drawn from the Western philosophical tradition, is, I hope, generic enough to be useful for the study of philosophy outside the West, and then argues for the legitimacy of metaphysics as an interpretative tool for the understanding of Zen Buddhist thought. The second section spells out what I take to be the basic features of Dogen's metaphysics, and the third deals with a rival non-metaphysical interpretation of Dogen's philosophy.

The Very Idea of Metaphysics in the Study of Zen Thought

In saying that a philosopher is interested in "metaphysics," I mean that he or she is interested in an inquiry into the character of being qua being, or (if one wants to avoid the implication that all things are substances) one can say that metaphysics concerns the character of reality qua reality or reality as such. Because metaphysics concerns reality "as such," a metaphysical statement describes things that exist-for example a cherry tree- not in those somewhat general features that it shares with other cherry trees (which would be botany), but rather in those completely general features it shares with anything else. I will argue that some of Dogen's writings reflect an interest in this kind of inquiry into the character that reality has as such. Moreover, some thinkers in the West have argued that metaphysical claims about the generic features of reality as such are best understood not as empirical claims that may or may not be the case, but rather as logically necessary claims concerning the conditions for the possibility of anything existing at all. They therefore describe what must be the case, and if they are true, then they are true in every possible world. On this understanding of metaphysics, which I will call transcendental metaphysics, metaphysical claims are unrestricted existential statements that purport to be true in every conceivable state of affairs.¹ They are transcendental not in the sense that they describe a realm that transcends the phenomenal one, but rather in the sense that they describe the features of things without which they would not exist at all. Dogen's metaphysical claims also seem to meet this narrower definition.

The term "metaphysical" carries other connotations as well that I would not ascribe to Dogen. For some thinkers, "metaphysical "or" transcendental¹¹ philosophies has to do with supernatural realities or speculative thought unconnected to experience.

There is a powerful tendency to take metaphysical statements that describe the general or abstract features of all concrete realities as statements describing a special class of objects. But, to repeat, "metaphysics" refers here to the generic features of *this* world and not to some other world. Moreover, I am not suggesting that Dogen is "really" a metaphysician, even in my sense of metaphysics, or even that he is "really" a philosopher, as opposed to a religious teacher or the founder of a school. I claim not that I am presenting the essence of Dogen but only that, among other things, Dogen makes metaphysical claims, and thus that important aspects of his thought are missed if one does not see them as metaphysical.

The idea that, in addition to being the founder of the Soto Zen school in Japan, Dogen can be labeled a philosopher is no longer new, but the claim that his philosophy includes metaphysics may strike many as strange. Scholarship on Zen thought has moved beyond the Orientalist conceit that Zen is a nonrational or non-philosophical form of discourse, but the idea that Zen is nonmetaphysical remains. Metaphysics continues to seem an inappropriate tool for understanding Buddhist thinkers in general because, according to some interpretations at least, this is a religion that explicitly rejects metaphysical inquiry. The Buddha is famously represented as saying in the Majjhima Nikaya that certain views are not part of his teaching, and that pursuing these questions is like being a person shot by a highly poisoned arrow who wants to know the kind of man who shot it, the type of bow and arrow, and so on, rather than let the doctor save his life.² Such views do not help one abandon attachments, overcome suffering, or attain Nibbana; they are "not even the beginning of the Noble Practice."³ This passage (and others) has often been read as saying that Buddhism is too pragmatic to include metaphysics. Dogen, too, may seem to reject the relevance of metaphysics. Like Gautama, Dogen rejects certain speculative questions as irrelevant to liberating practice.⁴ And like other Zen teachers, Dogen sometimes states that the true Buddhist teaching is transmitted directly, without discursive means.⁵ According to Dogen, the proper goal of Zen is a way of being, characterized by what he calls the "harmonization of body and mind," and he recommends a number of practices to help achieve this, including, especially, seated meditation (*zazen* 坐禪) under the direction of a master.⁶ Metaphysical speculation is no substitute for this harmonization; it cannot even lead to it. In fact, it may seem that pursuing metaphysical questions actually hinders liberating practice, insofar as intellectualism stems from attachment to self.⁷ Dogen's Buddhism therefore may seem to reject intellectual pursuits, including metaphysics, in favor of a somatic practice designed to inculcate selflessness and nonattachment. In short, one might argue that Buddhism in general and Dogen's Buddhism in particular reject metaphysics on the grounds that the Buddhist path is practical, not speculative. For these reasons, it may seem that one can judge a priori that to interpret Dogen's teaching as metaphysical would be inappropriate and distorting.

However, the claim that Buddhism is completely antimetaphysical is false. It is true that Buddhism, like religions generally, typically shows little interest in metaphysical knowledge for its own sake. But Buddhism, like religions generally, does show an interest in the idea of metaphysical knowledge pursued as part of trans-

forming one's perceptions, affects, and character in order to be in accord with the true nature of things. It is also true that Buddhism typically rejects those forms of metaphysics that claim that things in general and selves in particular are enduring substances. But this is only to say that Buddhists reject what they consider bad metaphysics, not metaphysics as such.⁸

I believe that the same is true of Dogen. In fact, the idea that Dogen's Zen is antimetaphysical is even more suspect, for among Zen teachers Dogen is perhaps the one who values reason most highly. Especially relevant here is Dogen's revalorization of both language and logic.⁹ For Dogen, the use of reason is an integral part of Zen practice,¹⁰ and therefore one cannot assume that Dogen's Zen does not include metaphysics on the grounds that Zen is inevitably transmitted outside words or logic. To be sure, reason for Dogen is not merely intellectual assent to a truth but rather its authentication with the whole of one's person. In Dogen's terms, one understands neither with mind alone nor with body alone, but with one's "body-mind."¹¹ But this only describes how the teachings are authenticated, and does not rule out the possibility that the teachings are metaphysical in scope. In general, I believe, Dogen's criticisms of "pursuing words and following after speech" (as in the quote from the *Fukanzazengi* 普勸坐禪儀 in endnote 4) should not be read as the rejection of language or logic. Rather, they should be seen in the context of sectarian conflicts, where they serve as criticisms of the claim that reading sOtras and practicing the *nembutsu* rather than *zazen* are the proper Zen practice.

It is true that interpreters from one culture to another need to take care not to impose their own philosophical categories blindly, but to treat Dogen as non-metaphysical is no guarantee that one has done this. On the contrary, nonmetaphysical categories such as "pragmatic," "phenomenological" or "nonrational" are equally Western and run an equal risk of distorting their object. So I conclude that the arguments that metaphysics is always an inappropriate tool for understanding Dogen fail.

The issue of the presence of metaphysics in Dogen's writings is also complicated by the rise of the Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyo* 批判仏教) movement.¹² This movement argues that certain metaphysical claims (such as those concerning original enlightenment or Buddha-nature) are not truly Buddhist. They have challenged Dogen studies by their claim that at the end of his life Dogen came to reject these views. My response is that there are a number of basic Buddhist teachings that Dogen maintains consistently throughout his career, such as impermanence, dependent arising, and momentariness. The issue pursued in this essay is the philosophical question concerning the logical status of these themes in Dogen, not the historical question of whether the metaphysical views I discuss represent Dogen's final position or the "Buddhological" or sectarian question of whether these metaphysical views represent true Buddhism. I therefore focus on the seventy-five-fascicle

Shobogenzo 正法眼藏 without implying any position about its composition or its relation to the twelve-fascicle *Shobogenzo*. My issue is simply whether and in what sense one might speak of metaphysics in Dogen's *Shobogenzo*, especially the seventy-five-fascicle version.¹³

Several interpreters have described Dogen's work as metaphysical, though unfortunately they do not define the term.¹⁴ This section aims to unpack Dogen's metaphysics, which is to say his understanding of the character of reality as such. It first outlines Dogen's account of the character of reality as such, which is in large part simply Dogen's explanation of the idea of dependent arising. The second part of this section then seeks to show how this metaphysical account figures in the religious or soteriological context of liberation from suffering. The third part argues that Dogen's *prima facie* metaphysical claims about the character of reality as such are most plausibly interpreted as a version of transcendental metaphysics, in the sense introduced above that they seek to describe the conditions for the possibility of the existence of anything whatsoever.

Reality as Such in Dogen's Zen.

What *is*, according to Dogen, is temporal. In fact, it is not correct to say that all things exist in time; rather, all things *are* time. Each thing is a unit of time. "The rat is time, the tiger is time, sentient beings are time, buddhas are time."¹⁵ Pine trees and bamboos, mountains and seas, self and other are really time.¹⁶ Time has colors; good and evil are times.¹⁷ "You must see all the various things of the whole world as so many times."¹⁸

What does it mean to say that things are times? When one asks what kind of entity reality is composed of, the answers often fall into one of the two categories defined by the contrast of being and becoming. That is, metaphysical reflections often take either space or time as one's root metaphor and then articulate an account of reality as such with either spatial units (atoms, substances, matter) or temporal units (events, moments, occasions) as the basic model of an individual. The result is some form of substance metaphysics or some form of process metaphysics. In terms of this contrast, Dogen clearly opposes substance metaphysics and articulates a form of process metaphysics. According to Dogen, every concrete thing is an event, a moment, or an occasion. "In essence, all things in the entire world are linked with one another as moments."¹⁹

However, although all the various things of the world are times, Dogen rejects the contrast of being and time described in the previous paragraph. Reality as such is not composed of times *as opposed to* beings. For Dogen, just as beings are really time, time is really being. Neither category is given any form of ontological priority.²⁰ A moment is equally being and becoming: "time, just as it is, is being, and being is all time."²¹ In order to express this idea, Dogen coins the term "being-time" (*uji* 有時). Thus, according to Dogen, the world is composed of units of being-time. Insofar as anything is anything at all, it is a unit of being-time.

What is the character of reality if reality is composed of units of being-time? Each unit of being-time is impermanent, Dogen says, and he develops this idea in terms of what he calls "flowing."²² Each unit of being-time "has the quality of flowing.... The entire world is not unchangeable, is not immovable. It flows."²³

As I see it, Dogen's concept of "flowing" does three jobs. First, it describes the fact that all things are dynamic or active. The whole world in which human beings live is composed not of inanimate objects and dead matter; rather it moves, and (as Dogen sometimes suggests) lives. "Now when dragons and fish see water as a palace, it is just like human beings seeing a palace. They do not think it flows. If an outsider tells them, 'What you see as a palace is running water,' they will be astonished, just as we are when we hear the words, 'Mountains flow'." ²⁴ Thus, to say that all things flow means that every unit of being-time is an activity. Every concrete thing takes place.

Second, the word "flow" also describes the *kind* of activity that all things are, or *how* they are active. Dogen is especially interested in avoiding the suggestion that the word "flow" implies that things become or move in any sort of linear direction, presumably because this would imply the privilege of either past or future over the other. "Do not think that flowing is like wind and rain moving from east to west. . . . Flowing is like spring. Spring with all its numerous aspects is called flowing." ²⁵ Flowing is not a process or a becoming in the teleological sense of realizing potential or creative synthesis. Rather, flowing occurs all over, all at once. Each moment is a "total dynamic activity" that is itself.²⁶ Dogen describes the movement of an activity as "ascending and descending up and down."²⁷ "Spring invariably flows through spring. Although flowing itself is not spring, flowing occurs throughout spring." ²⁸ Each entity/activity is self-sufficient and complete unto itself: "Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment. . . Each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness."²⁹ "Flowing is completed at just this moment of spring." ³⁰ Dogen also seeks to convey this idea that being is really an activity-that-brings-itself-about by making nouns into verbs-for example, "entirely worlding the entire world with the whole world," "spring passes through spring," "impeding impedes impeding."³¹

Third and last, the concept of flowing describes the relation or continuity of things. Flowing is also called walking forward and backward; it is unceasing and it is not in one direction. The movement or flow of a unit of being-time is not just forward or back, into the future or into the past, but from the past and future into the present and within the present itself. "So-called today flows into tomorrow, today flows into yesterday, yesterday flows into today. And today flows into today, tomorrow flows into tomorrow."³² "The path of water runs upward and downward and in all directions."³³

Dogen recognizes that the idea that things are really activities that "flow" contradicts people's ordinary view of things. From the commonsense standpoint, a thing is an object. If there is an activity that is not the activity *of* something, then the apparent activity must not be real after all. An activity without some underlying thing that does the activity seems evanescent and detached from reality, like a relation or a quality. Dogen opposes this everyday view, saying, "You mustn't by your own maneuvers make it a nothingness; you mustn't forcibly make it a being."³⁴

Although Dogen stresses the creative activity and the interrelated continuity of

things, he also notes that each unit of being-time (that is, of reality) is in a sense "cut off" and independent of its own past and future. He gives the following example.

Firewood is reduced to ash and cannot become firewood again. So, one should not hold the view that ash is succeeding and firewood is preceding. One must know that firewood dwells in the dharma-position of firewood [of which] there is preceding and succeeding. Although there is before and after it is cut off from before and after. Ashes are in the dharma-position of ashes [of which] there is preceding and succeeding. Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it has been reduced to ashes, so man does not resume life after death.³⁵

The central concept here is that of "dwelling in a dharma situation" (*juhoi* 柱法位). Whereas the concept of "flowing" suggests that everything that exists is an activity, "dwelling" says that each activity takes place in a particular spatial and temporal location. Cut off from its past and future, it seems, each entity/activity is self-sufficient and discontinuous from the rest.³⁶ This is not to say that dwelling or abiding in a dharma position is a description of stasis: insofar as each abiding moment is not an abstraction but rather an actual event, it is involved in the dynamic activity of producing itself, all at once. "The sharp, vital quick itself of dharmas dwelling in their dharma positions, is being-time."³⁷

There is a lack of agreement among Dogen's interpreters on the relation between the continuity and the discontinuity of being-time. Does one entity flow into others, or are they cut off from each other? For example, Hee-Jin Kim, who summarizes the views of some of Dogen's Japanese interpreters, treats discontinuity as primary.³⁸ He argues that the idea of dwelling in a dharma position "is a radical rejection of the flow of time, or the stream of consciousness, or any other conceptions of time based on the idea of continuity and duration. That is, time is absolutely discrete and discontinuous."³⁹ Thomas Kasulis and Steven Heine, on the contrary, say that flowing and dwelling represent two perspectives, each of which is true in its own way.⁴⁰ They argue that from one perspective time flows, but from the perspective of the immediate present (*nikon* 而今) it abides.

Though the position of Heine and Kasulis has the advantage of avoiding a somewhat static vision of independent being-times, it does so by focusing on "the right now" (*nikon*) rather than dwelling in a dharma position (*juhoi*), and thus it treats both continuity and discontinuity as merely part of the human perspective. In my opinion, these two ideas can also be seen as part of reality itself. That is, something in reality can be both continuous and discontinuous. In order to see how this is so, it pays to reconsider the point Dogen tries to make with these two ideas. "Flowing" means that each thing is transient and dynamic; "dwelling" means that change is the successive creation of new entities rather than successive change to identical entities. To this extent, the two ideas do not contradict each other, but rather serve to make the same point that *things do not become*. Things do not perdure; they arise and perish. Birth and death are therefore features not only of human experience but also of reality. It is true that each entity/activity is independent of its past and future,

but it nevertheless has a past and future and is located in terms of its past and future. This is where the idea of "flowing" plays its role, for individual entities/activities are related to each other by "flowing." Thus "flowing" does not mean development, but can be read as something like "reach" or "influence." Activities flow in the sense that the past influences the present and the present the future, but also the future influences the future, and the future influences the present. The flow or influence between units of being-time is symmetrical or nondual, going in all directions at once. In this way, these two important ideas, flowing and abiding, respectively describe the continuity and the individuality of each thing in the world. As ineliminable aspects of being-time, they, too, are metaphysical attributes, describing the character of reality as such.

My interpretation, then, is that each of Dogen's basic terms- impermanence, being-time, flowing, and dwelling in a dharma situation- is meant to describe the character of reality as such. Each can be put into a sentence that says "Reality as such is-----." All of these are metaphysical characteristics of reality as such or things in general. In fact, they imply each other and help to articulate the nature of things.

The Religious Significance of Dogen's Metaphysics.

Dogen does not adumbrate his metaphysical views simply for the sake of philosophy. Again and again, as Dogen speaks of the nature of the things, he tells his listeners or readers, "You should reflect and learn the meaning of this. If you do not learn to be free from your superficial views, you will not be free from the body and mind of a superficial person. Then you will not understand the land of the buddha ancestors, or even the land or the palace of ordinary people."⁴¹ For Dogen, meta-physics has liberating or religious significance.

The religious significance of Dogen's metaphysical claim that all things are impermanent is twofold. On the one hand, impermanence identifies the unavoidable character of human existence and so, wrongly appreciated, is the source of suffering. On the other hand, rightly understood, impermanence is actually that which makes liberation possible. A metaphysical claim thus provides a description of both the problem of human existence and its solution.

According to Dogen, what is true of the extrahuman world is also true of human existence: it is composed of being-time, and it flows. "Such is the fundamental reason of the way: that our self is time."⁴² Human existence, like the existence of all things, is impermanent, transient, and already in the process of dissolution. For human existence, however, this impermanence leads to suffering: "Our present body, we should realize, consists of a temporary union of the four elements and the five aggregates. Therefore we are always afflicted with the eight kinds of suffering."⁴³ This fact that life is impermanent leads to anxiety and fear of loss, and especially the loss of one's own life. Typical is this statement:

We know neither when nor where our transient life will end. This body is already beyond our control; and life, at the mercy of time, moves on without stopping for even an instant.

Once the ruddy face of youth has disappeared, it is impossible to find even its traces. When we think about time carefully, we find that time, once lost, never returns. Faced suddenly with the prospect of death, kings, state ministers, relatives, servants, wife and children, and rare jewels are of no use. We must enter the realm of death alone, accompanied only by our good and bad karma.⁴⁴

This problem, call it the problem of birth and death or the problem of time, is the central problem of Dogen's Zen. "The thorough clarification of the meaning of birth and death-this is the most important problem of all for Buddhists."⁴⁵

The first step in solving the problem of birth and death is to realize that one is in fact subject to change-for some are ignorant of or deny even this.⁴⁶ To become aware of it requires reflecting on the human condition. This may require an "event"¹¹ in which the transience of life is brought home to one, as when, for example, according to legend, Dogen first experienced the impermanence of all things on watching the ascending incense at his mother's funeral.⁴⁷ But even if not recognized, impermanence is inevitable: "Since our human body is subject to birth and decay, no matter how ardently we may love it we cannot keep it from change."⁴⁸ In other words, it is a necessary feature of human life that it is permeated with impermanence.

According to Dogen, one has a natural disposition to deny that one is impermanent. One wants to believe that the self is really permanent. For Dogen, this attitude shows an attachment to self that leads to suffering. Impermanence is contrasted with something substantial, Buddha-nature or Nirvana, which one can hold to and rely on. To realize that one is impermanent, however, is to welcome the impermanence of the world as one's own truth.⁴⁹ One should, so to speak, internalize impermanence. Dogen here uses being-time as a verb: "you should being time thus."⁵⁰ Therefore there is the following relation between the world and human existence: the world is impermanent; the self may choose whether or not to realize this. To realize the truth that the self is no less impermanent than the world is selflessness. As Dogen says, transience exposes desire.⁵¹ "When the transient nature of the world is recognized, the ordinary selfish mind does not arise."⁵² This realization is total, in that there is no self apart from the cycles of life and death that might escape death. One is nothing other than one's changes; to exist as anything is impermanence. Conversely, there is no time independent of the living and dying of the existent things in the world. When this is realized, one ceases to look for the "meaning of life" outside the process of life and death, and the problem dissolves." [B]irth-and-death is itself Nirvana. There is nothing such as birth and death to be avoided; there is nothing such as Nirvana to be sought. Only when you realize this are you free from birth and death."⁵³ If one can train oneself through diligence, one can see the impermanence of all things, including the lack of a permanent self. This very existence is Nirvana. "Birth and death, coming and going, are the real body of the Buddha."

In this way, the metaphysical truth of impermanence provides the solution to the problem of birth and death. It is because all things (including oneself) are impermanent that one is not "stuck" permanently in a state of suffering. It is because all

things are impermanent that Buddhahood is possible. In other words, the very impermanence of things is their Buddha-nature.⁵⁴

Since impermanence is Buddha-nature, Buddha-nature is also a metaphysical characteristic of reality as such, always and everywhere present. However, to call Buddha-nature a metaphysical characteristic of reality as such may suggest that Buddha-nature is some special kind of being or entity, and Dogen works hard to oppose such interpretations. He spends a great deal of time distinguishing his teaching from empirical and supernatural interpretations of Buddha-nature, and one could fairly say that Dogen's primary goal is deconstructing this idea, rather than stating a position about it.

You must understand, the "being" that the Buddha-nature makes *whole being* is not the being of being and nonbeing.... Nor does the term *whole being* mean emergent being; nor is it original being, or mysterious being, or anything of the like. And of course it is not conditioned being or illusory being. It has nothing to do with such things as mind and object, subject and form.⁵⁵

Buddha-nature is substanceless, formless, unconditioned, neither something nor nothing. Nevertheless, the metaphysical interpretation of Buddha-nature is still appropriate. Although these negative claims can be read as the rejection of some kinds of metaphysics (Buddha-nature is not a primordial or "original" possibility, nor is it a "seed" or a mental attribute; Buddha-nature is not Ultimate reality or the Absolute), they can also be seen as the endorsement of another kind of metaphysics in which Buddha-nature refers to a characteristic that describes all things whatsoever. Since Dogen identifies Buddha-nature with impermanence, the claim "for any x, x is Buddha-nature" would therefore also be a metaphysical statement about what is, a statement about reality that purports to be true under all conditions.

In short, my argument is that a metaphysical interpretation of Dogen is appropriate because Dogen's Zen includes or implies a metaphysics, in the following way. Metaphysics provides the answer to the question: why should one be selfless and nonattached rather than otherwise? The answer is: because everything is impermanent, and attachment to self is thus inauthentic, a result of false views. This claim that "everything is impermanent" or "empty" is best understood as a piece of meta-physics. Thus Dogen's Zen is not a theoretical matter pursued for its own sake, but it does include or imply a correct understanding of reality as such (and therefore also of human existence as such) that is metaphysical in scope.

Impermanence as Transcendental Metaphysics.

When Dogen says that all things are impermanent or that the entire world flows, I have argued that he is speaking of reality as such and is therefore making meta-physical claims. I want now to argue that such claims are in fact metaphysical in the narrower sense of transcendental claims that are purportedly true under all conditions. Although Dogen does not use the phrase "transcendental," he does distinguish the character of impermanence (i.e., Buddha-nature) from all other things in

ways that strongly suggest it. To make this argument, I focus on three passages from the *Shobogenzo*.

The first passage is Dogen's commentary on the well-known passage from the *Mahapari-Nirvana Sutra*, traditionally read by Mahayana Buddhists as: "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature."⁵⁶ Dogen interprets this passage to say that "All sentient beings completely are the Buddha-nature." This interpretation avoids the idea that Buddha-nature is something that things have merely in a potential state, that it is but a part of them. But then Dogen reads (or deliberately misreads) the words "without exception have" as "whole being" (*shitsuu* 悉有), a change that creates the ungrammatical sentence "All sentient beings whole being the Buddha-nature." Dogen plays on different connotations of the phrase "whole being/" and so the reference or the status of whole being is decidedly plural.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it seems clear that Dogen uses this phrase in order to reinterpret this sutra passage in such a way that avoids limiting Buddha-nature to sentient beings. For Dogen, Buddha-nature is something more inclusive, of which sentient beings are but a part: "the words whole being mean sentient beings and all beings. That is to say, whole being is Buddha-nature: I call one integral entity of whole being 'sentient being'." ⁵⁸ Dogen is offering a reinterpretation of the Buddha's saying that emphasizes the unrestricted character of Buddha-nature. It is, as Kim says, de-anthropocentric and de-biocentric. ⁵⁹ Moreover, Dogen's reinterpretation also accords with Mahayana anti-dualism. Dogen rejects the idea that the nature of the self or of experience is different in kind from the nature of the world. Buddha-nature would not be true under *all* conditions if it were merely an attribute of sentient beings, but Dogen is at pains to see that Buddha-nature is not interpreted in this way.

The second passage that supports the transcendental metaphysics interpretation is Dogen's unusual claim that Buddha-nature is permanent:

Permanence is prior to turning. "Prior to turning" is never connected to the aftertraces of coming and going, *even* though [Buddha-nature] turns to severing Wisdom or becomes the worldly passions that are severed. Thus it is said to be permanent. ⁶⁰

This claim has seemed a difficult one for some interpreters.⁶¹ For Dogen, as for the Mahayana tradition generally, all concrete things are impermanent. The question is whether Buddha-nature is an exception to this rule, an eternal refuge from transience, or whether Buddha-nature, too, is impermanent. In this passage, Dogen seems to contradict his claims that *everything* is impermanent (a claim he repeats again in the very next sentence).

The metaphysical interpretation of this passage avoids any sense of contradiction. By saying that Buddha-nature is permanent, Dogen moves his discussion from an empirical description of what the case is under some conditions to a metaphysical description of what the case is under all conditions. The statement that Buddha-nature is permanent therefore represents not the description of a particular thing but rather reflection upon any description. Any description will be of an impermanent dharma; Buddha-nature or impermanence is the one permanent part of one's

descriptions. Impermanence is not itself impermanent any more than the claim that all things are relative is relative to something, or the claim that all things are dependent is dependent upon something. "Impermanence is permanent" is, according to my reading, another way of saying that impermanence is not itself a dharma but rather a transcendental condition for any possible dharma. It is nonrestrictive and logically necessary. As Dogen has said, Buddha-nature is not the kind of thing that might or might not exist: "the being that Buddha-nature makes is not the being of being and nonbeing."⁶²

Following this interpretation, the statement that Buddha-nature is permanent is a metaphysical claim, not because Buddha-nature is itself an existing thing but rather because anything that exists is characterized by it. In fact, for Dogen, to say that Buddha-nature is permanent in the sense of a permanent thing would be to demean it. The idea that Buddha-nature is a permanent thing or state "should only be the foolish thoughts of small minds, limited knowledge spun from discriminatory speculation. 'Buddha' would thus come to be a small, limited body, and '[Buddha-]Nature,' narrow restricted activity."⁶³ Buddha-nature or impermanence is not limited, not restricted.

The third passage that supports the metaphysical interpretation is Dogen's statement that impermanence is a characteristic without which nothing is. "Mountains are time and seas are time. If they were not, there would be no mountains and seas. So you must not say that there is no time in the immediate now of mountains and seas. If time is destroyed, mountains and seas are destroyed. If time is indestructible then mountains and seas are indestructible."⁶⁴ I take Dogen to be arguing that without impermanence, nothing is. Dogen's project—including unpacking the concept and the experience of time with the ideas of being-time, flowing, and dwelling-therefore represents an analysis of the condition of the possibility of existence. To recapitulate, then, in these three passages, Dogen seems to be claiming that Buddha-nature or impermanence characterizes all beings, rather than sentient beings alone; that it forms a permanent aspect of one's descriptions of anything; and that it is the possibility of things existing at all. Thus impermanence seems to be a transcendental metaphysical feature of reality itself. I conclude that Dogen offers impermanence as a metaphysical characteristic of reality, in the sense that the statement "x is impermanent", where x is anything at all, is always and everywhere true.

The Conflict of Interpretations

I have argued that Dogen's account of being-time, impermanence, and flow is best understood as a set of metaphysical claims about the character of reality as such; that Dogen implies that the statement "x is impermanent" is a transcendental metaphysical statement; and that this interpretation can make sense of the soteriological aims of Dogen's writings. The question may arise, however, whether Dogen's claims can be accounted for under any other—perhaps less disputed—philosophical approach. The primary rivals to the metaphysical interpretation are those inte

pretations that compare Dogen to some form of nonmetaphysical phenomenology or existentialism.⁶⁵ Of these, the most sophisticated, comprehensive, and insightful, in my opinion, is that of Thomas Kasulis.⁶⁶ The rest of this essay sketches his phenomenological interpretation of Dogen's philosophy before giving some reasons why his rejection of metaphysics in Dogen is not persuasive.

The Phenomenological Interpretation of Dogen.

Kasulis argues that Dogen is not a metaphysician concerned with the structure of reality but rather a phenomenologist concerned with the structure of experience.

¹¹Rather than trying to develop an epistemological or metaphysical system, Dogen's main philosophical concern is to characterize the nature of human experience, especially in its preconceptual or prereflective dimension."⁶⁷ According to Kasulis, Dogen brackets questions about the world independent of experience:

Dogen's tack is to concern himself only with what is experienced. Limiting himself to this, he is not concerned with notions of reality outside this process of experiencing consciousness.... In this respect, *Dogen* is implicitly carrying out his own *form* of bracketing and the term phenomenological is surprisingly appropriate to characterize the nature of his methodology.⁶⁸

According to Kasulis, Dogen limits himself to talking about experience in a way that rules out talking about things except insofar as they are experienced. Kasulis goes so far as to deny that for Dogen impermanence or change is an attribute of objects at all. "Dogen would reject our commonly held notion that change is in the things outside us, that is, a (metaphysical or physical) attribute of objects."⁶⁹ Things as they exist independently of experience are simply not of philosophical or religious interest to Dogen.

Kasulis argues that not only was Dogen nonmetaphysical but, in relation to the Japanese Buddhism of his day, he was antimetaphysical. "[T]he thrust of Dogen's thought is precisely *against* . . . a metaphysical understanding of Zen."⁷⁰ Dogen's goal was to reverse the reification of Buddhist ideas. "In *Shobogenzo*, Dogen takes a seemingly metaphysical statement from the T'ien-t'ai or Hua-yen traditions and interprets it as a descriptive statement about the structure of a specific experience; in effect, he suspends metaphysical and epistemological commitments outside the realm of things as experienced."⁷¹ "The implication of Dogen's standpoint is that many statements that have been misunderstood as having metaphysical significance are actually descriptive statements about experience."⁷²

According to Kasulis, Dogen's phenomenological focus has been occluded by the metaphysical biases of his Western interpreters. These interpreters *have* tended to translate Dogen's experiential ideas with thing-like terms like "Suchness" instead of "being such," or "absolute reality" instead of "the presencing of things-as-they-are."⁷³ Kasulis questions this hypostasis or nominalization of things-as-experienced, treating a feature of experience as if it were an independently existing thing. Kasulis would replace the interpretation of Dogen that says that for *Dogen* the person "overcomes illusion and experiences directly the manifestation of absolute reality"

with the phenomenological version: "the person overcomes his delusion and experiences directly the presencing-of-things-as-they-are."⁷⁴

According to Kasulis, the goal of Zen philosophy is to distinguish different modes of consciousness and argue that some modes are more complete, more creative, and more self-expressive than others.⁷⁵ Dogen argues for these claims by appealing to "what is fundamental in all experience," namely a prereflective dimension of experience that Dogen calls "without thinking." Kasulis analyzes the idea of "without-thinking" as a mode of consciousness that neither affirms nor negates its content; it does not objectify its content, and it offers a non-positional noetic attitude and the pure presence of things as they are as the noematic content. "Without-thinking is distinct from [other modes of consciousness] precisely in its assuming no intentional attitude whatsoever: it neither affirms nor denies, accepts nor rejects, believes nor disbelieves. In fact, it does not objectify either implicitly or explicitly... In short, it is a nonconceptual or prereflective mode of consciousness."⁷⁶ Kasulis gives as an example of this mode of consciousness the everyday experience in which, "after mowing the lawn, an exhausted man leans his arm on the lawnmower and rests."⁷⁷ In this state, the content of one's experiences is simply the presencing of things as they are. This state of "without-thinking" serves as the touchstone from which the enlightened person decides how to respond to the world without the prejudice of conditioning.

The Question of Metaphysics.

In my opinion, what Kasulis calls his de-metaphysicalization of Dogen-de-reifying concepts, removing Western ideas of the Absolute and the One does more to clarify the aims of Dogen's philosophy than any other interpretation. I believe Kasulis has accurately uncovered the phenomenological dimension of Dogen.

However, this phenomenological interpretation of Dogen, uncovering "what is fundamental in all experience," does not yet contradict a metaphysical interpretation. That is, the phenomenological and the metaphysical interpretations agree that Dogen is interested in the necessary features of human experience. Unfortunately, Kasulis rejects the claim that Dogen is also interested in the necessary features of reality. This section argues that this negative claim is false.

Though Kasulis does not define his use of the term "metaphysics," one can get a sense of what he means through his descriptions of what Dogen rejects. It turns out that Kasulis uses the term "metaphysics" in two senses. The first is the pre-Kantian definition of metaphysics as an inquiry into the nature of things as they are, independent of experience, or speculation about the thing-in-itself. Thus, Kasulis contends that for Dogen "[t]here is no 'absolute' reality; there is only what is. There is nothing behind this world that is waiting to be manifested; there is just the presenting of what-is."⁷⁸ Kasulis rightly argues that this idea of a reality beyond experience is alien to Dogen. Second, Kasulis conceives of metaphysics as the characterization of things in themselves as unchanging essences, or, in other words, he identifies metaphysics and substance metaphysics. "Simply stated, impermanence is not a meta-physical, but a phenomenological, category for Dogen: no things are directly expe-

rienced as substantial in the sense of having a changeless essence." ⁷⁹ Again, Kasulis rightly argues that this idea is not Dogen's; in fact, it is an idea Dogen consistently combats. Thus, when Kasulis argues that Dogen rejects metaphysics, he means that Dogen neither aspires to the knowledge of things independent of experience nor conceives of things as unchanging substances.

Neither of these two ideas, however, is intrinsic to what metaphysics involves. Kasulis does not explore either the possibility of a metaphysics that seeks to describe the necessary features of things-as-experienced or the idea that the nature of these entities might be that of process, becoming, or "flow." Consequently, the disagreement between the phenomenological and the metaphysical interpretations of Dogen may turn on definitions. Perhaps what I attribute to Dogen as "metaphysics" Kasulis might recognize under some other name, such as "phenomenological ontology" or the like. If we agree that Dogen rejects both the idea of things in themselves and substance metaphysics, then we might also agree that Dogen has an interest in the nature of reality as such, understood in this way as not independent of experience. ⁸⁰

However, I believe that Kasulis would not agree (or he overlooks) that Dogen has an interest in the nature of reality as such because Kasulis himself rejects the possibility of metaphysics, even as understood in my sense. Although he does not make an antimetaphysical argument explicitly, Kasulis' talk of "conceptual overlays" ⁸¹ and, indeed, the very idea of phenomenology imply that he believes that knowledge can only be of things as they appear, not of things as they really are. Knowledge is thereby "limited" to phenomena, as opposed to noumena. Kasulis' rejection of metaphysics seems to be based on a Kantian distinction between mediated knowledge and the world in itself.

If Kasulis rejects metaphysics because he believes that we have no access to things in themselves, then his rejection is based on a spurious distinction. The metaphysical interpretation of Dogen, as I have presented it, does not deny but rather insists that we have no such access. It insists, that is, that one cannot meaningfully conceive of objects independent of human experience, or, in other words, that conceivable objects are the only objects that can be meaningfully discussed. If, therefore, Dogen is right that things as experienced are necessarily impermanent, that impermanence is fundamental to the experience of things, then it follows (according to the metaphysical interpretation of Dogen) that insofar as one can have any knowledge of any thing whatsoever, that thing will be impermanent. Following this interpretation, there is no knowledge of things, nor can one even conceive of things, that are not impermanent. Hence impermanence is a property of things insofar as they are anything at all, a necessary property of things as such. Given the conceivability of things in themselves, as Kant held, there can be no further meta-physics in the sense of inquiry into the nature of reality as such. But lacking any access to a noumenal realm, phenomenological claims when they describe the features of things as they *necessarily* "appear" are recognized as metaphysical claims describing the necessary features of things as such. ⁸²

In short, the difference between the two positions is this. According to the phenomenological interpretation, change or impermanence is only a feature of experience.

According to the metaphysical interpretation, change or impermanence is also the metaphysical condition of the possibility of anything whatsoever. Impermanence is thus independent of the existence of any sentient being; in other words, even if there were no sentient beings, the statement "something is impermanent" would still be true. According to the metaphysical interpretation, Buddha-nature is the necessary character of reality as such, reflected in but not exhausted by the consciousness of sentient beings. Despite the fact that impermanence is fundamental in all experience (as Kasulis and I agree), sentient experience is not the only place where impermanence is found. In my opinion, Dogen himself recognizes the possibility of a phenomenological interpretation of his work but warns interpreters not to "phenomenalize" the metaphysical character of Buddha-nature when he comments on the traditional analogy in which the relation of Buddha-nature to the mind is like the moon reflected in water. As Dogen says, "one should fully examine the water's smallness, and clearly discern the size of the moon."⁸³ The character of Buddha-nature is not limited to the experiencing mind. It is "both within and without sentient beings."⁸⁴

If the argument of this essay has been successful, the recognition of Dogen's metaphysics has two benefits. First, it helps us better understand Dogen (and Zen philosophy in general) by clarifying the philosophical status of some of Dogen's claims; it identifies the kind of claims he makes, their object and scope. Second, the metaphysical interpretation identifies a question common to Dogen and Western philosophical and theological traditions, namely "what is the character of reality as such?" Metaphysics thereby provides not only common ground for possible dialogue, but also criteria by which one might assess rival answers.

Notes

I would like to thank Paul Griffiths, Franklin Gamwell, Steven Heine, Tom Kasulis, Gereon Kopf, and two anonymous readers for this journal for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

- 1 - This definition is taken from Charles Hartshorne. For a fuller statement, see especially his "What Metaphysics Is" and "Unrestricted Existential Statements," in his *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1970).
- 2 - The specific views the Buddha refuses to consider in this discourse are (1) whether the world is eternal or not eternal, (2) whether the world is finite or infinite, (3) whether the soul is the same as or different from the body, and (4) whether a sentient being exists after death, does not exist after death, both does and does not exist after death, or neither does nor does not exist after death. See "Cula Malunkya Sutta: The Lesser Discourse to Malunkya," in *Twenty Five Suttas from Majjhimanikaya* (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1991), pp. 65-72.

- 3 – "Cula Malunkya Sutta," pp. 71-72.
- 4 – For example, in the *Fukanzazengi*, his introduction to Zen practice, Dogen says, "You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words and following after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inward to illuminate yourself." One should not "waste yourself in speculations and discriminations" (Dogen, "Bendowa," trans. Norman Waddell and Abe Masao, *Eastern Buddhist* n.s., 4 [1] [May 1971]: 139).
- 5 – For example, Dogen, "Bendawa," p. 133.
- 6 – Ibid., p. 141.
- 7 – According to Francis Cook, Dogen believed that "metaphysical systems . . . are constructed and defended to the death in order to solace and defend minds that are primarily concerned with their own reality, importance, and survival. As Nagarjuna argued in the second century and Dogen continued to insist in the thirteenth, all positions and ideologies arise from and, in turn, nourish the inauthentic self" (Francis H. Cook, "Dogen's View of Authentic Selfhood," in William R. LaFleur, ed., *Dogen Studies* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985], p. 136).
- 8 – As David Kalupahana notes, some of the questions that Gautama does consider, such as questions about causal uniformity and survival of the human personality, are questions that modern philosophers would consider metaphysics. See his *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), pp. 153-161.
- 9 – Fascicles in which Dogen most explicitly defends the legitimacy of speaking and writing include "Mitsugo" and "Datoku." See Dogen, "The Voicing of the Way: Dogen's Shobagenzo Dotoku," trans. Sakamoto Hiroshi, *Eastern Buddhist*, n.s., 16 (1) (Spring 1983): 90-106. On Dogen's reevaluation of speech and writing, see Hee-Jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), chap. 2; idem, "'The Reason of Words and Letters': Dogen and Kana Language," in LaFleur, *Dogen Studies*, pp. 54-82; and Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), chap. 7.
- 10 – Kim, "'The Reason of Words and Letters,'" p. 55. Kim notes that, according to Kato Shaku, Dogen uses terms for "reason" 284 times in the Shobagenza (Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, p. 271 n. 7).
- 11 – This felicitous term was introduced to Dogen studies by David Edward Shaner. See his *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism: A Phenomenological Perspective of Kakai and Dogen* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

- 12 – For a very helpful collection of primary sources in English, see Paul Swanson and Jamie Hubbard, eds., *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). Swanson's "Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism" is an excellent introduction to the movement. I would also like to thank two anonymous readers for *Philosophy East and West* for helping me to relate the philosophical concerns of this essay to this set of historical questions.
- 13 – Those interested in these important textual issues should see Steven Heine, "Critical Buddhism and Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō," in Swanson and Hubbard, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, and David Putney, "Some Problems in Interpretation: The Early and the Late Writings of Dōgen," *Philosophy East and West* 46 (4) (October 1996): 497-531.
- 14 – For example, Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, chap. 4, and Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, vol. 2, *Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 79-103. Similarly, Thomas Cleary uses the metaphysical phrase "the nature of things" to translate Dōgen's *hosshō*. See, for example, "The Nature of Things," in *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), pp. 36-42, and "Awakening the Unsurpassed Mind," in *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), p. 97.
- 15 – Dōgen, "The Time-Being," in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans. Robert Aitken et al. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), p. 79.
- 16 – Dōgen, "The Time-Being," pp. 78, 81, 78.
- 17 – Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 144.
- 18 – Dōgen, "Being Time: Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō Uji," trans. Norman Waddell, *Eastern Buddhist*, n.s., 12 (1) (May 1979): 117.
- 19 – Dōgen, "The Time-Being," p. 78. The term translated in this quote as "moments" does not imply the briefest duration and could be translated simply as "times."
- 20 – This is one of the most significant differences between Dōgen's metaphysics and Whitehead's process metaphysics. For a fuller treatment, see Abe Masao, *Zen and Western Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), chap. 7, and Charles Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Differences from Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 25 (4) (October 1975): 407-413.
- 21 – Dōgen, "Being Time," p. 116. Kim translates this as "The existence-time . . . means that time is already existence and existence is necessarily time" (Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 143).
- 22 – The term here translated as "flowing" is *kyōryaku*, which Heine translates as "total passage"; Kim has "continuity" or "dynamism"; Kasulis has "ranging"

("The Zen Philosopher: A Review Article on Dogen Scholarship in English," *Philosophy East and West* 28 [3] [July 1978]: 353-373, at p. 370); Abe Masao and Waddell have "Being-time has the virtue of seriatim passage" ("Being Time," p. 120). But since it is part of Dogen's goal to reject the idea of linear progress, the term "seriatim" seems an unhappy choice.

- 23 - Dogen, "The Time-Being," pp. 78, 80.
- 24 - Dogen, "Mountains and Water Sutra," in Tanahashi and Aitken, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 104.
- 25 - Dogen, "The Time-Being," p. 80.
- 26 - On the idea of "total dynamic working," see the fascicle by that name, translated by Norman Waddell and Abe Masao in *Eastern Buddhist*, n.s., 5(1) (May 1972): 70-80.
- 27 - Dogen, "Being Time," p. 121.
- 28 - Ibid.
- 29 - Dogen, "Mountains and Water Sutra," p. 97.
- 30 - Dogen, "The Time-Being," p. 80.
- 31 - Dogen, "Being Time," pp. 122, 124, 127.
- 32 - Dogen, "The Time-Being," p. 78.
- 33 - Dogen, "Mountains and Water Sutra," p. 104.
- 34 - Dogen, "Being Time," pp. 122-123.
- 35 - Dogen, "Genjokoan" Trans. Steven Heine, in his *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dogen* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 93. In place of "firewood dwelling in the dharma-position of firewood," Tanahashi and Aitken have "firewood abides in the phenomenal expression of firewood" (*Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 70).
- 36 - Dogen recognizes that the idea that things abide in any sense contradicts the Buddhist Tradition but he sticks to his guns. "Buddha said, 'All things are ultimately liberated. There is nowhere that they abide.' You should know that even though all things are liberated, and not tied to anything, they abide in their own phenomenal expression" (Dogen, "Mountains and Water Sutra," p. 102).
- 37 - Dogen, "Being Time," p. 122; Abe and Waddell explain that the phrase translated as "sharp, vital quick" is *kappatsupatchi*, "an onomatopoeic description of the lively slapping of a landed fish" ("Being Time," p. 122 n. 32). Kim translates the sentence as "living vigorously in a Dharma-situation-such is existence-time" (*Dogen Kigen*, p. 151).
- 38 - Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, p. 150.

- 39 – Ibid.
- 40 – Thomas Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), p. 80; Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dogen and Heidegger*, pp. 129-130.
- 41 – Dogen, "Mountains and Water Sutra," p. 18.
- 42 – Dogen, "Being Time," p. 118.
- 43 – Dogen, "The Merit of Becoming a Monk," in Yuho Yokoi, ed., with the assistance of Daizen Victoria, *Zen Master Dogen: An Introduction with Selected Writings* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), p. 73.
- 44 – Dogen, "The Meaning of Practice-Enlightenment," in Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen*, p. 59.
- 45 – Dogen, "The Meaning of Practice-Enlightenment," p. 58. Kim suggests that what is unique to Dogen's Zen is the central place he accords the problem of time, as opposed to emptiness, Buddha-nature, nonsubstantiality, causality, or other features of Buddhist philosophy (Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, p. 142).
- 46 – Dogen, "Awakening to the Bodhi-mind," in Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen*, pp. 109-110; Dogen, "The Merit of Becoming a Monk," pp. 73-74.
- 47 – Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, p. 17. Gautama's chariot ride is another legendary event that gives rise to the realization that life is impermanent and therefore subject to suffering, but Dogen says that the realization can arise even on seeing one's hair go gray (Dogen, "The Merit of Becoming a Monk," p. 72).
- 48 – Dogen, "The Merit of Becoming a Monk," p. 74.
- 49 – This may be the meaning of the enigmatic passage in the "Genjōkōwan": "To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things," or that of "The essence of the rivers becomes wise people" (Tanahashi and Aitken, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 103).
- 50 – Dogen, "Being Time," p. 128.
- 51 – Dogen, "One Hundred and Eight Ways to Enlightenment," in Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen*, p. 170.
- 52 – Dogen, "Points to Watch in Buddhist Training," in Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen*, p. 48.
- 53 – Dogen, "Birth and Death," in Tanahashi and Aitken, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 74.
- 54 – Moreover, because all things are impermanent, all things teach the dharma. Mountains and grasses, tiles and pebbles, all preach Buddhism in the sense that their very impermanence proclaims the liberating truth. See especially the "Mujo-Seppo" and "Sansuikyō" fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō*.
- 55 – Dogen, "Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature (1)," p. 98.

- 56 – Ibid., p. 97. For discussions of this difficult fascicle, see Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, pp. 120-137; Masao Abe, "Dogen on Buddha-Nature," in *A Study of Dogen: His Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Steven Heine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 35-76; and Takashi James Kodera, "The Buddha-nature in Dogen's *Shobagenzō*," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 4 (4) (December 1977): 267-292.
- 57 - For example, sometimes Dogen speaks of sentient beings as the whole being of Buddha-nature, and Buddha-nature as sentient beings' whole being. These statements suggest that all of one's being is Buddha-nature, a sense that agrees with Dogen's use of body-mind to refer to the subject (Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, pp. 95-100).
- 58 – Dogen, "Buddha-nature (I)," p. 97.
- 59 - Kim, *Dogen Kigen*, p. 124.
- 60 – Dogen, "Shobogenza Buddha-nature (II)," p. 92. I quote the translation by Abe and Waddell without their interpolations.
- 61 – Abe and Waddell call this passage "a baffling crux" and argue that Dogen's claim that Buddha-nature is permanent represents the pre-enlightened understanding of Buddha-nature ("Buddha Nature [II]," p. 92 n. 18), but there seems to be no sign in the text that this is not an idea that Dogen endorses. Joan Stambaugh says the claim that Buddha-nature is permanent "makes no sense as long as we are stuck in the ordinary understanding of impermanence and permanence," that it is beyond logic, an inconceivable but not unexperienceable unity of opposites (Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha-nature: Dogen's Understanding of Temporality* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990], pp. 26, 21). I believe that she is right when she says that Dogen opposes both nihilistic and lifeless permanence, but again I suggest that the metaphysical interpretation of the text makes better sense.
- 62 - Dogen, "Buddha-nature (I)," p. 98.
- 63 – Dogen, "Shobagenza Buddha-nature (II)," p. 92.
- 64 – Dogen, "Being Time," p. 118.
- 65 – The most popular partner for Dogen seems to be Heidegger. See, for example, John Steffney, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 27 (3) (July 1977): 323-336; idem, "Man and Being in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy Today* 25 (1) (Spring 1981): 46-54; Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha-nature*, chap. 7; and Carl Olsen, "The Leap of Thinking: A Comparison of Heidegger and the Zen Master Dogen," *Philosophy Today* 25 (1) (Spring 1981): 55-62. Although it is not always clear whether these writers are completely opposed to the possibility of a metaphysical interpretation of Dogen, their interpretations of Dogen exclude metaphysics. For example, Steffney writes that "Zen is certainly in agreement

with Heidegger that metaphysics must be transcended" (p. 324). Olsen says that Dogen's idea of "Non-thinking is not transcendental thinking. . . . It can be termed trans-transcendental. In other words, it cannot in the final analysis even be characterized" (p. 61). Stambaugh says bluntly, "Metaphysics is dead" (p. ix).

Steven Heine also compares Dogen to Heidegger but is more careful to account for Dogen's critical and constructive relationship to metaphysics. For example, he speaks of Dogen not as rejecting but rather as "clarifying meta- physics" (Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dogen*, p. 12).

- 66 – Kasulis introduces his phenomenological interpretation of Dogen's philosophy in "The Zen Philosopher," and gives a more complete statement of his interpretation in *Zen Action/Zen Person*, chaps. 6 and 7. See also his "Truth and Zen," *Philosophy East and West* 30 (4) (October 1980): 453-464, and "The Incomparable Philosopher: Dogen on How to Read the Shobogenzo," in Lafleur, *Dogen Studies*, pp. 83-98. Further support for Kasulis' phenomenological interpretation can be found in Shaner, *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism*. My comments on Kasulis apply equally well to this position.
- 67 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, pp. 69-70; see also p. 80.
- 68 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, p. 69 n. Kasulis seems to consider this an attribute of Buddhism in general: "To assert or speculate about any reality behind . . . things-as-experienced is to take Buddhism out of its own field of discourse" ("The Zen Philosopher," p. 359).
- 69 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, p. 81.
- 70 – Kasulis, "The Zen Philosopher," p. 364.
- 71 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, p. 69.
- 72 – Kasulis, "The Zen Philosopher," p. 359.
- 73 – Ibid., p. 360.
- 74 – Ibid., p. 368.
- 75 – Ibid., p. 355.
- 76 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, pp. 74-75.
- 77 – Ibid., p. 75.
- 78 – Kasulis, "The Zen Philosopher," p. 368.
- 79 – Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, p. 82.
- 80 – Despite his objections to the term "metaphysics," Kasulis recognizes a Zen interest in the nature and source of reality, or "the source of all things" (Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, pp. 12, 13).

- 81 - For example, Kasulis, "The Zen Philosopher," p. 359.
- 82 - Donald Davidson makes precisely this point in "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme": "In giving up dependence on the concept of an uninterpreted reality, something outside all schemes and science, we do not relinquish the notion of objective truth-quite the contrary. Given the dogma of a dualism of scheme and reality, we get conceptual relativity, and truth relative to a scheme. Without the dogma, this kind of relativity goes by the board. Of course the truth of sentences remains relative to language but that is as objective as can be. In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but reestablish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences true and false" (Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1984], p. 198; see also, in the same volume, his "The Method of Truth in Metaphysics," pp. 199-214).
- 83 - Dogen, "Genjokoan," *Existential and Ontological Dimensions*, p. 136.
- 84 - Dogen, "Buddha-nature (I)," p. 97.