

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma
Book 35
Spiritual Powers

Supplemental Notes

1. **“Spiritual powers”** (*jinzū* 神通): Though loosely translated here as “power,” the second element, *tsū*, in this binome has such primary senses as “to pass through,” “to reach,” “to communicate,” etc.; hence, by extension, “to know,” “to master,” etc. (This connotation will be crucial to some of Dōgen’s treatment of the term below.) The range of its application is suggested in the *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄, by the tenth-century Zen author Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975), who lists five types of “powers.”

1. “Uncanny powers” (*yaotong* 妖通): the transformations and possessions of animal and nature spirits.
2. “Recompensive powers” (*baotong* 報通): the preternatural acts of gods, demons, dragons, etc.
3. “Dependent powers” (*yitong* 依通): the marvelous workings of talismans and potions, etc.
4. “Spiritual powers” (*shentong* 神通): the paranormal powers of contemplatives.
5. “Enlightened powers” (*dao-tong* 道通): the natural accord with all things of the person with “no mind” (*wuxin* 無心).

(Summarizing T.48:494b18ff.) The list reflects a similar one in the *Baozang lun* 寶藏論 (T.45:127b1-9), a text traditionally attributed to the early fifth-century monk Seng Zhao 僧肇 but composed in the Tang.

2. **“Tea and rice in the house of buddha”** (*bukke no sahan* 佛家の茶飯): The term *bukke* (“house of the buddha”) usually refers simply to Buddhists in general; from the context, clearly Dōgen is using it here to mean the buddhas themselves. The phrase neatly combines this term with the common expression *kajō sahan* 家常茶飯 (“family style tea and rice,” or “home cooking”). This usage, which appears elsewhere in Dōgen’s writings, probably derives from the words of Fuyung Daokai 芙蓉道楷 (1043-1118), “The thoughts and words of the buddhas and ancestors are like family style tea and rice” (*fozu yiju ru jiazhang chafan* 佛祖意句如家常茶飯; some versions give simply “the words [*yenju* 言句] of the buddhas and patriarchs”). Quoted in Dōgen’s *shingji Shōbōgenzō*, case 143; and see *Shōbōgenzō kajō* for Dōgen’s discussion of the phrase.

3. “Six spiritual powers” (*roku jinzū* 六神通): The most common list of paranormal powers in Buddhist literature. The exact descriptions of these powers vary somewhat, but there is wide consensus throughout the tradition on the members of the list and the basic features of each member.

1. “Spiritual bases” (*jinsoku* 神足, also *nyoisoku* 如意足; *ṛddhi-pāda*): Supernormal physical powers. A standard list, found in many texts, gives the following: ability to manifest mentally produced images of one’s body, to disappear, to pass through solid objects, to enter the earth, to walk on water, to fly, to touch the sun and moon, to ascend to the heavens of Brahmā; the abilities to cause the earth to shake and to produce fire and water from the sides of one’s body are often included in the list.
2. “Heavenly ear” (*tenni* 天耳; *divya-śrotra*): Supernormal hearing; the ability to hear the sounds of humans and heavenly beings (*devas*), whether near or far.
3. “Knowledge of others’ thoughts” (*tashintsū* 他心通; *para-citta-jñāna*): Mental telepathy; the ability to discern the state of mind of others, especially the person’s spiritual state — whether or not his or her mind is defiled, concentrated, liberated, and the like.
4. “Recollection of prior lives” (*shukumyō chi* 宿命智; *pūrva-nivāsānusmṛtī*): The ability to recall in detail thousands of one’s previous existences.
5. “Heavenly eye” (*tengen* 天眼; *divya-cakṣus*): Regularly associated with the supernormal vision of the *devas*, which can see everywhere without obstruction, but especially the ability to discern the karmic destinies of beings.
6. “Knowledge of the exhaustion of the effluents” (*rojīn chi* 漏盡智; *āsrava-kṣaya-jñāna*): Knowledge of one’s own purification; the recognition that one has been purged of spiritual defilements.

The six powers are closely linked with the practice of the four *dhyānas*. Accounts of these four basic states of meditation are often followed immediately by the claim that, once the contemplative has mastered the *dhyānas*, he or she can apply the power of concentration to the cultivation of five or six spiritual powers.

4. “They are the same as the Snowy Mountains, like trees and rocks” (*dō sessan nari nyo bokuseki nari* 同雪山なり如木石なり): The referent of “Snowy Mountains” (*sessan* or *sessen*) here is ambiguous: it is usually a proper noun indicating the Himalayan range (and hence, perhaps, by extension, the Buddha Śākyamuni, who is said to have practiced in that range in a previous life); but here, it seems to function as a “pivot word,” shifting the discussion from the life of the buddha to the natural world of “trees and rocks” (presumably with the implication, developed below in the text, that the spiritual powers are both the buddha and the natural world).

The phrase, “like trees and rocks,” picks up the well known Zen expression, “a mind like trees and rocks” (*xin ru mu shi* 心如木石), as in Huangbo’s saying, “Only when

your mind is like trees and rocks, do you have the status to study the way.” (*xin ru mu shi shi you xue dao fen* 心如木石始有學道分). (*Guzunsu yulu* 古尊宿語錄, ZZ.118:188a9.)

5. “The ten holy and three wise” (*jisshō sanken* 十聖三賢): A standard term for the bodhisattva path, often used by Dōgen (sometimes in reverse order: *sanken jisshō*). Although there is much variation in the technical accounts of the *bodhisattva-mārga*, traditional Mahāyāna texts regularly distinguish between the categories of (to use the Chinese terms) the “wise” (*xian* 賢; usually *bhadra*) and the “holy” (*sheng* 聖; *ārya*).

The former represents a preliminary set of three stages, during which one cultivates the “good roots” (*shangen* 善根; *kuśala-mūla*) of spiritual karma and practices the contemplative exercises of “calming” (*zhi* 止; *śamatha*) and “insight” (*guan* 觀; *vipaśyanā*). These practices culminate (when all goes well) in the “path of insight” (*jiandao* 見道; *darśana-mārga*) and the elevation to the status of the “holy.”

The stages of the “holy” correspond to the famous ten “grounds” (*ji* 地; *bhūmi*) of the bodhisattva. These are known collectively as the “path of cultivation” (*xiudao* 修道; *bhavanā-mārga*), during which the bodhisattva practices the six (or ten) “perfections” (*polomi* 波羅蜜; *pāramitā*). This path leads to the final state of buddhahood.

In East Asian Buddhism, the “three wise and ten holy” are commonly mapped onto a more elaborate path of fifty-two stages. This path begins with ten stages of “faith” (*xinxin* 信心), proceeds through thirty stages corresponding to the “three wise,” to the ten “holy” stages of the “grounds.” The end of the path is divided into two additional stages: an initial “virtual enlightenment” (*dengjue* 等覺) and an ultimate “wondrous enlightenment” (*miaojue* 妙覺).

See also Supplemental Note 7.

6. “A hair follicle swallowing the vast ocean, a mustard seed containing Sumeru” (*mō don kyokai ke nō sumi* 毛吞巨海芥納須彌); **“emitting water from the upper body, emitting fire from the lower body”** (*shinjō shussui shinge shukka* 身上出水身下出火): The first set of these powers is especially associated with the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*; the second reflects more general Buddhist usage.

The chapter entitled “Inconceivable” (*Pusiyi* 不思議) in the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* describes a series of remarkable powers possessed by the bodhisattva who dwells in the liberation called “inconceivable.” The series begins,

Śāriputra, the buddhas and bodhisattvas have a liberation called “inconceivable.” Bodhisattvas abiding in this liberation can put Sumeru, so high and broad, into a mustard seed, without increasing [the seed] or decreasing [the mountain]. . . . Again, they can put the four great oceans into a single hair follicle, without injuring the fish, tortoises, sea turtles, crocodiles, and other forms of water life. (*Weimo jing* 維摩經, T.14: 546b24-c1.)

Dōgen’s phrasing of these powers adopts the form famous from a story about Linji Yixuan and the notoriously wild monk Puhua.

Puhua and Linji were at a meal at a donor’s home. Ji asked, “A hair follicle swallowing the vast ocean, a mustard seed containing Sumeru (*mao tun ju hai jie na xumi* 毛吞巨海芥納須彌).’ Are these the spiritual powers and marvelous functions (*shentong miaoyung* 神通妙用), or are they the dharma itself just as it is (*faer ruran* 法爾如然)?”

Puhua kicked over the table.

(Translated from the version at *shinji Shōbōgenzō*, case 96, *DZZ.5:174*.) The ability to fly into space and emit water and fire from the sides of the body is one of the earliest examples of Buddhist powers in the literature, a feat said to have been demonstrated by Gautama himself. It became a standard motif in accounts of the *rddhi-pāda*, the first of the six *abhijñā*. (See Supplemental Note 3, above.)

Commentators have singled out a passage in the *Lotus Sutra* as a particularly likely source for Dōgen’s phrase here. It occurs in Chapter 27, on the king Śubhavyūha (*Miao zhuangyan wang* 妙莊嚴王), whose two sons convert their father to the buddha dharma by impressing him with their powers.

They leap into space to the height of seven *tāla* trees and show various spiritual transformations (*shenbian* 神變). They walk, stand, sit, and recline in space. They emit water from their upper bodies, they emit fire from their lower bodies (*shenshang chu sui shenxia chu huo* 身上出水身下出火). They emit water from their lower bodies; they emit fire from their upper bodies. (T.9:60a5-7.)

7. “The five powers or six powers are all the small spiritual powers (*gotsū rokutsū mina shōjinzū nari* 五通六通みな小神通なり): By grouping the five and six powers together, Dōgen is here conflating a traditional soteriological distinction, crucial to the story of the seer and the Buddha that he will quote below, between the first five spiritual powers of an ascetic adept and the sixth power, “knowledge of the extinction of the effluents.” (See Supplemental Note 3, above.) This last power

is regularly distinguished as the only one specific to the Buddhist path itself, in two senses.

First, it is generally held that the initial five members of the list are “mundane” (*seken* 世間; *laukika*) powers, accessible to anyone, whether Buddhist or not, who has mastered the four *dhyānas*; the sixth member is considered “transmundane” (*shutsu seken* 出世間; *lokottara*) and the exclusive accomplishment of those who have recognized the truth of the dharma.

Second, whereas the first five members are not in themselves necessary for progress toward nirvāṇa — and are therefore sometimes held to be optional for the arhat — the sixth, involving as it does the elimination of the “effluents” (*ro* 漏; *āsrava*), or “defilements” (*bonnō* 煩惱; *kleśa*), is a necessary condition for the final soteriological goal, whether it be the nirvāṇa of the arhat or the complete enlightenment of the buddha.

Although some sūtra accounts of the sixth *abhijñā* present it as if it were itself the state of final purification, the developed *mārga* theory tends to treat it merely as the fruit of elimination of any (rather than all) of the *kleśa* and associates it with the “undefiled” (*muro* 無漏; *anāsrava*) state of those who have passed through the “path of vision” (*kendō* 見道; *darśana-mārga*) and attained the *ārya* “path of cultivation” (*shūdō* 修道; *bhāvanā-mārga*).

8. “They are defiled by practice and verification” (*shushō ni senna serare* 修證に染汚せられ): There are several variants of the conversation between Nanyue and the Sixth Patriarch from which Dōgen takes his recurrent teaching of “undefiled practice and verification” (*fusenna no shushō* 不染汚の修證). Here is the version recorded in his *shinji Shōbōgenzō*, case 101 (DZZ.5:179).

The Zen Master Dahui of Mt. Nanyue visited the Sixth Ancestor. The Ancestor asked him, “Where do you come from?”

The Master said, “I come from the National Teacher An on Mt. Song.”

The Ancestor said, “What is it that comes like this?”

The Master was without means [to answer]. After attending [the Ancestor] for eight years, he finally recognized the question. Thereupon, he announced to the Ancestor, “I’ve understood what you put to me when I first came: ‘What is it that comes like this?’”

The Ancestor asked, “How do you understand it?”

The Master replied, “To say it's like anything wouldn't hit it.”

The Ancestor said, “Then is it contingent on practice and verification?”

The Master answered, “Practice and verification are not nonexistent; they're not to be defiled.”

The Ancestor said, “Just this ‘not defiled’ is what the buddhas bear in mind. You're also like this, I'm also like this, and all the ancestors of the Western Heavens are also like this.”

9. “Though they may appear when we do not show them, they fail to appear when it is time to show them” (*fugen ni gen zu to iedomo genji ni gen zuru koto wo ezu* 不現に現ずといへども現時に現ずることをえず): There is no consensus among commentators on how to interpret this difficult sentence. Some (e.g., *Monge*, 616; *Shiki*, 617) take the *gen* of *fugen* and *genji* to mean something like “the constant present”; hence, the small powers appear only occasionally (*fugen ni*) but cannot appear throughout all time (*genji*). Others (e.g., Mizuno, 318) have taken this *gen* as “real”; hence, the small powers seem to appear but do not really. Still others (e.g., Terada, 403) suggest the small powers appear when they are not expected to but not when they ought to.

The present translation takes the *gen* of *fugen* and *genji* as a transitive verb, as found in such Zen challenges as, “why not show you spiritual powers?” (*ho buxian shentong* 何不現神通), or “try to show your spiritual powers” (*shi xian shentong kan* 試現神通看). Hence, on this reading, the small powers may appear even when one does not try to show them, but they may also fail to appear when one ought to show them.

10. The argument of this passage might be paraphrased as follows.

The miraculous appearance (“vomiting forth”) of the world (“the vast ocean”) from its source (the “hair follicle” or “mustard seed”) occurs in time, for time is itself an appearance from the source. What is this source? It comes from the spiritual powers. Hence (although we speak of the appearance from a source), the source is just the working of the spiritual powers itself. This mysterious working is the ongoing activity of the world itself. This mysterious working is the field in which the buddhas operate.

The four sentences beginning, “When a hair follicle vomits forth the vast ocean . . . ,” could be parsed somewhat differently from the translation here, yielding a reading like this.

When a hair follicle vomits forth the vast ocean or a mustard seed vomits forth the vast ocean, they vomit it forth in a single moment, they vomit it forth in ten thousand *kalpas*; for the ten thousand *kalpas* and the single moment have both been vomited forth from the hair follicle and the mustard seed. How are the hair follicle and mustard seed themselves obtained? They have been obtained from the spiritual powers, since this obtaining is itself the spiritual powers. This is just the spiritual powers giving rise to the spiritual powers.

11. The argument of this passage might be summarized somewhat as follows.

Carrying firewood is a venerable Zen practice, seen already in the story of the Sixth Patriarch. We should recognize that Zen practice (“morning blows, three thousand”; “evening blows, eight hundred”) is itself the realization of the buddha’s spiritual powers. If we recognize this, we will see that the enlightenment (“attainment of the way”) of a buddha is itself Buddhist practice. This enlightened practice (“bearing water”) is the true meaning of “the great spiritual powers.” That such practice (“bearing water and carrying firewood”) has been handed down in each generation of Zen is itself the working of these powers. This view (“the great spiritual powers”) is obviously very different from one that sees the powers merely as supernormal deeds (“the little stuff”).

12. If we substitute “spiritual penetrations” for “spiritual powers” as the translation of *jinzū*, we get a reading of this playful passage something like this.

Even if he explains the penetration or obstruction of “that one penetration,” how can the seer penetrate “that one penetration”? For, though the seer has the five penetrations, they are not the five penetrations in “the buddha has six penetrations.” Even if the penetrations of the seer get utterly penetrated in what the penetrations of the buddha penetrate, how could the penetrations of the seer penetrate the penetrations of the buddha? If the seer could penetrate even one penetration of the buddha, by this penetration he should penetrate the buddha.

A less literal paraphrase of the passage might look something like this.

Even if the Buddha explained the real meaning of his powers as a buddha, the seer could not understand them; for the seer’s powers are not those of a buddha. The Buddha can know the seer’s powers, but the seer cannot know the buddha’s powers. If he could know any of the buddha’s powers, he would know what it means to be a buddha.

13. Linji is here quoting the *Liang zhao Fu dashi song Jingang banruo jing* 梁朝傅大師頌金剛般若經 (T.85:2b23-26; Stein 1846), preserved among the Dunhuang documents. Though traditionally attributed to the semi-legendary sixth-century figure Fu Dashi, or Great Master Fu 傅大師 (497-569), it is thought to have been composed in the Tang.

The verse quoted by Linji here is commenting on the *Diamond Sutra’s* discussion of the the “marks” (*xiang* 相; *lakṣana*) of a buddha. It is introduced in the original Fu Dashi text by two passages (b18-21) from Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Diamond*.

Subhuti, what do you think? Can one see the Tathāgata by his bodily marks?” “No, Bhagavat, one cannot see the Tathāgata by his bodily marks. Why is this? The bodily marks spoken of by the Tathāgata are not bodily marks.” (T.8:750a20-23.)

The Buddha admonished Subhuti, “Whatever marks there are, they are all vain delusion. If you see the marks as no marks, then you see the Tathāgata.” (749a23-25.)

14. “[He] is the heavenly being of the self” (*ze jiko ten* 是自己天): This difficult sentence is the result of a curious parsing of Baizhang’s Chinese. Dōgen reads both “heavenly being” (*ten*) here and “human” (*nin*) in his immediately preceding phrase (“the most inconceivable human”) as predicate nominatives governed by the copula *ze*; in the original, they represent the grammatical subjects of separate sentences, from the second of which Dōgen has dropped the predicate. The original Chinese should probably read,

He is a human beyond the buddha, the most inconceivable. The human is the self; the heavenly being is the light of wisdom (*shi fo xiangshang ren zui buke siyi jen shi ziji tian shi zhizhao* 是佛向上人最不可思議人是自己天是智照).