

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

Book 13

Ocean Seal Samādhi

Supplemental Notes

1. These three paragraphs on "arising" seem particularly murky. Here, I hazard what I take to be the argument.

When we understand the sutra passage as the ocean seal samādhi, in which all of reality is apparent, then it is not (as seems to be the case in the sutra) that there are things ("the body") produced ("combine to form") by phenomenal events ("the dharmas"). Rather, all these terms are simply alternative aspects of, or ways of referring, to the ongoing activity of reality ("combine to form this body").

This activity does not produce separate things that could be known ("not awareness," "not cognition"); hence, it cannot be described in our usual terms ("does not state"). In the ocean seal samādhi ("a further encounter"), the distinction between self and other does not hold ("one loses the advantage of the encounter").

The activity is always present ("when the moment comes"), always revealing reality just as it is ("arisen!"), always exposing the self just as it is ("I arise"). This self is also just the activity of the world and, hence, cannot be described ("the I arise that is he does not state"). The activity of reality in the ocean seal samādhi is not to be judged in ordinary terms of time ("the twelve times") or space ("the three realms").

2. A paraphrase of the point here might be put somewhat as follows.

The words "arising and ceasing don't stop" and "who's arising and ceasing?" well express the Zen commitment to ongoing practice ("the vital artery of the buddhas and patriarchs") in the quest to clarify the self ("who's arising and ceasing?"). This practice is modeled on that of the bodhisattva ("manifesting this body," "preaching the dharma for them,") and the tradition of Bodhidharma ("you've got my marrow," "you've got my bones").

3. "You're also like this" (*nyo mo kaku no gotoshi* 汝もかくのごとし); "I'm also like this" (*go mo kaku no gotoshi* 吾もかくのごとし): Derived from the words of the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng, in the following conversation (from the version given in Dōgen's *shinji* 真字 *Shōbōgenzō* [case 101, DZZ.5:178]).

南嶽山大慧禪師〈嗣曹溪、諱懷讓〉參六祖。祖曰、從什麼處來。師曰、嵩山安國師處來。祖曰、是什麼物恁麼來。師罔措。於是執侍八年、方省前話。乃告祖云、懷讓會得、當初來時、和尚接某甲、是什麼物恁麼來。祖云、爾作麼生會。師曰、說似一物即不中。祖曰、還假修證否。師曰、修證即不無、染污即不得。祖曰、祇此不染污、是諸佛之所護念。汝亦如是、吾亦如是、乃至西天諸祖亦如是。

The Chan Master Dahui of Mt. Nanyue (descendant of Caoxi, named Huairang) 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 understood the previous conversation. 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 [i. e., India] are also like this.”

4. “Adorned with many arms and eyes” (*tahan no shugen wo shōgon seri* 多般の手眼を莊嚴せり): Allusion to a dialogue between Yunyan Tansheng 雲巖曇晟 (780?-841) and fellow disciple Daowu Yuanzhi 道吾圓智 (769-835) regarding the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (*senju sengen Kannon* 千手千眼觀音).

雲岩問道吾、大悲菩薩、用許多手眼作什麼。吾曰、如人夜間背手摸枕头。師曰、我會也、我會也。吾云、爾作麼生會。師曰、遍身是手眼。吾曰、道即太煞道、祇道得八九成。師曰、師兄作麼生。吾曰、通身是手眼。

Yunyan asked Daowu, “How does the bodhisattva of great compassion use so many arms and eyes?”
 Wu said, “Like a person searching behind [his head] for his pillow in the night.”
 The master said, “I understand. I understand.”
 Wu said, “What do you understand?”
 The master said, “The entire body is hands and eyes.”
 Wu said, “You talk big talk, but what you say is eight or nine tenths.”
 The master said, “How about my fellow teacher?”
 Wu said, “Throughout the body are hands and eyes.”

(Translated from Dōgen’s *shinji* 真字 *Shōbōgenzo* 正法眼藏, case 105; Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集 5: 182. The dialogue appears in several Chan sources; see, e.g., *Zongmen tongyao ji* 宗門統要集 7:23recto-verso, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 禪學典籍叢刊 1:149-150. Dōgen discusses a slightly different version of the conversation at *Shōbōgenzō kannon* 正法眼藏觀音, DZZ.1:213ff.)

5. An attempt to summarize the above four paragraphs on "ceasing" might come out something like this.

To say that phenomena cease is to say that what we identify as phenomena are empty of real referents and cannot ultimately be defined ("he does not state, 'I cease'"). Since they are empty of real referents, the phenomena we identify as defiled ("the adventitious defilements") are not really defiled. The recognition that they are not really defiled is what defines the enlightened ("the buddhas and patriarchs"), but the state of being undefiled is common to all ("you are also like this"). There are many terms ("hands and eyes") for this condition of emptiness ("nirvana," etc.); but it is simply another, negative way of talking about the activity of reality ("the moment of arising").

The emptiness ("ceasing") of the phenomena refers to the stream of both our experiences ("thought moments") and their objects ("dharmas"). In one sense, we can say with Mazu that, since they are empty, these are not really separate entities in relation to each other ("not related," "not opposing"); but we can also say more positively that emptiness is the reality of all things, both of the person ("the five aggregates") and its world ("the four elements"). This is the reality within which authentic buddhist practice ("hands and eyes") takes place, the reality that marks the authentic practitioner ("the merit of the buddhas and ancestors").

Just as it is said that phenomenal events do not oppose each other as entities, so the activity of reality ("arising") and its emptiness ("ceasing") do not oppose each other. Both are always present ("in beginning, middle, and end"). They are what we might call the outer ("officially," "in meeting") and inner ("privately," "if you raise the point") aspects of the same reality.

Together, they are just ("this is") the pure ("undefiled") phenomena of Buddhist spiritual life ("practice and verification") called the ocean seal *samādhi*.

6. One possible reading of this paragraph might go somewhat as follows.

The *samādhi* referred to in the expression "the ocean seal *samadhi*" is what is actually happening ("a realization") all around us; it is the Buddhist expression of what is actually happening ("a saying"). It is like the compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara spontaneously reaching out to the world ("groping for a pillow in the night"). It is like the Buddha Śākyamuni preaching the *Lotus Sūtra* to beings in the watery world of the dragon king. Because the buddhas and bodhisattvas are inherently free from themselves ("they do not state, 'I arise'"), they are already immersed in the world of what is actually happening ("I am in the ocean"). The self as agent and the sphere of its actions are mutually constitutive of each other: the self ("the former face") expressing the Buddhist truths ("I always preach") configures the world around it ("the slightest motion of a single wave and ten thousand waves follow"); the world ("the latter face") of the self's expression ("the *Lotus Sūtra*") configures the self ("the slightest motion of ten thousand waves and a single wave follows"). Whether its direction is from the self reaching out ("let out") or from the world responding ("wind up"), the relationship between the two ("a line of a thousand feet") is immediate and direct ("goes straight down"): that is, the self (the

former face”) and the world (“the latter face”) are but two features of a single reality (“I am on the face of the ocean”). Indeed, to speak of a self (“former head”) and its world (“latter head”) is already to posit something extra (“putting a head on top on your head”). It is not that there is a self (“someone”) in a world (“in the ocean”): the world of the enlightened self (“I am in the ocean”) is not the mundane world (“where the worldly dwell”) nor even the spiritual world (“what is loved by the sages”); it is, rather, the condition of being inherently located (“I am in”), of necessarily expressing the truth (“the preaching of always only”). Hence, the world of the enlightened self (“in the ocean”) is not centered on the self (“does not belong to the center”) and is not divided between self and world (“does not belong to inner and outer”): it is, rather, the constant, ongoing (“remaining forever”) activity of expressing the Buddhist truth (“preaching the *Lotus Sūtra*”). This activity has no particular locus or direction (“not in east, west, north or south”); yet it is a vehicle (“boat”), at once without reward (“empty”) and filled with treasures (“laden with moonlight”), that is carrying us back where we belong (“coming home”). The activity of expressing the Buddhist truth is our natural resort (“true return”); it is to be seen not merely as work in the world (“getting drenched”) but the highest form (“limits”) of the enlightened life (“the way of the buddha”). This is the activity of the Zen masters’ work of certifying the enlightenment of their students, what they call “sealing the sky, sealing water, and sealing mud.” The “ocean seal” of the “ocean seal *samādhi*” is this activity, but it is more: it is the activity of certifying the world itself (“sealing the ocean”). This activity of certifying the world is the handing down of enlightenment (“singly transmitting the mind seal”) that is certified by the Zen masters (“seals water, seals mud, seals the sky”).

7. “It’s not the merit of the ten thousand things to stop breathing” (*ban’u hi go kō zeki* 萬有非其功絕氣): A tentative translation. Most interpreters favor a reading that would yield something like, “the ten thousand beings, when lacking their merit, stop breathing (*ban’u ha sono kō ni arazareba zekki nari*). (See, e.g., *Shōbōgenzō chūkai zensho*, 579; similarly, Nishiari, 102.) Dōgen’s sentence is difficult to interpret because his quotation here (and in his *shinji Shōbōgenzō*) cuts off Caoshan’s answer in mid-sentence, making a predicate of what had been the subject of a second clause (and, indeed, some manuscripts of the *Shōbōgenzō* restore the full version):

師曰、萬有非其功絕氣有其德。

The master said, “The ten thousand beings are without their merit; one whose breath has stopped has its virtue.”

Caoshan’s original statement seems to be saying that the ocean holds only those beings that are devoid of merit, whereas the dead body retains its virtue (i.e., individual identity?) and, hence, does not belong.