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Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma  
*Shōbōgenzō*

Book 42

Talking of the Mind  
Talking of the Nature  
*Sesshin sesshō*

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TREASURY OF THE EYE OF THE TRUE DHARMA  
BOOK 42  
Talking of the Mind, Talking of the Nature  
*Shōbōgenzō sesshin sesshō*

INTRODUCTION

According to its colophon, this fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō* was composed in 1243, at Kippōji, the monastery in Echizen (present Fukui) where Dōgen resided following his departure from the capital area in the summer of the same year.

The text represents a commentary on a conversation between Shenshan Sengmi and his dharma brother Dongshan Liangjie (807-869), famed founder of Dōgen's Caodong (Sōtō) lineage. The title derives from Dongshan's remark in the conversation that "there's someone inside who's talking of the mind and talking of the nature."

In the Chinese Chan literature (and perhaps even in Dongshan's remark), to talk of the mind and the nature was sometimes seen as a waste of time. There was a story, for example, of the Second Ancestor, Huike, who always talked of the mind and the nature but did not understand them. There was the opinion of the famous Song-dynasty figure Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163), who warned his followers against talking of the mind and talking of the nature.

In an earlier text, the *Mountains and Waters Sutra*, Dōgen seems to agree with this view; but here he takes the opposite position, arguing forcefully that talking of the mind and the nature are the very essence of the Zen tradition, what he calls "the essential functions of the Seven Buddhas and the ancestral masters." Talking of the nature, he says, is the nature "talking," the Buddha nature expressing itself in the world; and it is participation in this activity that constitutes the teaching, practice, and awakening of the way of the buddha.

From this position, Dōgen criticizes those who think that one must give up talking of the mind and the nature in order to attain the way. In particular, he singles out Dahui as someone who does not understand the mind and the nature, someone who has not “tasted the tea and rice of the buddhas and ancestors.”

This attack on the Linji master Dahui, as well as a passing jibe at Linji himself, together with the praise of the Caodong founder, Dongshan, as “the most honored among the ancestors,” has led some scholars to see this fascicle as in part an argument for the superiority of Dōgen’s Sōtō tradition.

The following translation is based on the text appearing in Kawamura Kōdō, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, vol. 1, pp. 449-456, with slight changes in section formatting. It has appeared elsewhere (in a less fully annotated form) in *Dharma Eye*, number 16. An online html version (without Chinese or Japanese text) can be found on the SZTP web site, at [www.scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3](http://www.scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3). Other translations of this fascicle can be found in Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 2 (1977); Yokoi, *The Shōbo-genzo* (1986); and Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo*, vol. 3 (1997).