

Genjokoan (Actualizing the Fundamental Point)

[These questions and reflections are simply to help you engage more deeply with the text and promote discussion; they are not intended to represent any sort of “content”.]

0) As you read and consider (both on your own and with the group), keep this question alive: “How do I see/experience/understand this in my own life?”

1) What is the “fundamental point”?

2) How do you “actualize” this fundamental point?

3) What is the point of actualizing the fundamental point?

4) Genjokoan has also been translated as “Manifesting Absolute Reality”. How does this representation relate (if at all) to “Actualizing the Fundamental Point?”

5) Wisdom and Compassion are the “two wings” of the buddhadharma. Yet, Dogen does not mention compassion even once in Genjokoan. Why might this be? As you read, consider how compassion might implicitly arise from the text.

6) Suppose Dogen were asking **you** about genjokoan – how do you respond?

1

As all things are buddha-dharma, there is delusion and realization, practice, birth and death, and there are buddhas and sentient beings.

1.1) OK. This makes sense; I can look around and find these things. Right?

1.2) But, what’s this business about “all things are buddha-dharma”?

As the myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddha, no sentient being, and no birth and death.

1.3) Now wait just a minute. I thought I was just told that there **were** these things. What gives?

The buddha way is, basically, leaping clear of the many and the one; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas.

1.4) OK, now I’m really confused. There are, there aren’t... which is it?

1.5) Reflect on the progression of these three lines. What is Dogen saying about the world?

- 1.6) *To what extent does a hierarchy exist between these lines? To what extent are they perspectives through which we might move? In the latter case, what are examples of when each perspective would be useful/problematic?*

Yet in attachment flowers fall, and in aversion weeds spread.

1.7) *Why?*

1.8) *So what?*

1.9) Genjokoan is not mysterious (necessarily). *Fill in the blanks: Yet in attachment _____, and in aversion _____.*

In what ways do the preceding lines, considered together or in any combination, (a) resonate with your own life and/or understanding and (b) contribute to the overarching goal of Buddhist practice – the cessation of suffering?

2

To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion. That myriad things come forth and experience themselves is awakening.

- 2.1) *How do you “carry yourself forward”? Why does Dogen say this is delusion?*
- 2.2) *How do the myriad things “experience themselves”? Why does Dogen characterize this as “awakening”? To what extent can you experience “things experiencing themselves?”*
- 2.3) *What is the difference between “carrying oneself forward” and “things experiencing themselves?” To what extent is this important?*
- 2.4) *What is a time when you “carried yourself forward”? What was a time when “things experienced themselves?”*
- 2.5) *Shoken Winecuff (abbot of Ryumonji Zen Monastery) once said, “When you come to Ryumonji, don’t bring the monastery to yourself, but bring yourself to the monastery.” Reflect on this statement.*

Those who have great realization of delusion are buddhas; those who are greatly deluded about realization are sentient beings. Further, there are those who continue realizing beyond realization, who are in delusion throughout delusion.

- 2.6) *What do buddhas realize about delusion?*
- 2.7) *About what are sentient beings deluded regarding realization?*
- 2.8) *What is realized beyond realization?*
- 2.9) *“... in delusion throughout delusion.” How can one be more deluded than deluded? Why does Dogen say this?*

When buddhas are truly buddhas, they do not necessarily notice that they are buddhas. However, they are actualized buddhas, who go on actualizing buddhas.

2.10) *What is it to be “truly” a buddha? Are there “false buddhas” or “half-buddhas”?*

2.11) *Why might a buddha not notice being such? What if they did?*

2.12) *Consider this statement: “When deluded sentient beings are truly deluded sentient beings, they do not necessarily notice that they are deluded sentient beings.” To what extent is this the case?*

In what ways do the preceding lines, considered together or in any combination, (a) resonate with your own life and/or understanding and (b) contribute to the overarching goal of Buddhist practice – the cessation of suffering?

3

When you see forms or hear sounds fully engaging body-and-mind, you grasp things directly. Unlike things and their reflections in the mirror, and unlike the moon and its reflection in the water, when one side is illuminated, the other side is dark.

3.1) *How do we “fully engage body-and-mind” in hearing and seeing? In what ways (if any) is this different from how we usually experience things?*

3.2) *What, in your estimation, would it feel like to “grasp things directly”? To what extent is this something you have experienced?*

3.4) *If you don’t “grasp things directly”, how do you encounter them?*

3.5) *Why do you feel Dogen this issue (“grasping things directly”) is important to Dogen’s worldview and way of thinking? Why has he included it here?*

3.3) *The last line is challenging: What is Dogen showing us here?*

In what ways does this section (a) resonate with your own life and/or understanding and (b) contribute to the overarching goal of Buddhist practice – the cessation of suffering?

4

To study the buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of realization remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly.

4.1) *How do you study the self? Have you ever done it? In what ways (if any) is self-study in this context different from/similar to, other forms of self-study*

- 4.2) *We often understand the result of study to be an accumulation of knowledge. Here, however, Dogen says that the goal of this study is to **forget**. What is he pointing toward here?*
- 4.3) *To what extent is “to be actualized by myriad things” similar to “things experiencing themselves”?*
- 4.4) *“... the bodies and minds of others drop away ...” What is Dogen asking us to see here?*
- 4.5) *Many Zen teachers talk of the “stink of Zen”. What is this stink of Zen? In what ways (if any) might stinky Zen be related to “no trace of realization remains”?*

In what ways does this section (a) resonate with your own life and/or understanding and (b) contribute to the overarching goal of Buddhist practice – the cessation of suffering?