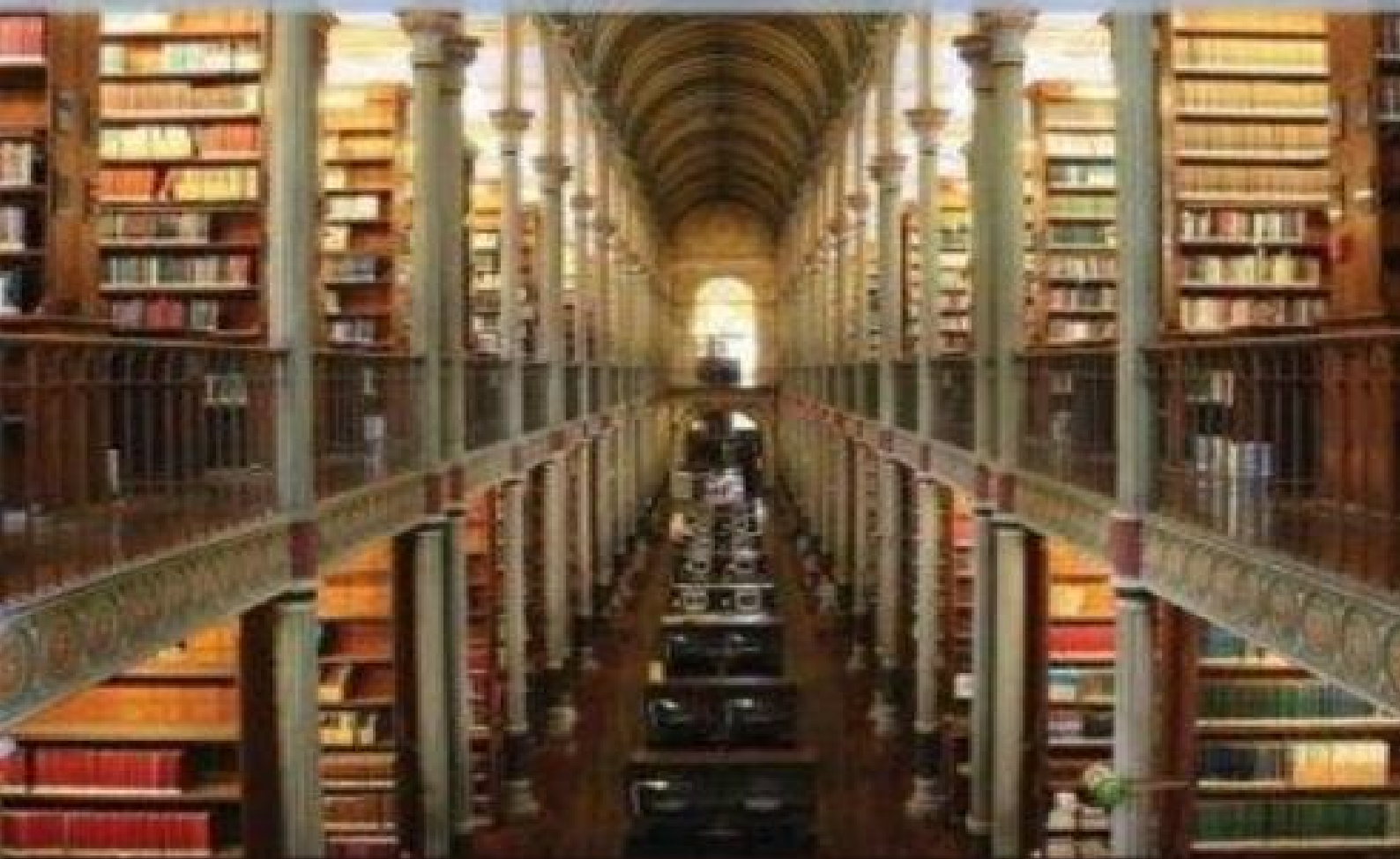


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Visions of Awakening
Space and Time

Dogen and the Lotus Sutra

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Dogen and the Lotus Sutra

TAIGEN DAN LEIGHTON

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Preface

In the striking story from the Lotus Sutra that is one starting point for this work, an incalculable number of venerable, dedicated bodhisattvas, or enlightening beings, emerge suddenly from an open space under the earth to pledge to the Buddha Sakyamuni their assistance in keeping alive his teaching, even far into the future. This tale of chthonic bodhisattvas emerging from under the ground resonates with a number of mythic and historical narratives. Comparing such images may provide some illuminating metaphoric contexts for this story, which begins chapter 15 of the sutra.¹

Although a survey of analogous mythological references is beyond the scope of this work, a particularly instructive comparison to the story of emerging bodhisattvas is a modern account by spiritual writer Annie Dillard of a experience she had in 1982. Her story reaches back in time to around 206 BC, historically within a century before the Lotus Sutra began to be committed to writing, and to events in China some six centuries before Kumarajiva translated

Dillard visited the tomb of the Qin emperor near Xi'an (formerly Chang'an) and the thousands of clay soldiers buried with the emperor who had first unified China were being unearthed after their recent discovery in 1974. As her eyewitness response is a key part of the comparison, I quote Dillard at some length:

Chinese archaeologists were in the years-long process of excavating a buried army of life-sized soldiers. The first Chinese emperor, Emperor Qin, had sculptors make thousands of individual statues. Instead of burying his army of living men to accompany him in the afterlife—a custom of the time—he interred their full-bodied portraits.

At my feet, and stretching off into the middle distance . . . I saw what looked like human bodies coming out of the earth. . . . From the trench walls emerged an elbow here, a leg and foot there, a head and neck. Everything was the same color as the terra-cotta earth and the people: the color of plant pots.

Everywhere the bodies, the clay people, came crawling from the deep ground. A man's head and shoulders stuck out of a trench wall. He wore a helmet and armor. From the breast down, he was in the wall. The earth bound his abdomen. . . I looked down into his face. His astonishment was formal.

The earth was yielding these bodies, these clay people: it erupted them forth, it pressed them out. The same tan soil that embedded these people also made them; it grew and bore them. The clay people were earth itself, one-shaped.³

The first obvious difference is that this uncovering of entombed soldiers is a historical event, unlike the literary, scriptural emergence from the earth of spiritual benefactors in the Lotus Sutra. However, as Donald Lopez traces the term "bodhisattva," the Sanskrit word *bodhi* is the state of being awake, and the Sanskrit term *sattva* has etymological roots that include "sentient being," "mind

or "intention," but also "the sense of strength or courage, making the compound bodhisattva mean 'one whose strength is directed toward enlightenment.'" The meaning was later emphasized in the Tibetan translation for bodhisattva, which means literally "enlightenment-mind-hero," or "one who is heroic in his or her intention to achieve enlightenment."⁴ This meaning may have been reinforced by the historical Sakyamuni Buddha having previously been a prince well-trained in martial arts. Thus the bodhisattva has sometimes been associated with warrior strength and courage and with the heroic aspect of dedication to awakening.

As a further parallel, East Asian Mahayana imagery frequently discusses the relationship of teachers and students, or buddhas and bodhisattvas, using metaphors of lords and vassals, based on the relationship of Chinese emperors to their soldiers and government ministers. So it seems that the Chinese soldiers buried under the earth for all those centuries are not an inappropriate analogue for the underground bodhisattva retainers of Buddha.

Of course, one prime facet of the Lotus Sutra underground bodhisattvas is their long-lived practice and enduring availability, whereas the Xi'an soldiers are mere "clay people." However, Dillard's reaction to observing how "the earth was yielding these bodies, these clay people: it erupted them forth, it pressed them out," is a revealing comparison for the emerging from earth of the bodhisattvas. First, we simply note the earthiness of the Qin soldiers, clay people colored terra-cotta, of "the earth itself, only shaped." The Lotus Sutra bodhisattvas are alive, not molded from terra-cotta. And yet they have been under the earth, in the open space under the ground, for longer, much longer, than the two-millennia-old Qin dynasty soldiers, and these bodhisattvas also profoundly represent the earth element.

Another noteworthy aspect of Dillard's account is her astonishment at the partial exposure of the soldiers, like Michelangelo's striking figures still half-embedded in stone. It is as if Dillard were seeing the bodhisattvas' rapid emergence in extreme slow motion. And her astonishment at the sight is reminiscent of the puzzled confusion of the Buddha's regular disciples in the sutra story.

Yet Dillard transposes this shock and bewilderment to the soldiers themselves: "A man's head and shoulders stuck out of a trench wall. The earth bound his abdomen. . . . I looked down into his face. His astonishment was formal." Dillard's account allows us to wonder at the contrasting response of the Lotus Sutra

underground bodhisattvas, as they suddenly emerged after vast ages beneath the earth. Their eruption is itself so startling that we might neglect the perhaps equally amazing readiness that they exhibit in promptly making offerings to the Buddha and proclaiming their availability to sustain the Dharma, with no befuddlement or hesitation themselves after their astonishing, sudden emergence. From their extraordinary performance of enduring service and dedication, one might derive much concerning the spiritually nourishing nature of earth and of time in the Mahayana, and we will see that certainly Dogen does so.

The underground bodhisattvas express the immanence of the liberative potential, or buddha nature, in the ground of the earth, as well as in the inner psychological ground of being, ever ready to spring forth and benefit beings when called. The image represents the fertility of the earth itself and the wondrous healing, natural power of creation, or the phenomenal world.

This work explores this section of the Lotus Sutra and how it was used by the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Eihei Dogen to express his dynamic worldview. The first chapter presents the story of Lotus Sutra chapters 15 and 16 beginning with the underground bodhisattvas emerging to maintain the sutra's teaching long into the future, leading to the revelation of the Buddha's inconceivably long life span. This story is pivotal to the sutra's meaning and to its literary structure, as early Chinese commentators Daosheng and Zhiyi viewed the story as dividing the earlier cause or practice section from the effect, or fundamental teaching, later section of the sutra. The worldview of Dogen in which space itself becomes awakened and is mutually, interactively supportive with practitioners is also introduced.

The second chapter presents a range of hermeneutical and methodological considerations related to Dogen and the Lotus Sutra, discussing approaches particularly relevant to Dogen: skillful means; Tathagata garbha, or buddha womb teaching; and practice as enactment of realization. This is followed by pertinent considerations from Paul Ricoeur's Western hermeneutical perspectives on use of metaphor and wordplay as a context for appreciating Dogen's creative use of language, and Ricoeur's writings about proclamation that are illuminating of Dogen's discourse style, which to a great extent explicitly draws from the Lotus Sutra. Also discussed is the new interest in the strong role of imagery and imagination in Buddhism, important for both Mahayana sutras and for Dogen.

Chapter 3 traces the responses and commentaries to the Lotus Sutra, especially to its chapters 15 and 16, from a series of prominent East Asian Buddhist teachers. Featured in these discussions are early Chinese teachers Daosheng, Zhiyi, and Zhanran; Dogen's rough contemporaries in Japan, Saigyō, Myōe, and Nichiren; and the commentaries of later Japanese Zen figures Hakuin, Ryōkan, and the modern master Shunryū Suzuki. Among major issues that these contrasting responses address are the nature of the earth and the practitioner's relationship to this world; the manner in which this Lotus Sutra story applies to daily, later, ongoing practice; and the nature of the Buddha himself in the light of this story.

Chapter 4, in many ways the heart of this book, is a close reading of a range of references throughout Dogen's writings to Lotus Sutra chapters 15 and 16, organized in terms of earth, space, and time, and then by how Dogen uses these citations as practice encouragements for his students. These commentaries reveal Dogen's strong lifetime allegiance to the Lotus Sutra text, and also his approach to awakening as a function of the nature of reality, intimately connected with the dynamic support of the earth, space itself, and a multidimensional view of the movements of time.

Chapter 5 discusses a range of Mahayana imagery concerning earth, space, and their confluence and related Buddhist backgrounds on temporality, and how these may have served as a wider context for Dogen's worldview beyond the Lotus Sutra as his major Mahayana source. David McMahan's discussions of

the spatialization of time help further reveal how Dogen's view of the spiritual potential of space and earth influenced his more celebrated teachings of being time and his exhortations to fully inhabit time.

Finally, the afterword speculates about some of the potential implications of Dogen's Mahayana worldview to contemporary twenty-first-century concerns. These include parallels to modern cutting-edge physics and string theory, the worldview's relationship to a spiritual perspective on ecology and our struggle to sustain our environment, and then to social engagement and a modern, socially active Buddhist ethic.

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I have been thinking and teaching about the material in this book, including the central story in the Lotus Sutra and its relationship to Dogen's teaching, for more than fifteen years, so I have been helped in the relevant research by many people. My long-time study of Dogen has benefited immeasurably from collaborative translation work I have done with Shohaku Okumura (for three books we cotranslated) and with Kazuaki Tanahashi (included in the three books of Dogen translations he has edited). I am grateful for their friendship, as well as their invaluable help in understanding Dogen and his language. I have also had the pleasure and benefit over the years of extensive discussion and friendship with Dogen and Zen scholars Steven Heine, Norman Waddell, Griffith Foulk, Thomas Cleary, Will Bodiford, Carl Bielefeldt, and Tom Wright. They have all informed my understanding of Dogen.

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The Pivotal Lotus Story and Dogen's Worldview

In the modern Western appropriation of Zen Buddhism, Zen often has been viewed as an intriguing but abstract philosophical doctrine, or as a spiritual exercise designed to achieve higher states of personal consciousness or therapeutic calm. However, the Zen tradition in East Asia developed as a branch of the Mahayana bodhisattva teachings, dedicated to universal liberation. As a religion with soteriological aims, Zen is based on and grew out of a Buddhist worldview far apart from the currently prevalent preconceptions of a world formed of Newtonian objectifications. This objective worldview still clouds our attitudes toward many realms, including the study of religion, even though it has now been discredited by new cutting-edge physics. Contrary to present conventions, Zen Buddhism developed and cannot be fully understood outside of a worldview that sees reality itself as a vital, ephemeral agent of awareness and healing.

Probably the most prolific writer among the historical Zen masters is Eihei Dogen (1200-1253), considered the founder of the Soto Zen tradition in Japan, which is now spreading in many places in the West. Dogen's various writings have been widely translated and commented on in recent decades and have played a major role in the importation of Buddhism into the West. Dogen traveled as a young monk to China in 1223, where he met his teacher, and then in 1225 brought back the Soto Zen lineage, founding a training monastery, Eihei-ji, and an order of monks that became Japanese Soto Zen. Dogen's writings are among the most voluminous and wide-ranging

of any East Asian Buddhist figure and are filled with references both to the recorded sayings of traditional Chan masters and also to many sutras.

Dogen often cites the Mahayana sutras. Among these, he by far most frequently cites the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, commonly known as the Lotus Sutra. This sutra was the scripture most venerated in the Tendai school, in which Dogen was first ordained and trained. But even after his return from four years of Chan training in China in 1227, when he began to spread the Zen teachings in Japan (especially its huge koan lexicon, of which Dogen had achieved exceptional mastery), he continued to frequently cite and to venerate the Lotus Sutra until his death in 1253.

This work shows how Dogen used the Lotus Sutra especially to express his worldview of earth, space, and time themselves as awakening agents in the bodhisattva liberative project. I focus particularly on Dogen's citations of the pivotal story in chapters 15 and 16 of the sutra. This story concerns the bodhisattvas emerging from the earth who will preserve and expound the Lotus teaching in the distant future, and the resulting revelation that the Buddha once appears to pass away as a skillful means, but actually has been practicing, and will continue to do so, over an inconceivably lengthy life span. I explore Dogen's interpretations of this story and how he treats its images and metaphors to express his own religious worldview of the liberative qualities of spatiality and temporality.

The visions portrayed in this story of the underground bodhisattvas and the Buddha's inconceivable life span demonstrate the basis for the development of Mahaayaana practices of transcendent enactment and faith. The range of perspectives of Dogen's contemporary Kamakura-period figures and of other prominent East Asian Buddhists concerning the key teachings in these chapters also illuminate possibilities for contemporary twenty-first-century approaches to understanding fundamental Mahaayaana orientation and awareness.

The Story: Telling the Tale

Turning to the sutra story itself, I offer the following paraphrase of the entire narrative, which appears in chapters 15 and 16 of Kumarajiva's translation of the Lotus Sutra, the standard version in East Asia.¹ A group of bodhisattvas have been visiting from a distant world system in order to hear Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha) preach the Lotus Sutra. At the beginning of chapter 15, they ask the Buddha if he would like them to return in the future to maintain the Lotus Sutra teaching. Sakyamuni Buddha has been soliciting such future assistance in previous chapters for the period to follow his imminent

demise and passage into nirvana, and especially for the distant future "evil age." Historically many Lotus Sutra devotees have identified their own period with this evil age. This was certainly true for Dogen's contemporaries in Kamakura-period Japan, who thought they had entered the degenerate age of mappō, the final decline of the Dharma. It might seem true as well for contemporary interpreters in our own evil age of cycles of terrorist vengeance, environmental devastation, massive corruption, and preemptive warfare.

As soon as the visiting bodhisattvas make their offer, Sakyamuni declares their help unnecessary, whereupon, "from out of the open space under the ground simultaneously spring forth vast numbers of experienced, dedicated bodhisattvas. The immensity of their numbers and of their retinues of attendant bodhisattvas is expressed in conventional Mahayana mathematical metaphors about the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River. Each of the bodhisattvas offers appropriate ritual veneration to the Buddha. The names of their four leaders are mentioned: Superior Conduct, Boundless Conduct, Pure Conduct, and Steadfast Conduct. Sakyamuni Buddha declares that for countless ages all of these numerous bodhisattvas have been diligently practicing under the ground, have been present to help aid and awaken suffering beings, and will continue their beneficial practice and promulgation of the teaching even through the future evil age.

Maitreya Bodhisattva, predicted to be the next future incarnated buddha, voices the questions of the startled and puzzled assembly of Sakyamuni's disciples as to the identities and backgrounds of these emerging bodhisattvas, previously unknown to the regular disciples. Sakyamuni declares that he himself has trained all these underground bodhisattvas. Even more perplexed, Maitreya asks how that could be possible, as these unfamiliar underground bodhisattvas are obviously venerable sages, some considerably more aged than Sakyamuni. This would be like a twenty-five-year-old saying he is the father of a hundred-year-old son. Maitreya recounts that all the disciples know that Sakyamuni was born some eight decades before, left his palace in his late twenties, and after undergoing austerities discovered the Middle Way and awakened under the bodhi tree four decades previous to his present expounding of the Lotus Sutra.

This question leads to the climactic teaching of the whole sutra, the revelation in chapter 16 by Sakyamuni Buddha that he only seems to be born, awaken, and pass away as a teaching expedient. He declares that, in actuality, he has been awakened and practicing through an inconceivably long life span, and for many ages past and future is present to awaken beings. The extent of this time frame is depicted with vast astronomical metaphors. The Buddha explains that he appears to live a limited life and pass away into nirvaana only as a skillful means for the sake of all those beings who would be dissuaded from their own diligent conduct.

and miss the importance of their own attentive practice, by the knowledge of the Buddha's omnipresence.

The Buddha illustrates the situation with one of the parables characteristic of the Lotus Sutra, in which a good physician returns home to find his many sons delusional after having taken poison. The physician offers them good medicine as an antidote, but many refuse to take it because of their delusions. They are finally willing to take and be cured by the medicine only when brought to their senses by grief after hearing a false report that their father has passed away.

The Story's Position in the Sutra

Both doctrinally and in terms of literary structure, the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the sutra are pivotal chapters. They present central aspects of the Lotus Sutra teachings about the meaning of bodhisattva activity and awareness in space and time and also serve to separate the two main sections of the sutra.³

Going back to early Chinese commentators such as Daosheng (ca. 360-434; Doshō in Japanese) and Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597; Tendai Chigi in Japanese), founder of the Chinese Tiantai school, the first fourteen chapters of the sutra have been considered the cause, or practice section, and the last fourteen chapters beginning with this story, have been marked as a separate section indicating the fruit of practice. This demarcation was also designated as between the "trace teaching" (shakumon) and the "origin teaching" (hon-mon).⁴ This division between what is traditionally called the cause and result halves of the sutra also conveys its conventional and ultimate meanings, respectively. Zhiyi, and much of East Asian Buddhism after him, considered the Lotus Sutra sections prior to this story to be the trace teachings about the historical Buddha as the manifested trace of the fundamental teaching and of the fundamental or original Buddha who is revealed in chapter 16 as having an inconceivably long life span. The remainder of the sutra, including and after this revelation, is then designated the fundamental teaching.

The primary structural boundary in the sutra that is marked by this story also reflects a major shift in the trajectory and history of Mahayana practice. The

practice or cause portion of the sutra reflects the traditional Indian approach of rigorous bodhisattva cultivation over numerous lifetimes as the precursor to eventual buddhahood in the distant future. This is presented in the first half of the sutra itself via numerous predictions by Sakyamuni of future buddhahood in named buddha lands for his specific disciples, all set in the far distant future after a great many lifetimes of their practice. Teachings with this approach to the Mahayana detail many elaborate systems of stages of development of bodhisattva practice. This cause section of the sutra emphasizes the diversity of skillful means in the variety of teachings presented by the Buddha, all directed at the great One Vehicle and the single great cause for buddhas appearing in the world: to lead suffering beings into the path to awakening.

On the other hand, the full realization of the inconceivable life span of Buddha and thus his omnipresence in the subsequent fruit of practice phase of the sutra can be seen as a significant inspiration for sudden or rapid awakening practice beyond stages of development. The teaching of rapid awakening became a major Mahayana approach to practice in East Asia.

Implications of the Story for Mahayana Praxis

This complex story of the underground bodhisattvas and the Buddha's inconceivable life span expresses the vastness and the immanence of the sacred space as well as time and breaks open limited, conventional, linear perspectives of both space and time. It bears a variety of practical and theoretical implications that were critical to the development of East Asian Buddhist practice and faith.

The visions portrayed in this story demonstrate a foundation for the development of East Asian Mahaayaana practices of transcendent faith and ritual enactment of buddhahood, dependent not on lifetimes of arduous practice, but rather on immediate, unmediated, and intuitional realization of the fundamental ground of awakening. Paul Groner has described this shift as "shortening the path," in which there is the possibility of the path to liberation occurring rapidly. Jan Nattier describes this same shift as from a "progress philosophy" to a "leap philosophy," referring to categories from Karl Potter, in which gradual progress over lifetimes of cultivation is replaced by a leap.⁶ Historically in East Asia, w

might see such a leap enacted via the various approaches to "sudden enlightenment" or underlying realization in the Chan/ Zen traditions, but also in the "leap" of faith in the more devotional traditions, such as the mind of faith (shinjin) in the teachings of Dogen's contemporary Shinran (1173-1263).⁷

This shift to rapid awakening is most directly exemplified in the Lotus Sutra itself by the speedy arrival at enlightenment of the eight-year-old Naga princess in the Devadatta chapter, chapter 12 in Kumarajiva's version of the sutra. The story is highly radical in the Mahayana tradition, as the Naga princess rapidly attains enlightenment even though she is only a child and is not quite human, aside from being female (and thus inferior in patriarchal Asia). But the theoretical context for the shift to immediate realization of awakening is most fully revealed in the story in chapters 15 and 16, with its depiction of Buddha's omnipresence throughout vast reaches of time.

This omnipresence and the revelation of his vast life span bear implications for the ontological status of Buddha and raises issues for his soteriological function and efficacy. The initial image of the underground bodhisattvas as awakening teachers, benefactors, or guides emerging from the earth, "the open space under the ground," has resonance with a variety of mythic motifs. Through Dogen's references to these images, this work explores the symbolic, spiritual significance of both this story of chthonic bodhisattvas springing forth from the ground to maintain sacred teachings and diligently protect beings, and the story of Buddha's inconceivable life span. These narratives reveal the nature of the divine in the bodhisattva tradition and the purpose of its spiritual practice.

Dogen's Radical Worldview and Its Diverse Sources

Dogen's perspectives on the key teachings in these Lotus Sutra chapters, and how he refers to them, help reveal and clarify his dynamic view of earth, space, and time. Dogen's radical worldview is one of the most striking features of his teaching. His view of time, especially from his notable 1240 Shōbōgenzō essay "Being Time" ("Uji"), has received much attention in modern commentaries.⁸ But the totality of his worldview, including of earth and space, has not yet been given appropriate consideration.

The sources for Dogen's Mahaayaana worldview are hardly limited to the Lotus Sutra. Before considering his references to chapter 15 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra, and how they illuminate and express his perspective, a brief reference to other sources for this worldview and some examples of his fundamental expressions of it will be helpful.

Other relevant contexts in East Asian Mahayana thought include the writings of the Tiantai scholar Zhanran (711-782; Tannen in Japanese), who articulated the teaching potential of grasses and trees, traditionally seen as inanimate and thus inactive objects.⁹ Zhanran devoted an entire treatise to explicating the buddha nature of insentient things, though the Sanlun school exegete Chizang (549-623; Kichizo in Japanese) had previously argued that the distinction between sentient and insentient was not viable.¹⁰ The development of buddha nature discourse in China is clearly a significant source for Dogen's thinking. In his 1241 essay "Buddha Nature" ("Bussho," included in one of his masterworks, True Dharm Eye Treasury; Shobogenzo in Japanese) Dogen expresses his persistent stance of radical nonduality when he takes the important Mahaparinirvana Sutra saying, "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature," and plays with the Chinese characters to rewrite it as "All sentient beings completely are Buddha nature."¹¹ In this statement and his extended commentary, Dogen argues for the all-pervasiveness of buddha nature.

Another source for Dogen's view of reality is the Chinese Huayan teaching based on the Avatamsaka Sutra, or Flower Ornament Sutra, which describes the interconnectedness of all particulars. Thereby the world is a site of radical, mutual interconnection of the subjective and objective, in which each event is the product of the interdependent co-arising of all things. Huayan teachers such as Fazang (643-712; Hozo in Japanese) developed and elaborated this vision. It can be described with their philosophical fourfold dialectic of mutual nonobstruction of the universal and the particular, and beyond that, the mutual nonobstruction of the particulars with "other" particulars.¹²

This Huayan dialectic was elaborated in Chinese Chan with the Five Degree or Five Ranks philosophy of the interrelationship of universal and particular that was first enunciated by Dongshan Liangjie (807-869; Tozan Ryokai in Japanese). Dongshan is considered the founder of the Chinese Caodong (Japanese Soto) lineage, which Dogen later brought from China to Japan.¹³ Dogen only occasionally refers explicitly to this Five Rank dialectic of interfusion of the ultimate within the particulars of the world. But it is clearly pervasive as a background in much of his philosophical teachings. Dongshan also was significant in echoing the Tiantai teacher Zhanran about the buddha nature of nonsentient things (although apparently without any reference to the Lotus Sutra, the most esteemed Tiantai scripture). Dongshan's elaborate story of awakening with his teacher Yunya Tansheng (781-841; Ungan Donjo in Japanese) centered on his question of

Another source can be seen in the worldview of Japanese Vajrayana, also referred to as Esoteric, or mikkyo, Buddhism, whose enactment approach to practice is discussed in chapter 2. Although mikkyo teachings first entered Japan through the Shingon school, they had been fully integrated into Tendai, the Japanese development of the Tiantai school, long before Dogen was initiated into Tendai monasticism as a teenager.

Thus there are a variety of Mahayana sources, including buddha nature discourse and Huayan and Caodong/Soto dialectics, that provide a context for

Dogen's worldview. But it is the Lotus Sutra that Dogen himself frequently cites to express his views of earth, space, and time, and his relevant references to it in chapters 15 and 16, on which this study focuses.

The cosmological perspective of the world as an active agent of awakening is evident even in Dogen's earliest writings. His "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendowa"), written in 1231, is his fundamental text on the meaning of zazen, or seated meditation (now considered part of Shobo-genzo). In the "Self-Fulfillment Samadhi" (jijuy zanmai) section of this writing (just preceding the long question-and-answer section), Dogen avows that when even one person sits upright in meditation, "displaying the buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind," then "everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha mudra and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment."¹⁵ (Mudra usually refers to a spiritually impactful hand gesture, but here it connotes the whole of the upright seating posture in zazen.) The notion that space, the world surrounding the practitioner, can itself become enlightenment or awakening goes beyond Chinese buddha nature formulations and is profoundly subversive to conventional modern viewpoints. In this passage Dogen continues to elaborate on this awakening of all things. Echoing Zhanran and Dongshan, he adds that "earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in ten directions, carry out buddha work." Not only are the landscape features of the world dynamically active, but they also are agents of enlightening activity. Moreover, and quite significantly, the meditator and the particular elements of the world "intimately and imperceptibly assist each other."

According to Dogen there is a clear and beneficial mutuality in the interrelationship between the practitioner and the environment. "Grasses and trees, fences and walls demonstrate and exalt it for the sake of living beings; and in turn, living beings, both ordinary and sage, express and unfold it for the sake of

grasses and trees, fences and walls."¹⁶ This world is very far from being an objective, Newtonian realm of dead objects that humans hold dominion over and manipulate and utilize for their human agendas. Rather, the myriad aspects of phenomena are all energetic partners in spiritual engagement and devotion.

This dynamic perspective on space is expressed in a great many of Dogen's voluminous writings. One other revealing example appears in his 1246 Shōbōgenzō essay "Turning the Dharma Wheel" ("Temborin"), a story that Dogen repeats in his other major work, *Eihei Kōroku*, in Dharma hall discourses 179 given in 1246.¹⁷ In both texts he begins with a saying about space by Sakyamuni Buddha from the *Surarigama Sutra*, along with revised versions of that statement in commentary by four great Chinese Chan masters, including Dogen's own teacher.¹⁸ Dogen then gives his own commentary version, disclosing his radical view of the spiritual nature of space, which here is the reality of all the world of particulars.

The historical Buddha's original statement is, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions disappears." One possible interpretation of this is that when one person completely awakens, the space between things and all separation dissolves in the unity and harmony of the interconnectedness of all being. Then Dogen presents the four Chinese masters' variations on this statement, with different outcomes for what happens "when one person opens up reality and returns to the source." For the important Linji lineage master Wuzu Fayuan (1024-1104; Goso Hoen in Japanese), upon the opening of reality and return to the source, "all space in the ten directions crashes together resounding everywhere." For his successor Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135; Engo Kokugon in Japanese), compiler and commentator of the celebrated *Blue Cliff Record* (*Hekigan Roku*), in all space "flowers are added on brocade." For Yuanwu's successor Fuxing Fatai (n.d.; Bussho Hotai in Japanese), "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions is simply all space." These evocative responses indicate respect for and celebration of the world as the place in which awakening occurs and then may further adorn the world. For Dogen's own teacher, Tiantong Rujing (1163-1228; Tendo Nyojo in Japanese), however, when someone returns to the source, "the mendicant breaks his rice bowl," which might indicate more personally a seeker's completion of his work.

But Dogen's own version of this utterance expresses a deeper appreciation for the vitality of the spatial environment and for the actual spiritual potency and capacity of the world to manifest awakening. He states, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions opens up reality and returns to the source."²⁰ For Dogen it is in such a world, capable of its own awakening, that bodhisattva practitioners act to benefit beings and foster their awakening.

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