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Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen, translated by Thomas Cleary. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. vii + 123 pp.

This volume presents the translation of thirteen fascicles of Dōgen's masterwork with an introductory essay on Dōgen's use of language and its relation to meditation in light of traditional Zen practice, as well as prefatory comments (and in some cases, annotations) to each fascicle. Cleary is one of the most noted and prolific translators of Zen and Far Eastern Buddhist texts; his previous publications include works by Dōgen and the Sōtō sect. In this case, the material presented has become increasingly familiar. All of the fascicles have appeared in English at least once, some of them two or more times, and particularly important and famous pieces such as "Genjōkōan" and "Uji" are available in a half-dozen versions. Yet, Dōgen's creative but idiosyncratic Sino-Japanese writing is generally recognized as being so complex and multi-dimensional in its interweaving of novel approaches to traditional Buddhist doctrine that there will continue to remain room for some time for new interpretations if they are faithful to the text and supported by classical and modern Japanese scholarship. So, an important question in evaluating this volume is, What does Cleary's approach to translation and broad background in Mahāyāna and Zen contribute to the subtle and profound philosophical maze of the *Shōbōgenzō*?

According to the introductory material (in the Foreward, Introduction and jacket notes), there are three main rationales for this translation: first, it attempts to preserve "the form as well as content, on the premise that both are functional parts of the original design, which is arresting and demands close attention" (p. 20); second, its commentary and notes help make "accessible to a wider audience a Zen classic once considered to be the private preserve of Sōtō monks and Buddhologists . . . including readers from various fields in the sciences and humanities" (jacket); and third, it has "selected [fascicles] for their emphasis on perennial issues in Buddhist learning and action." (Foreward)

The last of these points is probably the strongest. Cleary uses his considerable expertise in Chinese Buddhist texts to illuminate the development and forms of expression of Dōgen Zen. His references in the introduction to other Zen writings, such as those by Gyōzan and Wanshi, underscore the influence of Chinese thought on Dōgen without losing sight of the uniqueness of Dōgen's approach. Cleary convincingly argues that "a great deal of Dōgen's writings for contemplation in *Shōbōgenzō* would fall into the general category of complex *kōan*, and can

be used with great effect in aiding the mind in the practice of fluid integration of multiple perspectives" (p. 8). In some cases, the connections may be overstated. For example, the interpretation of the elusive opening paragraph of "Genjōkōan" in terms of the traditional Chinese Sōtō doctrine of "five stages" (*goi*) could be valid, but it does not account for Dōgen's explicit criticism of the *goi* standpoint in certain sections of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Yet, Cleary's work may help initiate further research into relatively unexplored territory and reverse the tendency to interpret Dōgen in light of his mentor, Ju-ching, while overlooking other significant Chinese influences.

The rationale concerning form in addition to the content of the original material, however, is somewhat problematic. Since the *Shōbōgenzō* is written in a conventional prose form—and not in an unusual or unexpected poetic or calligraphic form (although it contains references to Zen poems as well as a poetic quality in its composition)—the question of capturing "form" would not seem to present an issue for the translator. What Cleary basically means by form is that "passages and phrases which the original text keeps in Chinese, as well as certain technical terms which seem to stand out for emphasis, have been italicized in the English." (p. 20) The practice of highlighting the Chinese references is valuable, since Dōgen's writing frequently consists of reinterpretations or rewritings of early Chinese sources. But most translations, at least the careful ones, do set the references off by quotation marks or indentation. Perhaps Cleary is more thorough than some because he italicizes each word from a source passage that is mentioned in Dōgen's commentary. The real difficulty in this issue arises from the fact that both the Chinese references and the technical terms are highlighted in exactly the same way. In the original text, these so-called technical terms are never identified as such. Thus, doing so here entirely reflects the translator's own judgments, which are not explained and are also not a matter of the text's form. In addition, this practice is not always followed consistently. Many of the important doctrines, such as *shinjin-datsuraku* (casting off or shedding body-mind) and *kikan* (pivotal working), are not italicized; some that are, including *kyōryaku* (passage), are not explained in the commentary. Perhaps a comprehensive glossary would have been a more effective means of indicating the special concepts in Dōgen's thought.

Thus, the key question remains, How does the translation fare in terms of content? This is generally a thorough and accu-

rate job, which is often quite successful in conveying the full implications of Dōgen's highly suggestive writing. Several of the translations, such as "Sansuikyō" and "Kūge," are particularly noteworthy for capturing the tone and essence of Dōgen's thought. In other cases, however, the translation is not as meticulous or as certain as one might hope. An examination of the crucial "Genjōkōan" fasicle (pp. 32-35), which appears first in most Japanese editions, reveals a number of problems. First, the translation seems too literal in the phrase, "enlightenment on top of enlightenment," by which Dōgen means "enlightenment beyond enlightenment" or "self-surpassing enlightenment." In a related context, Cleary translates the term (*jō* or *ue*) as "progress (or transcendence)" (p. 30). On the other hand, the rendering of the central doctrine of *jū-hōi* as "normative state" (which is not italicized) appears to take too much liberty. Dōgen's term, which is usually translated more literally as "abiding dharma-position" (Cleary's rendering in "Uji") refers to the concrete manifestation of the interpenetrating currents of life and death, akin to Nishida's logic of place (*basho*) of absolute nothingness. "Normative state" not only loses the temporal significance underlying the spatial metaphor, but seems to overlook the point that the type of philosophical perspective articulated by Dōgen is descriptive of the ontological condition of reality as it is, rather than offering an axiological recommendation for how things should be.

While the problem in the above points may be a lack of familiarity with the standard Japanese commentaries, another difficulty is the awkward rendering of Dōgen's philosophical writing. For example, the final sentence in the well-known passage in "Genjōkōan" concerning the relation between self-forgetfulness and the casting off of body-mind is translated as: "There is ceasing the traces of enlightenment, which causes one to forever leave the traces of enlightenment which is cessation." (p. 32) This version seems to carry a threefold redundancy: ceasing the traces causes one to leave the traces which is an act of ceasing. In Dōgen's writing, however, the two clauses build upon and enhance one another as well as the metaphor of shedding. Thus, an alternative version would be: It [casting off body-mind] is the cessation of the traces of enlightenment, and this traceless enlightenment is perpetually renewed."

Another example of awkward or misleading translation is in the title of several fascicles. For instance, "Genjōkōan" is rendered as "Issue at Hand," which may be an interesting but controversial attempt to capture in contemporary idiom Dōgen's

unique sense of spontaneity. As Cleary explains, *genjōkōan* means the "manifestation" or "present actuality" of the Zen *kōan*. But it does not seem likely that the phrase "issue at hand" will clarify for the reader that actuality should not be understood in the ordinary sense of "ready-made" or simply "in front of me." Rather, *genjōkōan* suggests the primordial realization of the priority and immediacy of here-and-now experience without the impediments of presupposition and conceptualization. The problem with Cleary's rendering in the title is reflected by the fact that he translates *genjō* as "manifestation" or "actualization" when it is used in the body of the fascicles. Similarly, "Zenki" translated as "The Whole Works" may not convey the unity of the totality (*zen*) and dynamism (*ki*) of unobstructed and interpenetrating temporal reality suggested by the original terms. One case in which Cleary's approach does seem effective is the translation of "Immo" (Skt., *tathā*) as "Such." By leaving off the substantive suffix in "suchness," which most translations use, he illuminates Dōgen's expression of concrete experience without abstraction.

The rationale concerning the book's appeal to non-specialists in the sciences and humanities is also questionable. Certainly Dōgen's thought can and should continue to be explored in terms of disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and aesthetics for its views on time, nature, language, ethics, etc., in addition to religious attainment. However, these issues are not directly addressed in the introduction or commentary. Nor do the fascicles selected necessarily reflect an interest in interdisciplinary dialogue. For example, the philosophical and literary richness of "Busshō," "Shinjingakudō," and "Muchū-setsumu" are not included, while several of the fascicles that are focus almost exclusively on meditative realization. In this context, the title is rather misleading since this volume contains only a small portion of the entire *Shōbōgenzō* (Japanese editions range from 75 to 95 fascicles), with no mention of how the fascicles were selected or put in sequence in relation to the original complete work.

In summary, this is a handy and generally reliable translation if used with some caution, but it probably only accomplishes part of the goals it sets.

Steven Heine