

Joyful Mind Zendo
Ango
January 6 – April 7, 2025
Quotations for Study and Reflection

The quotations that follow are taken from ***Moon in a Dewdrop; Writings of Zen Dōgen***, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi, (with various translators. North Point Press, New York, 1985. Reissued 1995.).

These quotations and the accompanying comments were originally composed for the Ango booklet published by Silver Spring Zendo, One Heart Sangha for its 2012 Ango booklet and are offered here for study and reflection by those participating in Joyful Mind Zendo's 2025 Ango. The comments on the quotations were added by the following members of One Heart Sangha: Anne Christoffel, Dan Bruner, Bill Dietrich, and Sensei Rose Mary Myoan Dougherty.

Zen teacher Tenshin Zenki Reb Anderson writes:

“...[F]or our practice to be alive and relevant to the actual problems of our current suffering...we must go beyond the previous ways our tradition has gone beyond itself...In reading this text, we can see how [Dōgen] ingested, transformed, and became a new expression of his own Dharma nourishment. We can observe how his study chews up the records of his own ancestors and completely or incompletely digests them...If we just sit by and watch while not participating in the dynamic way that Dōgen leaves the tradition behind in the dust, the dust will engulf our present generation.”¹

Thus the invitation in taking in the following words of nourishment from Dōgen is to chew them up and digest them as completely or incompletely as our practice will allow, so that we each might become a new expression of the Dharma for our generation. The commentaries from the past are offered as examples only. **We should leave them in the dust and not let them distract us from creating our own expression of the dharma!**

May it be so! ***Gassho!***

¹ From the Forward to the translation of the *Eihei Koroku (Dōgen's Extensive Record)* by Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura. Wisdom Publications. 2010.

Monday, January 6

Mountains do not lack the qualities of mountains. Therefore they always abide in ease and always walk. You should examine in detail this quality of the mountains' walking.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 97.

Mountains seem massive and immovable. Their ease comes because they practice by simply being what they are: just mountains. Yet they are always changing, subject to the law of impermanence. So it is with us. We disturb our essential peace when we try to be what we are not, straying from our true nature, and when we resist life's inevitable changes.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, January 7

Mountains' walking is just like human walking. Accordingly, do not doubt mountains' walking even though it does not look the same as human walking.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 97f.

The practice of all beings - even mountains - is the same: just this! We should look beyond outward appearances and see deeply into the true nature of all things, people, and ourselves. Then we realize our essential oneness with all things.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, January 8

Keeping its own form, without changing body and mind, a mountain always practices in every place.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 98.

We practice in every place and in every time by simply being who we are in the present moment. Sounds simple enough, yes? Yet often we think we need to change something about ourselves to be happier, or thinner, or wealthier, or less stressed-out, or whatever it is we think we need to add or subtract from ourselves. As Suzuki Roshi said, you are perfect just the way you are...and you can use a little improvement!

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, January 9

Even if you see mountains as grass, trees, earth, rocks, or walls, do not take this seriously or worry about it; it is not complete realization.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 99.

The calculating mind seeks to analyze each part of life in order to understand and control it. In doing so we miss the inherent oneness of reality. Do not obsess about our faults, nor do the same with others. See the beauty of the whole person. Just this!

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, January 10

Seeing into mind and seeing into true nature is the activity of people outside the way. Set words and phrases are not the words of liberation.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 99.

Avoid intellectual concepts, or what anyone else tells you about the nature of reality. "Dharma gates are boundless." No words needed to enter them!

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, January 11

You should understand the meaning of giving birth to a child. At the moment of giving birth to a child, is the mother separate from the child? You should study not only that you become a mother when your child is born, but also that you become a child. This is the actualization of giving birth in practice realization.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 99f.

Like birth and death, mother and child are one: no separation, no distinction, no difference. Yet at the same time there is separation, distinction, difference. Likewise as we practice, we do not become something other than what we already are. And yet in each moment of practice we are different. How wondrous!

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, January 12

Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither existent nor nonexistent, neither deluded nor enlightened.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 101.

Shitou says: "But even slight distinctions made, set earth and heaven far apart" (Affirming Faith in Mind). Trying to describe reality is our attempt to control it. To grasp the essential reality we must drop our labels, seeing life just as it is. Notice the labels you make for the people and things you encounter - then drop the labels!

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, January 13

You should go forward and backward and leap beyond the vital path where other fathoms other.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 101.

The Prajnaparamita mantra says: Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate: "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond." Gone where? Beyond what? You cannot understand by thinking about it!

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, January 14

[T]he views of all beings are not the same. You should question this matter now. Are there many ways to see one thing, or is it a mistake to see many forms as one thing? You should pursue this beyond the limit of pursuit.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 102.

One pillar of practice is Great Doubt - our willingness to not-know, to let go of our deeply held conceptions about the nature of life. Can you see how important this was to Dōgen?

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, January 15

The existence of water is not concerned with past, future, present, or the phenomenal world. Yet water is actualization of the fundamental point.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 103.

Splash water on your face. Experience it firsthand. Now do you understand?

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, January 16

Now when dragons and fish see water as a palace, it is just like human beings seeing a palace. They do not think it flows.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 104.

What one person considers a castle or a palace is just a creation of mind - someone else might think it a dump. We create our own reality, usually reflecting our likes and dislikes. Shitou says "When preferences are cast aside the Way stands clear and undisguised...Just let those fond opinions go." (Affirming Faith in Mind).

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, January 17

Do not foolishly suppose that what we see as water is used as water by all other beings. You who study with buddhas should not be limited to human views when you are studying water.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 104.

Dōgen states it plainly: Do not adhere to fixed views!

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, January 18

[F]rom ancient times wise people and sages have often lived near water. When they live near water they catch fish, catch human beings, and catch the way...Furthermore, there is catching the self, catching catching, being caught by catching, and being caught by the way.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 106.

Do not think about this!

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, January 19

An ancient buddha said, "Mountains are mountains, waters are waters." These words do not mean mountains are mountains; they mean mountains are mountains. Therefore investigate mountains thoroughly.

Dōgen, "Mountains and Waters Sutra," p. 107.

Each thing is just as it is, its thusness awaiting our awareness. Go beyond words. Let your awareness just be.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, January 20

Even if you try millions of times to avoid cold or heat, it is like trying to put a tail where your head is.

Dōgen, "Spring and Autumn," p. 109.

Sometimes we try to avoid or control what life brings us. But controlling life is an illusion. What is better than this moment, just as it is? As the song says, this is as good as it gets!

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, January 21

Study this place as everywhere and study everywhere as now.

Dōgen, "Plum Blossoms," p. 118.

Zen teacher Ezra Bayda suggests that when we become aware of thoughts, feelings, or emotions, we simply ask, What is this? This attitude of inquiry can help us see more clearly the nature of what he calls our "believed thoughts," thought-constructs we substitute for reality. Let go of our believed thoughts and we see life just as it is.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, January 22

Blossoms have deep, vast characteristics of inside and reveal high, vast characteristics of outside. This outside-inside is the blooming of one blossom.

Dōgen, "Plum Blossoms," p. 118.

Everything has an inherent unity, an inherent wholeness that is its true reality. The blooming of each person is the same: our wholeness.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, January 23

When you paint spring, do not paint willows, plums, peaches, or apricots - just paint spring. To paint willows, plums, peaches, or apricots is to paint willows, plums, peaches, and apricots. It is not yet painting spring.

Dōgen, "Plum Blossoms," p. 121.

We cannot realize our enlightened true nature through analyzing or any such intellectual pursuits. Let go of them. Just be!

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, January 24

Each and every ordinary activity is simply having rice.

Dōgen, "Everyday Activity," p. 125.

All that we do, even the most ordinary thing, with wholehearted attention is practice and can lead us to realization. Life, just as it is, is the Way.

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, January 25

One mouth swallows the empty sky. The empty sky is received with palms together.

Dōgen, "Everyday Activity," p. 126.

This day may we bow in emptiness, free from all our mental concepts, opinions, images, labels, to receive what is real, the truth of all things. Gassho!

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, January 26

A person who has not had rice cannot have hunger. Since this is so, a person who gets hungry every day is someone who has had rice. You should understand this completely.

Dōgen, "Everyday Activity," p. 126.

There is in us a deep desire, a longing to live into our "original face before our parents were born." We experience this birthright through wholehearted practice-practice/enlightenment, as Dōgen calls it. We long to return to it. Live into and be that longing each moment.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, January 27

The time when the moon appears is not necessarily night. Night is not necessarily dark. Do not be limited to the narrow views held by human beings.

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 129.

The full moon of autumn rises in afternoon stillness. Where is day? Where is night? Complete just as it is.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, January 28

Amid the "before and after" – in the myriad years of a moment – which of these is not the moon?

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 131.

Each breath we draw is the timeless present. Just sit, breathe in and breathe out without concern for before and after.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, January 29

Everyday activity at this moment is hundreds of grasses brilliant in the moon, the minds of ancestors brilliant in the moon.

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 131.

Eating breakfast, driving the car, climbing stairs, let us open our eyes, open our ears, open our hearts. The mind of the ancestors illuminates it all.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, January 30

[C]louds and moon travel at the same time, walk together, with no beginning or end, no before or after.

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 132.

Moon and clouds, wind and leaves, swirling in their dance. Letting go of ideas, join the dance. You are the moon. You are the clouds. Then you are you.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, January 31

You should know that the Tathagata's words do not make a metaphor of clouds for dharma suchness, of moon for dharma suchness.

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 132.

Because our minds are limited, we make metaphors to understand reality. But we know that reality is beyond our metaphors. Where can we encounter it? The moon and water make a reflection in a puddle. Step in!

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, February 1

Round and crescent are not the cycle of coming and going. The moons do and do not use coming and going: go freely and grasp freely coming and going.----- [T]he moons are as they are.

Dōgen, "The Moon," p. 133.

*"But there is one thing which always remains clear.
It is pure and clear not depending on life and death.
What, then, is the one pure and clear thing?"*

From The Human Route koan

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, February 2

Thus it is said, "To penetrate one thing is to penetrate myriad things."

Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake," p. 134.

The entire universe arises together moment by moment. Give yourself wholeheartedly and with full attention to the one activity before you and you enter the universal arising.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, February 3

The ten names and the three cognitions are a painting on a scroll. The virtues, the powers, the methods, and the noble path are also a painting on a scroll. If you say a painting is not real, then the myriad things are not real.

Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake," p. 134.

Can we put away our paint boxes? Can we say nothing? Should we try to?

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, February 4

Because the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting.

Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake," p. 138.

We will never have the minds of angels or computers. The activity of our human minds is painting a world for us to inhabit. We can paint delusion, but we can also paint realization. Paint with attention!

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, February 5

[M]ake earth, water, wind, and fire your vital activity; make mind, consciousness, and wisdom your great death. In this manner, the activities of the house have been passed on with spring, autumn, winter, and summer as furnishings.

Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake," p. 138.

When we give full effort to realizing our way, every situation becomes an opportunity to practice and we find ourselves at home everywhere.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, February 6

When you understand this meaning with your body and mind, you will thoroughly master the ability to turn things and be turned by things.

Dōgen, "Painting of a Rice-cake," p. 139.

Imagine being able to freely respond to all situations. Let that be an inspiration when we lose our way.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, February 7

Although this inconceivable dharma is abundant in each person, it is not actualized without practice, and it is not experienced without realization.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 143.

The way has no short cuts. Trust in your own original nature and practice diligently.

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, February 8

This is not only practice while sitting, it is like a hammer striking emptiness: before and after, its exquisite peal permeates everywhere.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 147.

Touching emptiness in our sitting practice changes us and that change spreads like sound waves from a bell being struck. Just as we cannot hear the sound waves until they meet our ears, so we may not be aware of the change in ourselves until it manifests in our everyday life.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, February 9

Each moment of zazen is equally wholeness of practice, equally wholeness of realization.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 147.

Take your seat and enter fully into each breath - body and mind. Experience the joy of being complete. In that breath-moment nothing at all is lacking.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, February 10

[T]he zazen of even one person at one moment imperceptibly accords with all things and fully resonates through all time.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 147.

Our practice is not just for ourselves; it is for all beings everywhere and at all times. Conversely, we are supported by all beings who have ever practiced. When the bell rings, let us bow together with them.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, February 11

Now the realm of all buddhas is inconceivable. It cannot be reached by consciousness. Much less can those who have no trust, who lack wisdom, know it.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 148.

Without trust, how can we have the courage to let go of our thinking? In what can we trust? Look to the light that shines in our own hearts. It is not made by conscious thought.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, February 12

In this sense, the words "Mind itself is buddha" are like the moon reflected on water; the teaching "Sitting itself is becoming buddha" is like the reflection in the mirror. Do not be concerned with the splendor of the words.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 149.

Our reflections can give us useful information but they can also be an invitation to spin off into thoughts. Be careful! Words about the way, however splendid and true, can never be a substitute for practice.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, February 13

You should also know that we do not originally lack unsurpassed enlightenment, and we are enriched with it always. But because we cannot accept it, and we tend to create groundless views, regarding them as actual things, we miss the great way; our efforts are fruitless.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 150.

Why can't we accept this? If we don't know, let us turn the light of practice around, look inside, and inquire.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, February 14

Because practice of the present moment is practice-realization, the practice of beginner's mind is itself the entire original realization.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 151.

"This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few."

Shunryu Suzuki

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, February 15

Those who regard worldly affairs as a hindrance to buddha-dharma only think that there is no buddha-dharma in the secular world, and do not understand that there is no secular world in buddha-dharma.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 155.

There is no separation between practice mind and secular mind; there is just your one mind. In its shining there is no distinction between spiritual and secular; there is only what is.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, February 16

Question 15: Can we attain realization if we practice, even in this last age of decline:

Answer: -- [I]t is taught that everyone attains the way by practice.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 156.

The kingdom of God is right here, right now. The Buddha way lies open at our feet. The world will never be without sorrow. Don't let the news detour you from the path.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, February 17

Those who practice know whether realization is attained or not, just as those who drink water know whether it is hot or cold.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 156.

What is realized is not a teaching received from outside but is our own truest self. Thus we recognize it as we become who we always knew we were.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, February 18

If you practice with right trust, you will attain the way, regardless of being sharp or dull.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 159.

Emotions belong to the conditioned body and they are always changing as our circumstances change. Trust in the self that does not change and persevere in practice whether you are feeling "up" or "down".

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, February 19

[S]preading the way of buddha ancestors does not necessarily depend upon place or circumstances. Just think that today is the beginning.

Dōgen, "On the Endeavor of the Way," p. 160.

The past no longer exists and the future is a fantasy. Each today we can make a new beginning. What a blessing!

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, February 20

[R]ealization inevitably differs from your expectation. ... You should reflect on this: What you think one way or another before realization is not a help for realization.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 161.

We waste time and energy, and tie ourselves in knots with ideas about "realization". Let's just pay attention to what is, right at this moment.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, February 21

[I]t is worth noticing that what you think one way or another is not a help for realization. Then you are cautious not to be small-minded.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 161.

When we fix on an idea of "realization" as something grand and far away from our present lives, we actually constrict our attention and lose awareness of what is unfolding right now.

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, February 22

Past thought in themselves were already realization. But since you were seeking elsewhere, you thought and said that thoughts cannot be realization.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 161.

By thinking of realization as some state "out there" and far away from our actual thoughts and feelings, we separate ourselves from realization. Let's stop looking elsewhere for what is already here.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, February 23

To be unstained does not mean that you try forcefully to exclude intention or discrimination, or that you establish a state of nonintention. Being unstained cannot be intended or discriminated at all.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

Let's stop wrestling with ourselves and just clarify what is unfolding inside us and around us, with loving attention.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, February 24

Realization does not depend on thoughts, but comes forth far beyond them; realization is helped only by the power of realization itself. Know that then there is no delusion, and no realization.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

Where does realization come from? If we try to "make" it by our own efforts, it feels further away than ever. Let's open our hearts and our practice to forces beyond our control and comprehension, and sit with faith.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, February 25

Being unstained is like meeting a person and not considering what he looks like. Also it is like not wishing for more colors or brightness when viewing flowers or the moon.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

How often do we distort what we see and close ourselves off from possibilities with those we encounter by adding judgment to each encounter?

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, February 26

That which is accumulated has no self, and no mental activity has self.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

When we see patterns in our thoughts, words or actions, how can we respond creatively and appropriately without tying ourselves down with the idea that "that's just who we are"?

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, February 27

[W]hen you clarify that there is nothing to be disliked or longed for, then the original face is revealed by your practice of the way.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

Just day-to-day, moment-to-moment sitting, walking, breathing, working, driving, taking care of what is needed – without adding our judgments and trying to hang on to anything or push it away.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, February 28

[T]he form of the flowers or moon in your mind should not be understood as self, even though you think it is self.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

What presents itself to our eyes, ears, and awareness is so much more than any idea we might have about it!

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, March 1

Spring has the tone of spring, and autumn has the scene of autumn, there is no escaping it. So when you want spring or autumn to be different from what it is, notice that it can only be as it is. Or when you want to keep spring or autumn as it is, reflect that it has no unchanging nature.

Dōgen, "Only Buddha and Buddha," p. 162.

This cold, crisp morning; this dark, wet afternoon; this setting sun obscured by city haze – each moment is perfect just as it is.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, March 2

A teacher of old said, “Although the entire universe is nothing but the dharma body of the self, you should not be hindered by the dharma body. If you are hindered by the dharma body, you will not be able to turn freely, no matter how hard you may try.”

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 162.

What is it that we fixate on or obsess over – a grudge, a past mistake, a conception about ourselves, an attitude towards our boss or our sibling, an idea about the goal of our practice – that hinders us and prevents us from turning freely?

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, March 3

There is birth in death, and there is death in birth. Death is entirely death, and birth is entirely birth.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 163.

Birth and death – the coming into being and the disappearing – are the ultimate mysteries. Can we just stay open to the mystery?

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, March 4

To seek to know the self is invariably the wish of living beings.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 164.

Everyone suffers and everyone is longing to be free. Can we appreciate this and be compassionate even to those who harm others and themselves – who may even harm us?

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, March 5

If you intend to seek outside what is, nothing will be attained.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 164.

This moment, this life, this body, these thoughts and feelings, are all there is! If we turn from that to chase after an idea, we lose our way.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, March 6

Long ago a monk asked an old master, “When hundreds, thousands, or myriads of objects come all at once, what should be done?”

The master replied, “Don’t try to control them.”

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 164.

When things around us and demands on us seem overwhelming, how much of our stress comes from our expectations, our resentments, and our wish to control those events? What changes if we simply respond as best we can?

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, March 7

Whatever comes is the Buddha-dharma, not objects at all.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 164.

Every occurrence, every challenge, is a manifestation of what is, a teaching and an opportunity. If we objectify it with our ideas and our preferences, we miss both the teaching and the opportunity.

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, March 8

An ancient Buddha said, “...All buddhas of the three worlds are practicing together with each person.” ... A buddha’s practice is to practice in the same manner as the entire universe and all beings. ... This being so, all buddhas, from the moment of attaining realization, realize and practice the way together with the entire universe and all beings.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 165.

If our practice is one of self-criticism and efforts at self-improvement, it can become very frustrating and very lonely. Let’s practice together with each other, with all buddhas and bodhisattvas, with all beings, to express the glory and the mystery of the buddha-dharma.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, March 9

An ancient Buddha said, “The mountains, rivers, and earth are born at the same moment with each person.” ... No one knows either birth’s end or its beginning; nevertheless everyone is born. Similarly, no one knows the extremities of the mountains, rivers, and earth, but all see this place and walk here.

Dōgen, “Only Buddha and Buddha,” p. 165.

Every sight, every situation, is an incredible mystery – let’s keep letting go of our ideas and keep our hearts and minds open to this glorious unfolding!

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, March 10

You should know that the ancestor’s words “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” do not mean that one understanding is closer than another. Even if there are superior or inferior views, in the ancestor way there is only attaining the self.

Dōgen, “Twining Vines,” p. 170.

Let’s not worry about how “deep” or “advanced” our understanding or practice is in comparison with someone else – just practice sincerely and with effort!

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, March 11

[T]hese four Bodhidharmas [his students who expressed their understanding and were told that they had attained his skin, flesh, bones and marrow, respectively] altogether mastered hundreds and thousands of myriad bits and pieces beyond the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow. Do not suppose you cannot go beyond the marrow. You can go beyond three pieces, five pieces.

Dōgen, “Twining Vines,” p. 173.

We shouldn’t rest anywhere, but keep moving and penetrating. How could this incredible world ever be fully grasped by anyone, no matter how “enlightened” he or she may seem? There is always more!

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, March 12

Zhouzhou said, “If Bodhidharma means, ‘Someone who has reached the outside attains the skin, someone who has reached the inside attains the bones,’ then tell me: What does someone who has reached even deeper inside get?” You should directly understand the meaning of “outside” and “inside.” When you discuss “outside,” skin, flesh, bones, and marrow are all outside. When you discuss “inside,” skin, flesh, bones, and marrow are all inside.

Dōgen, “Twining Vines,” p. 173.

Wherever we are and whatever we may think we have attained in our practice, there is always something deeper. Let’s not make a nest out of where we think we are – just keep going deeper!

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, March 13

Once Shakyamuni Buddha, on Vulture Peak in India, in the midst of a vast assembly of beings, held up a flower and winked. Venerable Mahakashyapa smiled. Then Shakyamuni Buddha said, “I have the treasury of the true dharma eye, the inconceivable mind of nirvana. This I entrust to Mahakashyapa.”

Dōgen, “Face-to-Face Transmission,” p. 175.

Perhaps the others in the assembly were too busy pondering the Buddha’s “deep meaning” to simply see and appreciate the beautiful flower!

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, March 14

In thousands of millions of transmissions, the trunk and branches are one, breaking an eggshell by pecking from the inside and outside at once.

Dōgen, “Face-to-Face Transmission,” p. 177.

We grow like a chick being born, by pecking at our shell from the inside. Do we appreciate how our teacher, and how the people and situations in our lives that seem like unwelcome irritations and intrusions, may be pecking at our shell from the outside, helping us break free?

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, March 15

This is a splendid opportunity for Buddha-dharma to enter into mud and water. If you do not realize the fruit at this moment, when will you realize it? If you do not cut off delusion at this moment, when will you cut it off? ... If you do not sit as a Buddha at this moment, when will you practice as a buddha?

Dōgen, "Face-to-Face Transmission," p. 180.

This moment, however messy or painful it may seem, is a precious opportunity – let's not turn away from it!

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, March 16

When you have the seal of realization from a Buddha, you have the realization without a teacher, realization without self.

Dōgen, "Document of Heritage," p. 186.

No one can give us this realization. It is apprehended without words, without a teacher. It is beyond self.

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, March 17

Although he realized the way on the eighth day of the twelfth month in the thirtieth year since his birth, it is the realization of the way before the Seven Buddhas. It is the realization of the way simultaneously with all buddhas shoulder to shoulder, realization of the way before all buddhas, realization of the way after all buddhas.

Dōgen, "Document of Heritage," p. 187-188.

Realization is timeless, as is our zazen. In doing zazen we enter the stream of all that is.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, March 18

You must study the way in detail, and wholeheartedly determine to master it.

Dōgen, "Document of Heritage," p. 189.

Life is the way to be studied. Thus, we give ourselves to it wholeheartedly each moment.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, March 19

Most students accept the master as dharma teacher only when they have broken open the great matter with him.

Dōgen, "Document of Heritage," p. 191.

Who is master? Who is student? When the great matter is open they become one.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, March 20

In the Linji School there is an oral instruction that heritage is not given by the first teacher or the last teacher, but by the right teacher; this is the principle of direct heritage.

Dōgen, "Document of Heritage," p. 192.

When the student is ready, the right teacher appears and student and teacher recognize each other.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, March 21

The great way of Buddha ancestors is to penetrate the realm, soaring with no strings attached or like clouds shooting below your feet.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 197.

Direct experience is the heart of the matter. Without attachment to any one thing, we grasp our oneness with all.

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, March 22

The world of blossoming flowers arises and I am always intimate with this.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 197.

I am not apart from the dharma. I am one with all. Occasionally I realize this.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, March 23

"All-inclusive study" means here to study as cartwheels, where Sacred truth doesn't do anything. What degrees can there be?

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 197.

We are meant to enjoy our study! To enjoy life! To come at each moment freshly, with the spontaneity of freedom, without concern for results!

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, March 24

Leisurely entering the monastery and leisurely leaving the monastery is not all-inclusive study. Seeing with the entire eyeball is all-inclusive study.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 198.

Nothing leisurely about our practice. We bring our full attention to each moment, stepping back far enough to see beyond ourselves to experience our oneness with all, no separation.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, March 25

To "thus come" is all-inclusive study. To open up the hall and see all buddhas and ancestors where "Speaking about it won't hit the mark" is all-inclusive study.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 198.

"Blessed are they who have nothing to say and who cannot be persuaded to say it."

- James Russell Lowell.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, March 26

To understand that the skin of the face is very thick is all-inclusive study.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 198.

Experiencing directly what is, without commentary: this is zazen.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, March 27

To just hit the earth when you hit the earth is all-inclusive study.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 199.

Whatever we do, know we are doing it.

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, March 28

By treading back and forth you will make the road smooth, the ground beneath your feet will become smooth, but all-inclusive study will be lost.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 199.

Why tread back and forth, always returning to the familiar? Why not stand on the ground of not-knowing and approach each moment freshly?

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, March 29

Juzhi's raising just one finger is all-inclusive study.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 199.

To experience the oneness of all, nothing excluded, this is our practice.

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, March 30

The entire universe of the ten directions is the true human body.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 199.

When I walk, the entire universe walks; when I sit, the entire universe sits. How do I manifest this?

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, March 31

Together you should study all-inclusively.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 200.

The gift of sangha - companions in studying the way.

MY REFLECTION:

Tuesday, April 1

All-inclusive study is just single-minded sitting, dropping away body and mind. At the moment of going there, you go there; at the moment of coming here, you come here. There is no gap. Just in this way, the entire body studies all-inclusively the great road's entire body.

Dōgen, "All-Inclusive Study," p. 202.

Practice is really quite simple - just single-minded sitting. Why complicate it? When we travel away with our thoughts, go there; when we see where we are, come back, always opening to the moment, not confined by mind or body.

MY REFLECTION:

Wednesday, April 2

You should know that talking is not stained by either hearing or not-hearing. It is not concerned with hearing or not hearing.

Dōgen, "Going beyond Buddha," p. 204.

Speak with the voice of the heart, beyond all words, AND listen with the ear of the heart, beyond all words.

MY REFLECTION:

Thursday, April 3

It is not that there is not aspiration for enlightenment, no practice, no enlightenment. But simply, not attaining.

Dōgen, "Going beyond Buddha," p. 208.

Can we practice just for the sake of practice, without considering outcome?

MY REFLECTION:

Friday, April 4

Right now, raise the eyebrow of the eye of study...

Dōgen, "Going beyond Buddha," p. 209.

Don't settle for another's perspective. What is your perspective? How do you see it?

MY REFLECTION:

Saturday, April 5

The vast sky does not hinder the white clouds from flying.

Dōgen, "Going beyond Buddha," p. 209.

How could the sky hinder the clouds since the sky and the clouds are one? How can anything hinder us except that which our minds create?

MY REFLECTION:

Sunday, April 6

If you do not have the key to the barrier of things which have come from the past, how can you discern correct from incorrect in Buddha-dharma? You are merely someone who studies words and phrases.

Dōgen, "Going beyond Buddha," p. 210.

Just here, just now, what can I learn from the past? What are the barriers that I bring from the past to this moment? "Why do (I) stay in prison when the door is wide open?" (Hafiz)

MY REFLECTION:

Monday, April 7 - Final Day

ON NONDEPENDENCE OF MIND:

Water birds

Going and coming

Their traces disappear

But they never

forget their path.

Dōgen, "Waka Poems," p. 214.

Leaving no traces we walk the way.

MY REFLECTION:

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GASSHO!