

Steven HEINE, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. xxii + 329 pp. Cloth \$16.95. ISBN 0-7914-1773-5.

The injection of poststructuralist theory into Buddhist studies has produced here a rich, lucid, well-focused work on the relations between the *Shōbōgenzō* and Chinese Zen literature, with Dōgen's own early kōan-collection, the *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, as a bridge between them. The subtitle is misleading, as the *Mana Shōbōgenzō* has only a small role in the argument, and everything that Heine has to say about it can be found on pp. 154–57; the text shows Dōgen following the model of the *Hekiganroku* and already making creative alterations in his Chinese sources.

Heine maps the complex relations between different Zen genres, correcting conventional ideas such as the association of *shikantaza* with Hung-chih's

“silent illumination.” He describes Dōgen’s style of kōan commentary as a “polysemous scenic route” (p. 228), which differs from the *Hekiganroku*’s “wrap-around” method in that kōans are introduced in essays on a given topic, and are handled so freely as to blur the difference between the encounter-dialogues and Dōgen’s own interlinear commentary. Moreover, all the exchanges in the source dialogue (and not merely the master’s punch line) are seen as expressing enlightenment, so that the distinction between enlightened and unenlightened understanding is also erased.

Dōgen’s commentary is as significant a culmination of the kōan tradition as Ta-hui’s “iconoclastic shortcut method” (p. 228), for in a style that is itself dialogal it explores rather than cuts off the multiple associations of the original dialogues. Where Ta-hui sees kōans as thwarting intellectualization, pushing the practitioner like a rat into a blind alley, Dōgen allows them to bring all the resources of mind and language into play. Where Ta-hui reduces kōans to a single “live word,” Dōgen plays with all the words of the dialogues, creating a Joycean babelization, a Barthesian *plaisir du texte*, a situation in which “meaning is always in the process of forming, deforming, and reforming” (p. 238). Heine’s postmodern reading fits the texts well, and encourages close analysis of the rhetorical structure of kōan literature and its tropes. Nor does it reduce Zen to idle verbal freeplay, for he shows that the playfulness is the product of and an aid to samadhic awareness. Rhetorical analysis promises to show in detail how the mobility of Dōgen’s writing resists the reification of kōan cases as pointers to some unvarying essence, in order to capture instead the dynamic emergence of enlightened awareness.

Heine gives disappointingly few close readings of particular texts, and some of these tend to over-ingenueity. In one kōan, Bodhidharma’s disciples give four answers that he acclaims as expressing his “skin,” “flesh,” “bones,” and “marrow” respectively. Heine sees here the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, and claims that Dōgen’s commentary on this kōan corrects Hayden White’s ordering of these tropes “by demonstrating the priority of a parallaxic rather than diatactical movement between tropes based on the priority of metonymy instead of irony” (p. 211). Constant movement from one tropic perspective to another, rather than an ironic self-suspension of language before the ineffable, is what frees the mind in Dōgen. But to derive from this a sweeping philosophy of tropes is impractical, given the complexity of the philosophical literature even about metaphor and irony taken singly. Better to confine the use of tropology to close reading, so to clarify what Dōgen is up to in his texts.

The theory of intertextuality is aired at length, but perhaps all that needed to be said—viz. that the meaning of a text is not located in that text in abstract isolation, but in the relational interplay between that text and other texts past and future—could fit on one page. The parallel between intertextuality and “the Buddhist notion of the egoless, insubstantial, and thus interdependent nature of reality” (p. 85) clears a fine space within which to read Dōgen, but many of Heine’s concrete findings might have been reached just as well by a conventional literary analysis. I feel we should be sparing in our use of sophisticated theory, invoking it only just so far as is necessary to

clarify the matter in hand. Otherwise the risk is great that all scholarly works will end up breathing the same intellectual air, in which little will remain of the color and life of the texts discussed.

Heine uses heavy machinery to refute stereotyped ideas about Dōgen's attitude to kōans; he seems to me to be breaking down open doors much of the time, since these stereotypes have already been put aside in the standard Dōgen scholarship. Much is made of tensions in Zen tradition between (1) concern with history and indifference to historical accuracy; (2) the aim to demythologize Buddhism and the mythologization of the masters; (3) ideal aims and actual methods in transmitting the tradition; (4) the emphasis on here-and-now experiential time and a teleological model of history; (5) non-duality and sectarian polemic (pp. 75–80). Would common-sense adjustments of hermeneutic perspective not suffice to soften most of these? For instance, it seems anachronistic to ask of Zen the critical attitude to the mythologization of history that is found in the West only since the *Aufklärung*; and gaps between ideal and practice are common to all religious institutions.

One last misgiving: Heine draws inspiration from current literary-critical approaches to the Bible. But in the case of the Bible the basic philological and exegetical spadework has long been done; new-critical and post-structuralist readings are a luxury biblical scholars can now afford. (Heine conflates the older literary analysis of Scripture—identification of sources and genres, *Formgeschichte*, redaction-criticism—with the recent influences of modern literary criticism; thus he misreads Pius XII as prompting the present approach rather than as belatedly accepting the older one.) In the case of Zen literature, much progress has still to be made at the level of basic exegesis, including source, genre, and redactional analysis. Heine's book will perhaps be most appreciated for its contributions at this level. Until Western scholarship has attained a secure and comprehensive grasp of Dōgen by conventional scholarly means, the application of brilliant poststructuralist theory may be a costly distraction. In Heine's study the theoretical wrapping is a catalyst that can fall away, and that may turn out to have been superfluous.

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