

Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy
of Traditions and Cultures 35

Ralf Müller
George Wrisley *Editors*

Dōgen's Texts

Manifesting Religion and/as Philosophy?

 Springer

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Editors

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Editors

Ralf Müller
Department of Philosophy
University College Cork
Cork, Ireland

George Wrisley
History, Anthropology, & Philosophy
University of North Georgia
Gainesville, GA, USA

Editor-in-Chief

Purushottama Bilimoria

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*I dedicate this anthology to
Ulrich Thiemann
my philosophy teacher at school and my
friend ever since then in 1990,
and Arifuku Kōgaku
my host and guide to reading Dōgen during
my first stay at Kyōto University in 1999.*

Ralf Müller

*And I dedicate it to
Hee-Jin Kim, Steven Heine, and Roger
T. Ames, all of whom made Dōgen a living
and ongoing possibility.*

George Wrisley

Forewords: Dōgen 2.0

This is a book of Dōgen 2.0. Then what is Dōgen 2.0? Or who is Dōgen 2.0? Dōgen and his works, especially *Shōbōgenzō*, or Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, were first presented to Western scholars as a philosopher and his philosophical texts. Since then, he and his works have been discussed as one of the most prominent examples of premodern Japanese philosophy. Dōgen as philosopher, and his writings as philosophical texts. This is Dōgen 1.0.

The era of Dōgen 1.0 has produced remarkable philosophical interpretations of him and his texts in Western languages. Works of Garfield, Kasulis, Stambaugh, Heine, Olson, Raud, Müller, Davis, and Kopf are among them. In this period, the legitimacy of treating Dōgen as a philosopher, reading *Shōbōgenzō* as a philosophical text, and comparing it with other philosophical theories, or simply put, studying Dōgen as part of the study of Japanese *philosophy*, was considered unproblematic.

In recent years, however, such a Dōgen 1.0 has come under criticism: Dōgen specialists such as Kim, Steineck, and van der Braak have, in their own ways, begun to object to the idea that Dōgen was a “philosopher” in today’s sense, that his texts were philosophical texts, and that philosophical interpretations could be given of them. (Van der Braak’s chapter in this book provides a nice summary of what I have been writing.)

We do not take issue here with the rightness or wrongness of their criticisms. However, at the very least, these criticisms made it no longer self-evident that Dōgen can be treated as a philosopher and that his texts can be interpreted philosophically. Shortly, they made Dōgen 1.0 problematic.

Now new “in the first place” type of questions have emerged. Who was Dōgen in the first place? And how should we read his texts in the first place? These are more meta- or methodologically oriented questions than those in the Dōgen 1.0 era. The latter question also connects to the question, “How has Dōgen been read so far?” This question is not merely a retrospective one, but also pertains to the here and now question, “How should I read Dōgen now?”

Of course, the fact that the legitimacy of a philosophical reading has become problematic does not mean that it has become forbidden or dismissed as

meaningless. It means that we are now forced to be aware of the non-self-evidence of the legitimacy of our philosophical approach to Dōgen's texts. We can no longer naively assume that the outcome of a philosophical reading matches the intentions of Dōgen himself, or the only correct interpretation of his texts.

But on the other hand, no privileged and self-evident alternative to the philosophical approach has appeared. For now, the identity of Dōgen itself has come under question. If Dōgen was not a "philosopher" in today's sense, then who was he? Was he a "religious figure" in today's sense? Or was he someone else who is neither a "philosopher" nor a "religious person" in today's sense? If so, what kind of someone else was he? Any answers to these questions are now no longer self-evident but are matters to be carefully discussed and subjected to critical examination.

No, the situation must, in fact, be more complex. For, as is the case with all human identities, Dōgen's identity may not have been so simple that it can be summarized in a single word. The same can be said of his texts. They may not allow for a unique characterization, whether of philosophy, religion, or a third category.

The upshot is that now the legitimacy of not only philosophical approaches to Dōgen and his texts, but all approaches have come to be no longer self-evident. There can no longer be, in principle, any self-evident and privileged approach, philosophical or otherwise.

This is the age of Dōgen 2.0. Dōgen 1.0 was the philosopher. Dōgen 2.0 has become a giant question mark. Dōgen as a question mark, the text of Dōgen as a question mark. This is exactly what Dōgen 2.0 is.

This book confronts squarely Dōgen as a question mark. On the one hand, it asks who Dōgen is, and on the other hand, it attempts to read his texts from various approaches and to reactivate them in the present intellectual milieu. In this sense, this book is clearly a landmark book that marks the beginning of the Dōgen 2.0 era.

Let us remember. "Who is Dōgen?" "How should we read his texts?" Is it possible to give a philosophical interpretation of those texts? Those methodological issues that mark the Dōgen 2.0 era had been actually already been taken by the first philosophical readers at the very beginning of the modern philosophical interpretation of Dōgen.

For example, Tetsurō Watsuji, a pioneer of the philosophical reading, began his "Dōgen: A Sramana" with a long and somewhat justificatory argument about the validity of his reading Dōgen philosophically. Hajime Tanabe, who followed Watsuji's initiative, also raised similar issues. Interestingly, both of them discussed the validity of their philosophical readings by taking up Dōgen's concept of "Dōtoku (perfect expression)". (Ralf Müller also provides an insightful discussion of "Dōtoku" in this book.) Watsuji and Tanabe used the concept of "Dōtoku" to justify their own philosophical readings of Dōgen's texts. However, there are also subtle differences lying between them that reflect the differences in their respective philosophical personalities. Watsuji acknowledged the residue of "irrational" and "religious" aspects in Dōgen's texts that cannot be reduced to philosophy, whereas

Tanabe held that everything in those texts can be rephrased into philosophy – which is, in fact, a projection of Tanabe’s own philosophy.

In any case, the methodological question of “Who is Dōgen?”, broadly construed, was a question that was raised at the starting point of the Dōgen interpretations given by academic researchers, as distinct from the interpretation of the patriarch by his sect members. In the sense of returning to the origin of academic Dōgen interpretation, Dōgen 2.0 is not merely an upgrade of Dōgen 1.0, but also an initialization of Dōgen 1.0, an attempt to return to the original point of Dōgen 0.0.

In the age of Dōgen 1.0, Dōgen was a mirror reflecting the face of the philosophical interpreter. As both Watsuji and Tanabe recognized, philosophical readers reflected their own philosophical faces in the mirror of Dōgen as a philosopher. And yet, in the era of Dōgen 2.0, when such self-projection has come under criticism, the situation has not fundamentally changed.

Even in the era of Dōgen 1.0, people were aware that the face reflected in the mirror was a self-projection of the viewer. However, the mirror itself, that is, Dōgen 1.0 as a philosopher, was not a product of self-projection, but was considered to exist strictly independent of the act of “looking in the mirror.” In contrast, it is with the Dōgen 2.0 era that people begin to realize that the mirror itself, i.e., Dōgen, was also nothing more than a product of self-projection. Still, we cannot stop looking in the mirror. We can only continue to produce both the mirror and the face in the mirror at the same time through self-projection. Dōgen 2.0 as a giant question mark also continues to be a mirror reflecting our image.

Dōgen said, “Don’t look in the mirror; rather, polish the mirror.” He continued, “Polish the mirror, not to make it clean, but to polish yourself”. Dōgen was trying to say that the mirror, or the true self or Buddhahood itself, is a product of one’s practice, or rather, nothing but the act of practice itself. This could also be interpreted to mean that the mirror of Dōgen itself is the product of the act of interpretation, or rather, the act of interpretation itself. Needless to say, such an interpretation is also nothing but a self-projection of myself, the writer of this Foreword.

In the age of Dōgen 2.0, when not only the image in the mirror but also the mirror itself has become an object of interpretation, Dogen’s interpretation will become even more diverse than before. This is clearly exemplified by this anthology. The diversity shown in this book is not limited to the diversity of approaches to and interpretations of Dōgen. The diversity of the philosophical and cultural backgrounds of the contributors of this anthology is also remarkable.

Dōgen also wrote, “[when] an Indian looks [in a mirror], the Indian appears [in it], then a Chinese looks, the Chinese appears” and “a Korean looks, the Korean appears, then a Japanese looks, the Japanese appears”. By making this remark, he was already welcoming the diversity, transculturality, and pan-culturality of the people who participate in the joint activity of looking into or polishing the mirror or to realize the Buddha way. The transculturality and pan-culturality of the polishing collaboration of Dōgen as a mirror in this book is an extension of a similar spirit in

Dōgen. Watsuji, the founder of the modern philosophical interpretation mentioned above, also spoke of the possibility of the “globalization” of Dōgen. This book certainly pushes Dōgen’s globalization a step further. The editors are to be congratulated for their labor in bringing together such a diverse array of contributors and furthering Dōgen’s globalization.

Kyoto University
Kyoto, Japan

Yasuo Deguchi

Preface

The thirteenth-century Japanese Zen Master Eihei Dōgen founded a new school of Japanese Zen Buddhism (Sōtō Zen), when he returned from China and began expounding a unique form of the Chan Cáodòng School's form of Buddhism. This form is to be compared with the Rinzai and Ōbaku schools of Japanese Zen. Dōgen's Sōtō Zen is currently the largest of the three in Japan and has spread around the world, along with other forms of Buddhism and non-western religions. However, as with many cultural imports, it has taken some time for Buddhism in general to become the cultural force it has become in the west; that said, its influential presence continues to grow and spread, particularly in the academy.

Yet, again, despite the west's long engagement with non-western traditions, especially those from Asia, the scope and purview of Zen, and Dōgen's work in particular, has been and still is debated. English-speaking scholars *from a variety of disciplines*, for example, have weighed in on Dōgen's status since at least the 1970s with Hee-Jin Kim's seminal *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*¹ and in the 1980s with Steven Heine's important *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time In Heidegger and Dōgen*,² and William R. LaFleur's edited volume *Dōgen Studies*³ standing out, as the latter brought together people such as Masao Abe, Thomas Kasulis, Hee-Jin Kim, Carl Bielefeldt, and John C. Maraldo. In this latter volume, the contributors focus on Dōgen's place in the academy, particularly his status as a philosopher. Nevertheless, despite works since then continuing to sporadically probe the question of Dōgen's status as Zen Master and/or philosopher, there is much still unsettled and more still to be said.

That there is still much to do is in no small part due to the nature of Dōgen's genius, as expressed in his writings and in the details of his vision of Zen practice. A vision whose rigor, complexity, subtlety, and creativeness are awe-inspiring.

¹ Reissued as Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2004).

² See Steven Heine *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).

³ William R. LaFleur, ed., *Dōgen Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985).

Moreover, we would do well to keep in mind that the status of Buddhism itself in the west is still “in the making,” to borrow a phrase Maraldo applies to philosophy.⁴

In this context, we find a good number of scholars happy to call Dōgen’s work philosophical if not also claiming Dōgen is a philosopher in the full honorific sense. However, that is, of course, not to say that all such specialists agree that Dōgen is a philosopher – Raji Steineck’s chapter in this volume is a case in point. As are the several chapters that find the choice *either philosopher or religious thinker* inadequate.

While the challenges of adjudicating the philosophical nature of a thirteenth-century Japanese Zen Master’s texts and Zen are many, two issues in particular provide reason for care. First, “philosophy” and “religion” are Western categories. And we are far from being able to say without controversy that we can coherently analyse non-Western traditions like Buddhism based on these categories. A *possible* alternative is to view Buddhism, especially Dōgen’s, as a hybrid form that is slippery to hold when using attributions such as “religion” and “philosophy.” Secondly, the process of developing a system of categorisation from within and across the Buddhist tradition(s) that could be used to compare with, and to modify, Western taxonomies is only beginning.

Thus, there are a variety of complicating, if not confounding, factors to keep in mind when pursuing the question of Dōgen vis-à-vis philosophy and religion. Keeping these in mind could well be called a necessary prerequisite for working with Dōgen in Western scholarship. Often, however, these are not fully considered, and simple identities are claimed on Dōgen’s behalf. Looking at the diversity of the contributions gathered here, we are convinced that the readers of this anthology will get both: a sense of identity and difference.

Against this background, our anthology shows that discussions between experts from different backgrounds are ongoing and fruitful. These interdisciplinary discussions are as fruitful as they are because primary sources from Dōgen and other Buddhists as well as secondary sources on almost all aspects of Buddhist teaching are abundant and available in multiple translations. Therefore, we hope that this volume will be of particular interest to experts in the fields of Philosophy, Religious studies, Buddhist studies, and Japanese studies, hoping it may serve as a springboard for further investigation in either, and all, direction(s). For doctoral students in these fields, the contributions provide both a case study and an opportunity to pursue the various ramifications of several central questions in comparative philosophy.

Cork, Ireland
Gainesville, GA, USA

Ralf Müller
George Wrisley

⁴See John Maraldo, “Defining Philosophy in the Making,” in *Japanese Philosophy Abroad*, ed. James W. Heisig (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2004).

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It was in January 2020, Steven Heine, Ralf Müller, and I presented at the Eastern APA’s Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy session. The first move in the series of moves leading to this co-edited volume on Dōgen and philosophy. A move that occurred a week after my mom’s diagnosis of late-stage ovarian cancer, to which she would succumb in November, 2020. In the aftermath of her death, my dad developed a Covid-19 infection, leading to his death in January 2021. Thus, this book, from my perspective, is an accomplishment that resisted the bleakness of the Covid pandemic and my parents’ deaths. Seeing now even more profoundly all they did to make this life of philosophy, study and teaching, possible, I once again wish to express the bottomless gratitude I have for this life and the relationship we had.

To my wife and “co-conspirator” in grappling with this often all-too-heavy life, Samantha Pinson Wrisley, a fellow philosopher and academic, I owe gratitude in a most profound sense, one that comes from a decade of mutual love and support through some of the most difficult years of our lives. I am grateful for the privilege of such a relationship and for the reciprocal love and respect found therein.

I am profoundly grateful to Steven Heine for his help and encouragement over the years since emailing him in 2013 to ask for his suggestions about learning how to read Dōgen’s Japanese. Ever since, he has not hesitated to invite me to participate in conferences and workshops, nor has he flinched in the face of the many emails filled with questions that I’ve sent him over the years. As many others have noted, he is extra-ordinarily gracious with his time and support.

Since meeting Ralf Müller in January of 2020, I have been engaged in one Dōgen conference or workshop after the other, and soon after first meeting, we jumped at

the opportunity to co-edit this volume. In this latter context, Ralf Müller has been extremely helpful and a source of encouragement and guidance.

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On my side, I, Ralf Müller, would like to thank my co-editor George Wrisley for his ongoing commitment to this book project, and his “yes” to editing “in spite of everything” (Viktor Frankl). Given all the challenges, impediments, and hindrances in our lives and over the past two or three years, we might wonder how and why we should engage in compiling words, pages, and books. While piles of books can appear as tombstones in a study left behind, to me, they are both nodes of living and condensed forms of life.

Hence, I am grateful to all our contributors who have invested their time to provide us with their viewpoints and rich ideas: Adam Loughnane, Aldo Tollini, Andrei Van der Braak, Eitan Bolokan, Felipe Cuervo, Laura Specker, Laurentiu Andrei, Raji Steineck, Rein Raud, Russell Guilbault, Steve Heine, Zuzana Kubovčáková.

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Finally, I would like to thank all my family and friends that keep me in good company.

Let's hope peace in the Ukraine and elsewhere prevails long before we can open the cover of this printed book once it will be shipped to our desks from abroad.

Introduction: “Dōgen’s Texts: Religion and/as Philosophy?”

Language has magical powers. We see this understanding reflected in most ancient cultures. Words can create things, bring them into existence. This is as true in the East as in the West. In *Genesis*, we read that God, in creating light, says: “Let there be light.” With God being the only conscious entity, language use here is not dialogical. Instead, the case suggests that language has a performative and creative power. The opening of John’s Gospel also points to the divinity, timelessness, and creative power of the word. Indeed, the Gospel tells us that the Word is God. Sources from India and China read in similar ways. The *beginning* of the cosmos is the Nameless, as stated in the Dao De Jing, but the Named is responsible for the universe’s diversity. This layer of language is not lost in philosophical reflection. In the West, however, it holds only a secondary position.

In the forthcoming pages of the initial section (I. Thematic Foundation: Language in Philosophy) of this introduction, the theme of language in philosophy is addressed and the importance of this theme for Dōgen is expounded upon. This lays the groundwork for our collection of essays, which is summarised in the subsequent section (II. Book Overview: The Emergence of Dōgen as Philosopher). I will focus on a core theme that is presupposed by most contributions in this anthology, omitting broad definitions of philosophy and religion. Additionally, I will narrow my focus to Dōgen and the Zen tradition instead of attempting to provide an overview that covers Buddhism and world philosophy as a whole.

In the first section, I will proceed as follows: I begin by comparing the theme of language in the works of Dōgen and Plato. Then, I delve into the significance of language in Dōgen’s reception in Japan. Finally, I demonstrate how Dōgen evolved into a philosopher in modern Japan. The emergence of Dōgen as a philosopher had led to ambiguities in his reception, providing scope for further investigation. On this basis, we can explore the full extent of our anthology and show how the ambiguity addressed in the various contributions remains a task to be tackled today. Even if most of the following papers support a philosophical reading of Dōgen, other voices are present such as André van der Braak’s or Raji Steineck’s.

I. Thematic Foundation: Language in Philosophy

In the early stages of development, almost all philosophical traditions deal with the nature of language. Language functions as the medium for philosophical expression. And any intellectual inquiry assumes, at a minimum, a rudimentary theory of the relationship between words and non-linguistic actuality. If not, such inquiry cannot truly be philosophical and will instead linger in a naïve position towards the world. However, different traditions reveal different basic options that have, in turn, been assessed in manifold ways. Nevertheless, any stance adopted concerning this connection has far-reaching consequences. A preliminary theory of language should be coherent and reflect some aspects of everyday language use.

1. *Language East and West*

Plato’s *Cratylus* sets out one of the most seminal philosophies of language in the West. The dialogue profoundly delves into the essence and characteristics of language. Today, such a philosophical discussion would involve an analysis of words, meaning, and reference. What renders *Cratylus* a modern discussion is its focus on the relationship between names and their referents. The ancient dialogue’s interlocutors also inquire about language’s origin. Comprehending the relationship between a name and its meaning requires understanding its genesis, according to the dialogue. This also involves the religious dimension of language. Plato has Socrates play the role of an oracle here.

The transcendence of the primitive religious conception of language is also highlighted by Socrates’ treatment of the thesis that the first naming is of divine origin. He mentions this thesis twice, once in conversation with Hermogenes (425d), and once with *Cratylus* (472c). In neither situation does he deny a divine origin or speak out against it. The religious view is less significant as its language origin is considered irrelevant, not false. Accordingly, Socrates points out that the thesis does not help him answer the questions he is concerned with. So Socrates can indeed be an oracle. He has – also – the potential to be a philosopher. In short, Plato has Socrates bracket the ancient religious view. It simply does not belong in the realm of philosophy. The divine, symbolic, evocative, and participatory aspects of language were left to religion. Philosophy’s primary focus is reference, the correct naming of things. The approach taken by the Zen Buddhist Dōgen differs from this.

Considering the enormous conceptual and cultural distance, the comparison of the Zen Buddhist Dōgen with the Athenian philosopher Plato may seem far-fetched, for there is more than just a time gap of over 1500 years that underlines the difference between the two thinkers. Yet there are some similarities: Both are outstanding literary figures who developed their respective genres ingeniously within their own traditions. Both value poetic expression from an aesthetic point of view. They even see this poetic expression as indispensable to the path of knowledge. Yet both

deny the value of literature and pursue goals that are predominantly non-literary. They even warn that literature can be dangerous. The similarities between Plato and Dōgen are not limited to their apparent ambivalence towards the written word. With regard to language, they deal with the same fundamental questions and, in some cases, resolve them in similar ways.

Concerning the nature of insight, however, they disagree. The question is how to achieve insight or understanding. For the Zen Buddhist, it requires meditation. The knower must devote special attention and sensitivity to the details of daily life. For the Greek philosopher, on the other hand, discernment requires refraining from everyday tasks and details. Instead, the focus is on intellectual dialogue and the contemplation of abstract concepts. Yet the starting point is again common to them: scepticism about the phenomenal world and the precision of natural language. Both warn against being deceived by appearances, even if they do so for partly different reasons. Natural language is a central part of that same phenomenal reality that calls for scepticism. Therefore, how do perceptual illusions weaken natural language? How do they entice individuals with insufficient insight to accept words at face value? Would the relation to language’s origin help reserve different access to the original issue?

Dōgen’s modernisation is controversial: The Zen master and founder of the Sōtō school in medieval Japan remains the most widely read pre-modern Japanese author in modern philosophy since the Meiji period. At the same time, however, his philosophical reception has been most severely criticised by his own denomination, the scholars of the Sōtō Zen community. Looking at Dōgen’s texts, do they manifest philosophy *and* religion? Or philosophy *as* religion? Or rather, a philosophy *of* religion?

Controversy surrounding Dōgen’s philosophical reception arose when non-denominational intellectuals alleged to have forged ahead with a genuine doctrine that could stand independently of the practice of “sitting only” (j. *shikan taza*), which was taught by the Sōtō school as the core of Dōgen’s Zen. However, the resultant predominance of a “practical” interpretation of Dōgen tends to obfuscate the significance and linguistic complexity of Dōgen’s writings.

2. *The Appropriation of Dōgen in Modern Japan*

In 1896, the miscellany *A Short Biography of the Great Teacher Jōyō* appeared in Japan in an issue of the world’s first journal for the philosophy of East Asia.¹ This miscellany is the earliest article dedicated to the Zen Buddhist Dōgen (1200–1253)²

¹The short text is not signed by name but quotes the Zen master Morita Goyū (1834–1915), the 64th head of the Eihei temple; cf. Anonymous, Jōyō Daishi no shoden [A Short Biography of Jōyō Daishi], in: *Tōyō Tetsugaku* 3/4 (1896): 205–206.

²Dōgen or with honorific Eihei Dōgen, as Bielefeldt notes (in the corresponding entry in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 2, 1995). The journal article cited above uses the posthumous (in the Meiji period) title Great Teacher Jōyō (j. Jōyō Daishi).

in a philosophical periodical. Nonetheless, it omits his writings’ speculative, if not metaphysical, content. The article testifies to the lack of familiarity with Dōgen that prevailed in the Japanese intellectual world at the time, but also to a burgeoning curiosity and interest among non-confessional readers in Japan. Above all, the article indicates the introspection of an Asian intellectual tradition that looks beyond Europe, discovering origins of philosophy not only in India or China, but also in Japan. Subsequently, through the confrontation with Western philosophy and the reconstruction of autochthonous traditions, the foundation is established for a modern philosophical position that cannot be reduced to an extension of the Greco-Roman tradition or an imitation of Western modernity.

2.1 Dōgen as a Source of Philosophy

Historically, Western thought has displayed a strong interest in Oriental philology, as manifested in Germany, for example, in the translations of August Wilhelm Schlegel in the nineteenth century and the philosophical-historical treatises of Paul Deussen at the turn of the twentieth century; not to mention foundational works by other authors such as Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) or Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852) in France, and William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) in the United States. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, it remains a challenge to approach non-Western traditions *as* philosophy. This is the case with the writings of Dōgen, as is documented in the programmatic titles and meticulous commentaries of recent publications.³ Such Western difficulties can be contrasted with the Japanese side, as exemplified by the Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime (1889–1862), who confronts the task head-on.

In contrast to the Western reluctance to approach non-European resources, which nowadays impacts the self-understanding of philosophy, Tanabe, as early as the year 1937, sought to reconstruct the thought of the medieval monk as the completion of a Buddhist dialectic and as the forerunner of postmodernism that surpasses the Western “ontology of being.” Tanabe turns the scepticism of language prevalent in Zen into the foundation of a philosophical reading of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen’s

³Cf. for example Steineck et al. (eds.), *Dōgen als Philosoph* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2002) where controversial approaches are discussed and tried out. Nakimovitch, in his *Dōgen et les paradoxes de la Bouddhété* (Genève: Droz 1999), offers the most detailed commentary on the “Busshō” fascicle in a European language and shows what philological and hermeneutical efforts are necessary to enable a philosophically fruitful interpretation. There are, obviously, many secondary works to name that treat Dōgen in a nuanced way such as Kim’s *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), and his *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection on His View of Zen* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), Steven Heine’s *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), William R. LaFleur (ed.) *Dōgen Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1985), and others. Most of these stake out room for Dōgen, the philosopher, in various ways, while the fruitful challenge Dōgen poses to philosophy is not widely discussed. It seems most of his readers stick to the option to either include or exclude Dōgen from philosophy.

main theoretical work. Tanabe further elaborates on his interpretation of Dōgen and the latter’s concept of the perfect expression of truth (j. *dōtoku* 道得). Tanabe sums up Dōgen’s thinking on language thus: “The entanglements [of language] are at the same time the perfect expression [of truth].”⁴

While the present anthology asks to what extent Dōgen’s texts can at least also, or perhaps even excellently, be regarded as philosophy, many of the collected contributions give an implicit or explicit answer in their own way as to whether and in what sense “entanglements are at the same time perfect expressions.” For Tanabe, the interpretation of this relationship (between entanglements and perfect expressions) is the central basic condition for reading the written work of a Zen Buddhist as philosophy, partly with and partly against tradition. Contrary to the widespread attitude that a mystically interpreted tradition (such as Zen Buddhism) rejects language, Tanabe sees in Dōgen’s formulation an affirmative attitude towards language; affirmative, in fact, insofar as language is able to represent, if not partially constitute, the means, medium, and expression of the Buddhist path. In this way, there is a necessary and sufficient overlap with philosophy, which can also be understood as a path and form of life, and which also makes existential use of language and realises itself primarily in it.

Against this background, the anthology is concerned with the possibilities and limits of interpreting Dōgen’s texts in their theoretical or speculative content, rather than as a propaedeutic introduction or practical instruction for monastic life. The initial question “whether Dōgen’s texts manifest religion and/as philosophy?” aims at the discursive content of the texts, at the form of the text as an end in itself on the path of Buddhist practice. This question is not only of interest from a global philosophical or Dōgenian perspective, since the discussion on/of/with Dōgen renews a confrontation between philosophy and Buddhism in general, which is reminiscent of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). While many people were working on Buddhism, Schopenhauer was among the few philosophers to discuss it in the context of *philosophy*.

2.2 “De-linguification” of Zen?

Zen Buddhism has been seen as a religion that is compatible with the modern hard sciences. At the same time, Zen represents a religious practice that is based on an originally mystical and rationally irreconcilable dimension. Indeed, the Zen tradition radically renounces written tradition and uses the spoken word primarily to undermine and withdraw the power of language. How, then, could speech or script be the “perfect expression of truth”? Why should Buddhism rely on texts? And how could philosophy depend on practice in order to attain knowledge? When confronted with Buddhism, there arises the question of whether and how philosophy emerged from the detachment of myth and religion or whether it can also exist in a

⁴THZ 8: 17; j. *kattō ha sunawachi dōtoku nari* 葛藤は即ち道得なり.

quasi-hybrid form, as it seems to be with parts of the Buddhist tradition. Can Buddhism offer a definitive method for attaining a rational perspective on the world?

We know of quietly meditating monks and enigmatic masters; in Zen, people are silent; they speak only to fall silent again. According to Jens Schlieter, Zen Buddhism marks the culmination of Indo-Chinese language thinking, which displays a proclivity towards “de-linguification.”⁵ As per this view, the texts of a Zen Buddhist could not say anything significant as the essence of Zen lies in the experience of enlightenment achieved solely through religious practice. And even if this experience found adequate expression in language as an articulated experience, only an enlightened individual could measure it and understand it in its depth. All this seems reason enough to deny the *Shōbōgenzō* the label of philosophy and not attribute any intrinsic relevance to the use of language.

However, Tanabe’s approach to Dōgen, which involves a philosophical reconstruction of his work from the monk’s reflections on language, places the *Shōbōgenzō* diametrically opposite to the attitude to Zen just described. Tanabe’s approach – largely unknown in the West and little discussed in Japan – appears like the precursor of the post-war period in which the importance of language and writing in the *Shōbōgenzō* is emphasised even more clearly, especially by Japanese thinkers who have dealt with the diversity of Buddhist scriptures and with the different traditions of East Asia from Buddhism to Hinduism and Taoism.⁶ Recognising the significance

⁵Schlieter, *Versprachlichung – Entsprachlichung: Untersuchungen zum philosophischen Stellenwert der Sprache im europäischen und buddhistischen Denken* (Köln: edition chōra 2000). He appropriates the term “Entsprachlichung,” in order to use it (correlative to “Versprachlichung,” i.e., to render into language) as a designation for a very reflexive relationship to language in Buddhism: In the Buddhist tradition, “training through concentration and meditation is explicitly described as a withdrawal of linguistic thinking, i.e., as an attempt to break through the categorically mediated one-to-one opposition of language and world, subject and object, experiencer and experienced, or thinker and thought. [...] Accordingly, we should speak of ‘correspondence’ where the withdrawal of language is visible, but at the same time accompanied by corresponding discussions about the structure and effect of language” (Ibid., 14–15). The fact that Buddhist thought is about a movement towards a limit, but by no means about a total standstill of verbal articulation, becomes clear from the complementarity: “‘De-linguification’ obviously presupposes ‘linguification’” (Ibid., 15).

⁶As an example, in his book *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* (Teheran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy 1977), Izutsu Toshihiko states: “[Dōgen’s] major work *Shōbōgenzō* is a record of deep reflection on matters pertaining to Man and the world from the Zen point of view. Besides, it is perhaps the most philosophical work ever written by a Zen master, whether in China or Japan” (Ibid., 58, fn 3). – In contrast to Tanabe, freed from the claim to establish a Japanese philosophy, the importance of Dōgen’s works is emphasised here and elsewhere not only within the canon of Buddhist and Zen Buddhist writings of China as well as Japan, but beyond that, their position in contemporary global thought is also inquired into. The uniqueness of the *Shōbōgenzō* begins at the level of linguistic expression in idiosyncratic Japanese but continues through philosophical reflection in general to language reflection as such. It is the coining of the term “perfect expression” (*dōtoku*) that marks language reflection and forces the remarks to be taken seriously as theoretical reflections. The subsequent question of the positive position of language in Zen is taken up by Japanese authors, each with a different emphasis. For example, in a conversation between Karaki Junzō and two other scholars of Japanese intellectual history: “The character *dō* (way) of the words *dōtoku* [perfect expression] and *dōjaku* [uttering] [in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō*] is

of Dōgen in this context contrasts greatly with considering his work as a representation of a once flourishing religious tradition (i.e. Buddhism) now in a state of attrition, as was the perception at the start of the 20th century in Europe.⁷

3. *Language in the Works of Dōgen*

Reviewing Dōgen's language thinking in depth and detail, as undertaken in this volume's appendix essay, "Two Types of Language in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*," reinforces the approach taken by most, if not all of the contributing authors in our anthology: reading Dōgen's texts as philosophy. While all of the contributors agree that the *Shōbōgenzō* serves both as a religious *and* philosophical text, some authors question the idea of manifesting a religious writing *as* a philosophical text. At present, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion the extent Dōgen's influence on philosophy. This is because both his factual impact and the need to reexamine Western categorization, which is based on Graeco-Roman concepts such as "religion" and "philosophy", remain to be determined.

What is the underlying understanding of text and language behind the statement that "the entanglements [of language] are at the same time the perfect expression [of truth],"⁸ and what critique of language does this understanding encompass? In the *Shōbōgenzō*, what does Dōgen explain and what does he consider articulated? How does the spoken or written word relate to what is inarticulate or inarticulable? What remains unsaid in linguistic expression? Does perfect expression pertain to a pre-linguistic realm accessible only to the Zen master in mystical immersion? Is the purpose to point towards the ineffable?

As a first step towards addressing such questions, let us expand our scope to examine Dōgen's perspective on language in works other than the *Shōbōgenzō*, and how he situates himself within the Zen tradition. We will demonstrate the centrality of language, including the Japanese vernacular, to Dōgen's intellectual pursuits. This is evident even before introducing a crucial language difference that relates to the traditional distinction of the two truths in Buddhism.

used with the meaning of 'to say.' It is as though there were a passion to speak in words of that which transcends words. This is my feeling. Yet if one were to fall back into the Zen saying, 'not relying on words or letters,' and let it all go, then one could have an end of it. I feel that the special character of Dōgen's Zen lies in these words, *dōtoku* and *dōjaku*. It seems to me that if 'doing only zazen' were the point, then without writing ninety-five fascicles, 'Do zazen' would have been enough. In spite of this there is a determination to explain completely and logically why it is necessary to do zazen. Isn't *Shōbōgenzō* a book of great singularity?" See Karaki et al., "Japanese Zen. A Symposium," in *Eastern Buddhist* 10/2 (1977): 80–81; KZ IV: 376

⁷ See Heiler, *Die buddhistische Versenkung: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (München: Reinhardt 1918).

⁸ See fn. 4.

3.1 Dōgen and the Tradition

As a Zen Buddhist, Dōgen’s place in his tradition is ambiguous. The Zen tradition is rich in writings, and known for its elaborate practice of textual “riddles” – called *kōans* – which seem to indicate a positive attitude to language *ad absurdum*. Nevertheless, inherent in Dōgen is a critique of *kōan* practice and the traditional self-conception of a “a special tradition [of teaching] outside scholasticism, independent of characters” (j. *furyū monji*, *kyōge betsuden*).⁹ This motto refers to the founding myth of the Zen school with its vivid imagery, according to which only one disciple from an infinite crowd of followers understood the actual message of the awakened one during a sermon by the Buddha on Vulture Peak: The (seemingly) wordless understanding between them is symbolised in Mahākāśyapa’s smile when he sees the Buddha hold up a flower and twirl it between his thumb and forefinger. It is the mutual acknowledgement in the silent gesture that seems to point to an intuitive and entirely language-free moment of experience. The mutual acknowledgement also appears to confirm that the critique of language in Zen presupposes the ineffable.¹⁰

However, in the Mahāyāna Buddhist Indian texts, some statements challenge the negative attitude towards language.¹¹ Chinese Zen demonstrates further complexity as a continuous narrative emerges from the aforementioned founding myth of the Buddha’s teachings: the narrative of a special transmission of the Buddhist teaching outside the scriptures. And a specific language practice evolved: In *kōans*, the narrative of the language-independent transmission becomes a practical question in which the primal scene of Vulture Peak is actualised. The myth also prompts a reflection on language in the medium of language itself as is evident from various *kōan* texts. In this line, Dōgen as the founder of the Japanese tradition of Sōtō Zen demonstrates how a single expression can initiate a reinterpretation of the tradition. He attains enlightenment at the instant when his master, who, despite his old age, practices *zazen* with his students until late at night, scolds a monk for dozing off.

⁹This thesis is already attributed to Bodhidharma, the Chinese founder of Zen, although the oldest textual evidence of this idea is found centuries later. See Döll, *Im Osten des Meeres: chinesische Emigrantenmönche und die frühen Institutionen des japanischen Zen-Buddhismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner 2010), 20.

¹⁰In this way, the school of Zen radically follows on from the well-known silence of the Buddha, which, especially in the Western interpretation of Mahāyāna Buddhism, establishes an ideology in which an entirely “different” way of thinking is projected onto the “smiling East.” The different interpretations of the Buddha’s silence are summarised in Schlieter, *Versprachlichung – Entsprachlichung: Untersuchungen zum philosophischen Stellenwert der Sprache im europäischen und buddhistischen Denken* (Köln: edition chōra 2000).

¹¹Cf. the reference to the criticism of the silence of Vimalakirti in Hori “Kōan and Kenshō in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum” in *The Kōan: texts and contexts in Zen Buddhism*. Ed. by St. Heine and D. S. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press 2000), 297. He refers to two passages from the *Vimalakirti Sutra* which he parallels, although one refers to the “thundering silence” of the wise Vimalakirti, while the argument for linguistic articulation is directed against Sariputra, who says nothing out of nescience. On the *Vimalakirti Sutra* see Thurman, *The holy teaching of Vimalakirti: a Mahayana scripture* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications 1991), especially 59 and 77.

Dōgen devises a term for this very moment in his master’s spontaneous utterance: “casting off of body and heart” (j. *shinjin datsuraku*).¹² As a means of expressing his enlightenment experience, the phrase serves Dōgen in two ways: on the one hand, he founds his teaching of “sitting only” (j. *shikan taza*), i.e., the strict practice of *zazen*, on it, but at the same time he begins to appropriate instantaneous immersion as a specific experience. Dōgen’s writings reflect both the process and outcome of this development.

3.2 A Positive Attitude Towards Language

Dōgen reflects on the early stages of his path against this backdrop of having given voice to something that is only realised in connection with practice. Initially, his understanding of the Zen tradition remained superficial, which is why he writes at the very beginning of the “Notes” about his motive for going to China: “He [Dōgen] wandered in vain through the territory of names and forms [*myōsō*]” (DZZ 7: 2).

In this context, the term “names and forms” pertains to Zen’s sceptical attitude towards language. To wander in vain through the territory of names and forms means to delve into theoretical discussions that appear useless, particularly when they are decoupled from the practical concerns of the religious path. Zen distrusts language to mediate reality on the practitioner’s path to nirvana, given that it understands language as not correlating with the experience of reality. For Dōgen, however, this does not mean rejecting language altogether. Rather, we ought to reflect on its form and make appropriate and, to a large extent, rational use of it. Hence, Dōgen succeeds in penetrating the “true meaning” of Zen teachings when, in going to China, he learns about a new interpretation of the Buddha’s practice.

In China, he meets – according to tradition – a master who not only distinguishes himself as a personality and demonstrates exceptional discipline in the practice of *zazen* despite his old age. Furthermore, the master coins an inventive term for enlightenment based on meditation – the core of Buddhist teaching from the Zen point of view. Although Dōgen discovers the answer to his question during enlightenment, he cannot avoid confronting tradition, which is incomplete in both theory and practice: Dōgen’s practice of *zazen* and his intellectual engagement with the tradition continued until the end of his life. Therefore, Dōgen interweaves the theory and practice of Zen meditation in a relationship of mutual fertilisation.

One of the most important achievements of his intellectual engagement with the Zen tradition is Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō*. For the present context, it is important to note how in this oeuvre, Dōgen criticises the patriarchs’ stories, commentaries, and

¹²On the transmission history of this expression and its possible misunderstandings due to phonetic similarity with other words on the one hand, and Dōgen’s lack of knowledge of the Chinese language on the other, see Nakamura, *Ways of thinking of eastern peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan* (Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center Press 1966), 242 and 348; and Heine, “Dōgen Casts Off ‘What.’ An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*” in: *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9/1 (1986): 53–70.

discourses when discussing quasi-metaphysical statements. In his interpretations, Dōgen de- and reconstructs these statements, most vividly in the fascicle “Buddha Nature” (“Busshō”). The text of the *Shōbōgenzō* remains unfinished. This is not necessarily a shortcoming since it needs to be considered vis-à-vis the hermeneutic process of continuous unfolding and deepening.

The *Shōbōgenzō* should be approached as a text comprised of the ideas and realizations of an enlightened individual. As a result, it can only be written in the quasi-monological context of the Zen master. This is reflective of Dōgen’s own status as the founder of a school upon his return to Japan from China. Indeed, his new understanding of tradition, which he elaborates on and develops in the *Shōbōgenzō*, was only attainable through and in the direct face-to-face engagement with his master. A new path was founded on a dialogical relationship, to put it differently. In his quest for an authentic master, Dōgen locates Nyojō¹³ who proves to be skillful and generous in imparting eloquent and unreserved instruction to his dedicated pupil.

Through Nyojō’s strictness in practice and openness in conversation, Dōgen is encouraged and inspired to cultivate his critical spirit: Even though respect for the master and his insights is demanded, in *Hōkyōki*,¹⁴ as elsewhere, the importance of conversation, dispute, criticism, and self-criticism between master and student is frequently highlighted – not merely following in silence, submission, or experiencing mystical unity.

3.3 Dōgen’s Critique of the Speechless Zen Tradition

At the outset of Dōgen’s critique of the Zen tradition, we find theoretical questioning, in contrast to mere meditative absorption, alongside discourse that is intellectual rather than imparting cryptic teachings. The reason for this is that this critique tends to dismantle verbal and written forms. Yet, at the same time, it offers a new and original use of language. Dōgen relates to both the new language practice of *kōan* dialogue and language scepticism when he problematises the concept of a separate transmission. He poses a query that encompasses the significance of the sutras in the transmission of the Buddha’s teaching and truth: “In all points of the compass, people today praise [the Zen teaching] as a special tradition outside scholasticism and consider [it] the reason why [the first] patriarch came from the West [India]. What does this mean?” (DZZ 7:4).

According to *Hōkyōki*, Nyojō already establishes a critique of the Zen tradition by rejecting the notion of its exclusivity. Therefore, Dōgen’s teacher answers the aforementioned question in the following manner:

¹³Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (1162–1227), a Chinese Chan monk, dharma heir to Zuan Zhijian 足庵智鑑 in the Caodong 曹洞宗 lineage; often referred to simply as Rujing 如淨.

¹⁴The *Hōkyōki* 寶慶記, one fascicle, written by Dōgen. A record made by while he was studying in China with Rujing 如淨 (a Caodong 曹洞 master of the Southern Sung).

Why should the great path [of Buddha] have anything to do with inside and outside? That one nevertheless praises [the teaching] as a special tradition outside scholasticism only means that the [first] patriarch [of the Zen tradition] – apart from the tradition of Kashaya Matanga and others – came from the West, that he went directly to China, that he transmitted the Way [of the Buddha] and that he granted [us] the practice [of meditation]. That is why we speak of the particular transmission outside of scholasticism. [But] two teachings of the Buddha cannot exist in the world. (DZZ 7: 4)

Ambivalences arise regarding the Zen tradition on two levels: Firstly, there is the issue of Zen’s detachment from the overarching tradition of Buddhism as originally founded by Buddha. Secondly, the question arises as to whether the Zen school can establish its own form of tradition: beyond the authoritative texts of the tradition such as discourses, sutras, and commentaries as laid down in the Tripitaka. Yet this is precisely what Nyojō denies: the practice of meditation in no way justifies a splitting off of a quasi-esoteric lineage and, from this perspective, does not even justify a school name. Thereby, Dōgen retracts the mentioned instruction of Mahākaśyapa by the Buddha in its meaning: The encounter between Buddha and his first follower is reinterpreted within the tradition into the practice of direct instruction between master and disciple in the *kōan* exercise. This practice, which is still carried out today, manifests as a confrontation with paradoxical statements, especially following Rinzai¹⁵ Zen. Dōgen recalls and criticises this practice, preferring a more discursive exchange:

In all directions today, the ancients of the past and present speak of “that which is heard, yet not heard, seen, yet not seen: without any question, here and now, it is the way of the Buddhas and patriarchs.” With this [attitude] they raise their fist or flyswatter, utter a shout or beat with a stick; they do not allow their disciples to consider anything in a differentiated way [...]. (DZZ 7: 4)

Dōgen critiques mere scribes (j. *kyōka*) and distances himself from them (cf. DZZ 7: 24). Although he rejects the concept of an “esoteric” tradition, he still engages in *zazen* practice and does not solely pursue scriptural study. He devotes himself to both aspects of Buddhism and does not acknowledge a hierarchy between theory and practice, or differentiate between “complete” and “incomplete” sutras, even if some are written in short form, and others in long form. Regarding the Buddha’s discourses, all forms of expression are appropriate. Thus, in dialogue with his mentor, Dōgen discusses the correlation between speech and silence. Ultimately, a unity of articulation and gesture is assumed when it is said: “Sacred silence like sacred teaching, both are the Buddha’s business” (DZZ 7: 22). This statement not only neutralises the paradoxical expression but also subverts silence as a privileged mode of communication in the Zen interpretive context.

A positive appreciation of language, which can also be linked to a metaphysical justification of a “concrete monism,” is found in a text that Dōgen only wrote in the year 1237 but which reflects an early encounter from his time in China. In his work, Dōgen addresses the importance of language. In *Tenzo kyōkun* (*Instructions for the*

¹⁵ Linji 臨濟, a reference to the Chinese Chan master Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866-7) and to the tradition of Buddhism that formed based on his teachings, the Linji zong 臨濟宗.

Chief Cook), which primarily sets out rules for the monastery’s cook, he recounts a conversation with a monk who, despite his advanced age – and his being in an exalted position – is in charge of the kitchen. This dialogue reveals that “theory” and “practice” are not contradictory, but mutually supportive:

“Revered master,” I asked, “why do you not practice *zazen* in your old age, and why do you not read the *kōan* cases of the ancients, but toil away at this chief cook’s office? What is so valuable about preparing meals for the monks?” Then the chief cook laughed aloud. “You good man from abroad! You do not know what the Buddha Way practice is. Nor have you yet grasped words!” [After months they meet again and the chief cook continues:] “Whoever wants to learn words must first recognise their principle. And whoever wants to strive for the Buddha Way practice must first know about its principle.” So I asked, “What are ‘words’?” “One, two, three, four, five.” “And what is the ‘Buddha Way practice’?” “All things in the world are unconcealed.” [Finally, Dōgen states:] Now I understood that that kitchen master was truly a man of the Buddha Way. The words I had seen so far were one, two, three, four, five, and the ones I saw now [after realising their nature] were six, seven, eight, nine, ten. When the monks practising the Buddha Way see from here what is there and from there what is here, and thus cultivate [the Way] intensively, they will understand that pure Zen is based on words. (DZZ 6:14, 16)¹⁶

Indeed, the chief cook speaks of comprehending the respective principles of words and practice. While such principles cannot be reduced to the designative aspect of an abstract statement and the path of understanding cannot be reduced to the study of specific texts alone, both practical experience and linguistic context are crucial. Dōgen’s statement that “pure Zen is based on words” can also be interpreted in the Sino-Japanese original to suggest that Zen is “above” and words are “below.” Nevertheless, it appears appropriate to view this statement as not establishing a rigid justificatory or favouring of one over the other – both Zen and words are inter-related in a powerful sense. Likewise, when counting numbers, they are neither “ordinary” words nor statements of identity. Numbers and their counting are subject to interpretation based on the situation and context. Consequently, an important implication of Dōgen’s conversation with the chief cook is that despite the potential hazards, constraints, and drawbacks of language, there exists a vital correlation between the pursuit and enactment of salvation and the use of language (words).

3.4 Dōgen’s Linguistic Articulation of Meditation

From this perspective, it becomes clear that Dōgen may prioritize the practice of *zazen* for strategic reasons, but never in principle. Upon returning to Japan, Dōgen goes from being a student searching for answers to his great doubt regarding original enlightenment and the need to practice to the time of instructing his own students; thus, he must strive for a form of authentic meditation. In the writing *Fukan zazen gi* (*Explanations for the General Promotion of Zazen*), he emphasises meditation and reliance on one’s own effort and experience. As previously indicated, the

¹⁶It is translated here *monji jō no ichimi zen* (DZZ 6: 16) as “on the words,” not as “above the words.”

scripture primarily serves as a tool for physical instruction and, can also be used – in its brevity and style – for recitation or be put away. Like a self-exhortation not to be captivated by “names and forms,” he writes: “So, refrain from seeking explanations and chasing words! Learn to let the light turn back and shine on your own nature” (DZZ 5:4)! However, it’s important to note that this proverb does not necessarily align with traditional Zen teachings.

Dōgen’s unconventional way of teaching becomes particularly evident when one reads in *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* (*Records of what I heard about the Shōbōgenzō*) – written by his next disciple Ejō in the period 1235–1238 – how pragmatically Dōgen spoke about subjects such as the Chinese language, poetry and literature, sutras and analects, teaching and the master-student relationship, debates that go astray, defamation and insult, the appropriate and ethically right form of speaking, and criticism and self-criticism. For him, the student’s effort towards independent understanding is crucial. Of course, he stresses that “literature and poetry are meaningless” (DZZ 7:72). And “even the words [j. *gongo*] of the Buddhas and patriarchs should not be loved and studied in excess” (ibid.). Nonetheless, this is not directed against language at such, since Dōgen, on the other hand, urges his students to strive to articulate what they understand:

Again, [Dōgen] states: One who studies the Way should not read the writings of the book scholars, nor even extra-canonical texts. Read the records of the words [of the ancient masters] that one has to read. Put the other [texts] aside for a while. Today’s Zen monks love to hastily and carelessly compose verses or doctrinal discourses [j. *hōgo*]. This is wrong. Write down what you think in your heart, even if you do not write verses; write down the true teaching, even if you are not capable of beautiful literature. [...] But even if you read the Sacred Scriptures, if you gradually understand the principle you find in the sentences, [...] you first see in the sentences what kind of couplets and what kind of intonation they are, and inwardly weigh whether they are good or bad, and only later pay attention to the meaning. [...] Leave the language and the style of writing to themselves – if you write down the principle as you think of it, in all its details, if one is looking for the principle, it is important for the sake of the path, even if later generations give nothing to your style. (DZZ 7: 90–93)

Here, too, an inclination towards rational insight is particularly evident. It is not subject to stylistic aesthetics, as neither metaphor nor other rhetorical devices determine the criterion for comprehension. Dōgen emphasises the affirmative use of everyday language. However, as demonstrated in the following, his consideration of language soon reaches far beyond its appreciation and defence against aesthetic criteria. This is evident in the author’s use of phrases such as “so to speak” (j. *iwayuru*), “that means” or “it says” (j. *to iu* or *to wa* and others), which reflect a self-reflexive distance from language. This is also visible through direct word explanations or substitutions of Sino-Japanese expressions with those of spoken Japanese, sometimes casually, sometimes deliberately. Finally, the use of theory-related terminology such as “meaning,” “expression,” or “metaphor” demonstrates a thorough grasp of the semantic aspect of linguistic signs.

II. Book Outline: The Emergence of Dōgen as Philosopher

Indeed, perhaps more than any other example, the emergence of the *Shōbōgenzō* as a philosophical text is representative of the history of how the creation of “Japanese philosophy” in the modern era has occurred alongside conflict with – or displacement of – the pre-modern confessional approach. For this reason, Dōgen studies in Meiji period Japan can be understood as a passage in which the image projected onto Dōgen changed and multiplied greatly. What exactly happened to Dōgen scholarship during this period remains to be clarified historically and systematically. The same applies to the presentation and discussion of the conditions before the Meiji era and the ensuing changes. Our anthology aims at a core problem that became critical in the Meiji period, in which the philosophical appropriation of Dōgen acted as a catalyst inside and outside the monastery: how should we deal with Dōgen’s texts?

This question is not limited to apparent oppositions between pre-modern confessional authority and modern academic discourse, religion and philosophy, or commentary and criticism. The emergence of modern denominational studies (j. *shūgaku*) based on practitioners’ self-criticism, or the convergence of philosophical discourse on Dōgen with denominational commentary literature, are examples that undermine such apparent oppositions and show that the issues involved are more complex. As for contemporary Dōgen studies, most of the entanglements stem from a number of different factions among those who were receptive towards Dōgen’s writings before, during, or after the Meiji era. These factions include: the Zennists (j. *zenjōka*), who emphasise practice; the Genzōnians (j. *genzōka*), who emphasise the reading of Dōgen texts; the lay movement, which opens both the texts and the practice to people in modern society; and the Genzō scholars (j. *genzō kenkyūka*), who search for the authenticity and truth of Dōgen’s writings.

This anthology’s collected contributions help clarify, subvert, and/or revise common notions of Dōgen in monasticism, confessional studies, or modern academic philosophy. The aim is to bring into play the various discourses on Dōgen and to discuss their relationship across periods and factions in modernity and pre-modernity. The challenge is to set hermeneutical reading standards and propose new, original, and critical interpretations of his texts. The performative dimension of language and silence circumscribes the framework within which we can place all three topics: the text, the practice, and time as a matter of both religious and philosophical thought. We will give each of these topics its dedicated part. In the first part, on text, the central level of philosophising becomes the subject. In the second part, on practice, we will discuss the text regarding its performativity, which seems closer to religion as an essential category for treating Dōgen. In the third part, we show how the relationship between text and performativity depends on another issue central to religion and the practice of philosophy: time.