

Chapter Title: An Introduction

Book Title: Abruptly Dogen

Published by: Punctum Books. (2022)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv27tct9p.2>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.



JSTOR

*Punctum Books* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Abruptly Dogen*

## An Introduction

Dogen (1200–1253), luminous thunder wabbling the Buddhist projects of liberation. He brings Zen to Japan. He's also the first to write of religion in his native Japanese. Too bright, he will disappear another seven hundred years, only reemerging in 1920s Japan. And now, a century later, in the main currents of world culture.

This book holds some of his sharp edges and cataract waterfalls, a land that may have 84,000 moons. So that we may glimpse the view from his *Eye of Real Dharma* (*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏). Each of the chapters contains material from one of its seventy-five fascicles.

He speaks mainly to monks, so I don't translate everything he says, though you can readily find that elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> I seek to afford an intimacy, to give his

1 I find Carl Bielefeldt and his team to be Dogen's most reliable translators, and I am always learning from them. See the Sōtō Zen Text Project, trans., *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 8 vols. (in prep.). For a Japanese text I follow Kawamura Kodō 河村孝道, *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集. There are several other complete translations, some of which are freely downloadable from the web. A pioneering work is John Stevens and Kosen Nishiyama, *Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*, 4 vols. (Tokyo : Nakayama Shobō, 1975–1988). Shasta Abbey has also produced a complete translation, available on their website: *Shobogenzo*, trans. Rev. Master Hubert Nearman, Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (Mount Shasta: Shasta Abbey Press, 2007), <https://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/shoboAll.pdf>. A useful alliance between Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross can be downloaded from bddk: *Shōbōgenzō: The True Dharma-Eye Treasury*, trans. Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross, 4 vols. (1996–1999; rpt. Moraga: bdk America, 2008), <https://bdkamerica.org/product/shobogenzo-the-true-dharma-eye-treasury-volume-i/>. Kaz Tanahashi makes some

ecstatic roaming more room to set us wondering. If you like philosophy, you will also find it here, and elegance and humor. His language is a unique grape-olect, jumpy and precise. But whereas his sentences tend to be lengthy, layered, folding rapturously back on and through themselves, that is, of the nature of mind, mine are blunt and short. Perhaps someone may yet devise an English prose that fully manifests his beauty.

So here we have his speech, from which perhaps we may discern his mind, from which we may discern an unknowing. I regret I can't sustain the proper concerns of context—society, history, religion, literature, that pantheon, how he emerges at a particular time and place, and his urgent need to establish on-going monastic forms of Zen.

“We could investigate these matters,” he says. Often he suggests we find a teacher and practice this with her.

strong selections in his *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1995). I do not recommend Thomas Cleary's work. Dogen's name is usually romanized “Dōgen,” the macron indicating a long *o*. Here I simply call him “Dogen,” as if he were American.