Visions of Awakening Space and Time

Dogen and the Lotus Sutra

TAIGEN DAN LEIGHTON
Preface
Acknowledgments
1 The Pivotal Lotus Story and Dogen's Worldview
2 Hermeneutics and Discourse Styles in Studies of the Lotus Sutra and Dogen
3 Selected East Asian Interpretations of the Story
4 Dogen's Interpretations of This Lotus Sutra Story
5 Dogen's View of Earth, Space, and Time Seen in Mahayana Context
Afterword
Preface

In the striking story from the *Lotus Sutra* that is one starting point for this work, an incalculable number of venerable, dedicated bodhisattvas, or enlightening beings, emerge suddenly from an open space under the earth to pledge to the Buddha Sakyamuni their assistance in keeping alive his teaching, even far into the future. This tale of chthonic bodhisattvas emerging from under the ground resonates with a number of mythic and historical narratives. Comparing such images may provide some illuminating metaphoric contexts for this story, which begins chapter 15 of the sutra.¹

Although a survey of analogous mythological references is beyond the scope of this work, a particularly instructive comparison to the story of emerging bodhisattvas is a modern account by spiritual writer Annie Dillard of an experience she had in 1982. Her story reaches back in time to around 206 BCE, historically within a century before the *Lotus Sutra* began to be committed to writing, and to events in China some six centuries before Kumarajiva translated the standard version of the *Lotus Sutra* used there.²

Dillard visited the tomb of the Qin emperor near Xi'an (formerly Chang'an) as the thousands of clay soldiers buried with the emperor who had first unified China were being unearthed after their recent discovery in 1974. As her eyewitness response is a key part of the comparison, I quote Dillard at some length:

Chinese archaeologists were in the years-long process of excavating a buried army of life-sized soldiers. The first Chinese emperor, Emperor Qin, had sculptors make thousands of individual statues. Instead of burying his army of living men to accompany him in the afterlife—a custom of the time—he interred their full-bodied portraits.

At my feet, and stretching off into the middle distance . . . I saw what looked like human bodies coming out of the earth. . . . From the trench walls emerged an elbow here, a leg and foot there, a head and neck. Everything was the same color, the terra-cotta earth and the people: the color of plant pots.

Everywhere the bodies, the clay people, came crawling from the deep ground. A man's head and shoulders stuck out of a trench wall. He wore a helmet and armor. From the breast down, he was in the wall. The earth bound his abdomen. . . . I looked down into his face. His astonishment was formal.

The earth was yielding these bodies, these clay people: it erupted them forth, it pressed them out. The same tan soil that embedded these people also made them; it grew and bore them. The clay people were earth itself, only shaped.³

The first obvious difference is that this uncovering of entombed soldiers is a historical event, unlike the literary, scriptural emergence from the earth of spiritual benefactors in the *Lotus Sutra*. However, as Donald Lopez traces the term "bodhisattva," the Sanskrit word *bodhi* is the state of being awake, and the Sanskrit term *sattva* has etymological roots that include "sentient being," "mind" or "intention," but also "the sense of strength or courage, making the compound *bodhisattva* mean 'one whose strength is directed toward enlightenment.'" This meaning was later emphasized in the Tibetan translation for bodhisattva, which means literally "enlightenment-mind-hero," or "one who is heroic in his or her intention to achieve enlightenment."⁴ This meaning may have been reinforced by the historical Sakyamuni Buddha having previously been a prince well-trained in martial arts. Thus the bodhisattva has sometimes been associated with warrior strength and courage and with the heroic
aspect of dedication to awakening.

As a further parallel, East Asian Mahayana imagery frequently discusses the relationship of teachers and students, or buddhas and bodhisattvas, using metaphors of lords and vassals, based on the relationship of Chinese emperors to their soldiers and government ministers. So it seems that the Chinese soldiers buried under the earth for all those centuries are not an inappropriate analogue for the underground bodhisattva retainers of Buddha.

Of course, one prime facet of the *Lotus Sutra* underground bodhisattvas is their long-lived practice and enduring availability, whereas the Xi'an soldiers are mere "clay people." However, Dillard's reaction to observing how "the earth was yielding these bodies, these clay people: it erupted them forth, it pressed them out," is a revealing comparison for the emerging from earth of the bodhisattvas. First, we simply note the earthiness of the Qin soldiers, clay people colored terra-cotta, of "the earth itself, only shaped." The *Lotus Sutra* bodhisattvas are alive, not molded from terra-cotta. And yet they have been under the earth, in the open space under the ground, for longer, much longer, than the two-millennia-old Qin dynasty soldiers, and these bodhisattvas also profoundly represent the earth element.

Another noteworthy aspect of Dillard's account is her astonishment at the partial exposure of the soldiers, like Michelangelo's striking figures still half-embedded in stone. It is as if Dillard were seeing the bodhisattvas' rapid emergence in extreme slow motion. And her astonishment at the sight is reminiscent of the puzzled confusion of the Buddha's regular disciples in the sutra story. Yet Dillard transposes this shock and bewilderment to the soldiers themselves: "A man's head and shoulders stuck out of a trench wall. The earth bound his abdomen. . . . I looked down into his face. His astonishment was formal." Dillard's account allows us to wonder at the bodhisattvas' rapid emergence in extreme slow motion. And her astonishment at the sight is reminiscent of the puzzled confusion of the Buddha's regular disciples in the sutra story. From their extraordinary performance of enduring service and dedication, one might derive much concerning the spiritually nourishing nature of earth and of time in the Mahayana, and we will see that certainly Dogen does so.

The underground bodhisattvas express the immanence of the liberative potential, or buddha nature, in the ground of the earth, as well as in the inner, psychological ground of being, ever ready to spring forth and benefit beings when called. The image represents the fertility of the earth itself and the wondrous, healing, natural power of creation, or the phenomenal world.

This work explores this section of the *Lotus Sutra* and how it was used by the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Eihei Dogen to express his dynamic worldview. The first chapter presents the story of *Lotus Sutra* chapters 15 and 16, beginning with the underground bodhisattvas emerging to maintain the sutra's teaching long into the future, leading to the revelation of the Buddha's inconceivably long life span. This story is pivotal to the sutra's meaning and to its literary structure, as early Chinese commentators Daosheng and Zhiyi viewed the story as dividing the earlier cause or practice section from the effect, or fundamental teaching, later section of the sutra. The worldview of Dogen in which space itself becomes awakened and is mutually, interactively supportive with practitioners is also introduced.

The second chapter presents a range of hermeneutical and methodological considerations related to Dogen and the *Lotus Sutra*, discussing approaches particularly relevant to Dogen: skillful means; Tathagata garbha, or buddha womb teaching; and practice as enactment of realization. This is followed by pertinent considerations from Paul Ricoeur's Western hermeneutical perspectives on use of metaphor and wordplay as a context for appreciating Do-gen's creative use of language, and Ricoeur's writings about proclamation that are illuminating of Dogen's discourse style, which to a great extent explicitly draws from the *Lotus Sutra*. Also discussed is the new interest in the strong role of imagery and imagination in Buddhism, important for both Mahayana sutras and for Dogen.

Chapter 3 traces the responses and commentaries to the *Lotus Sutra*, especially to its chapters 15 and 16, from a series of prominent East Asian Buddhist teachers. Featured in these discussions are early Chinese teachers Daosheng, Zhiyi, and Zhanran; Dogen's rough contemporaries in Japan, Saigyo, Myoe, and Nichiren; and the commentaries of later Japanese Zen figures Hakuin, Ryokan,
and the modern master Shunryu Suzuki. Among major issues that these contrasting responses address are the nature of the earth and the practice relationship to this world; the manner in which this *Lotus Sutra* story applies to later, ongoing practice; and the nature of the Buddha himself in the light of this story.

Chapter 4, in many ways the heart of this book, is a close reading of a range of references throughout Dogen's writings to *Lotus Sutra* chapters 15 and 16, organized in terms of earth, space, and time, and then by how Dogen uses these citations as practice encouragements for his students. These commentaries reveal Dogen's strong lifetime allegiance to the *Lotus Sutra* text, and also his approach to awakening as a function of the nature of reality, intimately connected with the dynamic support of the earth, space itself, and a multidimensional view of the movements of time.

Chapter 5 discusses a range of Mahayana imagery concerning earth, space, and their confluence and related Buddhist backgrounds on temporality, and how these may have served as a wider context for Dogen's worldview beyond the *Lotus Sutra* as his major Mahayana source. David McMahan's discussions of
the spatialization of time help further reveal how Dogen's view of the spiritual potential of space and earth influenced his more celebrated teachings of being-time and his exhortations to fully inhabit time.

Finally, the afterword speculates about some of the potential implications of Dogen’s Mahayana worldview to contemporary twenty-first-century concerns. These include parallels to modern cutting-edge physics and string theory, this worldview’s relationship to a spiritual perspective on ecology and our struggle to sustain our environment, and then to social engagement and a modern, socially active Buddhist ethic.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude for gracious assistance and suggestions from Richard Payne, dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies of the Graduate Theological Union, Judith Berling of the Graduate Theological Union, and Thomas Kasulis of Ohio State University, my committee for the doctoral dissertation on which this book is based. I thank especially Richard Payne for his very valuable suggestions and for long-term patience and support.

Thanks also to Seijun Ishii of Komazawa University in Japan, who was a valuable consultant and made helpful suggestions and corrections. Steven Heine, one of the preeminent American scholars of Dogen, was similarly of valued assistance as a consultant. I thank Yi Wu of the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, who helped guide some of the material that found its way into this work. I am also ever grateful to Yi Wu for his assistance in my earlier translation of writings by Hongzhi Zhengjue, which experience was helpful background to my ongoing study of Dogen and Soto Zen. Some of the material on hermeneutics in this work was first developed in consultation with Naomi Seidman of the Graduate Theological Union; I appreciate her helpful comments and encouragement. I am grateful to the Graduate Theological Union for presenting me with a Presidential Scholarship, helpful support while engaging in portions of this work.


The *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* essay, material from which is further developed in portions of the first four chapters of this work, began as a paper for the 2002 Rissho Koseikai conference on "Zen and the *Lotus Sutra*." Thanks to Gene Reeves, convener of this conference, for his helpful comments and encouragement. Many thanks also for useful comments and suggestions on that occasion from John McRae, Paul Swanson, Ruben Habito, and William LaFleur.

My essay "The *Lotus Sutra* as a Source for Dogen's Discourse Style," which appears in the Routledge book coedited by Richard Payne and myself, is the source for the material in the last portion of chapter 2. This essay initially was prepared for the Institute of Buddhist Studies conference on "Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism," held in September 2001. On that occasion I received especially beneficial extensive comments from Jan Nattier and other helpful comments from Carl Bielefeldt and Bernard Faure.

I am grateful to Cynthia Read, Julia TerMaat, and Oxford University Press for their kindness in bringing this work to publication. Thanks also to Rev. Ryuei Michael McCormick of the Nichiren Shu, who was helpful in various ways with the material on Nichiren, and also generally with his extensive knowledge of the *Lotus Sutra*.

I have been thinking and teaching about the material in this book, including the central story in the *Lotus Sutra* and its relationship to Dogen's teaching, for more than fifteen years, so I have been helped in the relevant research by many people. My long-time study of Dogen has benefited immeasurably from collaborative translation work I have done with Shohaku Okumura (for three books we cotranslated) and with Kazuaki Tanahashi (included in the three books of Dogen translations he has edited). I am grateful for their friendship, as well as their invaluable help in understanding Dogen and his language. I have also had the pleasure and benefit over the years of extensive discussion and friendship with Dogen and Zen scholars Steven Heine, Norman Waddell, Griffith Foulk, Thomas Cleary, Will Bodi-ford, Carl Bielefeldt, and Tom Wright. They have all informed my understanding of Dogen.

I would like to thank all of my spiritual teachers, who have helped me experience Dogen's teachings from within the practice tradition. I am unspeakably grateful to both Rev. Kando Nakajima,
who introduced me to Dogen together with zazen more than thirty years ago, and to my ordination and Dharma transmission teacher, Tenshin Reb Anderson. I am also indebted for teachings on Dogen to Zen teachers Tanaka Shinkai, Ikko Narasaki, Blanche Hartman, Richard Baker, Dan Welch, Dainin Katagiri, and Phillip Whalen. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Kimberly Johnson for her warm support, encouragement, and useful comments during the writing of this work.
The Pivotal Lotus Story
and Dogen's Worldview

In the modern Western appropriation of Zen Buddhism, Zen often has been viewed as an intriguing but abstract philosophical doctrine, or as a spiritual exercise designed to achieve higher states of personal consciousness or a therapeutic calm. However, the Zen tradition in East Asia developed as a branch of the Mahayana bodhisattva teachings, dedicated to universal liberation. As a religion with soteriological aims, Zen is based on and grew out of a Buddhist worldview far apart from the currently prevalent preconceptions of a world formed of Newtonian objectifications. This objective worldview still clouds our attitudes toward many realms, including the study of religion, even though it has now been discredited by new cutting-edge physics. Contrary to present conventions, Zen Buddhism developed and cannot be fully understood outside of a worldview that sees reality itself as a vital, ephemeral agent of awareness and healing.

Probably the most prolific writer among the historical Zen masters is Eihei Dogen (1200-1253), considered the founder of the Soto Zen tradition in Japan, which is now spreading in many places in the West. Dogen's various writings have been widely translated and commented on in recent decades and have played a major role in the importation of Buddhism into the West. Dogen traveled as a young monk to China in 1223, where he met his teacher, and then in 1227 brought back the Soto Zen lineage, founding a training monastery, Eiheiji, and an order of monks that became Japanese Soto Zen. Dogen's writings are among the most voluminous and wide-ranging
of any East Asian Buddhist figure and are filled with references both to the recorded sayings of traditional Chan masters and also to many sutras. Dogen often cites the Mahayana sutras. Among these, he by far most frequently cites the *Saddharmapundarika Sūtra*, commonly known as the *Lotus Sutra*. This sutra was the scripture most venerated in the Tendai school, in which Dogen was first ordained and trained. But even after his return from four years of Chan training in China in 1227, when he began to spread the Zen teachings in Japan (especially its huge koan lexicon, of which Dogen had achieved exceptional mastery), he continued to frequently cite and to venerate the *Lotus Sutra* until his death in 1253.

This work shows how Doagen used the *Lotus Sutra* especially to express his worldview of earth, space, and time themselves as awakening agents in the bodhisattva liberative project. I focus particularly on Dogen's citations of the pivotal story in chapters 15 and 16 of the sutra. This story concerns the bo-dhisattvas emerging from the earth who will preserve and expound the Lotus teaching in the distant future, and the resulting revelation that the Buddha only appears to pass away as a skillful means, but actually has been practicing, and will continue to do so, over an inconceivably lengthy life span. I explore Doagen's interpretations of this story and how he treats its images and metaphors to express his own religious worldview of the liberative qualities of spatiality and temporality.

The visions portrayed in this story of the underground bodhisattvas and the Buddha's inconceivable life span demonstrate the basis for the development of Mahaayaana practices of transcendent enactment and faith. The range of perspectives of Dogen's contemporary Kamakura-period figures and of other prominent East Asian Buddhists concerning the key teachings in these chapters also illuminate possibilities for contemporary twenty-first-century approaches to understanding fundamental Mahaayaana orientation and awareness.

The Story: Telling the Tale

Turning to the sutra story itself, I offer the following paraphrase of the entire narrative, which appears in chapters 15 and 16 of Kumarajiva’s translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, the standard version in East Asia. A group of bodhisattvas have been visiting from a distant world system in order to hear Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha) preach the *Lotus Sutra*. At the beginning of chapter 15, they ask the Buddha if he would like them to return in the future to maintain the *Lotus Sutra* teaching. Sakyamuni Buddha has been soliciting such future assistance in previous chapters for the period to follow his imminent
demise and passage into nirvana, and especially for the distant future "evil age." Historically many *Lotus Sutra* devotees have identified their own period with this evil age. This was certainly true for Dogen's contemporaries in Kamakura-period Japan, who thought they had entered the degenerate age of *mappo*, the final decline of the Dharma. It might seem true as well for contemporary interpreters in our own evil age of cycles of terrorist vengeance, environmental devastation, massive corruption, and preemptive wars of aggression.

As soon as the visiting bodhisattvas make their offer, Sakyamuni declares their help unnecessary, whereupon, "from out of the open space under the ground" simultaneously spring forth vast numbers of experienced, dedicated bodhisattvas. The immensity of their numbers and of their retinues of attendant bodhisattvas is expressed in conventional Mahayana mathematical metaphors about the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River. Each of the bodhisattvas offers appropriate ritual veneration to the Buddha. The names of their four leaders are mentioned: Superior Conduct, Boundless Conduct, Pure Conduct, and Steadfast Conduct. Sakyamuni Buddha declares that for countless ages all of these numerous bodhisattvas have been diligently practicing under the ground, have been present to help aid and awaken suffering beings, and will continue their beneficial practice and promulgation of the teaching even through the future evil age.

Maitreya Bodhisattva, predicted to be the next future incarnated buddha, voices the questions of the startled and puzzled assembly of Sakyamuni's disciples as to the identities and backgrounds of these emerging bodhisattvas, previously unknown to the regular disciples. Sakyamuni declares that he himself has trained all these underground bodhisattvas. Even more perplexed, Maitreya asks how that could be possible, as these unfamiliar underground bodhisattvas are obviously venerable sages, some considerably more aged than Sakyamuni. This would be like a twenty-five-year-old saying he is the father of a hundred-year-old son. Maitreya recounts that all the disciples know that Sakyamuni was born some eight decades before, left his palace in his late twenties, and after undergoing austerities discovered the Middle Way and awakened under the bodhi tree four decades previous to his present expounding of the *Lotus Sutra*.

This question leads to the climactic teaching of the whole sutra, the revelation in chapter 16 by Sakyamuni Buddha that he only seems to be born, awaken, and pass away as a teaching expedient. He declares that, in actuality, he has been awakened and practicing through an inconceivably long life span, and for many ages past and future is present to awaken beings. The extent of this time frame is depicted with vast astronomical metaphors. The Buddha explains that he appears to live a limited life and pass away into nirvana only as a skillful means for the sake of all those beings who would be dissuaded from their own diligent conduct, and miss the importance of their own attentive practice, by the knowledge of the Buddha's omnipresence.

The Buddha illustrates the situation with one of the parables characteristic of the *Lotus Sutra*, in which a good physician returns home to find his many sons delusional after having taken poison. The physician offers them good medicine as an antidote, but many refuse to take it because of their delusions. They are finally willing to take and be cured by the medicine only when brought to their senses by grief after hearing a false report that their father has passed away.

The Story's Position in the Sutra

Both doctrinally and in terms of literary structure, the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the sutra are pivotal chapters. They present central aspects of the *Lotus Sutra* teachings about the meaning of bodhisattva activity and awareness in space and time and also serve to separate the two main sections of the sutra. Going back to early Chinese commentators such as Daosheng (ca. 360-434; Dosho in Japanese) and Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597; Tendai Chigi in Japanese), founder of the Chinese Tiantai school, the first fourteen chapters of the sutra have been considered the cause, or practice section, and the last fourteen chapters, beginning with this story, have been marked as a separate section indicating the fruit of practice. This demarcation was also designated as between the "trace teaching" (*shakumon*) and the "origin teaching" (*hon-mon*). This division between what is traditionally called the cause and
result halves of the sutra also conveys its conventional and ultimate meanings, respectively. Zhiyi, and much of East Asian Buddhism after him, considered the *Lotus Sutra* sections prior to this story to be the trace teachings about the historical Buddha as the manifested trace of the fundamental teaching and of the fundamental or original Buddha, who is revealed in chapter 16 as having an inconceivably long life span. The remainder of the sutra, including and after this revelation, is then designated the fundamental teaching.

The primary structural boundary in the sutra that is marked by this story also reflects a major shift in the trajectory and history of Mahayana practice. The practice or cause portion of the sutra reflects the traditional Indian approach of rigorous bodhisattva cultivation over numerous lifetimes as the precursor to eventual buddhahood in the distant future. This is presented in the first half of the sutra itself via numerous predictions by Sakyamuni of future buddhahood in named buddha lands for his specific disciples, all set in the far distant future after a great many lifetimes of their practice. Teachings with this approach to the Mahayana detail many elaborate systems of stages of development of bodhisattva practice. This cause section of the sutra emphasizes the diversity of skillful means in the variety of teachings presented by the Buddha, all directed at the great One Vehicle and the single great cause for buddhas appearing in the world: to lead suffering beings into the path to awakening.

On the other hand, the full realization of the inconceivable life span of Buddha, and thus his omnipresence in the subsequent fruit of practice phase of the sutra, can be seen as a significant inspiration for sudden or rapid awakening practice beyond stages of development. The teaching of rapid awakening became a major Mahayana approach to practice in East Asia.

**Implications of the Story for Mahayana Praxis**

This complex story of the underground bodhisattvas and the Buddha’s inconceivable life span expresses the vastness and the immanence of the sacred in space as well as time and breaks open limited, conventional, linear perspectives of both space and time. It bears a variety of practical and theoretical implications that were critical to the development of East Asian Buddhist practice and faith.

The visions portrayed in this story demonstrate a foundation for the development of East Asian Mahayana practices of transcendent faith and ritual enactment of buddhahood, dependent not on lifetimes of arduous practice, but rather on immediate, unmediated, and intuitive realization of the fundamental ground of awakening. Paul Groner has described this shift as "shortening the path," in which there is the possibility of the path to liberation occurring rapidly.\(^5\) Jan Nattier describes this same shift as from a “progress philosophy” to a “leap philosophy,” referring to categories from Karl Potter, in which gradual progress over lifetimes of cultivation is replaced by a leap.\(^6\) Historically in East Asia, we might see such a leap enacted via the various approaches to “sudden enlightenment” or underlying realization in the Chan/ Zen traditions, but also in the “leap” of faith in the more devotional traditions, such as the mind of faith (shinjin) in the teachings of Dogen’s contemporary Shinran (1173-1263).\(^7\)

This shift to rapid awakening is most directly exemplified in the *Lotus Sutra* itself by the speedy arrival at enlightenment of the eight-year-old Naga princess in the Devadatta chapter, chapter 12 in Kumarajiva’s version of the sutra. This story is highly radical in the Mahayana tradition, as the Naga princess rapidly attains enlightenment even though she is only a child and is not quite human, aside from being female (and thus inferior in patriarchal Asia). But the theoretical context for the shift to immediate realization of awakening is most fully revealed in the story in chapters 15 and 16, with its depiction of Buddha’s omnipresence throughout vast reaches of time.

This omnipresence and the revelation of his vast life span bear implications for the ontological status of Buddha and raises issues for his soterio-logical function and efficacy. The initial image of the underground bodhisattvas as awakening teachers, benefactors, or guides emerging from the earth, “the open space under the ground,” has resonance with a variety of mythic motifs. Through Dogen’s references to these images, this work explores the symbolic, spiritual significance of both this story of chthonic bodhisattvas springing forth from the ground to maintain sacred teachings and diligently
Dogen’s perspectives on the key teachings in these *Lotus Sutra* chapters, and how he refers to them, help reveal and clarify his dynamic view of earth, space, and time. Dogen’s radical worldview is one of the most striking features of his teaching. His view of time, especially from his notable 1240 *Shobogenzo* essay "Being Time" ("Uji"), has received much attention in modern commentaries. But the totality of his worldview, including of earth and space, has not yet been given appropriate consideration.

The sources for Doagen’s Mahaayana worldview are hardly limited to the *Lotus Sutra*. Before considering his references to chapter 15 and 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*, and how they illuminate and express his perspective, a brief reference to other sources for this worldview and some examples of his fundamental expressions of it will be helpful.

Other relevant contexts in East Asian Mahayana thought include the writings of the Tiantai scholar Zhanran (711-782; Tannen in Japanese), who articulated the teaching potential of grasses and trees, traditionally seen as inanimate and thus inactive objects. Zhanran devoted an entire treatise to explicating the buddha nature of insentient things, though the Sanlun school exegete Chizang (549-623; Kichizo in Japanese) had previously argued that the distinction between sentient and insentient was not viable. The development of buddha nature discourse in China is clearly a significant source for Dogen’s thinking. In his 1241 essay "Buddha Nature" ("Bussho"; included in one of his masterworks, *True Dharma Eye Treasury; Shobogenzo* in Japanese) Dogen expresses his persistent stance of radical nonduality when he takes the important *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* saying, "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature," and plays with the Chinese characters to rewrite it as "All sentient beings completely are Buddha nature." In this statement and his extended commentary, Dogen argues for the all-pervasiveness of buddha nature.

Another source for Dogen’s view of reality is the Chinese Huayan teachings, based on the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, or *Flower Ornament Sutra*, which describes the interconnectedness of all particulars. Thereby the world is a site of radical, mutual interconnection of the subjective and objective, in which each event is the product of the interdependent co-arising of all things. Huayan teachers such as Fazang (643-712; Hozo in Japanese) developed and elaborated this vision. It can be described with their philosophical fourfold dialectic of mutual nonobstruction of the universal and the particular, and beyond that, the mutual nonobstruction of the particulars with "other" particulars.

This Huayan dialectic was elaborated in Chinese Chan with the Five Degree or Five Ranks philosophy of the interrelationship of universal and particular that was first enunciated by Dongshan Liangjie (807-869; Tozan Ryokai in Japanese), considered the founder of the Chinese Caodong (Japanese Soto) lineage, which Dogen later brought from China to Japan. Dogen only occasionally refers explicitly to this Five Rank dialectic of interfusion of the ultimate within the particulars of the world. But it is clearly pervasive as a background in much of his philosophical teachings. Dongshan also was significant in echoing the Tiantai teacher Zhanran about the buddha nature of nonsentient things (although apparently without any reference to the *Lotus Sutra*, the most esteemed Tiantai scripture). Dongshan’s elaborate story of awakening with his teacher Yunyan Tansheng (781-841; Ungan Donjo in Japanese) centered on his question of whether nonsentient things could expound the Dharma.

Another source can be seen in the worldview of Japanese Vajrayana, also referred to as Esoteric, or *mikkyo*, Buddhism, whose enactment approach to practice is discussed in chapter 2. Although mikkyo teachings first entered Japan through the Shingon school, they had been fully integrated into Tendai, the Japanese development of the Tiantai school, long before Doagen was initiated into Tendai monasticism as a teenager.

Thus there are a variety of Mahayana sources, including buddha nature discourse and Huayan and Caodong/Soto dialectics, that provide a context for Dogen’s worldview. But it is the *Lotus Sutra* that Dogen himself frequently cites to express his
views of earth, space, and time, and his relevant references to its chapters 15 and 16, on which this study focuses.

The cosmological perspective of the world as an active agent of awakening is evident even in Dogen's earliest writings. His "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendowa"), written in 1231, is his fundamental text on the meaning of zazen, or seated meditation (now considered part of Shobo-genzO). In the "Self-Fulfillment Samadhi" (jijuyU zannai) section of this writing (just preceding the long question-and-answer section), Dogen avows that when even one person sits upright in meditation, "displaying the buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind," then "everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha mudra, and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment." (Mudra usually refers to a spiritually impactful hand gesture, but here it connotes the whole of the upright seating posture in zazen.) The notion that space, the world surrounding the practitioner, can itself become enlightenment or awakening goes beyond Chinese buddha nature formulations and is profoundly subversive to conventional modern viewpoints. In this passage Doagen continues to elaborate on this awakening of all things. Echoing Zhanran and Dongshan, he adds that "earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in ten directions, carry out buddha work." Not only are the landscape features of the world dynamically active, but they also are agents of enlightening activity. Moreover, and quite significantly, the meditator and the particular elements of the world "intimately and imperceptibly assist each other."

According to Dogen there is a clear and beneficial mutuality in the interrelationship between the practitioner and the environment. "Grasses and trees, fences and walls demonstrate and exalt it for the sake of living beings; and in turn, living beings, both ordinary and sage, express and unfold it for the sake of grasses and trees, fences and walls." This world is very far from being an objective, Newtonian realm of dead objects that humans hold dominion over and manipulate and utilize for their human agendas. Rather, the myriad aspects of phenomena are all energetic partners in spiritual engagement and devotion.

This dynamic perspective on space is expressed in a great many of Doa-gen's voluminous writings. One other revealing example appears in his 1244 ShOboOgenzO essay "Turning the Dharma Wheel" ("Temborin"), a story that Dogen repeats in his other major work, Eihei KOroku, in Dharma hall discourse 179 given in 1246. In both texts he begins with a saying about space by Sakyamuni Buddha from the Surarigama Sutra, along with revised versions of that statement in commentary by four great Chinese Chan masters, including Dogen's own teacher. Dogen then gives his own commentary version, disclosing his radical view of the spiritual nature of space, which here is the reality of all the world of particulars.

The historical Buddha's original statement is, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions disappears." One possible interpretation of this is that when one person completely awakens, the space between things and all separation dissolves in the unity and harmony of the interconnectedness of all being. Then Dogen presents the four Chinese masters' variations on this statement, with different outcomes for what happens "when one person opens up reality and returns to the source." For the important Linji lineage master Wuzu Fayan (1024-1104; Goso Hoen in Japanese), upon the opening of reality and return to the source, "all space in the ten directions crashes together resounding everywhere." For his successor Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135; Enko Kokugon in Japanese), compiler and commentator of the celebrated Blue Cliff Record (Hekigan Roku), in all space "flowers are added on brocade." For Yuanwu's successor Fuxing Fatai (n.d.; Bussho Hotai in Japanese), "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions is simply all space." These evocative responses indicate respect for and celebration of the world as the place in which awakening occurs and then may further adorn the world. For Dogen's own teacher, Tiantong Rujing (1163-1228; Tendo Nyojo in Japanese), however, when someone returns to the source, "a mendicant breaks his rice bowl," which might indicate more personally a seeker's completion of his work.

But Dogen's own version of this utterance expresses a deeper appreciation for the vitality of the spatial environment and for the actual spiritual potency and capacity of the world to manifest awakening. He states, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions opens up reality and returns to the source." For Dogen it is in such a world, capable of
its own awakening, that bodhisattva practitioners act to benefit beings and foster their awakening.

These examples of Dogen’s view of space are offered here as introductory background for the explorations to follow of how he uses references to the *Lotus Sutra* story in chapters 15 and 16 to express his views of space, as well as of time and of the earth itself. Broader awareness of Dogen’s worldview and its implications may illuminate the possibilities for contemporary approaches to understanding primary Mahayana practices and outlook and their shift that occurred in East Asia.
Before directly considering references to chapters 15 and 16 of the *Lotus Sutra* in Dogen's writings, the next two chapters consider some of the hermeneutic and methodological implications of the *Lotus Sutra* as it interfaces with Dogen. Chapter 3 explores the responses to the sutra's chapters 15 and 16 by a selection of other prominent East Asian Buddhist figures.
Hermeneutics and Discourse Styles in Studies of the Lotus Sutra and Dogen

This chapter surveys some of the hermeneutical and methodological considerations that arise in exploring the confluence of the Lotus Sutra and Dogen's writings. Given the approximately forty-five-year length of the historical Sakyamuni Buddha's preaching career, the great diversity of students of different capacities he addressed, and the production (or "recovery," according to the Mahayana tradition) of new scriptures over nearly a millennium after his life, there has been a consequent wide range and diversity of sutras. Thus theories of understanding or interpretation, known as hermeneutics in religious studies, have always been an integral part of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Mahayana sutras and Zen koans and sermons are usually not didactic works presenting systematic doctrines, but rather instrumental texts aimed at inciting particular samadhi, or concentration, states and insights. They often include colorful stories or parables and require subtle textual interpretation and exploration of narrative and metaphor usage to demonstrate their inner meanings and logic. The book Buddhist Hermeneutics edited by Donald Lopez was a landmark work that articulated and clarified how some of the many traditional Buddhist teaching formulations can be understood as hermeneutical approaches to textual interpretation. Current works in the field of Buddhist studies have demonstrated the complexity of the actual lived tradition, as opposed to simplistic theories of its historical development that have been commonly held, both in sectarian and in some modern deconstructionist treatments. Prime examples are the fine recent studies of Dogen's own Kamakura-period Buddhism that have debunked simplistic stereotypes, such as the cliches about the new Buddhist movements and the decadence of the old schools, while also carefully illuminating the contents of Buddhist teaching and philosophy.1

The following three highly influential Mahayana Buddhist teachings, all of importance in considerations of the Lotus Sutra, are those approaches most evident in Dogen's teaching. These Buddhist hermeneutical theories, skillful means (upaya in Sanskrit), the Buddha womb (Tathagata garbha in Sanskrit), and enactment or performance praxis, together present a useful approach to East Asian Mahayana hermeneutics.

Skillful Means and Liberative Function

The foremost Mahayana hermeneutical principle is skillful or expedient means. Upaya sees the range and diversity of the sutras as an appropriate response to the diversity of suffering beings and honors the practical requirements for diverse methodologies. No single technique addresses the whole variety of individual, fluid obstacles to healing and liberation. So an essential part of the spiritual work in Buddhism is the hermeneutical project of understanding how to assess and use the variety of approaches, the diversity of teachings and their interpretations.

In terms of skillful means, one can understand the meaning of a text, and its place in the whole body of diverse teachings, by considering how it might be helpful for the alleviation of a particular source of suffering and how efficacious to liberation from various preconceptions. One might also interpret the significance of the teaching or instruction in a text by examining, where some historical evidence is available, the context of the audience to whom the teaching was addressed.
An example from Dogen is the impact on his teaching of his many prominent students who had previously studied in the Daruma-shua, an earlier Zen movement in Japan. To counter views from that school, Dogen criticized the "naturalist heresy," the view that enlightenment would spontaneously arise for those who had some understanding or awakening experience, with no further practice required. It is now considered that Dogen's extremely sharp criticisms in a couple of essays of the Song Linji lineage teacher Dahui (1089-1163; Dai-e in Japanese), and even of Linji (d. 867; Rinzai in Japanese) himself, were Dogen's attempt to counter their contribution to these views of the previous Daruma-shu students.

The primary locus of the hermeneutics of skillful means in Buddhism is the *Lotus Sutra*. Chapter 2 of the sutra discusses and is entitled "Skillful Means." Subsequent chapters offer a series of parables illustrating skillful means, perhaps most prominent being the parable of the burning house in chapter 3. A man comes home to find his house in flames and his children blithely playing inside. They refuse to leave because they just want to have fun. The father finally cajoles them outside with promises of a variety of many-splendored carriages drawn by diverse animals. When they reach safety outside the conflagration, they discover that he has only One Vehicle, which effectively embraces all. The sutra emphasizes that the man was not guilty of falsehood, because he acted to save the children. This preeminent story of skillful means is quite similar to the parable at the end of chapter 16 on the Buddha's long life span, about the physician who pretends to be dead so that his children will take their medicine.

These stories point to the hermeneutics of the unity of diverse expedients and complement the complex dialectical hermeneutics of Huayan Buddhism in which each element expresses the universal, which in turn embraces all particularities. To see all skillful means as ultimately cooperating in One Vehicle (Ekayana in Sanskrit) aimed at universal liberation allows for the possibility of a noncompeting, cooperative approach to interpretation, in which diverse viewpoints and hermeneutical approaches may be seen as compatible and even mutually informing. It should be noted that, although this skillful means and One Vehicle can indeed function as an inclusive, pluralistic approach to interpretation, skillful means has sometimes also been presented in a hierarchical, condescending manner to privilege some approaches over others, as will be discussed more fully in the section "The Self-Reflexive as a Skillful Mode."

The purpose of Buddhism is liberation from the karmic cycle of suffering via awakening, and the goal of the Mahayana is the awakening of all beings. In chapter 2 the *Lotus Sutra* states, in the line probably most often cited by Dogen, that the sole cause for a buddha's appearing in the world is to help the diverse suffering beings enter into, open up, disclose, and fully realize this awakening. The one great cause for Buddha's manifesting is also the one great cause for the expounding of Buddhist teachings. So it is a primary hermeneutical principle and criterion of all interpretations of Buddhist texts that they be evaluated based on their effectiveness as liberative instruments.

**Tathagata garbha**

Much of Chinese Buddhism emphasizes the teachings of Tathagata garbha, or "buddha womb," about the buddha nature of all beings, referring to the omnipresent potential for awakening. According to these teachings, the latent openness and clear awareness of the buddha nature is available to all beings and can manifest once the obscurations of karmic conditioning, attachments, and habitual responses are dispelled. Ultimately the awakened reality designated by suchness consists of the same epistemological and practical content as the teaching of emptiness, but viewed from differing hermeneutical positions.

The Tathagata garbha was a highly appealing philosophical underpinning in China, as it implied a positive ontological ground for Buddhist practice, even within the secular realm. According to the *Srimala Sutra*, an early scripture espousing the Tathagata garbha, this womb of buddhas is the basis, support, and foundation of the world of samsara, the conditioned realm of suffering. "Since the tathagata garbha is the enlightened wisdom of the Tathagata which exists embryonically in all sentient beings, the fact that it is also the ultimate ontological basis of reality has important soteriological consequences. It means that the basis of Buddhist practice is grounded in the very
The whole world is depicted as a womb, nurturing the development and emergence of new buddhas, but this imagery is also reversed in Tathagata garbha theory inasmuch as garbha can mean both womb and embryo. So the awakening buddha is also like a womb giving birth to the awakened land of a buddha field, the realm or environment constellated simultaneously with a buddha's awakening.

The Chinese Huayan thinkers took up this Tathagata garbha as a foundation for their dialectical theories of the mutual interpenetration of universal and particular. Based on the philosophy of the buddha nature, which would be significantly elaborated by Dogen, the Huayan dialectics about the mutual interactivity of universal and particular, and of particulars with particulars, was developed into the Huayan theory of the Fourfold Dharmadhatus (the four realms of reality, mentioned briefly in the previous chapter). These four are the realms of particulars, the universal, the mutual unobstructed interpenetration of the particular and the universal, and the mutual unobstructed in-terpenetration of the particular with the particular.

This Tathagata garbha theory poses a basic complex of hermeneutical approaches for Chinese Buddhism. Teachings can be interpreted, for example, based on whether they focus on the aspect of the universal or the particular. This degree of relationship of various teachings with the universal or the particular became the basis of Chan dialectic formulations, such as the Caodong (Soto) Five Ranks theories (mentioned in the previous chapter among sources for Dogen's worldview). These theories can also be used as lenses for interpreting other teachings. Thus the Tathagata garbha and all the theories that derive from it offer a range of hermeneutical criteria for approaching texts for interpretation.

The positive aspect of the buddha womb view, with buddha nature as an ontological ground as well as a basis for practice, indicates the prospect of multiple positive meanings. Texts can be interpreted constructively by showing how they refer to varying expressions of buddha nature and its potential for being realized. The obstructions to buddha nature of karmic conditioning and afflictions also pose a field of multiplicity that can be explicated through linguistic analysis of a text. The hermeneutics of polysemy is especially relevant to the Tathagata garbha's unfolding in Huayan dialectics. The Huayan Fourfold Dharmadhatus (as well as the later Soto Five Ranks system) concerns the multiple levels of interaction of the particular and the universal. Modern approaches to multiplicity of meanings can be helpful in revealing the varying aspects of particular and universal, which might be discerned in a given text under interpretation. Visionary samadhi texts such as the Avatamsaka Sutra, as well as many of the classical Zen koans, play extensively with the interaction of these varying levels of meaning, often in ways not immediately apparent.

A spiritual text creates a whole world pregnant with meanings that must be faced by any interpreter. This world is certainly analogous to the image of the buddha womb that is the starting point of all the Tathagata garbha her-meneutics. The buddha womb is the container of potential buddhas and is endowed with the capacity to give birth to buddhas. Similarly, the world of a spiritual text is a womb that can give birth, through the agency of interpretation, to a multiplicity of awakening and healing meanings. So one can see sutras themselves as wombs of buddha, available to give birth to awakening teachings and insights. And in the other direction, in accord with the reversible meaning of garbha as both womb and embryo, awakened interpretation can thus create (or re-create) the sutra as an awakening buddha field.

Enactment Practice and Performance Hermeneutics

As a final primary Buddhist hermeneutical principle, Chinese Chan strongly championed the soteriological emphasis on the actual experience as opposed to the intellectual comprehension and analysis of the teaching. This has traditionally been expressed in the Chan axiom "Direct pointing to the Mind, not depending on words and letters." This saying, attributed to the legendary Chan founder Bodhidharma (d. 532?), has at times been interpreted as an anti-intellectual rejection of scriptures and of all textual study, but more usefully it may be seen as simply the nonattachment to any particular written articulation of religious teaching, a form of hermeneutics of suspicion of all texts.

Ironically, Chan/Zen has produced its own massive literary corpus. But through emphasis on
meditation and ritual practices, Zen has also retained a particular experiential hermeneutics of enactment that takes priority even over its own literature. The emphasis on direct meditative experience was not to be deterred by elegant but nonpractical expositions of reality.

Zen shares with the Vajrayana (tantric) tradition this hermeneutics of the heart of spiritual activity/praxis as the enactment of buddha awareness and physical presence, rather than aiming at a perfected, formulated understanding. This is especially important as a background for Dogen's praxis. In the context of Tibetan Buddhism, Robert Thurman speaks of the main thrust of Vajrayana hermeneutics and practice as physical rather than merely mental: "When we think of the goal of Buddhism as enlightenment, we think of it mainly as an attainment of some kind of higher understanding. But Bud-dhahood is a physical transformation as much as a mental transcendence."9

Kukai (774-835), the great founder of Shingon "True Word," the Japanese Vajrayana tradition, also emphasized the effects of teachings over their literal meaning. As explicated by Thomas Kasulis, "Kukai was more interested in the teachings' aims than in their content, or perhaps better stated, he saw the aims as inseparable from their content. He saw no sharp distinction between theory and practice." The understanding of a teaching was not privileged independently from its practical effects: "The truth of a statement depends not on the status of its referent, but on how it affects us."9

The Vajrayaana emphasizes the expression of teachings in the three dimensions of body, speech, and mind, via the practice modes of mudra, mantra, and mandala. These practices are enactments of the teachings, more to the point than any theoretical formulations. For Kukai, language is not an abstract system for analyzing some objective meaning separate from itself. Rather, words, physical postures, and mental imagery are microcosmic representations of the ultimate reality within the human realm. They are expressions of ultimate reality, and by engaging in them, we are led to realization of that reality. Therefore, this function of the mantric quality of utterance becomes "a hermeneutic criterion for interpreting and evaluating various religio-philosophical theories: the more a theory leads us to recognize the microcosmic and cosmic dimensions of reality, the more true the theory."10 Thus the performance of the mantra or Dharmic utterance helps effect an expressive realization deeper than mere cognition.

Worth briefly noting is another aspect of performance in the use of texts as sacred material, which emerged in Vajrayana and would be important in Nichiren Buddhism's ritual response to the Lotus Sutra. Introducing a discussion of Ryobu Shinto, which was heavily influenced by Shingon, Fabio Rambelli notes, "Medieval texts had not just a 'meaning'—understood as the 'signified' of the text itself as the 'signifier'—, but also several 'uses'—many of which were defined in a ritual way... [including the] performative nature of texts.... Texts had value not necessarily and not only for their meaning. ... [They] were endowed with all the characteristics of sacred objects."11 Text as object is not of central importance to Dogen, although he does express veneration for sutras and texts from Zen ancestors. But his use of proclamation in his discourse style, discussed later in the chapter, shares the sense of the verbal text as holding meaning beyond anything "signified."

Both the Vajrayana and the Zen emphasis is on fully expressed performance of reality, not its cognitive knowledge or interpretation, which reflects the valuing of actual bodhisattvic workings over theoretical dictums. In Japanese Zen this might also reflect, in part, its heritage as deriving from Tendai mikkYo, or Vajrayana. The priority of performed expression may be seen as the source for hermeneutical criteria based on the realization of a teaching's enactment, rather than on cognitive comparisons. In his writing "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendowa"), discussed in chapter 1, Doagen directly emphasizes the hermeneutical priority of the actualization of practice over doctrinal theory: "Buddhist practitioners should know not to argue about the superiority or inferiority of teachings and not to discriminate between superficial or profound dharma, but should only know whether the practice is genuine or false."12 This hermeneutics of performance is reflected, for example, in the Japanese Soto Zen prescription "Dignified manner is Buddha Dharma; decorum is the essential teaching."13

The point is to enact the meaning of the teachings in actualized practice, often in ritual or ceremony. Indeed, the whole praxis, including meditation, may thus be viewed as ceremonially expressed of the teaching and its meaning, rather than as means to discover and attain some understanding of it. Therefore, the strong emphasis in much of Zen training is the mindful and dedicated expression of meditative awareness in everyday activities. The degree, effectiveness, and
qualities of the actualized or manifested expression of the Dharmic reality of a teaching or text thus becomes a prime criterion for its interpretation.

Ricoeur and Metaphor

In Doegen's interpretive references to the *Lotus Sutra* he is clearly in accord with modern principles of hermeneutics deriving from Schleiermacher and Dilthey. As the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (b. 1913) says, "Interpretation has certain subjective connotations, such as the implication of the reader in the processes of understanding and the reciprocity between interpretation of the text and self-interpretation. This reciprocity is known by the name of the hermeneutical circle; it entails a sharp opposition to the sort of objectivity and non-implication which is supposed to characterise the scientific explanation of things." Dogen uses his discussions of the *Lotus Sutra*, as he surely does his discussion of the koan lexicon, to proclaim his own subjective teachings and to encourage the primary text as a vehicle for the self-interpretation of his audience, as well as himself.

Ricoeur focuses on issues concerning narrative structure and the role of metaphor in myths and in spiritual texts. In his exploration of metaphor and the problem of hermeneutics, he maintains that texts are open to an abundance of meaning as appropriate to the diverse worlds of each interpreter. A full investigation of the roles of metaphor, polysemy, and intertextuality in Dogen's writing would be illuminating, but is far beyond the scope of this work. However, Dogen's use of metaphor as applied to ground and space may be clarified by some of Ricoeur's discussion of metaphor. Ricoeur says, "The understanding of a work taken as a whole gives the key to metaphor.... The hermeneutical circle encompasses in its spiral both the apprehension of projected worlds and the advance of self-understanding in the presence of these new worlds." Degen's playful interpretations of the world of the *Lotus Sutra* certainly express a preunderstanding of a "projected world," and also a self-understanding, or rather, his particular understanding of the inner nature of self itself, from his Buddhist perspective. His interpretive play with the world of the *Lotus Sutra*, in turn, further informs and explicates the world of Dharma and practice he is expressing.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory further supports the freestyle interpretation that Dogen seems to relish; as Ricoeur says, "All of the connotations which are suitable must be attributed; the poem means all that it can mean." He also maintains that any part of a text, a passage or even a word, can have a metaphorical meaning that is open to interpretation and can inspire new senses of meaning: "We can describe the word as having a 'metaphorical use' or a 'non-literal meaning'; the word is always the bearer of the 'emergent meaning' which specific contexts confer upon it." Ricoeur thus provides a theoretical rationale for creative readings of a narrative by employing interpretive word play. Like Dogen, he encourages the readers' or listeners' active interpretation of the text as part of the necessary process of understanding: "Interpretation thus becomes the apprehension of the proposed worlds which are opened up by the non-ostensive references of the text." In his own interpretations, whether of koans or the *Lotus Sutra*, Dogen reads various references into texts and inverts conventional grammar to more fully express his worldview and realm of practice.

Dogen's Hermeneutics and the Manifestation and Proclamation of the Underground Bodhisattvas

Paul Ricoeur discusses the dialectical relationship between the manifestation of the sacred and the hermeneutics of proclamation. Both manifestation and proclamation are central themes in the story of bodhisattvas emerging from earth and are illuminating of Dogen's uses of the *Lotus Sutra*.

Ricoeur describes the manifestation of the sacred in terms of five aspects. First is the awesome sense of the sacred as irrational and overwhelming, a surprising, unexpected emergence, certainly exemplified by the bodhisattvas springing out of the ground. Second is hierophany, or the manifestation of the sacred with heightened aesthetic intensity, both in space and time. The third
aspect is the "nonlinguisticality" of the sacred. The sacred is created not via the word and its signifying, but through sacred behavior that consecrates the world through ritual, even transforming speech from discourse (or proclamation) to recitation performances. The bodhisattvas' initial emergence can be seen as such a performance, and they follow their emergence with ritual offerings to the Buddha. Also, the *Lotus Sutra* emphasizes ritualized recitation of itself. The fourth aspect of the sacred is the role of nature and natural elements in its manifestation. In this story the earth itself, cracking open to emit the bodhi-sattvas, provides a context for expression of the immanence of the divine in the natural world. (Later I will return to the earth in this story as a nature image.) Ricoeur's fifth aspect of the sacred is the logic of the correspondences in all the previous traits of manifestation. We might see the emerging bodhisattvas as representing the manifestation of the sacred (in Buddhism, the awakening function) emerging from the ground of being of all beings, immanent and underlying the karmic position of all persons.\(^{18}\)

The hermeneutics of proclamation described by Ricoeur derives from the Judeo-Christian elevation of the Word, and thus contrasts with the use of proclamation by Dogen, discussed later. In the Western religious proclamation the divine is expressed in discourse, which then overwhelms the numinous and the hierophanous manifestations of the sacred. Ricoeur states that, beginning in the Hebraic faith, "The numinous [manifestation] is just the underlying canvas from which the word [proclamation] detaches itself.... Hierophanies ... withdraw to the extent that the instruction through the Torah overcomes any manifestation through an image."\(^{19}\) Ricoeur skillfully mines the possibilities for analyzing literary elements so as to explore and clarify diverse genres of the proclamation of the sacred. He discusses parables (in their "essential profaneness" presenting a "metaphor of normalcy"),\(^{20}\) proverbs (with intensification of meaning through paradox), and eschatological sayings. He also discusses poetics and its mythic mimicry of reality. He is interested in the qualities of discourse that explode the conventional logic of meaning and point to something extraordinary, that is, sacred: "The paradoxical universe of the parable, the proverb, and the eschatological saying... is a 'burst' or an 'exploded' universe."\(^{21}\) The sacred is thereby proclaimed seemingly without need for its manifestation. Particularly during the history of Christianity the proclamation of the Word and the manifestation of the Kingdom on earth have often become alienated.

Ricoeur starts his dialectic of the healing of the split between the manifestation and the proclamation of the sacred by fully acknowledging the de-sacralization of the world of modernity. He suggests that the function of the word is to reaffirm the sacred, instead of opposing its manifestation. He cites Hegel's view of Christ as the "absolute manifestation," so that finally "manifestation of the sacred is dialectically reaffirmed and internalized into proclamation."\(^{22}\)

Both manifestation and proclamation are evident and crucial in the story of bodhisattvas emerging from earth. The bodhisattvas fully exemplify the manifestation of the sacred as immanent within the earth itself and ready to spring into action whenever needed to perform liberative work. Yet the very purpose of these bodhisattvas' manifestation and effort is to serve the maintenance of the proclamation of the *Lotus Sutra*. Such proclamation is of central importance in the *Lotus Sutra*, perhaps more than for any other Buddhist sutra, as will be discussed in the section on "The Self-Referential Lotus."

Because the appearance of the underground bodhisattvas expresses the immanent omnipresence of the manifestation of the sacred via liberative practitioners whose very function is to sustain the proclamation of their own immanence, the bodhisattvas' emergence exemplifies a symbiotic synthesis of manifestation and proclamation, as is the case for the entire story, including the revelation of the Buddha's inconceivable life span. This *Lotus Sutra* synthesis, existing near the inception of East Asian Mahayana Buddhist history, is foundational to both its manifestation and its proclamation. Thus it is different from the synthesis described by Ricoeur, who is dealing with the ages-long split between manifestation and proclamation carried on in Western religion and the consequent desacralization and secularization of the world of modernity. But Ricoeur's interest in language, and his articulation of proclamation as a counterpoint to manifestation, provide a useful lens through which to clarify the important aspect of the underground bodhisattvas as proclaimers as well as embodiments of sacrality.
The Self-Referential Lotus

The *Lotus Sutra* itself frequently emphasizes the importance of and rewards for the proclamation of the *Lotus Sutra*, through reading, copying, and reciting it. To be sure, other Mahayana sutas talk about the merit to be derived by recalling or copying the sutra being read. However, the *Lotus Sutra* at times seems to hold this self-referential quality at its center, such that it promotes an extreme mode of self-referential discourse that is unique to it. The sutra often speaks of the wondrous nature of the *Lotus Sutra*, right in the text commonly referred to as the *Lotus Sutra*. This rhetorical device can be startling and mind-twisting, like Escher's painting of two hands drawing each other. Various important figures in the sutra appear within the text of the *Lotus Sutra* because they have heard that the *Lotus Sutra* is currently being preached by Sakyamuni Buddha on Vulture Peak. For example, in chapter 11, the stupa of the ancient Buddha Prabutaratna emerges from the earth and floats in midair because he has vowed always to appear whenever the *Lotus Sutra* is preached. In the same chapter, myriad bodhisattvas arrive from world systems in all directions to praise the Buddha for preaching this sutra in which they themselves are appearing.

This quality of the sutra talking about the sutra, and especially its many references to the *Lotus Sutra* as something expounded many ages ago, as about to be expounded, or even as hopefully to be expounded in the distant future, has led some commentators to observe that the whole text of this sutra, more than any others, is a preface to a missing scripture. As George and Willa Tanabe say, "The preaching of the Lotus sermon promised in the first chapter never takes place. The text, so full of merit, is about a discourse which is never delivered; it is a lengthy preface without a book. The *Lotus Sutra* is thus unique among texts. It is not merely subject to various interpretations, as all texts are, but is open or empty at its very center." This is a plausible perspective or interpretation. The text does refer, in third person, to a designated text that one might keep vainly waiting for, as if for Godot.

However, this perspective misses the manner in which the Lotus sermon certainly does exist. Fundamental messages of the Lotus, such as the One Vehicle and the primacy of the Buddha vehicle, are difficult to miss, even if they might be interpreted in various ways. Furthermore, between the lines the *Lotus Sutra* functions within itself both as a sacred text or scripture and as a commentary and guidebook to its own use, beyond the literal confines of its own written text. The *Lotus Sutra* is itself a sacred manifestation of spiritual awakening that proclaims its own sacrality. Right within the text's proclamation of the wonders of a text with the same name as itself, the text celebrates its own ephemeral quality with the visionary splendors of its assembly of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and spirits, and with the engaging qualities of its parables.

The synthesis of the immanent spirit spoken about in the text and the text's own intended functioning as an instrument or skillful catalyst to spark awakening has been carried on among its followers. This is exemplified in the varieties of Nichiren Buddhism in that they are rooted and focused in devotion to the *Lotus Sutra* itself as a sacred manifestation, and devotional object, which they are committed to proclaiming and promulgating. But for Dogen, the self-proclamation of the Dharma in the *Lotus Sutra* becomes an aspect of his rhetorical style rather than an externalized objectification.

Dogen's Proclamation of Dharma

In a manner similar to the sutra's proclamations of the wondrous qualities of the Lotus Dharma, Dogen in his writings commonly proclaims the wondrous nature of the Dharma, the Buddha, the many buddha ancestors, previous proclamations or utterances by ancestral teachers, and, of course, the *Lotus Sutra* itself. Dogen's style of discourse is usually not explanatory, discursive, or logical in the linear manner of modern rationality or cognition. Rather, Dogen seemingly free-associates, making illuminating connections based on doctrinal themes or imagistic motifs, aimed at proclaiming the nondual reality of the present phenomenal world as fully imbued with the presence of the Buddha
and of the ongoing possibility of awakening.

A clear encapsulation of the *Lotus Sutra’s* self-proclamatory discourse strategy appears in volume 1 of Dogen’s *Eihei Koroku* in two consecutive *jodo*, or Dharma hall discourses, numbers 69 and 70, given in 1241. Jodo number 69 reads in its entirety:

Today this mountain monk [Dogen] gives a Dharma hall discourse for the assembly. What I have just said I offer to all the three treasures in the ten directions, to the twenty-eight Ancestors in India, to the six Ancestors in China, to all the nostrils under heaven, to the eyeballs throughout the past and present, to dried shitsticks, to three pounds of sesame, to Zen boards, and to zafus. Previously we offered incense for the limitless excellent causal conditions, and we dedicate it so that toads may leap up to Brahma’s heaven, earthworms may traverse the eastern ocean, and clouds and water monks may become horses and cows. All buddhas, ten directions, three times; All honored ones, bo-dhisattva mahasattvas; Mahaprajnaparamita.

Here Dogen states that he is proclaiming a jodo. But immediately, without saying anything more about the Dharma, he dedicates that statement itself to the three jewels, the ancestral teachers, to meditation paraphernalia, and to famed Chan iconoclastic expressions for Buddha, the dried shitstick (or dry turd) of Yunmen Wenyan (864-949; Unmon Bun’en in Japanese) and the three pounds of sesame (or flax) of Yunmen’s disciple Dongshan Shouchu (910-990: Tozan Shusho in Japanese). He then further dedicates the incense offering, which had preceded the statement that he was now making a statement, to toads, earthworms, and monks who manifest as horses and cows, followed by the traditional concluding liturgical dedication. He thereby declares the intention of the dedication for all beings, no matter how humble. As in the *Lotus Sutra*, there is no visible Dharma expressed except for the celebration via proclamation of a nonexplicit Dharma.

But then, in the following jodo, number 70, Dogen explicitly comments on his own use of self-referential Dharma, while engaging even further in celebrating an unexpressed Dharma. We do not know how many days may have separated the two discourses. In this section of the text, between the jodos that can be dated and that are four months apart, there were an average of two discourses per week. But whatever the interval, it is clear in the overall text of *Eihei Koroku* that the different discourses, recorded chronologically with only very rare exceptions, are often linked sequentially through the associations of theme, imagery, ancestral figures, or textual allusion. In jodo number 70 Dogen writes:

As this mountain monk [Dogen] today gives a Dharma hall discourse, all buddhas in the three times also today give a Dharma hall discourse. The Ancestral teachers in all generations also today give a Dharma hall discourse. The one who bears the sixteen-foot golden body gives a Dharma hall discourse. The one endowed with the wondrous function of the hundred grasses [all things] gives a Dharma hall discourse. Already together having given a Dharma hall discourse, what Dharma has been expounded? No other Dharma is expressed; but this very Dharma is expressed. What is this Dharma? It is upheld within Shanglan Temple; it is upheld within Guanyin Temple; it is upheld within the monks’ hall; it is upheld within the Buddha hall.

Again, Dogen never talks about the content of his Dharma hall discourse. But he proclaims that his own act of proclaiming this self-referencing Dharma is echoed simultaneously in the discourses of the ancestral teachers and buddhas, just as the proclamation of the *Lotus Sutra* is echoed in various buddha realms, in various times. Then he asks the same question that the Tanabes ask about the *Lotus Sutra*: “What Dharma has been expounded?” And he answers unabashedly, “No other Dharma is expressed; but this very Dharma is expressed. What is this Dharma?” While not explaining or even stating some contents of this Dharma, his phrase “This very [shako] Dharma” might seem to refer to the teaching of suchness, or *tathata*, but it is also simply just this Dharma, as opposed to that one. Thereby Dogen emphasizes not an abstraction, but the concreteness of this particular reality as the realm of Dharma. Then he does declare and affirm that this nonexplicit teaching is upheld in the context of the temples and the buildings where the practice is carried on.

The example in these two jodos of Dogen’s proclamation of a nonexplicit Dharma is presented in a direct and concise manner, as is appropriate to the often brief declarations of the jodo form. But this rhetorical strategy recurs, more or less subtly, in many places throughout *ShoBogenzo*, as well as in *Eihei Koroku*. That he is adapting this rhetorical posture at least in part directly from the *Lotus Sutra*
is clearly evidenced by another early jodo in the *Eihei Kooroku*, number 24, given in 1240:

In the entire universe in ten directions there is no Dharma at all that has not yet been expounded by all buddhas in the three times. Therefore all buddhas say, "In the same manner that all buddhas in the three times expound the Dharma, so now I also will expound the Dharma without differentiations." This great assembly present before me also is practicing the Way in the manner of all buddhas. Each movement, each stillness is not other than the Dharma of all buddhas, so do not act carelessly or casually. Although this is the case, I have an expression that has not yet been expounded by any buddha. Everyone, do you want to discern it?

*After a pause Dogen said:* In the same manner that all buddhas in the three times expound the Dharma, so now I also will expound the Dharma without differentiations.30

In this Dharma hall discourse Dogen again does not elaborate on the content of the Dharma expounded by all buddhas in the three times, except to aver that it is no other than every movement, and every stillness, and is practiced by the monks at Eiheiji. Significant to the point of the crucial importance of the *Lotus Sutra* to Dogen is the context of this sentence from Sakyamuni Buddha, which Dogen quotes: "In the same manner that all buddhas in the three times expound the Dharma, so now I also will expound the Dharma without differentiations." This statement that Dogen uses to express the inexplicit Dharma proclaimed by all buddhas is a direct quote from the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 2, on "Skillful Means."31 Dogen further emphasizes this quote when he repeats it verbatim as his own expression for the inexplicit Dharma, which he claims "has not yet been expounded by any buddha." But his saying that it has not previously been expounded is tantamount to Dogen himself preaching the original *Lotus Sutra*, or to his own manifestation as the Buddha in the Lotus text in which it is first expounded.

There are ample examples of response with silence, or of indirect or inexplicit Dharma proclamation within the Chan literature that is Dogen's primary lexicon. Yet the *Lotus Sutra* referent for this 1240 jodo about expounding the Dharma clearly demonstrates that Dogen himself saw the *Lotus Sutra*, "expounded by all buddhas in the three times," as an important source for his own self-proclamatory rhetorical style of expounding. Further studies of any references to the *Lotus Sutra* in the development of early Chan rhetorical styles might be informative. But it is apparent that Dogen himself saw the Lotus as a primary model for his nondualistic, inexplicit discourse approach, expounding "the Dharma without differentiations."

The Self-Reflexive as a Skillful Mode

In *The Karma of Words*, William LaFleur discusses the sophisticated nature of the *Lotus Sutra* as literature and its impact on medieval Japanese poetics: "The surprising feature of [the parables] in the *Lotus* is that they are simultaneously the vehicle and the tenor of that vehicle. In a very important sense, the parables of the *Lotus* are about the role and status of parabolic speech itself. They are what I would call self-reflexive allegory; that is, their trajectory of discourse behaves like a boomerang. Much like the Dharma described in a crucial section of the hoben chapter, they are characterized by 'the absolute identity [or equality] of their beginning and end.'"32

LaFleur's analysis of this realm of discourse in the *Lotus Sutra* focuses on its radical nondualism and its embodiment of skillful means. This standpoint of nondualism represents interpretations of the *Lotus Sutra* developed in Tiantai and in Japanese Buddhism prior to Dogen, and which impacted the medieval literature LaFleur examines. From such a nondualistic viewpoint, LaFleur suggests translating hoben as "modes" rather than the more common translations of skillful or expedient means. Hurvitz translates hoben as "expedient devices," and Watson translates it as "expedient means," both implying a dualistic, and even manipulative, aspect of the teaching, especially when rendered as "devices," as by Hurvitz. Kato, Tamura, and Miyasaka translate it as "tactfulness," which implies more consideration and inclusivity, but might still be seen as implying a hierarchy of the teachings.

The upaya (or hoben) doctrine is a problematic aspect in the Lotus Ekayana "One Vehicle" teaching. The *Lotus Sutra* at times has been upheld, within the sutra itself as well as by some of its
followers, for example in the Tiantai panjiao ("classifying the teachings") system, as the epitome of the One Vehicle. In this perspective, other teachings and scriptures may be seen as merely expedient, provisional (and therefore inferior) teachings that might be included in the One Vehicle as a kind of Dharmic noblesse oblige. Such a view of upaaya implies a hierarchy of teachings, and even a manipulative use of them. Unquestionably the Lotus Sutra sometimes lends itself to, and often explicitly encourages, a political, polemical reading in which the Lotus Sutra, and those who preach it, represent the True Dharma, and those who follow provisional, expedient teachings exemplify the chaff, inimical to the full teaching.

On the other hand, the alternative mode of reading the teaching of upaaya, as presented by LaFleur, implies a radically nondualistic inclusivity and an acceptance of all helpful teachings as simply a diversity of 'modes.' Portions of the Lotus Sutra do indeed lend themselves to this more tolerant and inclusive reading of hogen. For example, in chapter 5 the parable of the Dharma rain falling universally on all implies no discrimination against any of the many plants that are equally nourished, each growing in their own way. Applied as appropriate to the diversity of needs of suffering beings, all teaching modes might be equally beneficial to the ultimate purpose for buddhas' manifestation, the soteriological and liberative function mentioned earlier. As proclaimed in the upaaya chapter, "By resort to numberless devices and to various means, parables, and phrases do [buddhas] proclaim the dharmas ... for one great cause appearing in the world... to cause beings to hear the Buddha's knowledge ... to cause the beings to understand ... to cause the beings to enter the path." Such an inclusive reading of hogen might be usefully appropriated to modern concerns of religious pluralism, which may be LaFleur's subtext. But LaFleur's reading also has implications regarding styles of discourse, the primary issue under consideration here.

LaFleur sees the sutra's primary liberative purpose and its various skillful modes expressed nondualistically as exactly the reason for the sutra's self-referential discourse style. In his reading:

The narratives of the Lotus are not a means to an end beyond themselves. Their concrete mode of expression is not "chaff" to be dispensed with in order to attain a more abstract, rational, or spiritual truth. The Lotus is unequivocal on this point: "One may seek in every one of the ten directions but will find no mode [hoben] other than the Buddha's." This accounts for what may seem to be an inordinate amount of praise directed by the sutra toward itself. It also implies that within the sutra there is an unmistakable philosophical move opposite to that in Plato's Republic, a move to affirm the complete reality of the world of concrete phenomena in spite of the fact that they are impermanent.

This common Japanese association of the Lotus Sutra with affirmation of the reality of the phenomenal world, followed here by LaFleur, can be dated back to the Japanese Tendai founder Saicho (767-822). Having studied with two strongly Huayan-influenced disciples of the Chinese Tiantai master Zhanran, who had argued for the Buddha nature of insentient beings (a teaching that Dogen would also later frequently celebrate), Saicho incorporated Huayan (Kegon) views of suchness into Tendai. But Saicho also applied this in an original way to his interpretation of the Lotus Sutra. His reading "not only acknowledges two aspects of suchness but establishes a hierarchy between the two in identifying the dynamic aspect of suchness--its expression as the phenomenal world--with the Tiantai category of the 'middle' and with the one vehicle of the Lotus. This represents a crucial step toward the profound valorization of empirical reality found in medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought."

From this Japanese Tendai perspective of spiritual reality immanent in concrete phenomena, the Lotus Sutra itself is not separate from, or talking about, a realm of transcendent spirit outside of itself. Thus the Lotus Sutra itself can become an embodiment of the awakening aspect of the phenomenal world, omnipresent, at least in potentiality, in all concrete particulars. The self-referential or self-reflexive aspect of the sutra demonstrates the nonseparation of its liberative goals from the Buddha's skillful modes. Given the nonduality of purpose and context of the Lotus Sutra as a text that itself represents and enacts veneration of the world's liberative potential, it is reasonable that this very sutra would become an object of veneration, as in Nichiren Buddhism.

To be sure, Dogen is not inclusive of the diverse modes of teachings in LaFleur's strictly nonhierarchical fashion, as, in common with all of the Kamakura-period innovators, Dogen at times upholds his own teaching lineage and strongly disparages others'. However, Dogen's use of Lotus-style self-referential discourse is directed at affirmation of the nondualism of means and end, and he
repeatedly affirms the concrete realm of particulars as the arena of nondual practice-realization, in accord with LaFleur's view of the *Lotus Sutra* discourse as based on hoben. In a similar skillful mode, Dogen often intentionally uses elaborate wordplay as vehicles to express the discourse he is then proclaiming. His frequent inversion of conventional word order and word meaning from classical koans or sutras serves to express this quality of proclamation, in which the discourse itself demonstrates that which it is expounding.

A prominent example, mentioned in chapter 1, is the wordplay in ShObO-genzO's "Buddha Nature" ("Bussho"), first written in 1241, in which Dogen retranslates the passage from the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, "All sentient beings without exception have Buddha nature." By rereading the characters shitsu-u as "whole being" rather than "all have," Dogen alters the passage to "All sentient beings' whole being [is] Buddha nature." Thus he eliminates the separation inherent in a subject possessing an object, as the whole string of characters, "All sentient beings whole being Buddha nature, might be read as either one long subject or one full predicate. This elimination of conventional dualistic grammar is itself a skillful mode for demonstrating the nondualism between sentient beings and Buddha nature.

In further accord with LaFleur's view of the Lotus discourse, Dogen specifically affirms "the complete reality of the world of concrete phenomena" in his discourse rhetoric as well as its content, and even when leaving the content itself seemingly absent, or at least not stated. In jodo 49 in *Eihei Kôroku*, also given in 1241, Dogen says, "This mountain monk has not lectured for the sake of the assembly for a long time. Why is this? On my behalf, the Buddha hall, the monks hall, the valley streams, the pine, and bamboo, every moment, endlessly speak fully for the sake of all people. Have you all heard it or not? If you say you heard it, what did you hear? If you say you have not heard it, you do not keep the five precepts." Here Dogen rhetorically affirms the immanence of the Dharmic discourse as well as its content, right in the world of dharmas, or particulars, including streams, pines, bamboo, and temple buildings, which all themselves discourse on this Dharma. He also self-consciously uses this nonexplicit discourse of the Dharma and its immanence as a skillful means for challenging his monks in training to hear and express the Dharma more fully: "Have you all heard it or not?"

Dogen's Use of the Fantastic

Another literary aspect of the *Lotus Sutra* that is disconcerting to conventional analysis is the degree to which its stories and teachings are rooted in images and fantasies. In his introduction to his book on Myoe (1173-1232), whose life and teaching were colorfully replete with the visionary, George Tanabe Jr. cites the centrality of visions to East Asian Buddhist experience, despite the focus of much of modern Buddhist studies on doctrine and philosophy: "The Buddhist tradition is as much a history of fantasy as it is a history of thought. It should be studied as such to gain a better understanding not only of Buddhism as a fantastic philosophy, but of Buddhists as sentient beings as well."

Current scholars are beginning to explore the vital role of the fantastic and of imagery in Mahayana Buddhist teaching and lore. In his book, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahayana Buddhism*, David McMahan writes, "What Buddhist texts say about vision in a technical sense is not as important to this inquiry as how they use visual metaphors and imagery, and what philosophical, praxiological, rhetorical, and social significance these uses had in Mahayana literature and practice." McMahan discusses the background of visual imagery in Indian Mahayana Buddhism, especially as it develops in the *Gandavyuha Sutra*, the final section of the vast *Avatamsaka Sutra*. In chapter 5, we will see how McMahan's exploration of the use of visual metaphors and imagery suggest interrelationships between earth, space, and time that are helpful to understanding Doagen's worldview.

In the context of Myoae studies, Tanabe's discussion of the fantastic might also more directly apply to the visions of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which Myoe, as a Kegon monk, especially cherished. The *Avatamsaka Sutra*, a highly psychedelic sanaadhi text, describes the activity of bodhisattvas in terms of evocative, lush imagery conducive to inspiring luminous visions of the exalted quality of mind and reality. But Tanabe's remarks also certainly pertain to the striking images and parables of the *Lotus Sutra*, about which he directly says, "The *Lotus Sutra* is less a work of memory and more a product of fantasy inspired with new visions derived internally." The *Lotus Sutra* thus calls for
examination of the significance and function of its imagery as much as, if not more than, its philosophical positions. As Tanabe says:

Visions are central to the East Asian Buddhist experience, but little has been done by way of research of them.... Mahayana Buddhism is, among many things it can be, a tradition of the mind's faculty for producing images in both waking life and sleep: a tradition, that is, of fantasy producing visions ... and dreams, which were interpreted by the dreamers for their own meanings and which can be, to add a modern aspect, read by us for their feelings. It will be possible to gain a better understanding of Mahayana Buddhism as a vehicle not only of ideas and institutions but of human emotion as well only when studies of the fantastic end of the spectrum become more available.40

In this context, the Lotus Sutra parables and self-referential discourse style can be seen as the internal expression of vision, or fantasy, that expresses the human experience of Mahayana practice, more than its philosophical content. Even when, as may frequently be the case, such discourse is a literary device or artifice rather than directly inspired by literal meditative experiences, visions, or dreams, such literary framing serves to honor the skillful use of imagination and the visionary.

The Lotus Sutra itself includes a parable that uses a fantastic vision to demonstrate how fantastic visions themselves can function as skillful liberative modes. In chapter 7, a conjured or phantom city is described as a vision that serves as a metaphor for the teaching of nirvana as cessation, which can provide a halfway oasis on the path to Mahayana universal liberation. Despite being a mere phantom, the vision of an oasis city acts as a necessary, beneficial encouragement for practitioners, who may be refreshed by temporarily imagining that they have achieved their goal. Similarly, Lotus Sutra parables themselves, even when they contain fantastic, dramatic, or ironic elements, also function as beneficial encouragements.

In another of the numerous examples in ShObOgenzO of Dogen using wordplay to invert conventional thinking, in "Within a Dream Expressing the Dream" ("Muchu Setsumu"), written in 1242, he extensively elaborates on his statement "All buddhas express the dream within a dream." He thereby denies the supposedly lesser reality of the "dreams" of the transient phenomenal world and negates a Platonic exaltation of the absolute, which LaFleur describes as the antithesis of Lotus Sutra teaching. Instead, Dogen proclaims the dream world of phenomena as exactly the realm of buddhas' activity: "Every dewdrop manifested in every realm is a dream. This dream is the glowing clarity of the hundred grasses. ... Do not mistake them as merely dreamy." The liberative awakening of buddhas is itself described as a dream: "Without expressing dreams, there are no buddhas. Without being within a dream, buddhas do not emerge and turn the wondrous dharma wheel. This dharma wheel is no other than a buddha together with a buddha, and a dream expressed within a dream. Simply expressing the dream within a dream is itself the buddhas and ancestors, the assembly of unsurpassable enlightenment."42

Dogen is not frivolously indulging in mere paradox here, but follows the logic of the dream as necessarily the locus of awakening. As he says in his celebrated 1233 Shobogenzo essay, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" ("Genjokoan"), "Those who have great realization of delusion are buddhas."43

What is worthy of study is not delusions or fantasies about enlightenment, but the reality of the causes and conditions of the realms of delusion and suffering. A similar logic is expressed in the Lotus Sutra dictum that buddhas manifest only due to the presence of suffering beings. Dogen's positive view of dreams will be significant in his parables to be discussed later, two of which he frames as if they might have been dreams, whether or not they were his actual sleeping dreams.

Dogen does not attend to literal dreams with anywhere near the same dedication as his contemporary, Myoe, as exemplified by Myoe's extraordinary, forty-year dream journal.44 Along with Myoe, dreams and visionary discourse are also more emphasized than they are by Dogen in the teachings of Keizan Jokin (1264-1325), Dogen's third-generation successor, who is revered as the second founder of Japanese Soto Zen. The central role of dream and vision for Keizan has been discussed and elaborated by Bernard Faure in Visions of Power. Keizan and his successors in the following few generations helped spread Soto Zen throughout rural Japan. One stereotype in Soto studies is the distinction between Keizan's use of the visionary, inspired by Esoteric teachings, and
the supposedly more "pure" Zen of Dogen. According to this stereotype, Dogen emphasized zazen and a rational presentation of Buddha Dharma, untainted by the more colorful and melodramatic Mahayana and Esoteric teachings indulged in by Keizan. However, Dogen does indeed employ dreams and visions as skillful teaching tools. Although we may certainly note differences in emphasis and style between Doagen and Keizan, Doagen is in fundamental accord with the worldview of medieval Japan, including the Esoteric teachings of Shingon and Tendai that were the background for all Kamakura-period Buddhism. Doagen's visionary context, including the impact of spirits, is perhaps most apparent in his interpretations and appropriations of the Lotus Sutra and in his own references to dreaming.

In "Within a Dream Expressing the Dream," Dogen explicitly refers to the Lotus Sutra as a source for the role of dreams in his discourse style. He quotes a long passage that concludes the final verse in chapter 14 of the sutra, beginning with "All buddhas, with bodies of golden hue, splendidly adorned with a hundred auspicious marks, hear the Dharma and expound it for others. Such is the fine dream that ever occurs." Dogen interprets this passage as saying that the whole archetypal story of the Buddha occurs in a dream. His reading takes this passage out of its context in the sutra to emphasize that the Buddha is "made king," leaves the palace, awakens under the bodhi tree, and conducts his whole teaching career, all in a dream. Thus this passage, just preceding the dramatic emergence of the underground bodhisattvas, is creatively interpreted by Dogen to serve as foreshadowing for the revelation in chapter 16 of Buddha's inconceivable life span, in which the archetypal story of his birth, awakening, teaching, and death is more explicitly revealed as a skillful means to encourage beings.

After quoting this passage, Dogen avers, "This dream of buddhas is not an analogy." In the original context of the Lotus Sutra text, this passage is merely describing the rewards of those who preach the Lotus, in this instance the reward being auspicious dreams. But Dogen uses his creative reading to validate, or at least exemplify, his teaching that the dream state of the conditioned phenomenal world is exactly the arena for awakening. But he is furthermore claiming the dream mentioned by the Lotus Sutra as a model for a skillful discourse mode that has recourse to the visionary as a tool for liberation. As in the Lotus Sutra's self-reflexive discourse style, the parable expression is itself a skillful mode of reality for Dogen, not separate from concrete phenomena. Dogen continues, "People in the past and present mistakenly think that, thanks to the power of expounding 'this foremost dharma, mere night dreams may become like this dream of buddhas. Thinking like this, one has not yet clarified the Buddha's discourse. Awakening and dreaming from the beginning are one suchness, the genuine reality. The buddha-dharma, even if it were an analogy, is the genuine reality." For Dogen, the particular events of this dream world are the reality, and also the skillful discourse, of the awakening of buddhas.

Dogen's Parables

The essays of Dogen's Shobogenzo, such as "Within a Dream Expressing the Dream, are sometimes philosophical and elaborative of traditional Buddhist or Zen doctrines and are addressed to a general audience of his contemporaries. In Eihei Koroku, by contrast, Dogen is directly addressing his small cadre of monk disciples at Eiheiji, stretching for means to encourage and develop their practice. In this work, the primary available source for his mature teachings, as well as occasionally revealing humor or feelings such as sadness and regret, he at times offers his own parables, often using fantastic, playful imagery, sometimes expressed as if in dreams. Briefly considering a few examples of Dogen's own use of the fantastic is appropriate background for exploring his interpretations of the apparently fantastic emergence of the bo-dhisattvas and the revelation of Buddha's life span.

In the following three parables from Eihei Koroku jodo, Dogen's appropriation of Lotus and Mahayana visions is evidenced through the allusions to Mahayana rhetoric or figures in each of them. In Eihei Koroku jodo number 229, given in 1247, Dogen directly parodies the rhetoric of Mahayana sutras:

The millions of billions of transformation bodies [of buddhas] abide throughout a monk's staff,
carry water and gather firewood to make offerings to buddhas as numerous as there are sitting cushions, and, on the tip of a whisk, simultaneously all attain unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment. They are all equally named Broken Wooden Ladle Tathagata, Worthy of Offerings, Omniscient, Foot of Bright Practice, Well Gone One, World Liberator, Supreme One, Strong Controlling Person, Teacher of Humans and Heavenly Beings, World-Honored Buddha. The Country [of this Buddha] is named Clump of Soil; the kalpa [age] is named Fist. The duration of the True Dharma Age and Semblance Dharma Age are both twelve hours, and the buddha's longevity is that of a dried turd from three thousand great thousands of worlds. Do you all understand?

If you state your understanding you are making mistake after mistake. If you say you do not understand, even the five precepts are not maintained.49

Doagen plays with words here, replacing the conventional sutra rhetoric for a buddha abiding throughout kalpas with his abiding throughout a monk's staff. Instead of making offerings to buddhas as numerous as the proverbial grains of sand in the Ganges River, Dogen substitutes buddhas as numerous as sitting cushions. Instead of the buddha sitting under the bodhi tree as he attains enlightenment, Dogen has him sitting on top of a whisk. Dogen then applies the standard ten epithets for a buddha, starting with "Tathagata," to a new buddha invented here by Dogen, named Broken Wooden Ladle. Given Doagen's use of common, everyday monastic implements, including even a broken ladle, this buddha might be seen as referring to all of the humble monks that Dogen is addressing at Eiheiji. Continuing with his parody of conventional Mahaayaana sutra rhetoric, Doagen designates the buddha land of this fabulous new buddha as "Clump of Soil," his kalpa as "Fist," and his longevity as that of a dried turd.

Dogen seems to mock the standard Mahayana sutra rhetoric, iconoclastically mimicking a formula for describing buddhas used often in the Lotuseutra, for example in chapters 8 and 9 on the predictions of future buddha-hood of the five hundred disciples, and of learners and adepts.50 However, he actually is affirming his view of the Lotus Sutra, as originally interpreted by Saicho and expressed by LaFleur, which validates the world of concrete phenomena as expressive of the essence of awakening. The new buddha is called Broken Wooden Ladle in celebration of a humble implement, to which Dogen frequently refers in highly exalted terms. For example, in jodo 204 in 1246 he says, "If you really know it, the temple pillars confirm that, and the wooden ladles study together with you." Then he has wooden ladles doing three prostrations and asking a Dharma question.51 Similarly revered in jodo 229 are the practice paraphernalia of sitting cushions, a monk's staff, and a teacher's whisk. But in celebrating the humble particulars, Doagen also emphasizes their ephemerality, as he says that the True and Semblance Dharma Ages of Broken Wooden Ladle Buddha each endure merely twelve hours. Although an intact wooden ladle is a useful implement, here the Buddha is named Broken Wooden Ladle, further emphasizing transience and recalling the Zen phrase "The bottom of a bucket broken out," which signifies the letting go of attachments in awakening experiences.

Doagen's challenge to his monks at the end of the joadoa echoes the prominent Chan Dharma combat rhetoric style of koan anthologies such as the Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record). However, his statement "If you state your understanding you are making mistake after mistake" might also be seen as a rationale for the whole Lotus Sutra self-referential strategy of not explicitly stating the content of the Dharma being celebrated and proclaimed. Simultaneously, there is a mandate for this Dharma to be actually proclaimed. "If you say you do not understand, even the five precepts are not maintained" implies the ethical responsibility not to deny whatever is realized, despite its ephemerality. This may be seen as echoing the frequent theme in the Lotus Sutra of the responsibility of Sakyamuni's disciples to maintain the Lotus Dharma in the future. Again, whether Doagen's rhetoric here borrows more from Chan tradition or more from the indirect modes of the Lotus Sutra is not the issue. The fact that he uses this style to mimic Lotus Sutra rhetoric, however, does indicate that in this joadoa Doagen is concerned and aware of Lotus Sutra discourse style and of appropriating it rhetorically, at least in part.

In the following two examples, Doagen provides fantastic parables that seem to be framed as dreams when he describes them as happening "last night." Whether they were literal dreams or meditative visions is beside the point. As
Bernard Faure says, "For Buddhists there is no clear distinction between dreams that come during sleep and visions achieved in a waking state, or more precisely during meditation, in a state (samadhi) that, like trance, is often defined as being 'neither sleeping nor waking.' Whether realized in sleep or samadhi, or merely used intentionally as literary devices invoking the visionary qualities of samadhi, these visions are used to "express the dream within the dream," that is, to reveal awakening amid the phenomenal. In his Enlightenment Day jodo, number 88, in 1241, Dogen says:

Two thousand years later, we are the descendants [of Sakyamuni]. Two thousand years ago, he was our ancestral father. He is muddy and wet from following and chasing after the waves. It can be described like this, but also there is the principle of the Way [that we must] make one mistake after another. What is this like? Whether Buddha is present or not present, I trust he is right under our feet. Face after face is Buddha's face; fulfillment after fulfillment is Buddha's fulfillment.

Last night, this mountain monk [Dogen] unintentionally stepped on a dried turd and it jumped up and covered heaven and earth. This mountain monk unintentionally stepped on it again, and it introduced itself, saying, "My name is Sakyamuni." Then, this mountain monk unintentionally stepped on his chest, and immediately he went and sat on the vajra seat, saw the morning star, bit through the traps and snares of conditioned birth, and cast away his old nest from the past. Without waiting for anyone to peck at his shell from outside, he received the thirty-two characteristics common to all buddhas, and together with this mountain monk, composed the following four line verse:

tumbling I stepped on his chest and his backbone snapped, Mountains and rivers swirling around, the dawn wind blew. Penetrating seven and accomplishing eight,
bones piercing the heavens, His face attained a sheet of golden skin.\(^53\)

In this joadoa Doagen describes a dreamlike fantasy in which he accidentally steps on a piece of shit, and in accord with Yunmen's description of Buddha often cited by Dogen, it jumps up and declares itself to be Sakyamuni. This vision increases the apparent disrespect for Buddha in Yunmen's utterance, as Doagen again steps on his chest (albeit again accidentally), even after the dried shit identifies himself as Sakyamuni Buddha. But Dogen uses this scatological vision not to degrade, but to further celebrate Buddha, by declaring that upon being stepped on, "He went and sat on the vajra seat, saw the morning star, bit through the traps and snares of conditioned birth, and cast away his old nest from the past."

Here Dogen skillfully proclaims and celebrates, nonexplicitly, the major revelation of the Lotus Sutra of the Buddha's life span enduring over inconceivable ages, and that his archetypal story of his home-leaving and awakening is demonstrated simply as a skillful mode. The effect of this dream parable of Dogen is to reinforce the story in chapter 16 by describing Buddha and his awakening process as still omnipresent, "last night" right at Eiheiji, and even in excrement.

Dogen's dream story also echoes the Lotus Sutra, chapter 4, parable of the prodigal son, who can realize his fundamental endowment only after years of shoveling manure in his father's field. As Dogen says in the introduction to his parable, even Sakyamuni "is muddy and wet from following and chasing after the waves." Dogen's further introductory statement, "Whether Buddha is present or not present, I trust he is right under our feet," echoes the Lotus Sutra parable about the ragged beggar unknowingly having the Dharma jewel sewn within his robe. It further suggests the image in chapter 15 of myriad bodhisattvas suddenly springing forth from beneath the ground "under our feet," which, as we will see, represents for Doagen the omnipresence of the bodhi-sattva potential in the ground of concrete particulars.

Having venerated Sakyamuni Buddha via seeming desecration in this last jodo parable, in Eihei KOroku jodo number 123, given in 1243, Dogen describes another dream vision, this one seeming to poke fun at Avalokitesvara, the bo-dhisattva of compassion.

One sheet of dull stubbornness is three inches thick. Three lengths of upside-downness is five feet long. Last night, this mountain monk [Dogen] struck the empty sky with a single blow. My fist didn't hurt, but the empty sky knew pain. A number of sesame cakes appeared and rushed to become the faces and eyes of the great earth.
Suddenly a person came to this mountain monk and said, "I want to buy the sesame cakes."
This mountain monk said to him, "Who are you?"
The person replied to this mountain monk, "I am Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. My family name is Zhang, and my personal name is Li."
This mountain monk said to him, "Did you bring any money?"
He said, "I came without any money."
I asked him, "If you didn't bring money, can you buy them or not?"
He didn't answer, but just said, "I want to buy them, I really do." Do you totally, thoroughly understand the meaning of this?

After a pause [Dogen] said:
When Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva makes an appearance, mountains and rivers on the great earth are not dead ashes. You should always remember that in the third month the partridges sing and the flowers open.

In the mock creation myth in the introduction to this jodo, Dogen punches out the empty sky. Then, with bravado akin to such classic Chan masters of fisticuffs as Linji Yixuan or Deshan Xuanjian (780-865; Tokusan Senkan in Japanese), Dogen declares that his fist didn't hurt, but the empty sky "knew pain." Like the skillful fists of Linji or Deshan, with their constructive impact on their monk trainees, Dogen's fist brings forth a cascade of sesame cakes, which in turn shower down as thousands of faces and eyes.

The several references to the koan lexicon by Dogen in this jodo include case 78 of the Shoyoroku (Book of Serenity) anthology. When asked by a monk about talk that transcends buddhas and ancestors, Yunmen answers, "Sesame cakes." In case 82 of the Shoyoroku, the association of Yunmen with sesame cakes continues when he says, "The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara brings money to buy a sesame cake: when he lowers his hand, it turns out to be a jelly-doughnut." This story must have inspired Dogen's vision of Avalokitesvara striving to purchase sesame cakes. But Dogen envisions the sesame cakes as transformed into dynamically active eyes and faces rather than jelly doughnuts (in East Asia, filled with sweet bean paste), which are still mere commodities, even if richer than sesame cakes.

As Dogen's parable in jodo 123 unfolds in dreamlike narrative, someone shows up who wants to buy the sesame cakes (transformed into faces and eyes). When Dogen inquires, the person identifies himself as Avalokitesvara, just as the piece of shit in the previously discussed dream parable identifies himself as Sakyamuni. Presumably Avalokitesvara is trying to acquire from Dogen the eleven faces and thousand eyes for his hands, as depicted in one of the bodhisattva's foremost iconographic forms. With these multiple perspectives, the bodhisattva of compassion can fulfill the skillful means that he is known for, as seen in his diversity of forms in chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra.

When Avalokitesvara further identifies himself by the very common Chinese names Zhang and Li, this represents him as an ordinary person. Even in a dream (or a literary discourse that he frames as visionary or dreamlike), Dogen is thereby implicitly affirming practice in the mundane world and the imminent presence of compassion. In "Within a Dream Expressing the Dream," written the year before the parable in jodo 123, Dogen declares, "The expression of the dream within the dream is the thousand hands and eyes of Avalokitesvara that function by many means." Here he explicitly denotes the discourse mode, the expressive style itself, as an aspect or example of Avalokitesvara's skillful means.

Dogen's parable ends with Avalokitesvara expressing his commitment and determination to obtain the eyes and faces (formerly sesame cakes) with which to proceed with his work of compassion, whether or not he has any money. In his own concluding commentary, Dogen adds, "When Avalokitesvara Bodhi-sattva makes an appearance, mountains and rivers on the great earth are not dead ashes." Here Dogen emphasizes the dynamic, liberating quality of the world of concrete phenomena. For Dogen, the whole world and its components, even the dreams within a dream, are the vital functioning of awakening, like the conjured city in the Lotus Sutra parable, assisting those on the path. Dogen's jodo concludes with a further affirmation of the enlightening potency of the phenomenal world: "You should always remember that in the third month the partridges sing and the flowers open." Here the emergence of vitality in spring, and also its very invocation, functions skillfully as an encouraging metaphor for the enduring potential of awakening in his disciple audience.

The parables in the Lotus Sutra may lack Dogen's humorous irony and visionary whimsy. But in
accord with LaFleur's account of the function of those parables, Dogen uses his dream parables similarly as skillful modes with which to encourage his monks' engagement with and affirmation of "the complete reality of the world of concrete phenomena in spite of the fact that they are impermanent."

This chapter has explored primary Mahayana Buddhist approaches to understanding and interpreting texts based on principles of skillful means, potentialities of buddha nature, and subtly effective proclamation of teachings. These provide a context from which to consider all Mahaayaana teachings. We have also seen how the modern hermeneutical perspectives of Paul Ricoeur encourage a flexible field of play with language to evoke spiritual meaning. Dogen freely employs such wordplay. His expressive style is in deep accord with, and is creatively indebted to, the self-reflexive, imagistic Lotus Sutra.

Now we turn to the content of the central Lotus Sutra story of the emerging underground bodhisattvas and the Buddha's inconceivable life span, first in the context of the views of selected East Asian Buddhist teachers, and then from Doagen himself.
Selected East Asian Interpretations of the Story

In this chapter a sampling of East Asian views of the *Lotus Sutra* and, where possible, especially comments on the story of the underground bodhisattvas' emergence from the earth and the Buddha's inconceivable life span will be presented to display themes highlighted by other East Asian Buddhist thinkers besides Dogen. This selection of historical Chinese and Japanese figures who have commented on the story includes Daosheng, Zhiyi, and Zhanran from China before Dogen. Special attention is given to responses from Dogen's contemporaries in or around Kamakura-period Japan, featuring Saigyo, Myoe, and Nichiren. From later prominent Japanese Zen figures who give special attention to the *Lotus Sutra* I include Hakuin and Ryokan, and from modern Japanese Zen, Shunryu Suzuki.

Daosheng Digging through the Ground and the Times

Daosheng (ca. 360-434; Dosho in Japanese) is one of the great figures in early Chinese Buddhism. Already a noted lecturer on a variety of Buddhist teachings, around 405 Daosheng spent a couple years studying with Kumarajiva while the latter was translating the *Lotus Sutra*. Although Daosheng also wrote commentaries on the *Vimalakirtti-nirdesa Sutra*, the *Aスタ asymptotic Sutra*, and the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, his only complete extant work is his full commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*, written near the end of his career, in 432, and which was the first commentary on the sutra written in Chinese. Daosheng also contributed to the development of Chinese buddha nature teaching. He denied the traditional Yogacara theory that held there were some beings, called *icchantika*, who had no buddha nature at all and were incapable of ever awakening. Around 428 he insisted that all beings were endowed with the universally applicable buddha nature, and that there were no icchantikas. As a result of this heresy, Daosheng was temporarily expelled from the Buddhist community. Fortunately for him, within a couple of years the complete translation of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* done in 421 by Dharmaksema (385-433) arrived in the capital and completely vindicated his position.

Daosheng's exegesis of the *Lotus Sutra* text is one of the most systematic of any to be considered herein, commenting on the text chapter by chapter, so I will discuss only selected relevant points in his commentary on the bodhi-sattvas emerging from the ground. Daosheng says at the beginning of the chapter that this story introduces the effect of the practice portion of the sutra, just as the first chapter had introduced the cause section. He says that Sakyamuni Buddha's call for protectors of the *Lotus Sutra* was because "the Dharma by which living beings emerge from delusion and are led to Budddhahood and nirvana is designed to extinguish itself completely; they (beings) must volunteer to protect it. Hence, the words of exhortation, so that they may strengthen their will to protect it."
However, living beings all are endowed with (the faculty of) great enlightenment; all are without exception potential bo-dhisattvas. In this respect there is no time when the sutra is not protected. So Daosheng sees the call for protectors of the sutra as a skillful means, like the inconceivable life span itself, aimed at helping bodhisattva practitioners "strengthen their will." And yet here he again asserts that all are endowed with awakening capacity. Even before arriving at the revelation of the inconceivable duration of the Buddha, he says that because of this bodhisattva capacity, and the emerging bodhisattvas, "there is no time when the sutra is not protected."

Daosheng’s view of this earth from which the bodhisattvas emerge shares both a striking difference from and an insightful similarity to Doagen’s view. Daosheng first makes a strong negative interpretation of the earth as an image in this story: "The earth refers to the bonds and the instigators of depravities. And the living being's endowment for enlightenment lies under these instigators of depravities." He sees the earth as representing the conditioned obstructions and attachments that awakening needs to break through. He adds that "living beings inherently possess an endowment for enlightenment, and it cannot remain concealed; they are bound to break the earth of defilement..."
and emerge to safeguard the Dharma." This interpretation, based on a negative view of the earth as defiled, fits the common, traditional Buddhist metaphor of the world's "dusts" as objects of desire that block clear awareness.

But Daosheng adds another note, which we will see Dogen developing. He says that the "open space" under this Saha world-sphere, in which the bodhisattvas had been abiding, represents the li (principle) of emptiness, "the state of li devoid of instigators." Thus Daosheng somewhat anticipates an aspect of the nature of these underground bodhisattvas as informed by the openness of space and earth, a metaphoric aspect of openness and space that we will explore more with Dogen.

In his comments on the chapter about the life span of Buddha, Daosheng states, "The profound mirror [representing the awakened mind] is void and clear, it is outside the realm of phenomena." Thereby he notes that although "any being with a distinct form" is subject to some life span, "there is no way that the Sage can be in that category." Thus he indicates the paradoxical nature of designating any life span for the Buddha, who is seen by Daosheng as both manifested in phenomenal form and also beyond form. But he notes that the "life-span is none other than that which prompted the Buddhas [to achieve] spiritual insight in the earlier chapters and is none other than the ultimate effect." This is a significant and suggestive viewpoint, as Daosheng suggests that this long-lived Sakyamuni, or the revelation of his life span, which is the fruit of practice, is also itself that which inspires the cause of practice in the earlier half of the Lotus Sutra. But this might also suggest that the limitation of a life span, and the fact of mortality, is itself a spur to practice. Although Daosheng does not elaborate, he does affirm the Buddha's move toward participation in the world of the living and even states that buddhas "tend to have an affinity for life and distaste for death." Thus the long-lived Buddha has precedence over the one who seems to acquire enlightenment merely in this historical life.

In affirming Sakyamuni with the long life span, Daosheng also upholds all modes of the Buddha, and does so in terms of a transcendent and all-encompassing view of time, perhaps implying an aspect of the worldview of time that Dogen will elaborate. Daosheng refers also to time when he says that Buddha "is one throughout the past and present; the past also is the present, and vice versa. There is no time when he is not existent. There is no place where he is not present. If there are times when something is not existent and there are places when something is not present, it applies only to beings, but not to the Sage." Buddha's extended presence seems to change time itself for Daosheng, as past and present inter fuse. But while perhaps positing an omnipresent, multidirectional realm of time for Buddha, he seems to be indicating a separate temporal reality for sentient beings, apart from that of the Buddha. But then he gives the new view of time precedence for all who accept the sutra's revelation of Buddha's life span as "He who has seen Reality never again sees what is not real." Thus Daosheng posits a new, more reliable temporal reality implied by Sakyamuni's omnipresence.

Zhiyi Integrating the Buddha Bodies

Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597; Tendai Chigi in Japanese), founder of the Chinese Tiantai school, is a seminal giant of Chinese Buddhism who integrated the diversity of Indian Buddhist teachings that had reached China to produce a coherent Chinese synthesis. In his panjiao system for organizing and categorizing the different scriptures, Zhiyi set the Lotus Sutra as preeminent. He speaks of the long-lived Buddha of the Lotus Sutra in terms of this Buddha's relationship to the cause and effect sections of the sutra, which were defined by Zhiyi as being demarcated by this story.

Zhiyi designates both a "true" aspect and a "tentative" aspect for the cause and effect parts of the sutra. For Zhiyi the true cause is that the Buddha's bodhisattva activity has no beginning, and the true effect is that his bud-dhahood has no beginning. For this Buddha's tentative cause he assesses his listener's inclinations and tells them the familiar story of his leaving home, attaining the way, and so on. In the tentative effect aspect the Buddha remains in this world eternally, relating different things to different people aimed at bringing all beings to the enlightenment he embodies. In this way Zhiyi seeks to clarify different perspectives on the Lotus Sutra Sakyamuni.

Zhiyi states in his teaching on the "Ten Degrees of Pervasive Teachings" that in the tenth stage,
the "Buddha Ground," bodhisattvas of sharp faculties see a Buddha who, "while also in human form, is not confined to the specific career of Sakyamuni but appears and disappears freely according to the presence or absence of beings ripe for salvation." This Buddha may not always be literally present for Zhiyi, yet he is ultimately always available when he can aid beings in need.

Zhiyi apparently instigated a later interpretation for the sutra passage revealing the Buddha's life span that describes this Buddha as eternal. However, as Jacqueline Stone points out in *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Japanese Buddhism,* "A literal reading of this passage suggests that the original realization, however inconceivably long ago, did indeed take place at a specific point in time, and thus must be said to have a beginning. Nevertheless, this 'original Buddha' of the 'Fathoming the Lifespan' chapter lent himself more readily than did the traditional, historical Sakyamuni to identification with the beginningless Dharma body." So, according to the sutra itself, this Buddha is not literally infinite or eternal.

Just as the sutra clearly indicates that the long-lived Buddha has a finite, if inconceivably long life, Zhiyi did not see the Lotus Sutra Buddha as virtually eternal. He initiated analysis of this Buddha in terms of the teaching of the three bodies of buddha, even though the three bodies (*trikaya*) teaching is not mentioned in the sutra itself. These three bodies are the historically manifested transformation body (*nirmanakaya*), the blissful recompense body (*sambhogakaya*), and the ultimate truth or reality body (*dharmakaya*). Zhiyi saw the three as integrated in the Lotus Sutra, as he "interpreted Sakyamuni Buddha of the 'Fathoming the Lifespan' chapter as embodying all three bodies in one." Whereas the historically manifested body is affected by causality and the conditions of the world, for Zhiyi the Dharma body is unchangeable, revealing of perfect suchness beyond distinctions. "Since the dharma body is in accord with the principle of suchness, both its nature and appearance are eternally as they are, whether it is manifested or not as a Buddha; therefore it is not relevant whether it is measurable or not, that is, whether it has duration or not." From the perspective of the Dharma body at least, the Lotus Sutra Buddha both incorporates and transcends each of the three bodies. For Zhiyi, "the three bodies are both permanent and impermanent, and are all three inherent in the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra: 'One body is three bodies; it is not one, it is not different.' " Zhiyi interpreted these three bodies as the attributes of a single, original Buddha, the Sakyamuni of the sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, enlightened since countless dust-particle kalpas ago. For Chih-i [Wade-Giles transliteration of Zhiyi], the unity of the three was mediated by the recompense body, which he saw as central.

Zhiyi did not dissolve these three bodies or aspects of Buddha into one, but uses the three to celebrate nuances of the Buddha revealed in chapter 16. His emphasis on the recompense body expresses the important role of actual practice, with "buddhahood as a process, which has by definition a location in time and place." We can see this body as most accurately conveying the inconceivable long-lived Buddha described in the sutra itself. The recompense body "represents a Buddha who has a beginning, and thus is finite before attaining enlightenment, but who becomes immeasurable, infinite, after his awakening. It exemplifies a Buddha who encompasses in himself both historical existence and universal principle: not an absolute Tathagata who assumes for some time a phenomenal form and then goes back to his true nature, but a Tathagata who is, at the same time, his true nature and his temporal manifestation." But while Zhiyi stresses this recompense body, he does so to show how the Lotus Sutra Buddha incorporates all aspects of buddhas.

Zhiyi's identification of the Lotus Sutra Sakyamuni with all three bodies of Buddha was retained in Chinese Tiantai as well as by Saicho (767-822), founder of the Japanese Tendai school in which Dogen initially trained. After Saicho, medieval Tendai "redefined Sakyamuni of the Lotus Sutra, not as an individual person who had once cultivated bodhisattva practice and achieved Buddhahood, but as an originally inherent Buddha, without beginning or end." This redefinition of the Buddha "would help give rise to medieval understandings of the Lotus Sutra as a teaching of original enlightenment," a teaching that was developing in Tendai circles in Doagen's time. Doagen frequently criticized these original enlightenment teachings inasmuch as they were taken to imply that practice was unnecessary, even as he also criticized acquired enlightenment approaches that posited enlightenment as a commodity or experience that could be obtained.
Zhanran Informing Phenomena with Buddha Nature

After Zhiyi, the prominent Chinese Tiantai sixth ancestor Zhanran (711-782; Tannen in Japanese) articulated the teaching potential of grasses, trees, and other insentient beings. As Robert Sharf notes, Zhanran uses the Lotus Sutra assembly, including the bodhisattvas emerging from underground, to express a "poetic vision of the phenomenal world as the very locus of awakening." For Zhanran, "the very colors and smells of the world around us constitute the Assembly of the Lotus; they are the immediate and undefiled expression of buddhahood."¹⁶ Contrary to Daosheng's view of the earth as "instigator of depravities," Zhanran affirms the earth from which the bodhisattvas emerge as the undefiled expression of awakening.

This affirmation reflects in part Zhanran's interest in Huayan cosmology, with its vision of the world as a luminous ground of interconnectedness and with the mutual nonobstruction of particulars. Zhanran cited the Huayan ancestor Fazang's dynamic view of "suchness according with conditions" to support his own teaching of the Buddha nature of insentient beings, and was the first to connect "the co-arising of suchness and the essential completeness of Buddha nature."¹⁷ Zhanran's perspective on the Lotus Sutra, influenced by Huayan, was later adopted by Saicho, who had been ordained in Kegon (the Japanese Huayan school) and studied Huayan texts before he went to study Tiantai in China.¹⁸

Zhanran also prominently cites the Mahaparinirvana Sutra to champion the universality of buddha nature based on the ultimate nonduality of cause and effect and of the illusion of self and other. For example, he references this sutra after saying, "From the beginningless beginning sentient beings have thought in terms of 'self' and the 'objects of self,' and yet they will never give voice to the universality [of buddha nature] if they continue to so categorize." But in the Tiantai sutra classification system panjiao, the Mahaparinirva Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are grouped together as the highest teaching.¹⁹ So Zhan-ran's appreciation of the Mahaparinirva Sutra is not in conflict, but is complementary to Tiantai views of the Lotus Sutra. Zhanran's lively view of the Lotus Sutra and its world was continued in Saicho's Japanese Tendai school, and certainly would have been assumed by Dogen and other Tendai monks.

In his 782 treatise "The Diamond Scalpel" ("Jinbei Lun"), Zhanran expounds on the universality of buddha nature. He cites the story in chapters 15 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra to support the inclusiveness and truth of the One Vehicle, "that Sakyamuni treats all equally and without bias," stating that the Buddha's previous lives express this and "the eternity of his life-span simply proves this." Echoing the sutra, Zhanran sees the duration of the inconceivable life span as providing the diversity of skillful means to lead all into the one great vehicle. He then also celebrates the bodhisattvas emerging from underground as giving "their lives to increase the path to enlightenment. First they develop the mind [of enlightenment] and, in the end, they will occupy a [vacant] place. How can there be another way by which we all inherit this?"²⁰ Zhanran sees the underground bodhisattvas and the omnipresent Sakyamuni of the Lotus Sutra as supporting the single great cause in the One Vehicle, elaborated in chapter 2 of the sutra, to help lead all beings onto the path.²¹

Zhanran especially champions the buddha nature of the land itself, serving as a precursor to Dogen's worldview. He maintains that the universal buddha nature "is complete within the bodies of all Buddhas, and one body [completely contains] all bodies. In like fashion, [it is complete within] the response-lands of all Buddhas; one land [completely contains] all lands. Bodies and lands being identical, what can be said about bodies can be said about lands. [This] is another way of saying that you possess [buddha] nature."²² We will see how Dogen uses the imagery of the emerging bodhisattvas to elaborate this view of the ground itself as imbued with buddha nature.

In the medieval Japanese Tendai discourse contemporary with Doagen, as mentioned previously, discussions developed derived from Zhiyi in which the long-lived Sakyamuni of the Lotus Sutra was described as literally eternal. But as Jacqueline Stone and Japanese scholars such as Genryu Kagamishima and Rosan Ikeda suggest, Dogen's responses to the nature of the Lotus Sutra Buddha owe more to Zhiyi and Zhanran than either to medieval Tendai or to Chinese Chan roots.²³ As Lucia Dolce notes, medieval Japanese Tendai regarded "the Sakyamuni of the far distant past as a threefold body
enlightened as it is, and the innumerable *kalpas* of his far distant past... as a metaphor, an example of conventional explanation. The danger of such a reading of the scripture would be to overlook the importance of practice as the means through which Buddhahood is attained, which is a central issue in the *sutra*.\(^\text{24}\) Concern with the danger of neglecting practice was especially significant in the work of Dogen, who railed against *hongaku shiso* (original enlightenment) theory not only in Tendai, but as it had affected attitudes toward practice as unnecessary in the Daruma school previously followed by many of Dogen's leading disciples.

The *Lotus Sutra* in Chinese Chan

The Chinese Chan classic recorded sayings, lamp transmission anthologies, and formal koan collections contain some passing references to the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as other Mahayana sutras, but no references that I have been able to find to the story in chapters 15 and 16 that is this work's primary concern. A full survey and analysis of *Lotus Sutra* references in the Chinese Chan literature is far beyond the scope of this work, but there were a few Chan masters who were especially noted for dedication to the *Lotus Sutra*.

A prominent early Chan figure who appreciated the *Lotus Sutra* was the founder of the "Oxhead" school in northern China, Niutou Fayong (594-657; Gozu Hoyu in Japanese). It is said that Niutou once lectured for seven days in midwinter on the *Lotus Sutra* and two stalks of golden hibiscus flowers emerged from the snow-covered ground, blooming only until his lectures ended.\(^\text{25}\) But the various stories of Niutou's magical powers are commonly used in the later Chan tradition to criticize him for lack of true understanding.\(^\text{26}\)

Other examples of Chan masters who studied the *Lotus Sutra* are Fengxue Yanzhao (893-973; Fuketsu Ensho in Japanese) and his successor Shoushan Xingnian (926-993; Shusan Shonen in Japanese), three and four generations after Linji in the Linji (Rinzai) lineage.\(^\text{27}\) Another is Yongming Yenshou (904-975; Yomyo Ensho in Japanese) of the Fayan lineage, noted for his voluminous *True Source Mirror Collection*.\(^\text{28}\) Fatong (n.d.; Buttsu in Japanese), a twelfth-century nun in the Caodong (Soto) lineage and a successor of Shimen Yuanyi (1053-1137; Sekimon Gen'eki in Japanese), is another example.\(^\text{29}\) But these Chan teachers seem to be exceptions to the rule, especially mentioned among Chan figures for their unusual focused study of the *Lotus Sutra*. More often, Chan figures explicitly rejected the Mahayana sutras as not the true "doctrine that has been separately transmitted outside the scriptural teachings," a popular Chan slogan.\(^\text{30}\)

Dogen had extraordinary mastery of the Chinese Chan/Zen koan lexicon, which he cites prolifically and skillfully throughout his writings. It can readily be noted, historically, that Dogen himself introduced the massive koan literature into Japan, even while expanding and elaborating on koan practice methodologies.\(^\text{31}\) But the worldview of space and time that will be revealed in his citations to the *Lotus Sutra* story resonates more with early Chinese Ma-hayana sources, which are not as direct a factor in Chan koan lore. The point is that, despite his dedicated introduction of the Chan koan literature to Japan, Dogen's ongoing appreciation and citations of the *Lotus Sutra* occur independent of, and not derived from, this koan literature. His references to the *Lotus Sutra* reveal the depths of his commitment to the Mahayana vision that predates Chan, especially as expressed in the *Lotus Sutra* itself.

I now turn to several other Japanese figures roughly contemporary with Dogen, beginning with the famed poet Saigyo from the century before Dogen.

Saigyo and the Moon over Vulture Peak

Saigyo (1118-1190) is highly respected as a late Heian-period poet-monk who wandered throughout Japan writing *waka* poems (traditionally five lines with a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable scheme), many about gazing at the moon. Saigyo helped develop the profound medieval Japanese aesthetics of
yuugen, a subtle response to the poignancy of impermanence. William LaFleur sees yugen and its associated aesthetic as a direct result of the impact of the Lotus Sutra in Japan.\textsuperscript{32} Saigyo became a great influence and example for many other noted Japanese literary figures, including the famed seventeenth-century haiku poet Basho.

But Saigyo was also a monk, and likely saw his poetry as a form of religious devotion. There is a perhaps apocryphal story, recounted long after Saigyo's death, about Myoe's strict master Mongaku. Though he had never met Saigyo, Mongaku severely criticized him for his focus on aesthetic activities and consequent neglect of practice. But when Saigyo came and participated in a ceremony at Mongaku's temple, Mongaku was moved by Saigyo's sincerity and treated him with great courtesy.\textsuperscript{33}

One of Saigyo's poems directly concerns chapter 16. It is entitled "On That Chapter of the Lotus Sutra Called 'Duration of the Life of the Tathagata.'" Here is William LaFleur's translation of the poem:

Those who view the moon
Over Vulture Peak as one
Now sunk below
The horizon ... are men whose minds
Confused, hold the real darkness.\textsuperscript{34}

In this poem, Saigyo's rejection of the fatalistic pessimism and gloom of the mappo theories of this period in Japan seems to be inspired by the promise of Sakyamuni Buddha's long life and remaining presence. Saigyo is thus an example of someone for whom the Lotus Sutra's teaching about the Buddha's longevity is a comfort and great encouragement. And he is willing to assert and maintain the Lotus teaching in his time.

Although noted for his poetic expressions of impermanence, Saigyo faithfully sees the Buddha's teaching remaining amid the present circumstances. In another example, at the Ise Shrine, Saigyo wrote:

Over Vulture Peak
There in Buddha's time and place:
A bedazzling moon,
Here softly filtered into
Tsukiyomi sacred shrine.\textsuperscript{35}

Even in his wanderings throughout Japan, Saigyo still beheld the Lotus Sutra moon and Sakyamuni's presence.

For the poet Saigyo, the story in chapter 16 seems to have provided comfort and the faith that in some sense the Buddha and his awakening teaching and support was still present in the world, if only in the ephemeral beauty of the moon shining over the mountains. Saigyo's response would be an appropriate exemplification of those devotees who the sutra says will witness the Buddha, even after his supposed passing into nirvana, because of their faith in the sutra itself.

Myoe's Devoted Yearning

Myoe Shonin (1173-1232) was highly respected as a model monk, and for many reasons is easily one of the most fascinating figures in Kamakura-period Buddhism. Mentioned in the previous chapter for his relationship to the fantastic, Myoe was ordained in the Japanese Kegon school and was a practitioner and ardent, insightful scholar of the visionary, colorful Avatamsaka Sutra (discussed previously in relation to the Chinese Huayan school). He expended considerable energy on developing practical means to implement Avatamsaka teachings about stages of bodhisattva practice. He was also deeply connected with the Shingon school, and thus a mikkyo practitioner and follower of Vajrayana texts such as the Mahavairocana Sutra. But despite his primary allegiance to other sutras, as a Kamakura-period Buddhist he could not avoid influence from the Lotus Sutra as well. His mother had chanted the Kannon chapter of the Lotus Sutra, hoping for a son. After she conceived, she regularly chanted the Lotus Sutra throughout her pregnancy with Myoe.\textsuperscript{36}

Myoe actively supported the inclusivity of Lotus Sutra skillful means and respect for the diversity of teachings and practices. Thus he strongly criticized his noted contemporary Honen
(1133-1212), founder of the Jodo-shu Pure Land School, for focusing exclusively on the nenbutsu practice of chanting the name of Amida Buddha while actively disregarding and disparaging other practices and buddhas. An adept of the traditional schools, Myoe himself engaged in nenbutsu and other devotional practices as well as meditation, but was alarmed at the trend, expressed most fully at the time by Honen, to denigrate all but a single practice strategy.

Myoe's life and practice are noteworthy for his intense religiosity and devotion to visions. For his last forty years, he kept a vivid Dream Diary, considered by modern Jungian analysts to be unique in human history for its duration and lucid self-reflection. In this journal, he included meditative visions together with his sleeping dreams, and it is sometimes not clear where one leaves off and the other begins.

The only mention of the Lotus Sutra in Myoe's entire extant Dream Diary is one of the earliest entries, in 1196, and it specifically concerns chapter 16 and the revelation of Buddha's life span. In the entry Myoe describes making summaries of a commentary on this chapter. Pondering its meaning, "tears began to flow as I yearned for the Tathagata." Later in the dream he says that from that day on he concentrated on chanting the sutra.

Myoe's response to the inconceivable life span of Buddha differs strikingly from that in Saigyo's poem. Whereas Saigyo is comforted and faithfully believes in the omnipresence of the moon over Vulture Peak, Myoe apparently did not interpret the good news of the expedient nature of Sakyamuni's decease as reassurance of the omnipresence of Sakyamuni. Instead, it inspired his intense yearning to see Sakyamuni, or at least the sites of his teaching in India. On one occasion Myoe keeled over, "reeling from the pain of [the Buddha's] absence." Myoe seriously planned a pilgrimage to India in 1203, and again in 1204, even attempting to calculate the distance and duration of such an unprecedented journey from Japan using the woefully inaccurate geographical information then available. He was finally dissuaded through dramatic visions of the protector deity of the Kasuga Shrine in Nara, whom he eventually came to understand as in some sense manifesting Sakyamuni Buddha's body, thereby concretizing the Lotus Sutra's promise of the Buddha's omnipresence. It is fortunate for Myoe that he did not actually accomplish this journey, because during the previous century Buddhism in India had been exterminated by Islamic invaders.

Myoe's vision of the Kasuga divinity recalls a long tradition predating the Kamakura period, referred to as honji-suijaku, "true nature manifestations," in which specific native Japanese spirits were considered manifestations of particular buddha or bodhisattva figures. In this system, the buddhas were identified with the fundamental or "original ground" (honji) of the enduring Sakyamuni Buddha of the sixteenth chapter, associated with the last fourteen chapters of the sutra, and each local deity was identified with the "manifest trace" (suijaku) of the Buddha as he appeared in the first fourteen chapters of the sutra. Nichiren would later view the important native Japanese deities Amaterasu and Hachiman as specifically manifestations of the enduring Sakyamuni of chapter 16.

In the story, the Lotus Sutra states that Sakyamuni's parinirvana, or passing away into final nirvana, is simply an expedient for the benefit of those who would slacken in their own practice and dedication should they see the Buddha as still present and taking care of the world. Therefore it is ironic that Myoe, who appears unsurpassed for his dedication to the Dharma and his diligent and intelligent efforts to find practical applications of the teachings for practitioners, seemed to derive from chapter 16 only an intense, never quite fulfilled yearning to literally see the Buddha, or at least his relics and sacred sites. Perhaps Myoe, despite his sincere devotion, could not quite make the leap of faith in the enduring Buddha that is suggested in the Lotus Sutra. And so he is an example of the pre-Lotus Sutra Mahayana practitioner who still feels the need for myriad lifetimes of practice, and who will practice only when motivated by Buddha's absence. Myoe even stated this explicitly. As Mark Unno points out, "Myoe felt that if only he could be in the presence of the Buddha, then everything would be all right: 'If I had been born in India, I would not have had to do anything.... Paying homage to the Tathagata[,] I would have had no need for study or practice.'"
The *Lotus Sutra* played a major role in inspiring faith-related East Asian Buddhism, and was especially central in the formation of Japanese Buddhism.

So it is ironic that the new Kamakura schools most commonly associated with devotion, the Pure Land schools, should have largely neglected their Tendai roots in the *Lotus Sutra* when they focused on the Amida nenbutsu. This perhaps can be attributed to the divergent goals of the faith: for the *Lotus Sutra*, faith was in the buddha nature potential in everyone and the possibility of embodiment of the Dharma in this life; in the case of the Pure Land, faith, at least popularly, was in rebirth in Amida’s Western Paradise, although the function of such rebirth has been understood quite variably over the history of Amidism.

However, Ippen (1239-1289), probably the most prominent Pure Land figure in the period right after Dogen, maintained a high regard for the *Lotus Sutra*. He is known for his energetic, widespread promulgation of the nen-butsu even with "a single utterance" (the basis for his name, meaning "once"); for his handing out slips of paper printed with "Namu Amida Butsu" ("Homage to Amida Buddha") to those who chanted the nenbutsu once; and for his maintaining of the public, joyful "dancing nenbutsu" practice. But his continuing respect for the *Lotus Sutra* might perhaps reflect his own previous rigorous practice as a *yamabushi* (mountain ascetic).

In the *Record of Ippen*, compiled by his followers five centuries after his life from scattered letters and notes, there are several references to the *Lotus Sutra*. None of these references include the material in chapters 15 and 16, but Ippen does state that the Path of the Lotus and the Pure Land are one, and that whichever is most beneficial to a particular practitioner should be followed. From the Pure Land perspective, which criticizes self-power, Ippen points out that even in the Lotus Path, "one must give up the body and life of the self in order to realize enlightenment." He asserts clearly, "The Dharma-Lotus and the Name [of Amida] are one. The Dharma-Lotus is Dharma as color and form; the Name is Dharma as mind. Since form and (perceiving) mind are nondual, the Dharma-Lotus is itself the Name. Thus the [Pure Land] *Meditation Sutra* teaches, ‘The person who utters the nenbutsu is a lotus flower among men.’" For Ippen the Pure Land nenbutsu and the *Lotus Sutra* Dharma are mutually supporting, and ultimately not separate.

Nichiren as Leader of the Underground Bodhisattvas

Dogen refers to the *Lotus Sutra* as "the great king and the great master of all the various sutras that the Buddha Sakyamuni taught." But Dogen’s central practice was zazen, and he also amply references other sutras, and, even more than the sutras, the recorded sayings or koans from the Chinese Zen "buddha ancestors." For Nichiren (1222-1282), on the other hand, the *Lotus Sutra* is the single sacred object around which his whole theology revolves. The main practice of the various Nichiren schools and their offshoots involves chanting the name of the *Lotus Sutra* and venerating a scroll of the sutra’s name. And in the more elaborated theology and sutra study also prevalent in Nichiren Buddhism, chapter 16 is especially central. Nichiren focuses on this story of the enduring Sakyamuni as the fulcrum for his teaching. Given this focus, it is fitting that the discussion of Nichiren in this chapter dwarfs most of the other sections in length. For Nichiren, Sakyamuni Buddha’s remaining ever-present and his teaching sustained by the underground bodhisattvas is the central spiritual fact.

Nichiren implied in 1272 in "Open Your Eyes" ("Kaimoku-sho") that he was himself a manifest reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Superior Conduct, the leader of all the bodhisattvas who had emerged from the open space under the earth in chapter 15 of the *Lotus Sutra*. In identifying his efforts with those of Bodhisattva Superior Conduct, Nichiren was claiming a direct connection to the original Buddha. Later on, in the Muromachi period, some exegetes in one of the Nichiren branches would go further, claiming that Nichiren was himself the original Buddha of chapter 16.

But Nichiren also makes explicit in his writings that the long-lived Sa-kyamuni, and also the underground bodhisattvas, are existent within our own minds. He quotes this passage in chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*: “The duration of my life, which I obtained through the practice of the way of bodhisattvas, has not yet expired. It is twice as long as the length of time stated above: 500 dust-particle kalpas.” He comments, “This reveals the bodhisattva-realm within our minds.” For Nichiren
the realm of bodhisattva practice expressed by the primordial, enduring Buddha, as well as the bodhisattva practice that leads to such a buddha life, is an interior, psychic realm imaged within the minds and hearts of current practitioners.

Nichiren continues that the underground bodhisattvas of chapter 15, "who have sprung out of the great earth, as numerous as the number of dust-particles of 1,000 worlds, are followers of the Original Buddha Sakymuni who resides within our minds."50 Nichiren here declares that this "original Buddha" lives as a potential within the minds of Buddhist devotees.

But the effect of the enduring Sakyamuni is not merely limited to the mental or subjective realm for Nichiren: "When the Eternal Buddha was revealed in the essential section of the Lotus Sutra, this world of endurance (Saha-world) became the Eternal Pure Land."51 Nichiren describes the external world of samsara as now, immediately transformed by Sakymuni Buddha, and consequently indestructible, transcending the changing kalpas. The powerful impact of the long-lived Buddha on the world itself is a significant model for Nichiren, which has allowed and encouraged Nichiren Buddhism to become one of the forms of Buddhism most concerned and engaged with this world, including social issues.

Further developing the identification of the enduring Buddha with the Buddha's followers, Nichiren states that the "Eternal" Sakymuni Buddha "exists forever throughout the past, present, and future. All those who receive His guidance are one with the Eternal Buddha."52 He goes on to state that the Sakymuni Buddha of the sixteenth chapter differs from the earlier Sakymuni Buddha of provisional sutras, and advocates that the enduring Sakymuni, and his image, be the new object of veneration in the current Age of Decline (mappo), replacing images of the Sakymuni who expounded the pre-Lotus sutras.

Nichiren strongly emphasizes the end of chapter 15 and chapter 16. This is the part of the sutra that "Nichiren judges to be almost exclusively representative of the meaning of the entire scripture."53 Lucia Dolce describes the difference in Nichiren's interpretation of the sutra from Zhiyi's as Nichiren seeing the long-lived Sakymuni Buddha as the single ultimate buddha encompassing all others. Whereas Zhiyi emphasized the sambhogakaya, or recompense body, and valued many other particular buddhas, Nichiren declares "that all Buddhas enlightened in the past are emanations of Sakymuni" of chapter 16, based on the events of chapter 11, in which emanations arrive to witness the other Buddha in his stuapa. For Nichiren, this long-lived Buddha includes all three bodies, including the manifested transformation body, nirmanakaya, and even Vairocana, the reality body or dharma-kaya: "Only the [chapter 16] Sakymuni who reveals his enlightenment in the past embodies the true Mahayana Buddha."54

Nichiren's view of temporality is determined by this story, as his emphasis on it "corresponds to the dilation of the temporal dimension expressed in those chapters, that is, the distant past in which Sakymuni obtained his original enlightenment. Nichiren absolutizes this original moment and makes it the only significant time, and relates it to the existence of humanity in a certain time and place." He does not describe this Buddha as literally eternal, but "uses the expression 'without beginning and without end,'" signifying "an existence not subject to temporal limitations." Because this limitlessness includes the transformation body, "the Buddha has always abided in this world and... his soteriological activity has been constant since the original time."55

The ontological status of this life span of Sakymuni has been debated in Lotus Sutra commentaries and is sometimes translated as "eternal."56 Despite Nichiren's own position, English translations of Nichiren Buddhism (including those cited earlier) generally refer to "Eternal Sakymuni" to designate the buddha in the sixteenth chapter. But the literal meaning of the Chinese characters in the Lotus Sutra text indicate his life span not as onto-logically eternal, but simply as unimaginably vast in duration, albeit finite.57

The story certainly does imply going far beyond the ordinary view of time and incorporating the atemporal, as Nichiren indicates. But Sakymuni Buddha also inhabited history for the sake of skillfully aiding and liberating beings temporally located in history. As Nichiren also emphasizes, the portrayal of Sakymuni's continuing presence suggests some kind of ongoing interaction with history, if only through the agency of the underground bodhisattvas he has trained, but possibly also in more personal modes.

This view of the omnipresent Sakymuni (functionally still present, even if not eternal) does
validate his ongoing veneration in Nichiren practice, as well as a more general template for ritual offerings to Buddha, and also for seeing living teachers in the tradition as reenacting Buddha's role, or even representing Buddha. The inconceivably long-lived Sakyamuni of the *Lotus Sutra* thus offers a form of integration of the atemporal realm with the historical, into which Sakyamuni and the underground bodhisattvas are ever ready to spring forth for the sake of liberating deluded beings.

The complexity of this story about an enduring Sakyamuni obviously foreshadows the post-*Lotus Sutra* teaching of the three bodies of Buddha. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese Tiantai founder Zhiyi saw the *Lotus Sutra* Sakyamuni as primarily a sambhogakaya buddha integrating all three bodies by realizing the truth of the Dharma body and responding to beings via the manifestation body. But in Japanese Buddhism, beginning with Saichō and throughout the Heian period, the *Lotus Sutra* Sakyamuni came to be increasingly equated with Vairocana, the dharmakaya buddha. The evolving Original Enlightenment *hongaku* theories, based at least in part on this long-lived Sakyamuni, were prevalent in the Tendai school in the Heian and evolving during the Kamakura period, and certainly influenced Kamakura views of chapter 16, especially in Nichiren Buddhism.

Shortly before the Kamakura period there were also Tendai critics of the Original Enlightenment theories, such as Hochi-bo Shoshin (fl. 12th cent.), who "opposed definitions of Sakyamuni of the 'Fathoming the Lifespan' chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* as an originally inherent Buddha, which, he said, clearly went against the sutra's statement that Sakyamuni had practiced the bodhisattva way and attained Buddhahood in the remote past." The theological issues involved in the story of Sakyamuni's life span were a challenge to the view of reality of all Japanese devotees, which Nichiren resolved in a unique manner.

As already mentioned, the underground bodhisattvas of chapter 15 have special significance for Nichiren: "The countless bodhisattvas who had sprung up from underground were disciples of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha ever since the time He had first resolved to seek Buddhahood." Although they had not visited Sakyamuni throughout his awakening under the bodhi tree and his expounding of the lesser sutras, since making their vow in the *Lotus Sutra* they are especially promised to appear in the mappoa times, which Nichiren believed had already arrived.

Thus the underground bodhisattvas are greater for Nichiren than the familiar disciples, and even greater than the celebrated archetypal bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra, Manjusri, and Maitreya. "The numerous great bodhisattvas, who had been guided by the Original Buddha in the past, sprang out of the earth of the whole world, according to [chapter 15]. They looked incomparably superior to Bodhisattva Fugen (Samantabhadra) and Manjusri, who had been regarded as ranking disciples.... Even Bodhisattva Maitreya, successor to Sakyamuni Buddha, did not know who they were, not to speak of other bodhisattvas." Nichiren sees the underground bodhisattvas as the model for those who carry out the teaching of the enduring S'akyamuni in current conditions. And Nichiren himself personally identified with these underground bodhisattvas: "When these four great bodhisattvas, leaders of those who sprung up from underground, spread this sutra through aggressive means of propagation, they would appear as wise kings reproaching ignorant kings. Practicing a persuasive means of propagation, they would be monks upholding and spreading the true dharma." In the final age of degenerate Dharma that Nichiren regarded as having arrived in Kamakura-period Japan, the imperative of proclaiming and propagating the *Lotus Sutra* teaching gained a new urgency. It was embodied for Nichiren by the enduring Sakyamuni and especially conveyed to the myriad beings by the underground bodhisattvas.

Through the all-encompassing nature of the *Lotus Sutra*’s Sakyamuni Buddha, as well as the persistent practice of the underground bodhisattvas, "the dharma world itself comes to be conceived as the phenomenal reality which actualizes the ultimate truth. ... According to Nichiren, in the second section of the Lotus Sutra Sakyamuni speaks of this saha world as the original land, a pure Buddha realm." Nichiren's view of the beginningless and endless (practically speaking) S'akyamuni implies for him that the phenomenal world itself becomes an active locus for awakening: "Nichiren considered the assembly on Vulture Peak a symbol of those who, having received the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, are able to transform our saha world into a 'resplendent land.'... Since the world where humans live is also the original world in which the Buddha attained buddhahood, phenomenal reality becomes the ground of the most complete enlightenment, which opens to ultimate reality." Thus, for Nichiren the inconceivable visionary reaches inspired by the vastness of time of the revelation of...
the Buddha's life span have liberative implications for this world, and for the conditions of this time and place.

There is no evidence that Nichiren ever so much as heard of Dogen. And yet, these critical perspectives on the active nature of the phenomenal world that Nichiren derived from the central story of the *Lotus Sutra* echo very closely Dogen's cosmological view of the earth, as we will clearly see in Dogen's own citations of the story. Dolce describes how this view informed Nichiren's sense of the responsibility for this world of *Lotus Sutra* devotees: 'If buddha-seeds occur 'according to circumstances and conditioned cause,' as suggested in the Lotus Sutra itself, both the infinite action of the Buddha and one's own activity are necessary.' A similar sense of responsibility, motivated by a similar perspective, might be seen in Dogen's emphasis on precepts and on the necessity of a lifetime of sustained practice. But the form of practice engagements of Dogen and Nichiren are, of course, quite different.

The one practice that was the "excellent medicine" for expressing the *Lotus Sutra* truth for Nichiren was recitation and veneration of the syllables "Namu Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo," the homage to the name of the *Lotus Sutra* that Nichiren saw as a symbolic embodiment of this enduring Sakyamuni and called "the essence of the chapter, 'Duration of the Life of the Buddha.'" He declared that these five characters were transmitted only to the underground bodhisattvas, who would proclaim them in the future "evil age," which had now arrived in Kamakura-period Japan. Nichiren says, "At this time, the bodhisattvas who sprang up from the earth will appear for the first time in the world to bestow upon the children the medicine of the five characters Myoho-renge-kyo." For Nichiren, the leap of faith expressed in the *Lotus Sutra* is grounded in the mappo theory, a pressing reality for him that was completely rejected by Dogen. Nichiren believed that the importance of Sakyamuni's remaining presence, and even more, of the proclamation of it by the underground bodhisattvas, was that the teaching was still available, even in the present evil age of mappoa. Thanks only to the underground bodhisattvas and the enduring Sakyamuni, the faithful still had the opportunity to hear the teaching and to express their faith through veneration and chanting of the name of the *Lotus Sutra.* But Nichiren went even further: "By defining the beginning of the Final Dharma age as the precise historical moment when the Buddha's ultimate teaching, the *Lotus Sutra*, shall spread, Nichiren was able to reverse the conventional gloomy connotations of the last age and celebrate it as the best possible time to be alive." The extraordinary self-referential quality of the *Lotus Sutra*, discussed in chapter 2 of this work, also had an important effect on both Dogen and Nichiren in their responses to the enduring Sakyamuni and the sutra itself. Whereas the impact of the self-referential is most clearly expressed by Dogen in his style of Dharma proclamation, for Nichiren the manner in which the sutra proclaims its own value and soteriological role becomes the basis for his religious praxis. Nichiren takes the sutra literally in this respect. Perhaps more than any other major Buddhist thinker, he elevates one scripture as sacred essence and object. The sutra itself extensively extols the virtues of copying, reading, and reciting the sutra. Nichiren simplified and consolidated these practices into chanting its name and venerating the written name of the sutra as an icon.

**Hakuin's *Lotus Sutra* Awakening**

Of all the colorful and venerable figures in the history of Japanese Rinzai Zen, Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1768) was probably the most influential. Hakuin was a dynamic, impressive character, from whose teaching the modern Rinzai koan curriculum derives, and from whom all modern Rinzai Zen lineages descend. A vigorous, ardent Zen student, he fiercely confronted the "great ball of doubt," straining his nervous system such that he endured several episodes of "Zen sickness." But he overcame these to have many dramatic opening experiences of deep realization: satori, or "seeing the nature" (kensho). As a teacher, Hakuin later demanded rigorous efforts from his students to experience similar breakthroughs. But with the range of common people who sought him out, he could also be very warm and flexible, finding appropriate meditative practices for Nichiren and Pure Land devotees, for example. After retiring from active teaching, he did calligraphy scrolls and often humorous brush paintings of Zen topics, many now considered museum masterpieces. He also left a
wide body of writings, including an unusual quantity of autobiographical records recounting his spiritual adventures.

Hakuin had a significant relationship with the *Lotus Sutra*. In his writing "The Poisonous Leavings of Past Masters," he relates how he heard the *Lotus Sutra* extolled as a young monk of fifteen, but upon reading found it wanting and irrelevant to his spiritual concerns. At that time he agreed with Linji's (Rinzai) total dismissal of the sutras, including the *Lotus Sutra*, as "mere verbal prescriptions for relieving the world's ills." When he was forty Hakuin looked at the *Lotus Sutra* again, and when reading the third chapter he suddenly realized that it was indeed the "king of sutras": "A loud involuntary cry burst from the depths of my being and I began sobbing uncontrollably.... I knew without any doubt that what I had realized in all those satoriis I had experienced, what I had grasped in my understanding of those koans I had passed—had all been totally mistaken. I was finally able to penetrate the source of the free, enlightened activity."69

Hakuin gave Dharma talks on the *Lotus Sutra* and regularly referred to its stories, though most often to the parables in the first half of the sutra.70 In a lengthy, eloquent letter about the *Lotus Sutra* responding to an elderly nun of the Lotus (Nichiren) school, he praises the sutra as the ultimate teaching, in which not only all buddhas but "mountains, rivers, [and] the great earth... bespeak the Dharma principle that all things are a nondual unity representing the true appearance of all things. This is the fundamental principle of Buddhism." He adds, "Reaching this place is called the *Lotus Sutra*, or the Buddha of immeasurable life-span," which he also equates with the Zen "original face."71 Thus Hakuin echoes Dogen in emphasizing the liberating role of the earth when it is informed by the *Lotus Sutra*.

In this letter, right after equating zazen and recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* in their power to clarify mind, Hakuin explicitly quotes Dogen about the great value of practicing this even for one day. Hakuin encourages sustained thorough engagement of the Lotus samadhi, through which he affirms, "Your body and mind will drop off. The true, unlimited, eternal, perfected Tathagata will manifest himself clearly before your eyes and never depart."72 He goes on to lament at length the neglect of the *Lotus Sutra* by his contemporaries.

### Ryokan in the Safe and Peaceful Land

The *Lotus Sutra* has been commonly perceived as tangential to Doagen, and to Japanese Soto Zen generally. The eighteenth-century literary figure Ryokan (1758-1831) is arguably the most renowned Soto priest of the past few centuries. In discussing Ryokan, Ryuichi Abe says, "Although Ryokan appears to have remained faithful to the religious ideals of his Soatoa progenitor Doagen, there was nothing sectarian about Ryokan's Buddhist practice. Among the numerous Buddhist scriptures, the *Lotus Sutra*—a popular text not particularly emphasized in traditional Soatoa training but the essential scripture of the Tendai and Nichiren schools—was by far his favorite."73 While the *Lotus Sutra* is certainly not nearly as important to Doagen or Soatoa as it is to Nichiren, Ryokan's great appreciation for it reveals the lingering appropriation of the *Lotus Sutra* in Soto Zen, an appreciation and usage that goes back to the Japanese Soto founder Dogen.

After completing his monastic training, Ryokan returned to his home village and lived very humbly in a grass hut outside town, supporting himself though traditional begging rounds. He is most often celebrated and still beloved in Japan for the many colorful stories about his innocent, quirky character, including regular play with village children, which earned him the Dharma name "Great Fool." Ryokan is greatly esteemed as a poet and callig-rapher whose brushwork already was highly valued during his lifetime. But he was also a well-trained Soto monk who was an accomplished meditator as well as a devoted scholar of Buddhism. Notably, "among the scriptural texts Ryokan studied, the *Lotus Sutra* is by far the most important source of inspiration for his poetry." He "expressed his love of the scripture in many poems inspired by the sutra's principal motifs."74 Further, Ryokan personally copied out the whole sutra, a traditional practice of *Lotus Sutra* devotees extolled in the sutra itself.
Ryokan's profuse poetry (both Japanese waka and Chinese kanshi) most often evocatively described and celebrated his life of meditation, of begging rounds, and of play with children. These verses are often filled with his sense of deep contentment and joy, but also include descriptions of his humble circumstances and the poignant loneliness of a life of seclusion, outside of the fellowship of other monks. Yet he also wrote many poems and some prose pieces on Buddhist doctrinal matters, including his love of the writings of Dogen; reflections on the priesthood and on begging practice; and lists of practice suggestions, the latter used apparently as reminders to himself. A number of Ryokan's verses contain references to the Lotus Sutra, for example those extolling the bodhisattva "Never-Despising Anyone" Sadapari-bhuta, featured in chapter 20 of the sutra. Because of this bodhisattva's indomitable practice of bowing to everyone and seeing their buddha nature, he was a particular hero to Ryokan. These verses were part of a collection of 122 that he wrote commenting on the Lotus Sutra chapter by chapter.

Among these, Ryokan's eight verses for chapters 15 and 16 describe the story somewhat straightforwardly, but poetically. For example, while colorfully describing the inconceivability of the Buddha's life span, Ryokan points out the importance of Buddha's skillfulness in appearing to pass into parinirvana:

Emptiness can be grasped, and the wind may be tied down, But the life-span of the Tathaagata cannot be fathomed.
Although he constantly abides on Vulture Peak expounding Dharma, He dares not let people observe him easily. (80)

Yet Ryokan gives priority to the reality of the continuing teaching of Sakyamuni with a clear and striking image:

Whether expounding his own or others' bodies, He shows passing into nirvana and also continuously abides. If there was a finish to his expounding on Vulture Peak The limitless hundreds of rivers would not flow into the ocean. (81)

Ryokan especially celebrates the effect of the chapter 16 Sakyamuni on the land itself. In his expounding, this present place becomes an indestructible buddha land, fully satisfying all spiritual needs. This sense of place must have been palpable for Ryokan and informed his presence in the woods around his hut and the village byways where he begged and played games with the children.

When the kalpa-ending fire blazes, destroying the billion worlds, This land of mine is truly safe and peaceful. This is the divine sage's wondrous mystery; Who'd need point to the Mystic Island and cross the billowing waves? (83)

In another of these verses, Ryokan uses the skillfulness of the Buddha's teaching about his life span to affirm Dogen's primary teaching about the oneness of practice or cultivation with accomplished realization:

It is said the Way should be cultivated and achieved, But it is true folly to regard the latter as separate from the former. If sentient beings did not have a variety of minds, The Tathagata would not expound various teachings. (82)

Despite the variety of teachings, for Ryokan, as for Dogen, every aspect of practice at every stage completely expresses the ongoing enduring fulfillment of the awakening of the Lotus Sutra Buddha.

Shunryu Suzuki and the Lotus Sutra in American Zen

One of the most important Japanese teachers in the modern importation of Dogen's lineage to the West is Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971), a Soto Zen priest who lived in California from 1959 until his death. During this time he founded
the San Francisco Zen Center, including its Tassajara monastery in the remote mountains of Monterey County, the first Zen monastery in the West. These sites remain prominent centers of Zen practice in America, and a collection of Suzuki's informal talks, *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind,* remains a foremost classic of American Buddhism.84

Dogen was endeavoring to import Chinese Chan into Japan, already a strongly Buddhist culture. He was introducing his disciples to the vast Chinese koan literature, but his references to the *Lotus Sutra* were all very familiar to his students. But Suzuki was introducing Zen Buddhist practice into a culture that had nearly no context of meditation and had distorted ideas of Buddhism as an exotic Oriental philosophy. Moreover, many of Suzuki's students arrived from the center of the '60s hippie counterculture in San Francisco, open to new ideas but with their own individualist prejudices and strong proclivities for intoxication.

Given his students' lack of any Buddhist background, it is striking that Suzuki, along with regular references to Dogen in his talks, gave a series of lectures on three texts, and that one of them was the *Lotus Sutra*. The other two were the *Blue Cliff Record, Hekigan Roku,* one of the primary Zen koan collections, and the Chinese teaching poem "Harmony of Difference and Sameness" ("Sandokai"), a short verse by a Chinese Caodong lineage progenitor, Shitou Xiqian (700-790; Sekito Kisen in Japanese), which is chanted regularly in Soto Zen.85 These two texts might be expected of a Japanese Soto Zen master introducing his practice to unlearned Americans. But his choice of the *Lotus Sutra* would remain quite surprising to many American Zen scholars not familiar with Dogen's own connection to the sutra.

Suzuki gave this series of lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* from February 1968 to November 1969 at Tassajara monastery. Most of his students found these talks "dry and deadly dull."86 And yet Suzuki persisted. In these talks he expands to diverse subjects, especially in the discussions with students, but his treatment of the text itself in sequence does not get past chapter 2 of the sutra (although he gives one reference to the parable at the end of chapter 16 about the physician who pretends to pass away so that his sons will take their medicine).87

Suzuki to some extent echoes Zhiyi (whom Suzuki does mention), as he discusses at length the central role of the Sambhogakaya Buddha, who he claims spoke the *Lotus Sutra*. Suzuki states, "Because this sutra was told by the Sambhogakaya Buddha instead of the historical Buddha, it is valuable."88 He further says, "The Sambhogakaya Buddha is the original source of the Nirmanakaya Buddha ... [who] has no eternal life. He is just one of the great heroes in our history. But when we understand Sakyamuni Buddha as a Sambhogakaya Buddha, or a Dharmakaya Buddha, for the first time he has perpetual life."89

Of course, Suzuki was a dedicated student of Dogen, so he naturally expresses the viewpoints we will see from Dogen. This extends even to Dogen's style of rhetorical proclamation from the *Lotus Sutra,* as described in the previous chapter. Suzuki declares that when we understand that the sutra "was spoken by the Sambhogakaya Buddha, or when we understand that, 'I am now reading the *Lotus Sutra,*' then the *Lotus Sutra* makes sense to us... I said, 'I am reading,' but actually, I meant, 'I am telling the *Lotus Sutra.*'"90 In this way readers of the sutra themselves become the Sambhogakaya and continue the life of Buddha. Suzuki also proclaims the lively, playful hermeneutic required by the sutra: "If you read this sutra literally, you will not understand it properly. This sutra is told in various ways, back and forth; it's sometimes this way and sometimes the other way. That is why the sutra is valuable. [It] could be very artistic or poetic."91

Suzuki presents his discussion of the Sambhogakaya Buddha early in the lecture series, indicating the importance to him of how this teaching illuminates the reality of earth and space. He says that this Buddha "is the source of all buddhas, which exist before Buddha. In this sense, Buddha is eternal, perpetual being.. The *Lotus Sutra* is the sutra which describes this kind of reality, the world of *tathata* in Sanskrit [suchness or thusness]." In terms of this reality of intersubjective awareness as it applies to earth, "when he observes his inside world, as the sun does, he finds himself as earth. That earth nature is universal. This earth is also earth, and the sun is also earth. Everything is earth, so there is no difference between the objective world and the subjective world." So for the Sambhogakaya Buddha, "his world is limitless. It includes the sun and stars and everything. So his virtue and wisdom are also limitless. He ... knows everything as being within himself. For him there is nothing outside his being."92 Thus Suzuki echoes and expands on the inclusive worldview of earth and space that we will see elucidated by Dogen.
Suzuki also mentions the implications of this reality and the Buddha's life span to a view of time. "Since [his disciples'] adoration for Buddha extended limitlessly, his practice before he attained enlightenment, or Buddhahood, became limitless. It follows that, if Buddha is a limitlessly lofty person, the time he practiced his way must also have been limitlessly long. In this way, the historical Buddha became more and more something like Absolute Being." In accord with Dogen's temporal perspectives, Suzuki clarifies the multidimensionality of time: "There is no separate past, present, and future. Past and future already exist in this present moment. ... If you do something good, your future is bound to be good; and that you are good means that your past life was good." In his *Lotus Sutra* lectures Suzuki also said that he was impressed as a boy hearing his mother regularly recite the chant from chapter 25 on the bodhisattva of compassion, Kanzeon (Avalokitesvara), which describes the miraculous saving power available to devotees who call on this bodhisattva when in peril. This is a text only rarely chanted in American Zen centers, as its devotional tone seems strange to many Western sensibilities. That verse is one of two from the *Lotus Sutra* chanted daily in Japanese Soto Zen (though still infrequently in the West), the other being the closing verse of the "Life Span of the Tathagata" chapter. The persisting importance of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Japanese Soto tradition reflects its importance to Dogen. And the relative lack of emphasis of the sutra's Mahayana perspectives in American Zen studies and practice might signify the latter's newness and lack of development.

Thematic Summary

Before examining Dogen's own responses to the story in chapters 15 and 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*, it will be useful to enumerate a few main themes expressed in these various East Asian responses.

One issue is the nature of the earth or ground. For Daosheng it is an obstacle and the "ground of defilement." But Zhanran sees "the phenomenal world as the very locus of awakening." For Nichiren and Hakuin this world is the ground of awakening. And for Saigyo and Ryokan the Lotus land can be apprehended poetically in their present world.

Both Nichiren and Hakuin also share an emphasis on the ongoing responsibility to practice, though in the different modes of chanting the *dai-moku* ("Namu Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo") and koan or zazen practice, respectively. A related issue is the varying views of the role of the underground bodhisattvas and how they relate to our current practice responsibility. Most remarkable is Nichiren's view of himself as the literal reincarnation of the leader of the underground bodhisattvas.

Finally, there is a range of interpretations about the nature of the Buddha of the *Lotus Sutra*. Saigyo sees the Buddha as still present, whereas Myoe earnestly laments his absence. Zhiyi and Shunryu Suzuki emphasize the pivotal role of the sambhogakaya, whereas for Nichiren the long-lived Ssakya-muni of the *Lotus Sutra* as the dharmakaya is more central. The ultimate reality body may also be seen as primary for Zhanran.

Not all of these themes will emerge as strongly in Doagen's interpretations of chapters 15 and 16, but we can see these as an interpretive context.
Dogen’s Interpretations

of This Lotus Sutra Story

Dogen quotes the *Lotus Sutra* more by far than any other sutra, and with unsurpassed veneration. In the *Shōbōgenzō (True Dharma Eye Treasury)* essay "Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures" ("Kie Bupposo-ho"), he quotes a passage from the closing verse of chapter 16 about how beings who are beset by their evil karma do not ever hear the name of the three treasures (buddha, Dharma, and sangha), whereas those who are virtuous, gentle, and upright see the Buddha's enduring presence on Vulture Peak. Immediately after quoting from chapter 16 about the Buddha's enduring life span, Dogen says that this *Lotus Sutra* is itself the single great cause for the appearance of buddha tathagatas, substituting the sutra itself for the intention to awaken all beings cited as the single great cause for buddhas in chapter 2 of the sutra. Then he declares that the *Lotus Sutra* "may be said to be the great king and the great master of all the various sutras that the Buddha Sakyamuni taught. Compared with this sutra, all the other sutras are merely its servants, its relatives, for it alone expounds the Truth." Among all of the numerous references to the *Lotus Sutra* in Dogen’s masterwork *Shobogenzo*, he refers in more of the essays to chapter 16 on the Buddha's life span than to any other chapter, with the exception of chapter 2 on skillful means. Dogen often mentions from the second chapter the one great cause for buddhas manifesting in the world: to lead beings into the path to awakening. He also frequently cites the chapter 2 statement "Only a buddha
together with a buddha can fathom the Reality of All Existence." He focuses on this saying in his Shobogenzo essay "Only Buddha and Buddha" ("Yuibutsu Yobutsu") as a support for the Zen face-to-face Dharma transmission tradition. The Lotus Sutra dedication to Sakyamuni Buddha also fits the main Buddha figure used in the Zen of Dogen, rather than the Buddhas Amida or Vairocana venerated in his contemporary Pure Land and Esoteric (and Kegon) movements. But perhaps most fundamentally, the significant presence of the Lotus Sutra in Dogen's teaching highlights the substantial foundation of Mahayana thought and practice underlying his worldview and teachings. The following discussion does not address Dogen's numerous references to upaya, or to many other sections of the Lotus Sutra, but focuses on his primary responses to chapters 15 and 16.

The Lotus Turning and Being Turned

In the essay in Shobogenzo that most directly and fully focuses on the Lotus Sutra, called "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" ("Hokke-Ten-Hokke") from 1241, Dogen celebrates the value of sutras while explicitly responding to the Zen axiom about sutra study that privileges direct mind-to-mind teaching above study of words and letters. The essay centers on a dialogue from the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Ancestor, Dajian Huineng (638-713; Daikan Eno in Japanese), who tells a monk who has memorized the Lotus Sutra that he does not understand the sutra. Huineng tells the monk, "When the mind is in delusion, the Flower of Dharma turns. When the mind is in realization [enlightenment], we turn the Flower of Dharma." Dogen clarifies how this story implies the necessity for an awakened hermeneutical approach to the active, practical applications of sutra study, rather than being caught by reified scriptural formulations.

Much of the essay involves intricate wordplay and discussion concerning the polarity of turning the Dharma flower, or else being turned by it, which Dogen eventually resolves in characteristically nondualistic fashion. In the conclusion he says that now that we have heard about this turning or being turned and "experienced the meeting of the ancient buddha with ancient buddhas, how could this not be a land of ancient buddhas? We should rejoice that the Dharma flower is turning from age to age, and the Dharma flower is turning from day to night, as the Dharma flower turns the ages and turns the days and nights." For Dogen, the reality of the Dharma flower and of the Buddha's enduring life span transforms the very earth and time itself. He ends the lengthy essay by proclaiming, "The reality that exists as it is... is profound, great, and everlasting [referencing the Buddha's life span], is mind in delusion, the Flower of Dharma turning, and is mind in realization, turning the Flower of Dharma, which is really just the Flower of Dharma turning the Flower of Dharma.... If perfect realization can be like this, the Flower of Dharma turns the Flower of Dharma. When we serve offerings to it, venerate, honor, and praise it like this, the Flower of Dharma is the Flower of Dharma."

In Dogen's reality, ultimately the Lotus turning the practitioner, as well as the practitioner turning the Lotus, are both simply instances of the Lotus Dharma turning the Lotus Dharma. The Dharma of the Lotus Sutra is simply nondual and wondrous. As Jikido Takasaki comments, "Without turning the Dharma flower there is no Dharma flower turning, as the Dharma flower turning then gives birth to the next turning of the Dharma flower. The single true matter transmitted in succession from the ancients in the remote past until long into distant future ages is the alternating interchange of turning the Dharma flower and the Dharma flower turning." In the light of the Lotus Sutra and Dogen's view of it, studying the sutra and personal experience of realization in practice are not contradictory, but mutually supporting, cooperative activities. The point of these activities, as indicated in chapter 2, is their liberative efficacy. Takasaki also notes, "The purpose of turning the Dharma flower is to turn the deluded mind into awakened mind. Without the deluded mind, both the Dharma flower turning and turning the Dharma flower are useless. Without turning the deluded mind into awakened mind, both [turnings] would be meaningless."

There is a traditional practice of ten, "turning" or "unfolding" the pages of a sutra, in which the pages are fanned from front to back as a symbolic reading and enactment of it. However, for Dogen it
is in the practitioners' appreciation and active expression of this nondual unfolding reality that the Dharma flower finds its true blossoming. I will return to such practice encouragement by Dogen toward the end of this chapter.

On the way to Dogen's nondual conclusion of "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," after the initial presentation of the Sixth Ancestor's story, Dogen presents an extended section on how "the mind in delusion, the Flower of Dharma turns" the practitioner. For Dogen it is necessary to equally study the Dharma flower turning as well as one's turning of the Dharma flower. Genryu Kagamishima comments, "There is no way to be released from the deluded mind other than penetrating through deluded mind." Dogen finally expresses his nondualism, and offers deep consolation, by saying that being turned by the Dharma flower is also part of the One Vehicle, so "do not worry about the mind being deluded."

This section on the deluded mind is followed by an extended section on "the mind in realization, we turn the Flower of Dharma," near the beginning of which is a substantial reference to and comment on chapters 15 and 16, which I discuss below in a variety of contexts. It begins:

The multitudes of the thousandfold world that spring out of the earth have long been great honored saints of the flower of Dharma but they spring out of the earth being turned by circumstances. In turning the Flower of Dharma we should not only realize springing out of the earth; in turning the Flower of Dharma we should also realize springing out of space. We should know with the Buddha's wisdom not only earth and space but also springing out of the Flower of Dharma itself. In general, in the Time of the Flower of Dharma, inevitably, the father is young and the son is old. It is neither that the son is not the son, nor that the father is not the father; we should just learn that the son is old and the father young. Do not imitate the disbelief of the world and be surprised. [Even] the disbelief of the world is the Time of the Flower of Dharma. This being so, in turning the Flower of Dharma we should realize the one Time in which the Buddha is living. Turned by disclosure, display, realization, and entering, we spring out of the earth; and turned by the Buddha's wisdom, we spring out of the earth.

In this passage, which well illustrates Dogen's characteristic style of wordplay in examining texts, he discusses the significance of bodhisattvas springing out of the earth and the time of the Buddha's inconceivable life span. He first points out that the veteran underground bodhisattvas "spring out of the earth being turned by circumstances." That is to say, they spring out of the ground in response to circumstances, to karmic causes and conditions, to the needs of suffering beings, and, in this case, to the need of Buddha.

One implied meaning of this Lotus Sutra ground for Dogen is thus the conditioned reality of this present space, as in Dogen's frequent teaching about the value to practice of abiding in, or totally exerting, one's own Dharma position (ho-i, ;^i 個位), which is the totality of the present circumstances, including the multiplicity of effects of previous causes and conditions. Hee-Jin Kim states, "What makes a particular position of time a Dharma-position is the appropriation of these particularities in such a manner that they are seen nondualistically in and through the mediation of emptiness. As such, the significance of the existential qualities and phenomenalities of things and events is by no means minimized." For Dogen, the ultimate emptiness or impermanence of all things and events does not diminish the need to fully engage in practice the present particulars of the conditioned world. And there is no place or time other than this current, impermanent Dharma position in which to enact this practice. Dogen often emphasizes ordinary, everyday reality, such as the activities of daily monastic practice, as the locus of awakening and of the sacred and the importance of not seeking liberation outside of the grounding of immediate everyday circumstances.

The Lotus Land's Dharma Position

This ground of our everyday Dharma position, and the earth from which the bodhisattvas emerge, also exemplify the practical importance for Dogen of the Buddha land, the earth itself. In Dharma hall discourse 269 from 1248 in Eihei Kōroku, Dogen's other major masterwork, with shorter, more personal talks to his trainees than those in Shōbōgenzō, he says, "The Buddha of the
land pervades the body and is the entire body. The lands of the Buddha are the suchness of reality, and their non-suchness.17

In traditional Mahayana Buddhism, when a buddha awakens, the world around that buddha is constellated as a buddha field (ksetra in Sanskrit), and the land itself is purified and illuminated.18 As Etienne Lamotte describes it, "The buddhaksetra is the fruit of the great compassion (mahakaruna) of the Buddha, who, in a given field, undertakes to do Buddha deeds (buddhakarya), that is, to cause beings to 'ripen' (paripacana) by developing in them the three 'good roots' (kusalamUla), absence of greed (alobha), of hatred (advesa) and of confusion (amoha)."19 Dogen uses the story of the bodhisattvas from under the ground as an image to express and develop his own understanding of the buddha land, which we saw in the first chapter in his early 1231 writing, "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendowa"), now considered part of ShObOgenzO, where he says that when one person fully performs zazen, "all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment."20

In Dharma hall discourse 91 from 1241 in Eihei KOroku, Dogen speaks poetically of the spiritual fertility of the earth when all beings abide in their Dharma positions with the Buddha's enduring presence. He begins by quoting Sakyamuni Buddha from chapter 16 of the sutra: "Since I attained budd-dhahood, I always remain here expounding Dharma."21 He concludes:

All dharmas dwell in their Dharma positions; forms in the world are always present. Wild geese return to the [north] woods, and orioles appear [in early spring]. Not having attained suchness, already suchness is attained. Already having attained suchness, how is it?

After a pause Dogen said: In the third month of spring, fruits are full on the Bodhi tree. One night the blossom opens and the world is fragrant.22

With the Buddha abiding in this world, the suchness of all things can blossom and be realized by all beings.

On hearing this particular Dharma hall discourse given to his assembled monks in 1241 in Kyoto—with its grounding of proclamation of the ultimate suchness of Buddha's awakening right within the concrete, natural expressions of this land and earth—one of Dogen's major disciples, Tettsu Gikai (1219-1309), is said to have had his first major experience of awakening.23 Gikai went on to become Dogen's second-generation successor as abbot at Eiheiji after Koun Ejo (1198-1280). After Dogen's death, Gikai himself traveled to China to learn more about Chan monastic forms, and he was instrumental in spreading Soto Zen in Japan, along with his own successor, Keizan Jokin (1264-1325).24 This 1241 Dharma hall discourse's inspiration for Gikai exemplifies the fertility of Dogen's expression of the awakened earth.

The Grounding of Space

In the passage quoted earlier from "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," Dogen compares the springing out of the earth by the bodhisattvas to springing out of space: "We should not only realize springing out of the earth; in turning the Flower of Dharma we should also realize springing out of space." Here Dogen implies a correlation between earth and space. Indeed, a number of his references to space contain the use of earth imagery to signify spatial dimension. A significant example, mentioned just above, is the "Self-Fulfillment Samadhi" (jijuyU zanmai) section of Dogen's important early writing, "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way," in which he describes the enlightenment of space itself. In explicating this declaration of the awakening of space itself, he identifies the earth with the whole of space and all the things that are space: grasses, trees, fences, and so forth: "At this time, because earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions carry out buddha-work, therefore everyone receives the benefit of wind and water movement caused by this functioning, and all are imperceptibly helped by the wondrous and incomprehensible influence of buddha to actualize the enlightenment at hand."25 All the elements or forms of the earth and space themselves "carry out buddha-work" as partners in the beneficial process of actualizing enlightenment.
In the 1245 *Shobogenzo* essay "Space" ("Koku"), Dogen further clarifies that space is not an empty container, the absence of forms, nor the air between things; rather, space is things themselves, as just elaborated in "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way," where "grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions" are exactly space.  

Dogen begins his "Space" essay with a story about two Chinese Zen masters, Shigong Huizang (n.d.; Shakkyo Ezo in Japanese) and his younger Dharma brother, Xitang Zhizang (735-814; Seido Chizo in Japanese). Shigong asked, "Do you know how to grasp space?"

The younger brother, Zhizang, said, "Yes I do."

Shigong asked, "How do you grasp it?"

Zhizang stroked the air with his hand.

Shigong said, "You don't know how to grasp space."

Zhizang asked, "How do you grasp it, older brother?"

Shigong grasped his younger brother's nose and yanked. The Chinese might even be rendered that he stuck his finger in the younger brother's nostril before pulling.

Either way, Zhizang yelled in pain, "You're killing me! You tried to pull my nose off!"

Shigong declared, "You can grasp it now!"

One common idea of space is as a kind of empty container, just as our conventional idea of time, disputed by Dogen in the 1240 *ShobOgenzO* essay "Being Time" ("Uji"), is of an objective temporal container. But for Dogen, space is form itself. Space is the nostril, and the nose around it. Dogen says, "Space is one ball that bounces here and there."

About Shigong saying "You can grasp it now," Dogen says, "It is not that space and other space reached out together with one hand. No effort was needed for grasping space. There is no gap in the entire world to let space in, but this story has been a peal of thunder in space." He adds, "You have some understanding of grasping space. Even if you have a good finger to grasp space, you should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors' endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space."  

This "killing space and giving life to space" is a recurring theme in Dogen's writings about the nature of space. Space is not just the air between things; space is things themselves. Until his nose was pulled, Zhizang apparently thought that space was just the empty air. With the immediacy of experience of his own painful nose space, the reality of space could finally be grasped. For Dogen, space is not an abstraction, but is concretely physical, and not at all apart from the dynamic effort of aspiration and practice. Giving life to space involves, first of all, recognizing its omnipresence and potential impact right in the forms we engage.

In "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," after relating earth and space as the source from whence the bodhisattvas emerge, Dogen adds, "We should know with the Buddha's wisdom not only earth and space but also springing out of the Flower of Dharma itself." The correlation of earth and space is here described as the context for emergence from the *Lotus Sutra* itself. This correspondence represents for Dogen the awakened realm as nondual-istically present right in the ground of this conditioned world.

A further passage about space in this section reads, "Vulture Peak [where the *Lotus Sutra* was preached] exists inside the stupa and the treasure stupa exists on Vulture Peak." This is a reference to the story in the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 11, of the ancient Buddha Prabhutaratna, who appears in his stupa hanging in midair above Vulture Peak. He comes to hear Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha of this age, preach the *Lotus Sutra*. But it is also said that this ancient buddha always appears in his stupa whenever this *Lotus Sutra* is being expounded, thereby demonstrating the self-referential aspect of the sutra discussed in chapter 2. Dogen says about the appearance of this stupa, "The treasure stupa is a treasure stupa in space, and space makes space for the treasure stupa. By saying "Space makes space for the treasure stupa"
ancient Buddha, Dogen again indicates that space is not just an object in a dead, objective world. The space that makes space is a lively, active agent, and here it is especially celebrated right in the space in which the Lotus Sutra is expounded.

The Form of Space as the Flowering of Emptiness

A line in a verse section of chapter 15 about the realm from whence the underground bodhisattvas emerge reads, "In the under side, in open space, they dwell" (Dogen says in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," "The meaning of this downward direction [under side] is exactly the inside of space."

He continues: "This downward, and this space, are just the turning of the Flower of Dharma and are just the lifetime of the Buddha. We should realize, in turning the Flower of Dharma, that the Buddha's lifetime, the Flower of Dharma, the world of Dharma, and the wholehearted state, are realized as downward, and also realized as space. Thus downward-space describes just the realization of turning the Flower of Dharma." Here Dogen explicitly emphasizes that the open space below the ground, where the underground bodhisattvas dwell, is itself the realization of the Lotus Sutra and of the life span of the Buddha. For Dogen the realization is both specific, this place down here, and inclusive, as all space.

In this section of the essay, Dogen also clarifies that in his discussion of earth and space he is interpreting the Lotus Sutra by characteristically indulging in a significant pun, using the double meaning of ku (空) as both space and emptiness. Soon after affirming the open space underground as the realization of the Lotus Sutra and as the life span of Buddha, he refers to the famous "Heart Sutra" passage, when he states, "There is turning the Lotus of 'Form is exactly emptiness,' and turning the Lotus of 'Emptiness is exactly form.'" The character ku that is translated as "space" can also be translated as "emptiness." It is the same character used for "emptiness" in the "Heart Sutra" passage that reads in Sino-Japanese, "Shiki fu i ku, ku fu i shiki. Shiki soku ze ku, ku soku ze shiki," meaning, "Form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is exactly emptiness, emptiness itself form." Though "emptiness" in that statement is ku, in the contexts discussed here from the Lotus Sutra chapter 15 and in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," it means simply "space," but with the other meaning acknowledged as an overtone.

Thus Dogen explicitly recognizes the bodhisattvas' underground open "space" as also emptiness, or sunyata. This verifies the immanence of the emptiness, or the insubstantiality of all existents, within the ground of earth/ space, and the empty nature of all the forms that compose earth and space. This ku is also the second of the two characters in "Koku," translated as "Space," the Shobogenzo essay featuring the story about grasping the nose as space. (The first character of Koku, ko, means "vacant" or "empty.") When he uses this character ku, sometimes in context Dogen is clearly talking about space, about spatial dimensionality, or simply about the sky. But often he is simultaneously providing a teaching about emptiness.

By recognizing the Lotus Sutra space under the ground as, in part, a metaphor for emptiness, Dogen implies the study of emptiness as the study that activates the Lotus Sutra underground bodhisattvas. By encouraging the realization that, "in turning the Flower of Dharma ... the Flower of Dharma ... is realized as downward [within the ground], and also realized as space [or emptiness]," he indicates the importance of his practitioner audience's own realization of the bodhisattvas as emerging from space, and also from emptiness.

Dogen verifies the study of emptiness (or space) as the study that impels the bodhisattvas. The emergence from the Lotus Sutra itself is described as seeing the identity of earth and space, which could represent the immanence of emptiness and of the awakened realm as nondualistically present right in the ground of this world of particulars. The view of the earth or ground implied by Dogen in these meanings provides a distinctly different, positive view of the earth from the negative interpretation of this earth as an obstacle, which had been given by Daosheng in China, with the obstruction to awakening from the earth's dust or sense objects.

It may be noted that Dogen's interpretation of the open space under the ground of the emerging bodhisattvas as, in part, related to emptiness teaching is not orthodox to Lotus Sutra teaching. Gene Reeves comments:

Some interpreters of the Lotus Sutra may prefer to think that this use of the idea of a space below the earth is really a symbolic reference to the popular Mahayana Buddhist idea of emptiness.
They could be right about this. But the *Lotus Sutra* is not much concerned with the term "emptiness," using it in a positive sense only very few times. So it seems to be unlikely that it is what is behind this story. What this story wants to affirm, I believe, is not the reality of emptiness, but the reality and importance of this world, this world of suffering, a world that is, after all, Shakyamuni Buddha's world.\(^{35}\)

Reeves is quite correct that the *Lotus Sutra* itself is not concerned with emptiness teaching, nor are most of its traditional followers. But there is no question that Dogen himself was playing with that meaning of ku, as evidenced, for example, by his reference to the "Heart Sutra" and in the "Flowers of Space" ("Kuge") essay, discussed next. But Reeves is also certainly accurate that the main import of this story, for the sutra itself but also for Dogen, as we will see, is "the reality and importance of this world, this world of suffering ... Shakyamuni Buddha's world."

The double meaning of ku (空) as both space and emptiness is featured elsewhere in Dogen's writings. A prominent example is his 1243 *Shobogenzo* essay "Flowers of Space" ("Ruge"), which might be read as "Flowers in the Sky" (as ku can equally mean sky) and also as "Flowers of Emptiness" or the "Flowering of Space" or "Flowering of Emptiness," depending on the context in various parts of the essay.\(^{36}\) There, too, Dogen gives a positive spin to space, although the phrase huge is usually a negative image for delusory obstructions. The essay circles around a quote from the *Surangama Sutra* in which Sakyamuni Buddha says, "It is like a person who has clouded eyes, seeing flowers in space. If the sickness of clouded eyes is cured, flowers vanish in space."\(^{37}\) The conventional Buddhist understanding of this statement is that our eyes are clouded by our karmic obstructions, so we do not see clearly. We see flowers in the sky, which is also a common idiom for cataracts. With cataracts we cannot see clearly because of the veils over our eyes, and we see delusory flowers in the sky, or in space.

Flowers in space, or the flowering of emptiness, also might easily be interpreted as Dogen referring to the flowering of Dharma in the *Lotus Sutra*. The *Lotus Sutra* is most often called the *Hohke-hyO* in Japanese, which more literally and appropriately would be translated as the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.\(^{38}\) So the key phrase and title of this essay "Flowers of Space" might well include the connotation of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* in the sky. Indeed, the whole middle of the sutra after the appearance in chapter 11 of the stūpa of the Buddha Prabhutaratna that emerges from the earth and floats in midair, including chapters 15 and 16 and through the remaining presence of the underground bodhisattvas up through chapter 22, is commonly referred to as "the assembly in the sky." Thus the main image in the essay "Flowers of Space" refers to flowers and the flowering of sky, space, and emptiness, with all those overtones, and also includes the sutra of the Dharma flower, or lotus. The essay cannot be fully translated with any one of these readings alone.

That Dogen had the *Lotus Sutra* in mind as he wrote "Flowers of Space" is evidenced when he quotes chapter 16 of the sutra. After saying that nirvana and life and death are simply the flowering of space (or perhaps the Lotus flower of space), he cites Sakyamuni: "It is best to see the triple world as the triple world." This occurs in the sutra when Sakyamuni avows to his startled disciples that he is speaking the truth about his inconceivable life span.\(^{39}\) This implies (among other possible interpretations; see note) appreciation of the space of the triple world and its suchness, seen exactly as flowers in the sky or the flowering of space.

Dogen's comments throughout this essay characteristically turn upside-down the conventional understanding that flowers in space are obstructions like cataracts that block our clear seeing. Near the beginning, before citing the passage from the *Surangama Sutra*, he says:

> There are the flowers in space of which the World-Honored One speaks. Yet people of small knowledge and small experience do not know of the colors, brightness, petals, and flowers of flowers in space, and they can scarcely even hear the words, "flowers in space." Remember, in Buddhism there is talk of flowers in space. In non-Buddhism, they do not even know, much less understand, this talk of flowers in space. Only the buddhas and ancestors know the blooming and falling of flowers in space and flowers on the ground, only they know the blooming and falling of flowers in the world, only they know that flowers in space, flowers on the ground, and flowers in the world are sutras. This is the standard for learning the state of buddha, because flowers in space are the vehicle upon which
Although flowers in space are conventionally an image of delusion and nonreality, Dogen affirms that all the buddhas' teachings and sutras are flowers in space, or more positively, the flowering of space, and of the ground and the world. The supposedly illusory space flowers are exactly where buddhas teach: "the vehicle upon which the buddhas ride." And also the Buddhist scriptures are flowers of space. This seeming paradox is in full accord with the Mahayana principle, enunciated in Lotus Sutra chapter 2, of buddhas appearing precisely for the sake of awakening beings from the delusions and afflictions of the mundane world.

Doagen turns the conventional image for delusion totally upside down: "Bodhi, nirvana, the Dharma-body, selfhood, and so on, are two or three petals of five petals opened by a flower in space." Then he quotes Sakyamuni Buddha saying, "It is like a person who has clouded eyes seeing flowers in space; if the sickness of clouded eyes is cured, flowers vanish in space."

Dogen says, "Because [scholars] do not know flowers in space, they do not know a person who has clouded eyes, do not see a person who has clouded eyes, do not meet a person who has clouded eyes, and do not become a person who has clouded eyes. Through meeting a person who has clouded eyes, we should know flowers in space and should see flowers in space. When we have seen flowers in space, we can also see flowers vanish in space." He is talking not just about space, but about the "flowering of space," and of the Dharma. Zazen and the whole Buddhist project is simply a flower in space and the flowering of space, or the Dharma flower vanishing into space. This is typical of Doagen's sense of humor and his play with his readers' usual understandings, even the usual understandings of Buddhist scholars and teachers. It is exactly amid space flowering that buddhas awaken and produce more space flowers.

Dogen here profoundly reaffirms the reality of nonduality. Usually non-duality is considered opposed to duality, to be about transcending duality and discriminating mind, seeing through the dualities of form and emptiness, this and that, good and bad, right and wrong, all of the conventional dualistic illusions. But in his discussion of the flowers of space, he is clearly talking about the nonduality of duality and nonduality, not about merely transcending the duality of form and emptiness. This deeper nonduality is not the opposite of duality, but the synthesis of duality and nonduality, with both included and both seen as ultimately not separate, but integrated. In the flowering of space of the buddhas' teaching, "space" is our activity and life, the dialectical synthesis of form and emptiness.

Dogen proclaims in "Flowers of Space," "People who understand that flowers in space are not real but other flowers are real are people who have not seen or heard the Buddha's teaching." He is saying yes to everything, and cutting through duality and nonduality, to point to the ontological and cosmological awakening of the natural world and the impact of space itself.

Dogen ends the "Flowers of Space" essay by bringing the flowers in the sky, seen as the nondual flowering of space and emptiness, back together with the emergence of the Lotus Sutra bodhisattvas from the ground (although he does not speak of those bodhisattvas explicitly). He quotes a Chinese master who said that the flowering of space emerges from the ground. Dogen complains that ordinary teachers, "when discussing flowers in space as 'flowers of emptiness,' speak only of arising in emptiness and passing into emptiness. None has understood reliance on space; how much less could any understand reliance on the ground." Dogen here proclaims space and the ground as significant, reliable sources for the work of awakening. "Flowers of Space" ends with the statement, "The flowering of space exists based on emerging from the earth, and the whole of earth exists based on the opening of flowers. Please know that the flowers of space cause both the earth and space to unfold." 

The Bodhisattva Leap within the Grounds

Dogen does not quite make the following connecting pun explicit, but it will help elucidate the conclusion to "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower." As Ricoeur suggests, we might
further follow Dogen's hermeneutic lead in creative interpretation, his active turning of the Dharma Flower through playful pursuit of metaphors. Thus we may follow the double meaning of ku (池) as "space" and "emptiness," and note that the "ground," chi (池), in the "open space under the ground," is also the Chinese character used for bhUmi, the Sanskrit word for the stages or grounds in the system of the ten stages of bodhisattva development, as expressed in the Dasabhumika Sutra. This would imply that the underground bodhisattvas in chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra emerge through their immediate insight into the emptiness of all bhums, or stages. These bodhisattvas, diligently practicing in the open space, or with the emptiness, under or within the ground, would thus be ever ready to immediately emerge and benefit beings in any future evil age. This is so thanks to their seeing into the ultimate emptiness of all systems of progressive cultivation and the unmediated emptiness of any and each particular stage or position in such systems, even while they might be fully engaging the practices at some particular stage.

Springing forth from the "open space under the ground" could be glossed linguistically as the leap "from the space of emptiness inside the bhumis." This reading is congruent with the recent interpretation of the Lotus Sutra by Jan Nattier (mentioned in chapter 1), based on writings by Karl Potter about Indian approaches to the spiritual path characterized as "leap philosophies" and "progress philosophies." Nattier theorizes that the Lotus Sutra embodies the leap that characterizes most East Asian Mahayana philosophy, as opposed to the myriad lifetimes of self-sacrificing practice accepted by much of Indo-Tibetan Mahayana practice and its gradual "progress" philosophy of the spiritual path.

The interpretation of the abode of the underground bodhisattvas as the emptiness underlying all stages implies that this story embodies the leap out of the realm of systematized stages of accomplishment in practice, based on insight into the fundamental emptiness of all the stages and of all specific sites or grounds. This reading and interpretation also accounts for the startling "otherness" to the members of the Buddha's regular assembly of the bodhisattvas springing out from under the ground.

Nattier describes a modern reenactment of the Lotus Sutra disciples' consternation in chapter 15 in a class she taught at Indiana University that included the Lotus Sutra. One of the students was a young, accomplished Tibetan monk, holder of a Geshe degree, the monastic equivalent to a doctorate, who was steeped in the teachings of the long lifetimes of practice necessary to the bodhisattva path. But he was unfamiliar with the Lotus Sutra, which is not studied much in Tibetan Buddhism. He became baffled, even shocked, as they went over the Lotus Sutra text in class. Finally, one day in class after examining "promises that even a child who makes an offering to the Buddha will become enlightened, and the exhortations to put one's faith in the sutra itself—he simply shook his head in amazement and exclaimed, 'I can't believe the Buddha would say such things!'"

Recalling Ricoeur's sense of metaphor as a basis for interpretation, the Lotus Sutra story's initial image of bodhisattvas emerging from the open space under the ground can be read as a metaphor for the spiritual leap out of the emptiness inherent in all positions on the spiritual path. Based on their insight into emptiness, and into the total and mutual interconnectedness of all particulars, the story is claiming that the bodhisattvas can leap free from any stage or ground of being into the possibility of buddhahood in this body and mind. The teaching of attaining buddhahood in this very body and mind, sokushin jObutsu in Japanese, was espoused by great Japanese Buddhist religious founders such as Saicho, Kukai, and Nichiren, all influenced by the Lotus Sutra. Dogen clarifies his understanding as sokushin zebyutsu, this very body and mind as buddha, letting go of ideals of attainment.

The Lotus Sutra thus can be seen as the dividing line in Buddhist history and theology between a praxis of long rigorous cultivation, as for example in much of Tibetan Mahayana practice, and the possibility of a praxis based on the leap into the underlying omnipresent awakening. Through the use of wordplay as espoused by Ricoeur, the underground bodhisattvas' emergence can be interpreted as the metaphoric image of this divide and opening.

Thus the scene at the beginning of chapter 15, and the emergence of the innumerable bodhisattvas, aptly coincides with the juncture in the Lotus Sutra that has been considered the commencement of the sutra's "fruit" of the practice and the "origin teaching," dating back to Daosheng and Zhiyi. Such a leap out of lifetimes of practice through insight into emptiness certainly matches Dogen's statement near the conclusion to "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower,"
which celebrates the ultimate nonduality of being turned by the Dharma Flower or turning the Dharma Flower, "which is really just the Flower of Dharma turning the Flower of Dharma." Dogen expresses that conclusion right after clarifying that the reality of the Lotus teaching is not bound by the traditional lifetimes and stages of practice: "Do not see this turning the Flower of Dharma only as the bodhisattva-way practiced in the past.... How joyful it is! From kalpa to kalpa is the Flower of Dharma, and from noon to night is the Flower of Dharma. Because the Flower of Dharma is from noon to night, even though our own body-and-mind grows strong and grows weak, it is just the Flower of Dharma itself." Here Dogen proclaims how the Dharma flower simply can be constantly celebrated, regardless of, and right in the midst of, the flow of conditions and throughout the variety of practice approaches. But along with Dogen's view of earth's spaciousness and emptiness, this conclusion obviously involves the dimension of time and its relationship to Buddha's enduring life span, to which we now turn.

The Inconceivable Life Span and Dogen Time

In the first passage cited earlier from "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," after referencing ground and space, Dogen turns to "the Time of the Flower of Dharma" and the revelation of the Buddha's vast life span as "the one Time in which the Buddha is living," a striking, evocative phrase. Referring to this ultimate time outside of our conventional time, and reaffirming Sakyamuni's teaching relationship to the underground bodhisattvas disclosed in the sutra, Dogen says that, "inevitably, the father is young and the son is old." Given his poetical style of rhetoric, Dogen's interpretations often require his readers' own reinterpretation. The father being younger than the son appears to be for Dogen an expression of the ephemeral and multidimensional aspect of time, hidden by our conventional time sense, and perhaps revealed by our shifting perspectives on time in time.

An example of this inevitable shift in temporal perspective may be seen in Bob Dylan's line about looking back at his own youth: "I was so much older then; I'm younger than that now." This open, multidirectional, ultimate Lotus Sutra buddha time, within which the variability of our own limited time frames are set, is important to Dogen, as in his injunction in the culmination of "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" passage, "We should realize the one Time in which the Buddha is living."

Dogen's view of time is most fully elaborated in his 1240 ShObOgenzO essay, "Being Time" ("Uji"), much celebrated in modern Dogen studies. This essay presents a complex vision of time as multidirectional, dynamic, and not separate from or independent of the actual existence, activity, and awareness of each particular being. "Being Time" does not directly cite the inconceivable life span from Lotus Sutra chapter 16. A full exploration of the complexity of Doegen's whole philosophy of time is not the point here, but Dogen's many references to Sakyamuni's inconceivable life span, and its sustained time frame as vitally present in the current time of wholehearted practice, are fully compatible and even illuminating of the quality of all time as present in the being-time that is expounded in "Being Time."

Doegen elaborates on the reference to young and old fathers and sons in another essay that focuses on the Lotus Sutra, his 1243 ShObOgenzO essay, "The Triple World Is Mind Only" ("Sangai-Yuishin"): "Sometimes a father is old and a child is young; sometimes a father is old and a child is old; and sometimes a father is young and a child is young. One who imitates the maturity of a father is not being a child, and one who does not pass through the immaturity of childhood will not be a father.... All such children—'my children' and 'childlike me's' [sic]—are true heirs of the compassionate father Sakyamuni.... The point of the Tathagata's words is only to speak of 'my children.' Here Dogen uses the time frame of Sakyamuni as teacher of the seemingly much older underground bodhisattvas to discuss the inclusion of all beings, regardless of their level of spiritual maturity, as children of the Buddha, and the potential of all beings as themselves developing buddhas.

Dogen discusses the Buddha's life span and the teaching of the venerable underground
bodhisattvas as children of Buddha not only in the realm of sutras, but he also applies it to the Zen transmitted lineage of buddha ancestors. The metaphor of all devotees and practitioners as Buddha's children is common in Buddhism, with the image of the Buddhist order as an alternative, other family. But Dogen characteristically gives it another turning. In his discussion of the document of heritage, shisho, used in the Zen Dharma transmission ceremony, Dogen says that the seven primordial buddhas inherited their Dharma from Sakyamuni, and quotes Sakyamuni as saying, "All buddhas of the past are disciples of myself, Shakyamuni Buddha."56

Here Dogen echoes the Lotus Sutra Sakyamuni Buddha by treating Sa-kyamuni as radically transcending time, in some sense preceding all other, including all earlier buddhas. And yet Dogen does not address this by employing a philosophical analysis of the Dharmakaya and other aspects of Buddha, as do Zhiyi and Nichiren (see chapter 3). After quoting Sakyamuni as saying that all buddhas of the past are his own disciples, Dogen simply proclaims, "The right form of all buddhas is like this. To see all buddhas, to inherit from all buddhas, to fulfill the way, is the buddha way of all buddhas."57 Thus for Dogen the bodies of buddhas of all times are informed by the inconceivability of the life span of Sakyamuni.

The Enduring Presence of Buddha

In the Shobogenzo essay "The Awesome Presence [or Dignified Manner] of Active Buddhas" ("Gyobutsu Igi") from 1241 (the year after "Being Time" and the same year as "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower"), Dogen discusses the igi (じい) the majestic, dignified, or awesome bearing, manner, or presence of buddhas active or actually practicing in the world. The character gyo (じょ, "active" or "practicing," describing these buddhas is the same used in the names of the leaders of the underground bodhisattvas who emerge in Lotus Sutra chapter 15: Superior Conduct, Boundless Conduct, Pure Conduct, and Steadfast Conduct ("conduct" is another meaning of gyo). So this essay, "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas," might be seen as describing the manner or deportment in which Sakyamuni Buddha and the underground bodhisattvas remain present and active in the world.

Near the beginning of "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" Dogen says, "Know that buddhas in the buddha way do not wait for awakening. Active buddhas alone fully experience the vital process on the path of going beyond buddha."58 Buddha remaining in the world does not wait passively for some future experience of buddhahood, but engages in awakening as an active process. "Buddha going beyond buddha" is an expression frequently used by Dogen to describe the vitality of ongoing awakening that is not looking back to some past experience or remembrance of a previous awakened state or being.59

Shortly after this passage, Dogen quotes Sakyamuni describing his long life span in chapter 16: "In the past I practiced the bodhisattva way, and so have attained this long lifespan, still now unexhausted, covering vast numbers of years." Dogen comments:

You should know that it is not that the lifespan of the bodhisattva has continued without end only until now or not that the lifespan of the Buddha has prevailed only in the past, but that what is called vast numbers is a total inclusive attainment. What is called still now is the total lifespan. Even if in the past I practiced is one solid piece of iron ten thousand miles long, it hurls away hundreds of years vertically and horizontally.

This being so, practice-realization is neither existence nor beyond existence. Practice-realization is not defiled. Although there are hundreds, thousands, and myriad [practice-realizations] in a place where there is no buddha and no person, practice-realization does not defile active buddhas.60

Dogen uses the story of the Buddha's life span to support his often expressed view of the immanent, pure unity of practice-realization. The inconceivable life span becomes a symbol for Dogen of the ongoing present being-time. This is not an abstract time frame belonging to an esoteric realm of buddhas, but a way of expressing Dogen's view of time as the actuality of nondual awakening and active practice in the concrete, present context.

Dogen refers to a story he cites frequently about the Chinese master Nanyue Huairang (677-
asserting to his teacher, the Sixth Ancestor Huineng (who is also featured in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower"), that practice-realization cannot be defiled. Huineng responds that this is exactly what is "attentively maintained by all buddhas," which Dogen equates in this essay with the awesome presence of the active buddha. Dogen then proclaims, "What is attentively maintained by active buddhas, and what is thoroughly mastered by active buddhas is like this.... Although the everyday activities of active buddhas invariably allow buddhas to practice, active buddhas allow everyday activities to practice. This is to abandon your body for dharma, to abandon dharma for your body. This is to give up holding back your life, to hold on fully to your life." The phrase "give up holding back your life" is from the closing verse of chapter 16 of the sutra when Sakyamuni says that for beings who are intent on seeing Buddha, not holding back or hesitating to even give their lives, then the Buddha and his assembly appear on Vulture Peak. For Dogen, the enduring life of Sakyamuni is realized by those who fully give their vitality to the everyday activities of buddhas' practice.

A little further in this lengthy essay, Dogen reaffirms the importance of the enduring presence and vitality of buddhas of the earth or land and of the Lotus Sutra, or the blossoming of lotuses themselves. He says, "That which allows one corner of a buddha's awesome presence is the entire universe, the entire earth, as well as the entirety of birth and death, coming and going, of innumerable lands, and lotus blossoms." Later in this essay he proclaims that buddhas do not appear only in human realms, but in other realms or worlds as well. He mentions a story that is attributed to his teacher, Tiantong Rujing (1163-1228; Tendo Nyojo in Japanese), that after Sakyamuni received transmission of the true Dharma from the prehistorical Buddha Kasyapa, Sakyamuni went to the Tusita Heaven to teach, and still abides there. Dogen comments, "Sakyamuni of the human realm spread the teaching through his manifestation of parinirvāna, but Sākya-kyamuni of the heavenly realm still abides there, teaching devas." This is an extraordinary claim in terms of conventional Mahayana mythology, and also an unusual, playful interpretation of the inconceivable life span in Lotus Sutra chapter 16.

In the usual Mahayana cosmology, all buddhas abide in the Tusita heavenly realm while they are waiting to take birth in the world as buddhas. At this time, in the current buddha field of Sakyamuni, the bodhisattva Maitreya, who is predicted to be born as the next future incarnate, nirmanakāya Buddha, is said to be sitting in the Tusita Heaven, waiting patiently for his chance at buddhahood as he contemplates how to save all suffering beings. Maitreya is also the figure in chapters 15 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra who questions Sakyamuni on behalf of all his regular disciples about the emerging underground bodhisattvas and about Sakyamuni's claims about his inconceivable life span. But in this comment in "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas," Dogen has Sakyamuni usurp Maitreya's place in Tusita Heaven, calmly abiding and teaching heavenly beings.

Dogen seems to imply that Sakyamuni has indeed passed away into parinirvāna in the human realm, his life span enduring only in the heavenly realm. But as the essay proceeds, Dogen proclaims that it is equally impossible with the limitations of either mere human or heavenly faculties to understand or "make calculations about the awesome presence of active buddhas." For the enduring, active Buddha, coming and going through the Tusita Heaven is no different from being immersed in the smelly defilements of the common world: "Active buddhas are free from obstruction as they penetrate the vital path of being splattered by mud and soaked in water." Later in this essay Dogen discusses the saying by Xuefeng Yicun (822-908; Seppo Gison in Japanese), "Buddhas in the past, present, and future abide in flames and turn the great dharma wheel," another image for the practice of buddhas immersed in the suffering of the world. Doagen comments, "Flames are the great practice place of all buddhas turning the dharma wheel." He adds, "If you try to assess this with the measurements of realms, times, human capacity, or ordinary or sacred, you cannot hit the mark.... As they are called all buddhas in the three times, they go beyond these measurements."

Dogen goes on to quote Sakyamuni from chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra: "To expound this Lotus Sutra is to see me." So those who sustain the expounding of the sutra are maintaining Buddha's life span. Then Doagen adds a following quote from the sutra: "After I pass away, to listen to and to accept this sutra, and to inquire into its meaning will be quite difficult." But in his "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" commentary, Doagen uses this quote to indicate that simply listening to
and accepting the sutra is sustaining Buddha's life span, equally to expounding the Dharma: "Know that it is equally difficult to listen to and accept this sutra. Expounding and listening are not a matter of superior or inferior. ... All buddhas of the three times remain and listen to dharma. As the fruit of buddhahood is already present, they do not listen to dharma to achieve buddhahood, [but] are already buddhas."\(^7\) So buddhas who are listening to the Dharma also "do not wait for awakening."

Near the end of this essay, Dogen offers a striking image for the persistence of the Buddha's teaching through time: "Although this moment is distant from the sages, you have encountered the transforming guidance of the spreading sky that can still be heard."\(^7\) Here he indicates the persisting of the Dharma in time as integrating with the pervading of "the spreading sky." So for Dogen the buddha nature of the sky, or space itself, offers "transforming guidance" throughout the vastness of time.

In 1250, nine years after writing "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" and "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas," Dogen gave a Dharma hall discourse, number 387, recorded in *Eihei Koroku*, that cites the same story about Huineng and the *Lotus Sutra* used in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" to strikingly emphasize the importance of the persisting presence of buddhas in the world. In this discourse, after citing the story about Huineng and the monk who had memorized the *Lotus Sutra*, Dogen quotes Huineng saying, "The essential point of this sutra concerns the causes and conditions for [buddhas] appearing in the world." Huineng's statement refers to the single great cause from chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*, that buddhas appear in order to lead beings to the way to awakening.

Dogen then declares, "I would say that the essential point of this sutra concerns all buddhas appearing in the world."\(^7\) This only subtly different statement emphasizes simply the importance of the fact of buddhas being present, appearing in the world, rather than the single great cause referred to by Huineng. For Dogen, this enduring presence of Buddha from the story of Buddha's inconceivable life span is exactly the point of the whole sutra. In this short Dharma hall discourse, Dogen then tells his monks not to say that his and Huineng's statements are the same, but also not to say that they are different.

Dogen Facing Buddha's Parinirvana

While Dogen utilizes the story of the Buddha's inconceivable life span to express his teaching, he simultaneously shares some of Myoe's mournful yearning for Sakyamuni, along with Saigyo's aesthetic celebration of Buddha's continuing presence in the wonders of the natural world (seen, for example, in the Dharma hall discourse above, which so moved Tettsu Gikai).

As throughout his more celebrated masterwork, *Shobogenzo*, Dogen references the *Lotus Sutra* very frequently in his other major work, *Eihei Koroku*, which consists in large part of his later teachings given in formal jodos while training his monk disciples at Eiheiji. Many of these Dharma hall discourses were given at ceremonial dates in the Buddhist calendar, including New Year's Day and the winter solstice, but also the traditional days for commemorating Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday and his passing away into parinirvana, known as Nirvana Day. In six of the seven Nirvana Day Dharma hall discourses that appear in *Eihei Kdroku*, Dogen either directly references the inconceivable life span story, or in some other way plays with the tension between his own sadness at the passing of Sakyamuni and his realization and creative interpretation of Sakyamuni as alive and present based on the *Lotus Sutra* story in chapter 16.

The yearning for Buddha, while still realizing Sakyamuni's abiding presence, is perhaps most poignantly expressed in Dharma hall discourse number 486 in 1252 (Dogen's last jodo for this event before he succumbed to his own final illness later that year). Dogen said, "This night Buddha entered nirvana under the twin sala trees, and yet it is said that he always abides on Vulture Peak. When can we meet our compassionate father? Alone and poor, we vainly remain in this world.... Amid love and yearning, what can this confused son do? I wish to stop these red tears, and join in wholesome action."\(^7\) Dogen knows that this "wholesome action" is itself one form of the continuing life of
Sakyamuni, but still he is sad.

In Dharma hall discourse number 367, given to commemorate Nirvana Day in 1250, Dogen said, "All beings are sad with longing, and their tears overflow. Although we trust his words that he always resides on Vulture Peak, how can we not be sorry about the coldness of the twin saala trees?" Doagen does not forget the enduring presence of the Buddha described in the *Lotus Sutra*, but he also honors the human sadness that Myoe had expressed.

In the Nirvana Day Dharma hall discourse number 146 from 1246, Dogen proclaims the identity of all buddhas and ancestors in and with Sakyamuni's passing away into parinirvana: "Now our original teacher, Great Master Sakyamuni, is passing away, entering nirvana. ... Why is this only about Sakyamuni Buddha? All buddhas in the ten directions in the past, future, and present enter nirvnaa tonight at midnight. ... Those who do not enter nirvnaa tonight at midnight are not buddha ancestors and are not capable of maintaining the teaching. Those who have already entered nirvnaa tonight at midnight are capable of maintaining the teaching." Here Dogen plays further with the story of Buddha's inconceivable life span by indicating that Buddha persists, with and as all buddhas, precisely in his passing away into parinirvana. The willingness to pass away for the sake of those who would benefit, or simply to face human mortality, is exactly Buddha's enduring life.

Here Dogen plays further with the story of Buddha's inconceivable life span by indicating that Buddha persists, with and as all buddhas, precisely in his passing away into parinirvana. The willingness to pass away for the sake of those who would benefit, or simply to face human mortality, is exactly Buddha's enduring life.

Later in this Dharma hall discourse, Dogen quotes chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra* directly: "With full exertion lift up this single stone, and call it the life-span of as many ages as the atoms in five hundred worlds." The image here is of a stone that is placed as one move in the game Go. Thus passing away is a simple skillful means of an inconceivably long-lived buddha, and simultaneously the full exertion of life and death.

The creative tension for Dogen between Buddha's historic absence and his spiritual presence, enduring by virtue of dedicated practice and herme-neutic insight, is apparent in all of the Nirvana Day jodos, but is perhaps most clearly articulated in Dharma hall discourse number 225 in 1247. Dogen says therein, "If you say Sakyamuni is extinguished you are not his disciple. If you say he is not extinguished, your words do not hit the mark. Having reached this day, how do you respond? Do you want to see the Tathagata's life vein? Offer incense, make prostrations, and return to the monks' hall [for meditation]." Dogen recognizes the same distance from the historical Sakyamuni in both space and time that Myoe feels. But Dogen has appropriated the *Lotus Sutra* story of emerging bodhisattvas and the long-lived Buddha to experience and express the awakening presence right in the practice within the space of his mountain monastery in thirteenth-century Echizen, Japan.

**The Emerging Bodhisattvas and the Life Span as Practice Encouragements**

A number of Dogen's references to chapter 16 show his interpretative play with the fundamental meaning of the persisting life span of the Buddha. The relatively brief 1244 *ShOObOgenzO* essay, "The Tathagata's Whole Body" ("Nyorai Zenshin"), describes the wholeness of the Buddha's body completely through the use of references to the *Lotus Sutra*. Dogen mentions the Buddha's life span after equating the sutra itself and the entire phenomenal world with the totality of the Buddha's body: "The sutra is the whole body of the Tathagata.... The mark of reality of all things in the present time is the sutra." Thus Dogen relates the sutra and the whole of reality itself to this enduring Sakyamuni, whose "life span resulting from the merits of the original bodhisattva practices is not limited in size by even such things as the size of the universe. It transcends this limit; it is limitless. This is the whole body of the Tathagata, it is this sutra.

One major significance of this long life span is that Buddha is still continuing his beneficial practice and teaching. Dogen immediately follows the preceding reference to the essence of the sutra (and reality itself) as Buddha's long life span with a quotation from the Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*: "For countless eons Sakyamuni has practiced difficult and painful practices, accumulated merits, and sought the Way of the bodhisattva, and thus even though he is now a Buddha, he still practices diligently." Dogen emphasizes the ongoing nature and power of the Buddha's practice together with his long life.

Historically, Sakyamuni Buddha continued his meditation practice after his complete awakening throughout his historical lifetime. But even now, Dogen implies, the Buddha's practice continues...
through his current followers, whose practice Dogen thus strongly encourages. His essay "The Tathāgata's Whole Body" concludes, "The long eons of difficult and painful practices are the activity of the womb of the Buddha.... When it is said that these practices have not ceased even for a second, it means that even though he is perfectly enlightened, he still practices vigorously, and he continues forever even though he converts the whole universe. This activity is the whole body of the Tathāgata." Dogen begins this passage by referring to the Tathāgata garbha, or womb of Buddha, discussed in chapter 2 as a hermeneutical standard for encouraging awakening practice. For Dogen the significance of the enduring Sakyamuni is not merely that Buddha is immanent in the world, but that his vigorous, inspiring practice continues and "converts the whole universe." This is description, but also prescription, and thus it is incumbent on Buddha's descendants, and Doagen's students, to continue Buddha's practice.

Dogen further turns the meaning of the Buddha's life span in the 1244 Shobogenzo essay "Awakening to the Bodhi-Mind" ("Hōtsu Bodaishin"), in which he discusses bodhicitta, the first arousal of the thought of universal awakening, which he considers of utmost importance, mysterious, and in some sense equivalent to a buddha's enlightenment. After quoting the Buddha's statement at the very end of chapter 16, "I have always given thought to how I could cause all creatures to enter the highest supreme Way and quickly become Buddhas," Dogen comments, "This [statement] is the Tathāgata's lifetime itself. Buddhas' establishment of the mind, training, and experience of the effect are all like this." For Dogen the inconceivable life span is exactly this intention to help all beings awaken, which mysteriously creates the ongoing life of the Buddha. As long as this vow and direction to universal awakening persists in the world and has the potential to spring forth in current practitioners, Doagen sees that the Buddha is alive.

Dogen again uses the teaching of Sakyamuni's life span as a direct incitement to wholehearted practice in the 1243 Shobogenzo essay "Meeting Buddha" ("Kenbutsu"), which includes several references to the Lotus Sutra. In one, Dogen quotes chapter 16's discussion of the Buddha's appearing to be born, awaken, and pass away as merely a skillful means, and the Buddha's statement that when beings with unified or "undivided mind, desire to meet buddha, without attaching to their own body and life," at that time he appears with the assembly at Vulture Peak and expounds the Lotus Sutra. Dogen comments, "When each present individual secretly arouses the desire to meet buddha, we are desiring to meet buddha through concentration of the Vulture Peak Mind. So the undivided mind is Vulture Peak itself. And how could the undivided body not appear together with the mind?"

Thus the whole of the Lotus Sutra and the inconceivable life span of Sakyamuni is also an embodiment of the wholehearted, single-minded practice Dogen advocates in his instructions for zazen, or sitting meditation. Throughout his references to the enduring Sakyamuni, Dogen uses the story as an encouragement to celebrate the importance of ongoing dedicated practice. In "Meeting Buddha" he equates the Buddha's extraordinary life span with the undivided wholeheartedness of single-minded practice. Rather than the Nichiren veneration of a symbolic object and mantra as an embodiment, Doagen promotes meditative practice as a physical, ritual enactment and expression of the enduring Buddha.

Doagen often emphasizes that the purpose of practice is not to obtain some future acquisition of awakening, but is the practice of enlightenment already present in the continuing presence of the living Buddha. His praxis of embodiment of awakening in this very body and mind, sokushin zebutsu, can be linked to his description of the enduring Sakyamuni as reality itself. Practice becomes the requisite ritual performance-enactment of an active faith in this awakened reality as already, and continually, being expressed and present in this conditioned world.

In Eihei Kōroku Dharma hall discourse number 182 from 1246, Dogen specifically cites the underground bodhisattvas in chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra, quoting Sakyamuni's saying that when they first saw his body and heard his teaching, they immediately accepted with faith and entered into the Tathaagata's wisdom. Doagen then comments, "Hearing the Buddha's teaching is like already seeing the Buddha's body. When one first sees the Buddha's body, one naturally is able to accept it and have faith, and enter the Tathaagata's wisdom. Furthermore, seeing Buddha's body with
your ears, hearing Buddha's preaching with your eyes, and similarly for all six sense objects, is also like entering and residing in Buddha's house, and entering buddhahood and arousing the vow, exactly the same as in the ancient vow, without any difference. Dogen uses the quote about the underground bodhisattvas' training and faith in Buddha to encourage faith and acceptance of Buddha wisdom in the actual experience of his own disciples. This implies that not only the Buddha's inconceivable life span, but also the enduring helpful work of the underground bodhisattvas in future ages are actually accomplished for Dogen through the dedicated practice of current practitioners.

In another reference to the Lotus Sutra bodhisattvas springing from underground, in his 1240 Shobogenzo essay "Sounds of the Valley Streams; Colors of the Mountains" ("Keisei Sanshoku"), Dogen discusses the searching for insight and guidance by beginning practitioners, who seek "to tread the path of the ancient saints. At this time, in visiting teachers and seeking the truth, there are mountains to climb and oceans to cross. While we are seeking a guiding teacher, or hoping to find a good spiritual friend, one comes down from the heavens, or springs out from the earth." He cites the bodhisattvas emerging from the ground as an encouragement, explicitly referring to the story's promise that these bodhisattvas will remain available to continue the Lotus teaching throughout the future. He furthermore indicates the presence of the underground bodhisattvas springing from the earth in the persons of present seekers and practitioners.

Dogen repeatedly uses the story of the bodhisattvas' emergence from the earth and Sakyamuni's ongoing presence as an encouragement to dedicated practice, equating the Buddha's extraordinary life span with the undivided wholeheartedness of single-minded practice in all aspects of everyday activity. Genryu Kagamishima comments that for Dogen, "The meaning of any distinction between the Lotus Sutra and all other things vanishes.... All other things become sutras whose purpose is to expound the ultimate truth of the Dharma flower [sutra]. [In order to expound the sutra,] the sounds of valley streams and the colors of mountains become the mountains and water sutra of the Dharma flower, drinking tea and eating rice become the tea-drinking sutra of the Dharma flower, [all] enjoying the transformative benefits of the Dharma flower." Dogen promotes meditative practice extending into all mundane functions as a physical, ritual embodiment and expression of this enduring Buddha. He also emphasizes that the purpose of practice is not to obtain some future acquisition of awakening, but is the practice of enlightenment already present in the continuing presence of the Buddha.

Conclusions: The Importance of the Story for Dogen

The profusion of Dogen's references to the Lotus Sutra and the story of the underground bodhisattvas and Sakyamuni's inconceivable life span expresses the importance to Dogen of the sutra and of this story. The examples explored, although hopefully providing a clear account of how Dogen uses this story to reflect his worldview, are very far from a complete catalogue of every one of his references to this story. Another reference to chapter 16, not discussed earlier because it does not relate to Dogen's worldview, is in the Shobogenzo essay "Home-leaving" ("Shukke"), written in 1246.

In 1243 Dogen left the Kyoto area and moved his community north to the remote mountains of Echizen Province (now Fukui). In 1244 he settled at Dabutsuji temple, which was renamed Eiheiji in 1246 and which remains one of the two headquarter temples of modern Soto Zen. Especially during the hardships of the first few years in Echizen, Dogen sought to encourage his monk disciples by stressing the significance of home leaving and monk ordination. In "Home-leaving" he quotes a passage from chapter 16 about the life span of Buddha in which Sakyamuni says that as an expedient means for beings of only slight virtue he recounts the conventional story of his life, including his home leaving. It is revealing of the great significance to Dogen of the story of Buddha's life span that even in this context, Dogen uses this quote to encourage home leaving to his monks.

It may be noted that the earlier citations to chapters 15 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra extend
throughout Dogen's teaching career, starting from "Sounds of the Valley Streams; Colors of the Mountains," written in 1240, and "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" and "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" in 1241 (1239 being the beginning of the five-year period during which more than 80 percent of the dated Shobogenzo essays were written).\(^92\) And, as has been discussed previously in this chapter and in chapter 1, Dogen's proclamation of the awakening capacity of earth and space dates back to 1231 and his earliest significant writing, "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way." His references to chapters 15 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra continue until the Eihei Kooroku Nirvana Day Dharma hall discourse from 1252, the last year of his dated writings, and the undated "Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures" ("Kie Bupposo-ho"), which is among the small number of Shobogenzo essays thought to have been written by Doagen in his last few years.

Many other instances demonstrate Doagen's high esteem for the Lotus Sutra. For a particularly significant example, in his mealtime liturgy Dogen took the step of adding in "the Mahayana, Wondrous Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra" to the traditional chanted "ten names of Buddha," along with the primary buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Chinese list, which included the Dharmakaaya, Sambhoghakaaya, Nirmaanakaaya, and next future Buddha Mai-treya, and the Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Samantabhadra, and Avalokitesvara.\(^93\) Furthermore, in one of his last poems, written in the remote mountains at Eiheiji temple, Doagen rejoices, "I always read the Lotus Blossom Sutra." This first of his "Fifteen Verses on Dwelling in the Mountains," verse 99 in the last volume of Eihei Kooroku, goes:

How delightful, mountain dwelling so solitary and tranquil. Because of this I always read the Lotus Blossom Sutra. With wholehearted vigor under trees, what is there to love or hate? How enviable; sound of evening rains in deep autumn.\(^94\)

A notable legend concerning the major role of the Lotus Sutra for Dogen in his own deathwatch is recorded in the Kenzeiki, one of the earlier biographies of Dogen (though not compiled until the fifteenth century, and not considered fully reliable by modern scholars). In this story, Dogen named the house where he died in Kyoto (which belonged to Kakunen, one of his major lay disciples who was caring for him) the "Lotus Sutra Hermitage" (Myo-an). He is said to have spent his last few days there doing walking meditation around a pillar while reciting a passage from chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Supernatural Powers of the Tathagata," which Sakyamuni addresses directly to the bodhisattvas who had emerged from under the ground in chapter 15.\(^95\) In this passage, the final sentences of the prose section before the final closing verse of the chapter, the Buddha says that wherever the sutra is kept, a stuapa should be erected and offerings given, and that in all these spaces buddhas awaken, turn the dharma wheel, and enter parinirvana.\(^96\)

We have seen that Dogen employs his creative hermeneutics to interpret the Lotus Sutra story of the bodhisattvas arising from under the ground and the consequent revelation of Sakyamuni Buddha's inconceivable life span as expressions and representations of the pervasion of the sacred and of the enduring capacity for awakening throughout space and time. In the writings of Dogen, the world expressed in the Lotus Sutra provides the context and import for bodhisattva practice. The open space of the realm of the underground bodhisattvas and the inconceivable life span of Buddha support a view of a present place and time that can function as a nondual and integrated realm of realization.

This world expressed by Doagen using these Lotus Sutra stories might be seen as a variety of Pure Land, somewhat comparable in function to his contemporaries' visions of exalted realms, depicted by Nenbutsu followers and in the Tendai hongaku, or fundamental enlightenment, teachings. However, it is not a realm or realization that can be automatically bestowed without the active involvement of the Buddhist devotee/practitioner. Rather, this realm is realized through the active practice propounded by Doagen, which is also the natural expression of his vision derived, at least to some substantial extent, from the Lotus Sutra.
Dogen's View of Earth, Space, and Time

Seen in Mahayana Context

In the spirit of Dogen's own hermeneutic play, this chapter explores the Mahayana context for the views of earth, space, and time arising from Dogen's references to the Lotus Sutra stories about the underground bodhisattvas' emergence and the Buddha's inconceivable life span. First, we again look at the practical importance of imagery in the Mahayana tradition, and for Dogen, and how it often supersedes theoretical philosophical discourse. Then we consider a range of images and stories related to earth, to space, and then to temporality from other Buddhist contexts, all of which were either directly or indirectly significant influences for Dogen. While Dogen himself expresses his worldview most fully through references to the Lotus Sutra, as we have seen, the milieu of Japanese Buddhism in which he lived and was trained offered a variety of available resources for creatively envisioning earth, space, and time.

The Function of Mahayana Imagery and the Emerging Bodhisattvas

In attempting to present and describe the Mahayana vision of earth and space, and then of time, which are implicit in Dogen's responses and in this pivotal Lotus Sutra story, it is not possible to reduce what is a complex, dynamic worldview to a single, static definition. Even if it were possible, from the explicit Mahayana priority...
of eliciting practical responses for encouraging active entry into the path toward awakening, simply deriving such neat definitions would not be constructive. This chapter accordingly portrays a multifaceted range of suggestive outlooks related to earth, space, and time from the Mahayana context.

From the perspective of the authors of the *Lotus Sutra* and of Dogen, the purpose of these cosmological views are not abstract, doctrinal, or philosophical, but rather practical and down to earth. Speaking as a *Lotus Sutra* scholar about the Buddha's inconceivable life span in chapter 16, Gene Reeves offers an interpretation of the meaning of the enduring Sakyamuni Buddha: "What does it mean to say that the Buddha is universal? Though some would take it to be so, this is not, I think, a metaphysical claim about some ultimate reality. ... The purpose of the Dharma ... is to lead people to act like buddhas, that is, to be doers of the bodhisattva way, and, in this sense, the wider purpose is to enable each of us to be the Buddha in the world for anyone to see."  Similar to this practical and liberative emphasis of the *Lotus Sutra*, Dogen also expressed his worldview for the purpose of religious practice rather than as a philosophical standpoint. As Hee-Jin Kim says in his excellent work introducing Dogen's thought and practice, "Dogen was a religious thinker, not merely or even primarily a philosopher. ... Dogen's most philosophic moments were permeated by his practical, religious concern, against the background of which his philosophic activities stand out most clearly in their truest significance. What Dogen presents to us is not a well-defined, well-knit philosophical system, but rather a loose nexus of exquisite mythopoeic imaginings and profound philosophic visions." Both Dogen and the *Lotus Sutra* are aiming at a praxis based on their multifaceted, lively worldview. The images and traditional contexts that follow are sources for the realms of earth, space, and time, which contribute to the evocative, imagistic worldview of Dogen and the *Lotus Sutra*. Such images and metaphors are the material of Dogen's "loose nexus of exquisite mythopoeic imaginings," and still may be relevant to the functioning of bodhisattva practice amid shifting contemporary concerns.

Before reviewing Dogen's perspectives on earth, space, and time inspired by the *Lotus Sutra* in the light of the importance and function of Mahayana imagery, it is helpful to revisit the impact of the striking story of myriad bodhisattvas springing forth from the open space under the ground.

The *Lotus Sutra* is especially noted among Buddhist texts for containing a great many remarkable images, some from its celebrated parables. These memorable images include the children reluctant to leave the burning house in chapter 3 of the sutra; the prodigal son unwilling to claim his birthright until after years of menial labor in chapter 4; the nourishing Dharma rain falling equally on all plants in chapter 5; in chapter 7 the illusory conjured city of nirvana as a halfway house on the road to universal liberation; a beggar unaware of a priceless jewel sewn into his clothing in chapter 8; the stupa of an ancient buddha floating in the sky over Vulture Peak in chapter 11; the eight-year-old daughter of a Naga king achieving buddhahood as quickly as Sakyamuni can accept her offering in chapter 12 (in the Kumarajiva version); as well as arresting images in the second, "original teaching" half of the sutra, such as the Bodhisattva Regarder of the World's Cries (Avalokiteshesvara) saving beings from a wide assortment of distresses in chapter 25 and the six-tusked magical white elephant of Samantabhadra in chapter 28. And yet, with all of these remarkable images, the vast numbers of bodhisattvas suddenly emerging from the earth in chapter 15 remains for me among the most intriguing images in the sutra.

As discussed more fully in chapter 2 of this work, scholars have begun to examine the uses of imagery in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. For such scholars, the practical import of images of earth, space, and time for Dogen, and for the *Lotus Sutra*, seems more relevant to their liberative function than any of their explicit doctrinal statements. We begin with exploring the role of imagery of earth in Buddhist teachings, followed by imagery of space and of time.

**Buddhist Earth Motifs: The Earth Witness Mudra and Earth Spirits**

The emergence of bodhisattvas from the earth recalls a number of other major Buddhist earth motifs. Each of these offers potential areas for further study. They are mentioned here briefly to
provide the context for the perspectives of Dogen and the *Lotus Sutra*. Primary to the story of Buddha's awakening is the image of the earth goddess said to have emerged from the ground to bear witness to Sakyamuni's buddhahood the night of his awakening under the bodhi tree. As the story goes, after trying various other methods of distraction, such as armies of attacking demons and seductive dancing girls, Maara, the spirit of temptation, attempted to unseat Sakyamuni by challenging his right to claim buddhahood. Thereupon Sakyamuni made the *mudra*, the gesture of touching the earth with the fingertips of his right hand (*bhumi sparsa mudra* in Sanskrit), which is a common iconographic feature of Sakyamuni images. In response, the earth itself, in some renditions personified as an earth goddess, testified to his buddhahood. John Strong says that in some versions of the story "the earth is actually personified as a great goddess, Stavara.

Emerging with the upper half of her body out of the ground, and accompanied by a whole throng of goddesses," she confirms the Buddha's awakening. According to another version of the legend, by this gesture Sakyamuni obliged the gods or spirits of the earth "to swear him eternal fidelity." But throughout Buddhism, the gesture of simply touching the earth has come to signify Buddha's awakening.

Dogen does not mention the earth-witness mudra directly in *Shobogenzo* or *Eihei Koroku*, and earth spirits or an earth goddess may seem alien to many Westerners' views of Zen and its practical meditation techniques. However, Dogen does honor earth spirits. In *Eihei Shingi*, the collection of Dogen's Chinese writings about monastic and community standards first published together in the seventeenth century, he encourages and emphasizes the importance of venerating the earth spirits. In "Pure Standards for the Temple Administrators" ("Chiji Shingi"), the largest section of *Eihei Shingi*, he discusses the responsibilities of the various monastic positions, including the garden manager: "Morning and evening in the vegetable garden [the garden manager] must offer incense, do prostrations, chant, and recite dedications to Ryuten and Doji, without ever becoming lazy or negligent." Ryuten (\.5^) is a heavenly spirit who helps manage weather conditions, essential to good harvests. Doji (\± t\j\f\), literally "lands" or "ground," is an earth protector spirit who watches over the monastic grounds and buildings.

It is noteworthy that there is no mention of any earth spirit in the parallel "Chief Gardener" or "Director of the Farming Village" sections of Dogen's primary Chinese Chan source for monastic regulations, which he frequently quotes verbatim, the *Chanyuan Qinggui* (Pure standards for the Chan garden; *Zen'en Shingi* in Japanese). So Dogen's reference to the earth spirit in this context may in part reflect native Japanese approaches to spirits, and to Ma-haayaana bodhisattvas and teachings as situated and available on the earth. Certainly there are ample connections in Japanese Soatoa lore between Doagen and native Japanese earth spirits, especially to the protector deity of Mount Hakusan near Doagen's temple Eiheiji. The Hakusan deity is said to have given a variety of aid to Dogen, including helping Dogen copy the entire *Blue Cliff Record* on the night before his departure from China for Japan.

In Japanese culture the *Lotus Sutra* has also been regarded as expressed in patterns on the earth itself. Allan Grapard, who has extensively studied East Asian sacred mountains, has shown how Buddhist teachings have been mapped onto landscape terrain. The Japanese volcano Futagoyama in Toyo-kuni Province, the original site of the Hachiman spirit in Kyushu, was considered to be a manifestation of the *Lotus Sutra* text, with its twenty-eight valleys correlated with the sutra's twenty-eight chapters, and its paths "lined with more than sixty thousand statues representing the total number of ideograms in the text." In this way the earth itself becomes the text, and walking its paths one sees the natural landscape as an experience of the *Lotus Sutra* teaching. Grapard expresses the view that at this site, "the mountains are the Lotus Sutra; they are the body of the Buddha; the world is the realm of Awakening."

The long connection between Dogen's Soto lineage and the Hakusan spirit near Eiheiji has even led to recent speculation that Dogen left Kyoto in 1243 to move to the remote northern Echizen region (where he founded Eiheiji) because of active support for him from Tendai Hakusan devotees in the Echizen area (rather than due to hostility or threats from the Kyoto religious establishment, the stereotypically speculated cause for his move). It is likely that the early Soto temples in the generations right after Dogen were intentionally built along geomantic lines in the earth associated with the Hakusan spirit. For example, the important early Soto temples Hokyoji in Echizen, founded by Dogen's disciple Jakuen (1207-1299), and the temples Yokoji and Sojiji founded by...
Keizan in nearby Noto Peninsula, were sited on geomantic lines associated with Mount Hakusan.\(^\text{14}\) Such attention to the earth may well reflect the enduring impact on his successors of Dogen's teachings about the earth.

The Earth Womb and Space Womb Bodhisattvas and the Tathagata garbha

Another major East Asian Mahayana earth motif appears in the figure of Jizo Bodhisattva (Ksitigarbha in Sanskrit; Dizang in Chinese), whose name means "Earth Womb" or "Earth Storehouse."\(^\text{15}\) Although not discussed directly by Doagen, this bodhisattva was a standard part of the Mahayana pantheon in Doagen's Kamakura period and remains among the most popular bodhisattva figure in Japan. Jizo is a protector whose vow to go down into the earth for the sake of beings in hell realms is described in the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*. In the sutra, four past lives of Jizo are related in which these previous persons vowed to alleviate the suffering of all beings in all six realms.\(^\text{16}\) In the two most extended stories, the former lives of Jizo are women who go down into hell realms to save their mothers, and thereby save many other suffering hell beings.\(^\text{17}\) As the Jizo figure has developed in popular folklore in China, and even more so in Japan, this bodhisattva functions archetypically as a witnessing presence, easing the suffering of those in hellish situations, or taking the place of those facing imminent threats.\(^\text{18}\) Close to the earth, Jizo is described as aiding farmers and other working people. He especially protects children and women and is a guide to all traveling in liminal, transitional spaces. Jizo's continuing popularity in Japan indicates the strong connection to the earth that endures in Mahayana imagination.

Jizo is closely related to Kokuzo Bodhisattva (Akasagarbha in Sanskrit; Xukongzang in Chinese), whose name means "Space Womb" or "Space Storehouse."\(^\text{19}\) In early Japanese Buddhism, visualization and mantra dedication to Kokuzoa were popular practices among mountain ascetics, and Kokuzoa was especially important in the early practice of the Shingon founder Kukai.\(^\text{20}\) Jizo and Kokuzoa images were sometimes enshrined together as bodhisattva attendants on either side of the Healing Buddha (Yakushi Nyorai in Japanese; Bhaisajyaguru in Sanskrit), the focus of chapter 23 of the *Lotus Sutra*. A prominent Heian-period example of such a triad is in the lecture hall of the Koryuji in Kyoto, best known for its famous image of the pensive Maitreya bodhi-sattva in its storehouse hall.

The relationship of Jizo and Kokuzo bodhisattvas implies a natural affinity between the earth and space elements in Japanese Mahayana imagery. The close correlation between earth and space in Dogen's references to the *Lotus Sutra* story may be seen as a further expression of this relationship. Kokuzo was a significant figure to Dogen's important disciple Tetsu Gikai, whose awakening experience after hearing a Dharma hall discourse from Doagen about the earth's fertility imbued with the universal was mentioned in the previous chapter. At the end of Gikai's journey to China to research Chinese monastic forms after Doagen's death, Gikai carved (or perhaps arranged to have carved) statues of Akasagarbha (Kokuzo) and Avalokitesvara to protect him on the return journey.\(^\text{21}\)

Gikai's successor, Keizan, who with his own successors popularized Soto Zen in the Japanese countryside, was also a devotee of Kokuzo.\(^\text{22}\) Keizan had a triad of Akasagarbha and Avalokitesvara images flanking Sakyamuni Buddha enshrined in his main temple, Yokoji.\(^\text{21}\) Such practices of Gikai, Keizan, and their successors usually have been attributed to Shingon influence and have sometimes been denigrated as departures from the "pure" zazen practice of Dogen.\(^\text{24}\) This characterization of Dogen misses the actuality of medieval Japanese Buddhism, with the persuasive influence of Esoteric mikkyo (Vajrayana) from both Shingon and Tendai, true for Doagen as well. But I suggest that the devotion of Gikai and Keizan to Kokuzo also reflects allegiance to Doagen's evocative teachings about space and their lingering impact.

The relationship of Ksitigarbha and Akasagarbha, the bodhisattvas of the earth womb and space womb, recall the Buddha womb, or Tathaagata garbha, discussed in chapter 2. According to this teaching, a buddha is a womb of embryonic buddha fields, and such an awakened land in turn becomes the womb of embryonic potential buddhas. This dynamic is clearly exemplified by Dogen in his early writing, "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendowa"), in which the person expressing buddha mudra and the earth and space itself are mutually, interactively supportive.\(^\text{25}\) As
Peter Gregory says, "Since the tathagata garbha is the enlightened wisdom of the Tathagata which exists embryonically in all sentient beings, the fact that it is also the ultimate ontological basis of reality [according to the Srimala Sutra] has important soteriological consequences. It means that the basis of Buddhist practice is grounded in the very structure of reality." In a similar interaction, the roles in the Mahayana of Ksitigarbha and Akasagarbha, earth womb and space womb, would seem to express and clarify facets of Tathaagata garbha. These figures imply the rich potentiality of the earth and of space to be wombs of buddhas, and in turn to be sacralized or celebrated as buddha fields by the awakening of buddhas, again, as expressed in Doagen's early teaching about the impact on the earth and on space itself of one person's zazen.

As mentioned in chapter 4, while discussing the image of "a space below the earth" in Lotus Sutra chapter 15, Gene Reeves emphasizes that "this story wants to affirm ... the reality and importance of this world, this world of suffering, a world that is, after all, Shakymuni Buddha's world." In his citations of the story of the emerging underground bodhisattvas, Dogen also affirms this world and the earth as receptive and supportive of the ever-present potential for awakening. As we have seen in many quotations from his "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" ("Hokke-Ten-Hokke") and elsewhere, Dogen connects the earth to his sense of space and its open spaciousness. For example, he says, "We should not only realize springing out of the earth; in turning the Flower of Dharma we should also realize springing out of space."

David McMahan explicates the relationship of space to the visionary aspect of Buddhist wisdom: "The ability of the visual system to apprehend vast areas, long distances, and many things simultaneously is often highlighted in Buddhist literature and associated with the sense of spaciousness. ... This sense of sight as capable of encompassing wide spaces and penetrating to the furthest depths of the cosmos is important to the development of the imagery of Mahayana sutras."

According to McMahan, in the Buddhist tradition, and especially the Mahaayaana, space often has been understood in the context of"far-seeing," and so also serves as an analogue to wisdom or liberation. Thus meditation on space may be employed as an entryway to awakening. In the early Buddhist Abhidharma teachings, space (akasa in Sanskrit) is one of the few unconditioned Dharmas, alongside nirvana itself: "The Abhidharmakosa describes it as that which does not impede and is unsupported by anything," McMahan describes the "primary symbolic force of space" as deriving from its vastness, formlessness, sameness, extension in all directions, and nonresistance, those aspects ofthe world "most akin to perfect, transcendent freedom as conceived in Buddhist thought."

Pursuing the metaphoric and symbolic richness of space in the Mahayana, McMahan notes, "The association of knowledge with space is one ofthe more interesting and quite neglected features of Buddhist discourse." Based on the "primary metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING, simply from a linguistic standpoint, connections between vision and space are apparent." McMahan relates the verb"locate" to the meanings "see," "know," and "perceive," and to the Sanskrit verb ioka, whose primary meaning is "free or open space." Concerning the rhetorical potentialities of space for Buddhist discourse, McMahan points out that the "etymological connection [of space] to light and vision is not overlooked by Buddhists, and it is sometimes said to shine brilliantly. Mahayaana texts are often less concerned than Abhidharma scholastics with systematic analysis of space and instead exploit the symbolic richness of the concept, making it one of the primary tropes for awakening and wisdom."

While Dogen uses his comments on the Lotus Sutra underground bodhi-sattvas as a primary referent to express his view of space, the full scope of Mahayana use of space as an image in various sutras, as described by McMahan, provides a context for Dogen's worldview of space. This creative use of space imagery includes some sources from Chan imagery. One of the foundational Chan koans involves the great Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897; Joshu Jiishin in Japanese), who asked his teacher Nanquan Puyuan (748-835; Nansen Fugan in Japanese) the fundamental question, "What is the Way (Dao)?"
Nanquan replied, "Ordinary (or everyday) mind is the Way." Zhaozhou asked, "How can it be approached?" Nanquan said, "The more you try to reach it, the further away you get."

Zhaozhou, a most discerning student, asked, "Then how do you know if it is the Way or not?"

Nanquan elaborated, "The Way is not a matter of knowing or not knowing. Knowing is an illusion; not knowing is vacancy. If you reach the true Way beyond doubt, it is vast and open as space."³³

Here space has qualities of wisdom, vastness, and openness, and so may be used to represent ultimate knowledge, as suggested by McMahan. But even more, for Nanquan space transcends all dichotomies of knowledge and ignorance. Zhaozhou is said to have awakened upon hearing this image of vast, open space superseding the characteristics of human cognition.

Dogen also heard this liberating reference to space. He included this dialogue as case 19 in his early collection of three hundred koans, without any of his own commentary, referred to as the Mana (or Shinji; i.e., Chinese) Shobogenzo.³⁴ This is a completely different work from his famed collection of essays called Shobogenzo, in which he does poetically and extensively elaborate on koans. He also comments on Nanquan's first response in this story in a variant (undated) version of the Shobogenzo essay "Going beyond Buddha" ("Bukkojoji").³⁵

The most important Caodong (Soto) lineage teacher in the century before Dogen was Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157; Wanshi Shogaku in Japanese), whom Dogen cites or refers to very frequently in Eihei Koroku.³⁶ In his practice instructions, Hongzhi says, "The essence is to empty and open out body and mind, as expansive as the great emptiness of space. Naturally in the entire territory all is satisfied. This strong spirit cannot be deterred; in event after event it cannot be confused."³⁷ Here is a model for engaging spaciousness in meditation and everyday practice that seems to inform the spacious aspect of Dogen's own teachings on practice as the present expression of awakening.

Dogen's Lotus View of Earth and Space Revisited

Having considered elements of the Mahayana context for envisioning earth and space, we now return to review the functional and practical import of some of Dogen's relevant comments on the Lotus Sutra story in chapters 15 and 16. In the conclusion of his 1241 Shobogenzo essay that most fully discusses the Lotus Sutra, "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," Dogen says that after discussing the teaching of the Sixth Ancestor, interpreted by Dogen as revealing the nondual Dharma flower turning the Dharma flower, now his assembly has "experienced the meeting of ancient buddha with ancient bud-dhas. So how could this not be a land of ancient buddhas?"³⁸ Dogen here indicates that study with the ancient buddhas, and full penetration of their teaching, allows his students to dwell in the buddha land. Where buddhas awaken, the earth must be a land of ancient buddhas. He is also encouraging his students to believe that their practice place is a site of awakening.

In his Eihei Kooroku Dharma hall discourse 269 from 1248, Dogen states, "The Buddha of the land pervades the body and is the entire body. The lands of the Buddha are the suchness of reality, and their non-suchness."³⁹ This signifies that in reality it is not possible to separate buddhas from their lands, the location where they express ongoing awakening, sometimes called by Dogen their Dharma position. In the Dharma hall discourse that occasioned the awakening of his major disciple, Tetsu Gikai, Dogen connected this reality of awakened land with the particulars of the earth. After quoting Sakyamuni Buddha in chapter 16 avowing his long-lived presence and teaching, Dogen remarked, "All dharmas dwell in their Dharma positions; forms in the world are always present. Wild geese return to the [north] woods, and orioles appear [in early spring]."⁴⁰ It is the natural activities of the earth itself that express Buddha's ongoing wisdom.

In his ShObOgenzO essay "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" ("Gyobutsu Igi"), amid references to Sakyamuni's inconceivable life span and images of lotuses themselves, Dogen emphasizes the indispensable, active role of the earth and its lands for Buddha's activities: "That which allows one corner of a buddha's awesome presence is the entire universe, the entire earth, as well as the entirety of birth and death, coming and going, of innumerable lands, and lotus
The lotus is a significant symbol for this active role of earth, as it grows and blossoms from beauty out of the swampy mud of earth. In a couple of Dharma hall discourses in *Eihei Koroku*, Dogen uses a colorful line from the *Blue Cliff Record (Hekiganroku)* koan collection, “The more mud, the greater the Buddha,” indicating the fertility of the earth and also of the karmic obstructions and suffering that activate the practice of buddhas. In another *Eihei Koroku* Dharma hall discourse, he says, “The lotus shrine has never been tainted by the mud in the water.”

Dogen directly compares Zen students and seekers to the bodhisattvas emerging from the earth in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Sounds of the Valley Streams; Colors of the Mountains” (“Keisei Sanshoku”): “In visiting teachers and seeking the truth, there are mountains to climb and oceans to cross. While seeking a guiding teacher, or hoping to find a good spiritual friend, one comes down from the heavens, or springs out from the earth.” Again, this is clearly an encouragement to Dogen’s students to see their efforts in the context of, and as inspired by, the emerging *Lotus Sutra* earth bodhisattvas.

In “The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower,” Dogen combines the practitioners arising from the earth with their arising from space, all in the advent of the *Lotus Sutra*: “The multitudes of the thousandfold world that spring out of the earth have long been great honored saints of the flower of Dharma but they spring out of the earth being turned by circumstances. In turning the Flower of Dharma we should not only realize springing out of the earth; in turning the Flower of Dharma we should also realize springing out of space. We should know with the Buddha’s wisdom not only earth and space but also springing out of the Flower of Dharma itself.” The relationship of earth and space is here expressed as a function of the *Lotus Sutra*. This dynamic concurrence of earth, space, and the Flower of Dharma is further described in the 1243 *Shobogenzo* essay “Flowers of Space” ("Kuge"). Dogen says, “Only the buddhas and ancestors know the blooming and falling of flowers in space and flowers on the ground, only they know the blooming and falling of flowers in the world, only they know that flowers in space, flowers on the ground, and flowers in the world are sutras.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.

Dogen amply encourages practitioners to develop an intimate relationship with space itself. For example, in his *Shobogenzo* essay “Space” (“Koku”), he declares, “You should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors’ endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.”

Turning to focus on Dogen’s teachings about space, one must inevitably first return to the early (1233) writing, “Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way.” There Dogen proclaims the mutual interactive support of space and the zazen practitioner, when “all space in the universe completely becomes en-lightenment.” Space (including its expression as the earth, i.e., “grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions”) is further praised as an active provider of awakening guidance and a participant in the transformative buddha work. However, the responsibility of the practitioner also to awaken space in turn is not neglected.
distance of his Japanese students from the historical Sakyamuni Buddha speaking the *Lotus Sutra* at Vulture Peak. In "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas," Dogen states, "Although this moment is distant from the sages, you have encountered the transforming guidance of the spreading sky [space] that can still be heard." Because of the still remaining transformative guidance of space itself, Buddha remains alive and Dogen's students (and, for Dogen, presumably current practitioners today) can still hear Sakyamuni Buddha's teaching.

Buddhist and Zen Perspectives on Time

Mahayana Buddhism includes many contexts for envisioning temporality that are worthy of extensive study. Before discussing Dogen's approaches to time, I will just briefly describe some of these outlooks, including the Huayan ten times and the figure of Maitreya, which served as background context for Dogen. I have already noted (in discussing its importance for Nichiren and other Kamakura-period figures in chapter 3) that Dogen denied any credence to the prevalent contemporary view of time and history, which held that mappo, the final degenerate age of the teaching, had arrived, and so true practice and enlightenment were impossible. For Doagen, practice-realization is always a potentiality, in all times.

Dogen had to look beyond current preconceptions such as mappo for his approach to liberating aspects of time. David McMahan has suggested that in the Mahayana, time is subsumed within space: "The image of time as contained within space provides the basis for mandalas like the Mahakala mandala in which time is represented as a circle in space." This spatialization of time represents an important, insightful perspective that allows for a new context for "envisioning" temporality. As McMahan explains, in the earlier Nikaayas (the pre-Mahayana scriptures, or *suttas*, written in Pali rather than Sanskrit), "Impermanence is not to be celebrated but transcended. This changes somewhat in the Mahayana, with its assertion of the nonduality of samsara and nirvana; the Mahayana found ways to conceive of the transcendence of time within time itself. Part of this is the spatialization of time—assimilating temporality to the always present dimension of space." McMahan adds significantly to our understanding of the Mahayana background for Japanese aesthetic celebration of impermanence, as was discussed in the section on Saigyo in chapter 3. The aesthetics of *yugen*, with its appreciation of the poignancy of impermanence, is a direct response to the *Lotus Sutra*, as explicated by William LaFleur. But McMahan shows that Saigyo's envisioning of the distant moon over the mountains also brings the "spatialization of time" into the aesthetic celebration of impermanence. Impermanence can be more fully appreciated, and celebrated aesthetically, as it is depicted visually through the space from the poet to the mountains lining the horizon, and to the moon so far beyond but still glowing. Time is marked by impermanence, but space is ever present to help in remembering it.

This spatialization of time helps indicate the importance of Dogen's sense of the dynamic agency of space for his views of temporality. From McMahan's discussions of the use of spatial imagery to inform temporal awareness, we can more fully see the value of Dogen's dynamic images of space as actively functioning, potentially expressing the buddha work. Dogen's views of space transform his being-time. For example, hearing Dogen say, "You have encountered the transforming guidance of the spreading space that can still be heard," one might envision a sky at sunset, splendid with colorful, drifting, or spreading clouds. But in this image Dogen is equally highlighting the persistence in time of the enduring Buddha. This significant role of the spatial imagination as informing Dogen's view of temporality has not been previously noted, to my knowledge.

Dogen was deeply concerned about impermanence. But, in accord with McMahan's discussion of Mahayana nonduality, Dogen found resolution to his struggles with impermanence in a spacious attitude toward impermanence itself. As Steven Heine says, Dogen "strongly rejected... efforts to deny the flux both as un-Buddhistic and, more basically, not true to the nature of his own quest and longing to find release from suffering within—rather than in contrast to—the unstoppable transiency of lived-time."
Returning to consideration of other Mahayana approaches to temporality, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, or *Flower Ornament Sutra*, in the chapter on "Detachment from the World" speaks often times through which great bodhisattvas explain past, present, and future. These ten times are the past, present, and future of the past; the past, present, and future of the future; the past, present, and future of this present; and finally, the interfusion of those previous nine times as the tenth, "being the one instant of the present." Just prior to articulating these ten times, the sutra offers ten kinds of entry into ages by great bodhisattvas. These are entry "into past ages, future ages, present ages, countable ages, uncountable ages, countable ages as uncountable ages, uncountable ages as countable ages, all ages as not ages, monages as all ages, and all ages as one instant." The point of time and its durations for bodhisattvas, according to this sutra, is to enter into and inhabit time, in all its temporal aspects, and not to escape into some timeless state. Although Dogen does not refer to these ten times directly, to my knowledge, he certainly shares the attitude expressed in this section of the sutra, which he of course knew, about fully examining and engaging in the many aspects of time.

From the perspective of his being-time teaching, I imagine Dogen might playfully elaborate on the dynamic interconnectedness of the ten times in some manner such as the following. The past of the present is also the past of a future. The present of the future will be intimately connected to the future of this present, yet is not necessarily predetermined or limited by this present's future. By shifting prior views of the past, one might reclaim the past in the present, and thus actually change the meaning of the past, and present, for the sake of the future. History is the changing process of defining the past for the present. It may be realized that the history of the future can be rewritten in the present as well as in the future. And how we will see this present present in the future present, or saw it in the past, affects the reality of this present.

Just following the passage of the sutra that details the ten times that explain time, the sutra mentions that bodhisattvas have "ten ways of knowing the worlds of past, present, and future: they know their definitions, their speech, their deliberations, their rules, their appellations, their orders, their provisional names, their endlessness, their quiescence, and their total emptiness. Thus do enlightening beings know all things in all times." Clearly the recommended practice is not to transcend time, but to study and engage its full complexity. This encouragement also becomes central in Dogen's "Being Time" (see the section below on this essay), when he urges thorough questioning and engagement of time, as in, "People do not doubt the duration of daily time, but even though they do not doubt it, this does not mean that they know what it really is.... Their doubting is so inconsistent that the doubts at the previous moment do not necessarily correspond to the doubts at the present moment." Furthermore, Dogen says in "Being Time," "People only see time's coming and going, and do not thoroughly understand that the time-being abides in each moment.... Closely examine this flowing; without your complete effort right now, nothing would be actualized, nothing would flow." Time is not some external, objective, independent entity, but requires a practitioner's "complete effort."

The second Chinese patriarch of the Huayan school, based on the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, was Zhiyan (602-668; Chigen in Japanese). In his essay "Ten Mysterious Gates of the Unitary Vehicle of the Huayan," Zhiyan spoke of the ten times as the fifth gate "of various becoming of separate things in the ten time frames." He says, "The ten time frames, by virtue of their interdependent origination, mutually identify and even mutually interpenetrate, yet without losing the three time frames. It is like the ten fingers making a fist yet not losing fingerhood.... The ten time frames interpenetrate and interidentify, yet without losing the characteristics of succession and duration: therefore it is said that separate things variously become." Thomas Cleary comments, "The universe—or in Hua-yen terms, the universe of interdependent origination—is at once the totality of causes and the totality of its effects; hence its total present at once contains its total past and total future. This is the basis for the Buddha's knowledge of past and future in the present."

These Huayan ten times, and their interdependent presence in the present as described by Zhiyan and Cleary, offer a rich depiction of the multidimensional quality of time, and its practical implications. Dogen was certainly aware of this Huayan teaching. As he suggested in his essay "Being Time," the ten times may flow in various directions. Although he does not refer to the Huayan ten times explicitly, we could well see his being-time teaching as playfully elaborating on the dynamic interconnectedness of the ten times.
Maitreya, the bodhisattva predicted by Sakyamuni as the next incarnate Buddha, plays a prominent role in the story of the emerging bodhisattvas and the revelation of Sakyamuni’s vast life span in chapters 15 and 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*. Given Maitreya’s claims on the future, this featured role is appropriate, and also ironic. In the story Maitreya represents the traditional assembly of the Buddha, voicing the disciples’ questions and perplexity, first about the startling emergence of the underground bodhisattvas, and then at the revelation of Sakyamuni’s enduring life span. In some ways, both events would seem to supplant Maitreya’s main function as guardian of awakening in the future. Maitreya’s future buddhahood may seem extraneous, with the underground bodhisattvas prepared to proclaim the *Lotus Sutra* Dharma in the distant future, as stated explicitly by Nichiren (see chapter 3). Maitreya’s future awakening would be called into question even more by the speculations surrounding Sakyamuni’s enduring future activity.

However, the archetypal figure of Maitreya has been a primary source for an expanded view of temporality in the Mahayana tradition. Maitreya is the bodhisattva who represents the unfulfilled aspect of the bodhisattva as not yet a buddha. He is a mere shadow of his future self, not presently being what everyone knows he is promised to become. A common iconographic version of Maitreya depicts him as sitting up in the Tusita Heaven, awaiting his next rebirth and pensively contemplating how to save all sentient beings and become the next Buddha. As we saw in chapter 4, in the *Shobogenzo* essay “The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas,” Dogen playfully has the long-lived Sakyamuni of the *Lotus Sutra* supersede Maitreya’s status even in the Tusita Heaven itself, as Dogen says that the enduring Sakyamuni “still abides there, teaching devas.”

Traditional accounts of Maitreya emphasize the vast period of time during which he patiently waits for his future awakening to become present. Predictions of the time before his buddhahood vary considerably. Some sources predict his buddhahood in the year 4456 CE. Other accounts describe it as 5,760 million years in the future. In any event, he is waiting in meditation for a very long time. Such patience embodies a vast time perspective. The Maitreya figure calls up many issues of temporality, but especially invites deep concern for the future, and for future generations, that may be attended to in the present. Thus Maitreya has represented in the Mahayana imagination vast ranges of time, but also the hope for the future, with reassurance of a new Buddha age to come. Maitreya devotees have sometimes acted to create the conditions of a better world in preparation for his coming, thereby bringing concern for the future into the practical realm of social reform.

This figure of Maitreya is one source for temporal awareness and inquiry that Dogen returns to in his writings to express the intricate and mysterious interfolding of time. Just one example is his relatively early, 1241 Dharma hall discourse number 61. He cites a story in which Nanquan says, “There is no Maitreya up in heaven and no Maitreya down on the earth.” In his comments to his students, Dogen repeats Nanquan’s words and adds, “Maitreya is not Maitreya; [and so] Maitreya is Maitreya. Even though this is so, doesn’t everybody want to see Maitreya?” Dogen then held up his whisk and said, “You have met with Maitreya. Already having met him, everyone, try to say whether Maitreya exists or does not exist.” Here Dogen demonstrates and evokes the experience of both Maitreya’s presence and the uncertainty of Maitreya’s being in the past, the future, or the present.

Basic Indian cosmology offers a very wide view of time that was adopted by Buddhism. There is a recurring cycle in every universe of four kalpas: the formation or becoming, continuity or the abiding, the decaying, and the “nonmanifest” or empty. A kalpa is an incalculably long period of time, with one colorful traditional description of its duration as “the image of a bird that flies once every hundred years over the peak of Mount Everest with a piece of silk in her talons; the length of time it would take the silk to wear down the mountain completely is said to be one *kalpa*. Another calculation is that a short kalpa “is the time required to empty a hundred square mile city enclosure filled with poppy seeds if one seed were to be removed every three years.”

The Chan/Zen Buddhist practice of ancestor veneration allows another vast and much more
personal perspective on time. The Zen tradition includes daily ritual recitation of a list of patriarchal ancestors going back to the historical Sakyamuni Buddha around 500 BCE, a list that Dogen deeply cherished and emphasized. For example, the very brief 1241 Shobogenzo essay "Buddha Ancestors" ("Busso") consists mostly of repeating the traditional list of names, with the need "to bring them forth and look at them respectfully ... not limited to the buddhas of past, present, and future."73

The now accepted historical inaccuracy of the Indian names of the Zen lineage, concocted later in China, is irrelevant to the expanded temporal sensitivity of the generations who have seen the practice as personally and intimately transmitted through many centuries of time.74 Whether or not all their correct names had been recorded, that Dogen felt a personal, spiritual connection to the ancestors throughout the generations is clear from his frequent citations of so many of them. Certainly the lineage was a source for legitimizing the practice in which he and his students engaged. But awareness of a personal connection to people over such a vast time span also allows a wide, deep perspective on time and history.

Dogen's Caodong (Soto) lineage provides some particular encouragements toward long-range time perspectives. The early Caodong progenitor Shitou Xiqian, mentioned in chapter 3 and frequently cited by Dogen, ends his "Harmony of Difference and Sameness" ("Sandokai"), "I humbly say to those who study the mystery, don't waste time."75 The notion of profitably utilizing or "spending" time may seem modern and pedestrian. However, Shitou's purposes include more than mere efficiency. As he indicated in "Harmony of Difference and Sameness" in a previous verse, "Each of the myriad things has its merit, expressed according to function and place."76 For Shitou, time is useful simply in the interest of the appreciation and expression of all the particular myriad things. Commenting after repeating Shitou's line, "Don't waste time," in his 1249 Dharma hall discourse number 319, Dogen encourages fully inhabiting the present time, saying, "Human life is impermanent; how could we wait for some other time?"77

In his other important teaching poem, "Song of the Grass Hut" ("Soanka" in Japanese), Shitou said, "Meet the ancestral teachers, be familiar with their instruction, bind grasses to build a hut and don't give up. Let go hundreds of years and relax completely. Open your hands and walk, innocent."78 This instruction implies letting go of centuries of karmic attachment. But Shitou here also suggests that release from limited, short-term time perspectives is congruent with complete relaxation, and with innocence beyond all afflictions or suffering.

Mentioned earlier for his encouragement of meditation on space, the twelfth-century Caodong master Hongzhi Zhengjue, who deeply influenced Dogen, also spoke of temporal transcendence. Hongzhi references the Lotus Sutra image of the Dharma rain falling equally on all in his espousal of wider time perspectives: "One thought of the ten thousand years is beginning not to dwell in appearances. Thus it is said that the mind-ground contains every seed and the universal rain makes them all sprout." Envisioning long ranges of time allows a calmer perspective on the immediate urgency of present needs and predicaments and fosters nurturing, organic processes. Hongzhi also says, "This is the time and place to leap beyond the ten thousand emotional entanglements of innumerable kalpas. One contemplation of ten thousand years finally goes beyond all the transitory, and you emerge with spontaneity."79 Awareness of the wider reaches of time can support a fuller inhabitation and engagement of present situations, or one's own "Dharma position." These cherished masters from Dogen's own lineage, and the very fact of the long lineage itself, certainly informed his sense of temporality.

Dogen's Being-Time

Dogen's renowned 1240 Shobogenzo essay "Being Time" is his primary writing that focuses on temporality, and so must be considered as a context for his comments on time in relation to the story of the enduring Buddha in the Lotus Sutra. In this essay, Dogen clarifies that time does not flow only from past to present to future. Time moves in mysterious ways, passing dynamically and multidirectionally between all ten times and beyond. Dogen says, "In being-time there is the distinctive function of [totalistic] passage (kyoraku); there is passage from today to tomorrow, passage from today to yesterday, passage from yesterday to today, passage from today to today, and
passage from tomorrow to tomorrow. This transpires because passage itself is the distinctive function of time. This multidirectional passage makes it possible for beings to realize how they fully inhabit all times as the present time, rather than seeking for the present as a restrictive escape from regret for the past or anxiety over the future. Although the movement of being-time is omnidirectional, it is also a discontinuity in which each being and all time are fully present. The richness of being-time is the vivid presencing of each being's time. For Dogen, each time of being fully exerts itself in total expressiveness. This is the deep reality of time that he urges his audience to actualize right here and now.

Dogen says, "Since a sentient being's doubting of the many and various things unknown to him are naturally vague and indefinite, the course his doubts take will probably not bring them to coincide with this present doubt. Nonetheless, the doubts themselves are, after all, none other than time." Steven Heine says about Dogen's inclusive present time, "Beings are invariably temporal occurrences; time always presences as all beings. There is no being in the entire Dharma-realm outside this very moment of time."

Dogen's being-time reflects the spatialization of temporality described by David McMahan, as time is described in terms of the space of landscapes. But for Dogen, space also depends on this time of being. As he says in "Being Time," "Mountains are time. Oceans are time. If they were not time, there would be no mountains or oceans. Do not think that mountains and oceans here and now are not time. If time is annihilated, mountains and oceans are annihilated." Here Dogen expresses the thorough integration of time, space, and earth, a key aspect of his worldview, explored in this work primarily in relation to his comments on Lotus Sutra chapters 15 and 16.

For Dogen, time, as we have seen for space, is not some intractable, merely external container within which beings are caught. All beings are time, just as "earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions, carry[ing] out buddha work," are space. When beings fully express themselves right now, that is time. Dogen says, "The sharp vital quick of dharmas dwelling in their dharma-positions is itself being-time." Beings cannot help but fully express their deepest truth right now. One cannot avoid being-time. Even a partial, halfhearted exertion of being-time is a partial being-time. As Dogen says, "Even the being-time of a partial exhaustive penetration is an exhaustive penetration of a partial being-time." This may well be heard as profoundly consoling, but it does not mean that individual beings do not have any responsibility for being-time through their own effort or expression.

In his intricate philosophical analysis of the Shobogenzo essay "Being Time" in Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dogen, Steven Heine discusses Dogen's being-time in terms of what Heidegger calls "primordial time" (ursprüngliche Zeit), which Heine equates with Dogen's "truth of being-time" (uji no dori). Both Heidegger and Dogen see this primordial time as transcending the limited, ordinary view of time that vainly imagines some stable, real present, although both recognize some partial validity to the conventional time sense. Heine further describes this primordial time as "neither an eternal realm beyond existence nor another attribute of existence which could be logically or ontologically added onto it either before or after existence is described; nor does existence, conceived of substantively, persist 'in' objectified time." Dogen's primordial time is not some objective entity with its own independent process transpiring beyond the activity of beings.

Throughout his writings, Dogen emphatically highlights the responsibility of practitioners. As Heine says, "Primordial time ultimately depends upon and is fulfilled only by means of each being's fully sustained and perpetually renewed selfless exertive power." He adds, "Dogen's emphasis on the temporal unity of practice and realization also seems to suggest that the pre-sencing of being-time itself is made possible by virtue of the selfless here-and-now activity which realizes itself as primordial time. No aspect or realm of temporal existence is independent of the individual's exertive effort."

Dogen's Lotus View of Time Revisited
Although "Being Time" is Dogen's most focused treatment of temporality, there are sections of other Shobogenzo essays and passages in Eihei Koroku that offer further discussion of time. However, Dogen does not provide enough developed material to derive a consistent "philosophy of time." And, of course, he is more concerned with encouraging practice than formulating philosophical positions. Yet reviewing some of Dogen's comments on the Lotus Sutra story of chapters 15 and 16 that relate to issues of temporality can provide some helpful, illuminating examples of how he expresses his dynamic view of time, and its practice. Near the conclusion of "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," he proclaims the active pervasion of the Lotus Sutra and its teaching through and by time, as he did for the ground of the Buddha land: "We should rejoice that the Dharma flower is turning from age to age, and the Dharma flower is turning from day to night, as the Dharma flower turns the ages and turns the days and nights." The nondualistic Lotus teaching is described as fully integrated with and mutually interacting with all the vast expanses of time, as well as its briefer durations. Dogen here proclaims that this teaching of the Dharma flower, that is, the Lotus Sutra, is both engaged throughout time, but also in some sense itself impels the varied passagings of time.

Furthermore, in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower," Dogen declares the unity of all Time, or ultimate temporality, which he believes is represented exactly in the long life span of Sakyamuni. We have seen how Dogen expounded multidimensional qualities of being-time. The year after writing "Being Time," he celebrates in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" the temporality of Sakyamuni of the Lotus Sutra and encourages his students to recognize this enduring, unified time: "Turning the Flower of Dharma we should realize the one Time in which the Buddha is living." But this "one Time" is a shifting, multidirectional time, in which, as Doagen says just previously (quoting from chapter 16 of the sutra), "the father is young and the son is old." Here Dogen points to this enduring Buddha as inhabiting all times, and awakening these times, and also awakening their new buddhas, even while transcending time. Discussing Dharma transmission, he quotes Sakyamuni as saying, "All buddhas of the past are disciples of myself, Shakyamuni Buddha." From this transcendent time of the Lotus Sutra Sakyamuni, all the many particular times usher forth now, including past as well as future.

Dogen uses the image of the enduring Buddha to show the present moment as a dynamic process inclusive of all times. Near the beginning of "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" he says, "Know that buddhas in the buddha way do not wait for awakening. Active buddhas alone fully experience the vital process on the path of going beyond buddha." Awakening is not something that can occur in a nonpresent future. It is a dynamic process that happens in the present experience of practice, but without excluding past or future, or any other aspect of this time of going beyond any fixed time. Doagen explains that it is "not that the lifespan of the Buddha has prevailed only in the past, but that what is called vast numbers is a total inclusive attainment. What is called still now is the total lifespan." For Dogen, the Buddha's vast life span expresses time as the present actuality of nondual practice and awakening in the concrete, present time that includes all times.

In the Shobogenzo essay "The Tathagata's Whole Body" ("Nyorai Zenshin"), Dogen quotes from chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra: "For countless eons Sakyamuni has practiced difficult and painful practices, accumulated merits, and sought the Way of the bodhisattva, and thus even though he is now a Buddha, he still practices diligently." Dogen comments, "The long eons of difficult and
painful practices are the activity of the womb of the Buddha.... When it is said that these practices have not ceased even for a second, it means that even though he is perfectly enlightened, he still practices vigorously, and he continues forever even though he converts the whole universe. This activity is the whole body of the Tathagata. Above all, Dogen emphasizes that enlightenment, like Buddha, is not an event that happens only at one particular time, once and for all. Rather, it is an ongoing, vigorous activity that awakens time itself, just as with the zazen practitioner's upright presence "all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment." As it is for space, so this process of ongoing awakening engages time.

Central to the explorations in this work of Dogen's worldview and how it reflects the Lotus Sutra story of the underground bodhisattvas' emergence and Buddha's life span is the capacity of Doagen's perspective to inform modern understandings of both Japanese Zen and the intriguing worldview of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism. One point is simply the deep Mahayana underpinnings of Japanese Zen, markedly expressed through Doagen's strong relationship to the Lotus Sutra. In these traditions, and particularly in the Soto lineage derived from Doagen, the vision of earth, space, and time as dynamic supports for bodhisattva work is important to their praxis development as well as metaphysical views. These visions go beyond anthropocentric or psycho-therapeutic biases to provide a deep ontological basis for Mahayana practice as an active, dynamic expression of ultimate reality. Doagen's conceptions of earth, space, and time exhibit his deep meditative and highly creative articulation of the Buddha Dharma. And yet they also reflect his embeddedness in the wider East Asian Mahayana tradition, including its imagery of bodhisattva figures such as Jizo, Kokuzo, and Maitreya.
Afterword

Implications of Dogen’s Mahayana Worldview

As a conclusion to this study of Dogen’s Mahayana Buddhist world-view, its potential implications can be further explored in a variety of contemporary concerns. In this afterword I briefly suggest a few realms that I believe would be fruitful for further studies, in which Dogen’s perspective as explored in this work may be useful and mutually informative.

We have seen in the citations near the end of chapter 4 how Doagen directs his interpretations to encouragement of current practitioners. He is not interested solely in promulgating an abstract philosophical or cosmological doctrine for its own sake, but in further promoting beneficial activity and awareness. This Lotus Sutra story implies and illuminates an understanding of the pervading sacrality of earth, space, and time. For Dogen the pure suchness of earth, space, and time serves as a matrix for practice and for further expressions of awakening. This awakened space-time is the context and a support for bodhisattva activity and clarifies the meaning of Ma-haayaana thought. The worldview of space and earth, and of time, expressed in Dogen’s use of the Lotus Sutra may serve as a platform for clarifying twenty-first-century approaches to understanding bodhisattva awareness and praxis.

What follows is not intended as a full presentation of the relationships between Dogen’s worldview and these other fields, but simply offers possibilities for additional inquiry. One realm is the intersection of Mahaayaana spirituality with modern physics. Another
is the relevance of Dogen's worldview to ecological consciousness. This ecological aspect of Dogen's worldview of awakened earth, space, and time is also applicable to Dharmic practices of social ethics and action, which recently have been referred to as "engaged Buddhism."

Dogen's Worldview and String Theory

Writings on the congruences between Buddhism (and other Asian spiritualities) and modern physics have been popular since Fritjof Capra's *Tao of Physics* in the mid-1970s, with ongoing interest and new studies still appearing. In many areas there are parallels between the two. I believe this is also the case in looking at Dogen's worldview and aspects of the *Lotus Sutra*. In his writings Dogen provides models for multidimensional awareness of space and time that seem to provocatively complement contemporary physics. I do not claim any comprehensive understanding of the innovative, cutting-edge, and somewhat controversial realm of string theory physics, so I will not attempt to make extended explorations of parallels in specific aspects of the perspectives of Dogen and string theory, but will simply suggest areas for further study of their correspondences that I believe may be mutually informative and inspiring.

Of course, there is no historical relationship between Dogen's worldview and modern cosmological theories of physics. Moreover, one view comes from the perspective of medieval East Asian Buddhism, aimed at encouraging spiritual practice, and the other is an attempt to mathematically resolve modern questions in the science of physics. So these perspectives have vastly different functions and purposes, as well as highly disparate historical and cultural contexts. I see no need to justify or validate Dogen's teachings through their similarity to modern science, nor to support string theory physics by its echoing of ancient Oriental wisdom. Each side is quite capable of speaking for itself. The point of exploring what seem to me commonalities between these worldviews is the potential for their differences to shed mutual light on aspects of each that are not readily apparent. Especially the differences within the aspects that seem analogous may inspire fresh insights for each. Even a casual review of some of the more accessible treatments of string theory offers stimulating parallels to Dogen's view of space and time as vital agents for increased awareness.

Superstring theory physicist Brian Greene states, "Science is still struggling to understand what space and time actually are." We have seen how Dogen uses his playful imagination to persistently inquire into the realities of space and time. String theory is particularly noted for its suggestions of multiple dimensions, somewhat reminiscent of the innumerable multiple realms of Mahayana sutras, such as the distant buddha fields from which bodhisattvas arrive to visit Sakyamuni Buddha while he preaches the *Lotus Sutra*. String theory "claims that our universe has many more dimensions than meet the eye—dimensions that are tightly curled into the folded fabric of the cosmos." String theory is considered most promising in that it proposes to integrate the two major, established principles of modern physics, relativity theory and quantum mechanics, which heretofore have been in irreconcilable conflict. Both of these theories hold congruences to Buddhist perspectives. In the realm of relativity theory, Brian Greene says, "Space and time ... can no longer be thought of as an inert backdrop on which the events of the universe play themselves out; rather, through special and then general relativity, they are intimate players in the events themselves." This strikingly echoes Dogen's thirteenth-century views of the dynamic involvement of space and time in the world, as they are "intimate players," potentially available to actively support Buddha's work. As we have seen, Dogen proclaims the mutual supportive relationship between space and the zazen practitioner. And he declares the inseparability of temporality from our present existence and functioning. As for current quantum theory, commenting on its relationship to the Buddhist teaching of interdependence, astrophysicist Trinh Xuan Thuan says, "Quantum mechanics thus eliminates all idea of locality. It provides a holistic idea of space. The notions of 'here' and 'there' become meaningless, because 'here' is identical to 'there.' This is the definition of what physicists call 'nonseparability.'" This nonseparability of space seems in accord with Buddhist views of interconnectedness; for example, in his *ShOboGenzO* essay "Space," Dogen says, "Space is one ball that bounces here and
His images of the interactive, pervading capacity of space and its potential for rapid awakening may help illuminate and illustrate this nonseparability of physicists, in which seemingly distant elements of space are actually one totality. We have seen space itself awakening and doing buddha work in Dogen's "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way" ("Bendowa"). Dogen also invokes the transforming guidance of pervading space, enduring throughout time, in "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" ("Gyobutsu Igï"). Further, he proclaims that space has the capacity to create space for a prehistoric buddha's relics in "The Dharma Flower Turns the Dharma Flower" ("Hokke-Ten-Hokke"). These accounts about the active functioning of space in the buddha work, which for him go along with space's inseparability or intercon-nectedness, may suggest to string theorists new approaches for investigating how space is actively functioning.

As for time, Dogen speaks of "the one Time in which the Buddha is living." In "Being Time" ("Uji") he further describes the multidirectional passaging of time and the primary importance of questioning and including the range of temporal perspectives. Certainly the questioning of our conventional time sense is also important in physics. As Greene says, "From the perspective of sentient beings, [time flowing] seems obvious. As I type these words, I clearly feel time flowing.... Yet, as hard as physicists have tried, no one has found any convincing evidence within the laws of physics that supports this intuitive sense that time flows." Dogen's questioning of time and his descriptions of its multidirectional passaging may perhaps suggest new ways of approaching this significant issue in current physics. His insistence on temporality as a function of being itself may inspire new string theory understandings of the multiplicity of dimensions.

Perspectives from the new physics might also help illuminate qualities of Dogen's Mahayana worldview. In his book The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design, Leonard Susskind, who is considered the father of string theory, describes reality as understood in physics in terms of "landscapes." Susskind says, "The Landscape is a space of possibilities. It has geography and topography with hills, valleys, flat plains, deep trenches, mountains, and mountain passes. But unlike an ordinary landscape, it isn't three-dimensional. The landscape has hundreds, maybe thousands, of dimensions." This may provide a way of seeing the multiple dimensions in Mahayana reality and the multiple dimensions of space and time for Dogen. Susskind clarifies that "the Landscape is not a real place. It doesn't exist as a real location on the earth or anywhere else. It doesn't exist in space and time at all." In Dogen's Sino-Japanese, landscapes are sansui (literally "mountains and waters," as discussed below), which are physical, concrete realms of space and time, even though Dogen's wordplay provides his landscapes with deeper levels of meaning.

But the string theory landscape might also suggest, if only by metaphor, fresh views of Dogen's space and time. Susskind discusses the various fields in the landscape, such as gravitational and electromagnetic, as "invisible properties of space that influence objects moving through them." This recalls the mutual, inconceivable influence between practitioners and the elements, or perhaps fields, of space discussed by Dogen. Susskind declares, "Space can be filled with a wide variety of invisible influences that have all sorts of effects on ordinary matter." Dogen's visions of awakening space and time, significantly impacted by the Lotus Sutra, merit further study. Perhaps his perspectives can even provide a potential traditional source of inspiration for scholars developing strands of string theory physics. And unravelings of the mysterious aspects of string theory may equally assist in approaches to further untangling of the differences and parallels in Dogen's visionary wordplay.

Dogen's Worldview and Ecology

Another major prospective area for additional study is the relationship of Dogen's vision to ecology and environmental awareness. His views of earth as a space or field that can mutually nourish and be supported by spiritual practitioners has a range of implications for how we can see the natural environment in terms of a constructive, dynamic interrelationship. There already exists an active, developing field of study involving Buddhism and environmental
thought and practice, with a number of works that have included references to Dogen. Prominent among these is the 1997 collection edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (mentioned in chapter 5 in connection with the quote from Allan Grapard), which is part of the excellent Harvard University Press series on Religions of the World and Ecology. An earlier, less academic collection on Buddhism and ecology from 1990 is *Dharma Gaia*. Among the various works by individual writers on Buddhism and ecology, especially relevant are those of Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, and Stephanie Kaza.

The worldview of earth, space, and time expressed by Dogen in his responses to the central story in the *Lotus Sutra* can further inform this field of religion and environmental study. The connectedness of elements of the earth, and its East Asian Mahayana context, resonates with thinkers from the modern deep ecology movement. For example, in his essay "The Japanese Concept of Nature and Aldo Leopold," Steve Odin points out, "The environmental ethics of Aldo Leopold arises from a metaphysical presupposition that things in nature are not separate, independent, or substantial objects, but relational fields existing in mutual dependence upon each other, thus constituting a synergistic ecosystem of organisms interacting with their environment. According to Leopold's field concept of nature, the land is a single living organism wherein each part affects every other part." This modern formulation can readily be seen as an expression of Buddhist dependent co-arising as it functions in the ground of earth.

Further, "For the Norwegian environmental philosopher Arne Naess [who coined the term 'deep ecology'], ecology suggests 'a relational total field image [in which] organisms [are] knots in the biospherical net of intrinsic relations.'" This certainly echoes Dogen's images of myriad elements of the earth arising together. Dogen uses the image of bodhisattvas emerging from underground to extol the spiritual fertility of the earth, pervading through space and inspiring new practitioners. His view of the earth as an active agent for awakening that can be mutually supportive with practitioners may further expand the possibilities for seeing constructive engagement with the earth in deep ecology thought.

Gary Snyder, University of California at Davis professor, Beat poet, and Rinzai Zen adept, is the true originator of the field of Buddhism and ecology studies. Snyder calls Dogen "a proto-ecologist, a thinker who had remarkable insight deep into the way that wild nature works." Snyder celebrates the spiritual depth of Dogen's environmental savvy especially in discussion of his 1240 *Shobogenzo* essay "Mountains and Waters Sutra" ("Sansuikyo"). This essay is one of Dogen's most elegant depictions of the wondrous interpenetration of the natural world (not previously mentioned herein, as it does not specifically reference *Lotus Sutra* chapters 15 and 16). It might also be read as the "Landscape Sutra," as sansui, literally "mountains and waters," also is used as a compound to mean landscapes generally, as in landscape gardens. As just one example of Snyder's appreciation of this essay, he mentions Dogen's quoting of an ancient Chinese writer: "The path of water is such that when it rises to the sky, it becomes raindrops; when it falls to the ground it becomes rivers." Then Snyder quotes from Dogen's commentary: "The path of water is not noticed by water, but is realized by water." Snyder notes:

There is the obvious fact of the water-cycle and the fact that mountains and rivers indeed form each other: waters are precipitated by heights, carve or deposit landforms in their flowing descent, and weight the offshore continental shelves with sediment to ultimately tilt more uplifts.... One does not need to be a specialist to observe that landforms are a play of stream-cutting and ridge-resistance and the waters and hills interpenetrate in endlessly branching rhythms.... "Mountains and waters" is a way to refer to the totality of the process of nature. As such it goes well beyond dichotomies of purity and pollution, natural and artificial.

Snyder's comments indicate the full "realization" of how, as Dogen says, the path of water is "realized by water," both in the natural process of waters cutting through and uplifting mountains, but also in how "mountains and waters" themselves express awareness of the full totality, beyond dichotomies. Dogen's sense of the earth is both nondualistic and wide-ranging. He consistently emphasizes the realizational imperative of practice, that humans bear responsibility for actively expressing and making real the mountains and waters, but also, beyond human conceptual categories, that mountains and waters realize themselves, as well as realizing the persons within the mountains and waters.
Snyder cites the "Mountains and Waters Sutra" maxim, "Although mountains belong to the nation, they really belong to the people who love them." Recognizing the value to deep ecology of Dogen's writings, Snyder comments, "This is weirdly cogent for us as we debate about land-use policies with the governments and corporations of the world... Dogen causes us to look at the world in many layers, from many sides, on all scales, with both the spiritual eye and the eye of the non-human all-species ecological imagina-tion."27

A development of deep ecology that is particularly relevant to Dogen's being-time, and also to his "one Time in which the Buddha is living,"28 is the discourse of "Deep Time" by Joanna Macy. In the course of investigating and questioning temporality, Macy discusses the long-term dangers to the environment throughout ranges of time from the vast longevity of poisonous nuclear waste, the negative reflection of the long-lived healing Buddha. She dramatizes the consequent spiritual need for modern people to become intimately aware of beings of the future and of a wider sense of time.29 Macy talks about "reinhabiting" time, about our present responsibility to future generations, and generally of questioning our usual perspectives on temporality. In her examination of the New Age slogan, "Be Here Now," she criticizes spirituality that seeks to escape the fullness of time by hiding in a static present, safe from the hazards of the future and the consequences of the past, which actually are dynamically included in our deeper present.30 Her contemporary questioning of conventional temporal perspectives is informed by the sense of temporality envisioned by Dogen, with his encouragement to actively question and fully experience the multiple dimensions of the current time of being.

Dogen's Worldview and Social Ethics

Dogen's Mahayana view of the mutual guidance between the zazen practitioner and the environment, and of the spiritual fertility of the earth, has implications for environmental and social ethics. Dogen encourages individuals to see their nonseparation from and mutuality with all the things of the earth, beyond a merely anthropocentric value system. Such awareness is a quality of prajna, the wisdom that sees into the emptiness of all isolated, individual entities, and thereby into the radical interconnectedness, or dependent co-arising, of all things. Prajna and ethics (sila in Sanskrit), or beneficial activity, are seen in the Mahayana as interwoven. As Paul Williams says, wisdom "occurs within the context of the extensive and compassionate Bodhisattva deeds, the aspiration to full Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings."31

In Dogen's nonanthropocentric vision of people intimately related to the earth and space itself, one consequence is the possibility of people taking some ethical responsibility for their environment's well-being. We have seen how the practitioner's effort is intimately involved in being-time. Similarly, the intricate interconnection of the individual and earth or space implies ethical responsibility. As Steve Odin says about the Western context of Aldo Leopold's ecological worldview, "While in the past ethical discourse has been confined to the human community so as to pertain solely to the relation between individuals and society, environmental ethics extends this into the realm of... the symbiotic relation between humans and land."32 Inversely, Dogen's view of bodhisattva activity is certainly not limited to the nonhuman, environmental implications implied by the earth bodhisattvas. For example, in his 1243 Shobogenzo essay "The Bodhisattva's Four Methods of Guidance" ("Bodaisatta Shisho Ho"), Dogen discusses generosity, kind speech, beneficial action, and identity-action (or cooperation) as four approaches to helping people, although he also employs images involving the earth.33 However, recent historical studies are questioning and exploring the basis for Zen Buddhist ethical systems.34 The field of contemporary Zen Buddhist ethics received much impetus from the challenging historical exploration of Japanese Zen Buddhist involvement in World War II militarism in Brian Victoria's Zen at War. Currently, academics have been considering and questioning the development of samurai Zen in Japan and the wider East Asian Buddhist history of accommodation to the powers of the day. Relevant reflections have included the historical role of Confucian ethics in complementing and being accepted by Zen Buddhism; the problematical relationship (or perhaps lack thereof) between enlightenment and ethics; the Zen tradition's sometimes inadequate expression of
the bodhisattva ethos of compassion; and the questions and potential resources for Western Zen transforming an East Asian tradition to contexts with modernist ethical assumptions. The perspective of Dogen's worldview, with its strong Mahayana background, can contribute to the prospective construction of a positive modern Zen societal ethic.

In "Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers: Kukai, Dogen, and a Deeper Ecology," Graham Parkes questions the ethical implications of Dogen's teaching of all beings equally expounding the Dharma: "What would Dogen say about these causes of fatal disease and lethal pollution? Are deadly viruses and plutonium waste part of Buddha-nature?" Parkes cites the statement from Dogen's 1243 Shobogenzo essay "The Three Worlds Are Mind Only" ("Sangai Yuishin"), "Walls and tile, mountains, rivers, and the great earth are all mind-only." But in Parkes's interpretation, Dogen is sensitive to the broad perspective of varying "dharma positions." Parkes concludes, "One might reasonably wonder whether Dogen would be comfortable saying that even fences or roof-tiles made of nonbiodegradable plastic are Buddha-nature, and then opines that "Dogen would want to take into account the effects of propagating tubercle bacilli or radioactive waste on the flourishing of human (and other) beings before deciding to let them bloom." Parkes's interpretation of Dogen recognizes his view of the world as vibrantly awakening, but also as not only descriptive but prescriptive. Such a dynamic world is not simply another external object to passively observe from some settled vantage point outside the world. From deep-seated conditioning and ignorance people usually see the world, other people, and ultimately even themselves as dead objects, mere commodities to manipulate and exploit. As Bob Dylan points out, many people of this time do what they do just "to be nothing more than something they invest in." But the world Dogen is speaking from is alive and unfolding with awakening. Being not at all apart from such a dynamic world, active participation and also dedicated protection of its awakening potentialities are essential. The "observer is involved, with the ability to respond and the responsibility to support well-being and wholeness.

Dogen's view, informed by the Lotus Sutra, that the world itself can be a living spiritual agent is a significant resource for a societal ethic. If such a worldview is accepted, the world itself and its elements may render appropriate support and encouragement in the long-term project of developing skillful approaches to fostering awakening and compassion in our world. Practitioners own active engagement in supporting social justice and peace not only benefits beings of the world, but may in turn help to develop and deepen their own personal awakening.

Throughout his teaching career Dogen increasingly emphasized the importance of bodhisattva precepts and practitioners responsibility for upholding their Dharma-position in space and time. This emphasis is consistently reflected in his frequent and persistent exhortations to his disciples to engage in vigorous, wholehearted practice. While this concern with bodhisattva ethics can be seen throughout Dogen's life, simplistic and misleading stereotypical views of early and later periods in his career have claimed that he altered his philosophical position to emphasize ethical precepts only in his later years. In his recent book, Did Dogen Go to China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It, Steven Heine has presented a helpful and careful, more nuanced treatment of the various phases in Dogen's career, which were actually based primarily on his shifts in teaching genre and style and the needs of his audience. But there indeed were some changing emphases at times in Dogen's teaching career, including an enhanced concern about ethical practices in some of his later works. Dogen clearly gave additional attention to the effects of karma and ethical practice in later portions of Eihei Koroku and in the several essays of Shobogenzo believed to have been written in his later years. The bodhisattva vow to awaken all beings is a fundamental principle for clarifying and expressing Mahayana ethics. At the beginning of Eihei Koroku Dharma hall discourse number 434 from 1251, Dogen stresses the importance of this vow, declaring, "The family style of all buddhas and ancestors is to first arouse the vow to save all living beings by removing suffering and providing joy. Only this family style is inexhaustibly bright and clear." The "family style" is a common Zen expression for the teaching style of a particular lineage, but it is used here by Dogen for the family of all buddhas and all their followers, in which the bodhisattva vow to save all living beings, and alleviate their suffering, is primary. In Dharma hall discourse number 439, only slightly later, Dogen says, "Bodhisattvas studying the way should know how Buddha nature produces the conditions for Buddha nature." Practitioners bear responsibility for investigating how to use the present awareness and expression of buddha nature to foster further beneficial expression of buddha nature in the world.
Doagen expresses this bodhisattvic ethical imperative directly in terms of *Lotus Sutra* chapter 16 and as Sakyamuni's enduring life span itself. In the 1244 *Shobogenzo* essay "Awakening to the Bodhi-Mind" ("Hotsu Bodaishin"), he quotes the Buddha's statement at the very end of chapter 16: "I have always given thought to how I could cause all creatures to enter the highest supreme Way and quickly become Buddhas." Dogen then comments, "This is the Ta-thaagata's lifetime itself. Buddhas' establishment of the mind, training, and experience of the effect are all like this. Benefiting living beings means causing living beings to establish the will to deliver others before they attain their own deliverance." The responsibility of practitioners to the world of beings is a prime directive for Doagen.

Coda

The realms of current physics, environmental consciousness, and social ethics are suggested as areas that may benefit from further studies of Dogen's vision, and that may in turn be illuminating for such study. Doagen presents a unique worldview of earth, space, and time (all deeply interrelated), which he creatively
developed from the Mahayana context, especially from the *Lotus Sutra*. Appreciation of this worldview is crucial for a full understanding of Zen Buddhism. This view is relevant not only to contemporary Buddhist practice, but also to broader contemporary metaphysical, societal, and ethical issues.

A twentieth-century vision of time, from T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, provides a helpful expression of the interfolding of past, present, and future times as here in the abiding present. Eliot’s time sense is certainly congruent with the interfolding passaging of time envisioned by Dogen in his own "nexus of exquisite mythopoeic imaginings." Eliot writes:

> Time present and time past Are both perhaps present in time future, And time future contained in time past.... What might have been and what has been Point to one end, which is always present.  

Such time-being does not partition or separate temporal nodes but recognizes all times as present together. But to recognize this rich interconnectedness of deep time requires practice and mindful attention to the fullness of the present, as Dogen also encourages. Eliot fully honors this project and its deeply spiritual quality later in the *Four Quartets* when he says:

> Men’s curiosity searches past and future And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend The point of intersection of the timeless With time, is an occupation for the saint—.
# Table of Contents

**Preface**
**Acknowledgments**
**1. The Pivotal Lotus Story and Dogen's Worldview**
**2. Hermeneutics and Discourse Styles in Studies of t...**
**3. Selected East Asian Interpretations of the Story**
**4. Dogen's Interpretations of This Lotus Sutra Story**
**5. Dogen's View of Earth, Space, and Time**
**Seen in Mahayana Context**
**Afterword**