

Dogen Sangha Summer Sesshin 2006
Talk on Master Dogen's Ikka-no-myōju
By Eido Mike Luetchford
Talk number 2

From the conversation some of us had earlier, there's a phrase near the bottom of the first column, it says, "Gensa replied, *'Bodhidharma didn't plan to come to China, just as our second ancestor didn't plan to go to India.'*" It's rather misleading, because Bodhidharma *did* come from India and go to China - although he didn't intend or make a plan to do so, he actually did so. But the second ancestor, Master Taiso Eka - who was, so legend says, so enthusiastic to study Buddhism that he cut his right arm off; I think it's a legend - anyway, Taiso Eka *didn't* go to India, he stayed where he was. So the intent of Master Gensa's answer is, 'We do what we do: Master Bodhidharma came to China naturally, just following events; and Master Taiso Eka stayed in China naturally, just following events.' In other words, they didn't make a big plan. So, I'm going to change it - this is only a draft, so please tell me if anything sounds weird and I can incorporate your suggestions in this draft.

We got to the last paragraph on the second column on page one, after the story, in which Master Gensa and a monk, who was his student living together in the same temple, are having a conversation about Master Gensa's phrase, 'The whole Universe which extends in all directions is one bright pearl.' The gist of the conversation is Master Gensa is saying something about reality which is not something you can think about and understand, but just a simple description of reality; but the monk can't understand what he means and, in the end, when tested to see whether he does understand what Master Gensa means, he just replies with the same words that Master Gensa used. And Master Gensa's not so enthusiastic about that. So now Master Dogen starts to discuss, in his usual way, that exchange between Gensa and the monk.

This expression – *The whole Universe which extends in all directions is one bright pearl* – originated with Gensa. The point is that the Universe which extends in all directions cannot actually be described with expressions like "vast and great," or "meagre and small." Neither "square" nor "round" describe it. Neither "centred" nor "ordered" fit it.

There, he's saying that Master Gensa's expression is intended to get beyond categorisation. If we're talking about the Universe, meaning the whole of reality, everything that's in existence - to describe it with categories, like 'It's vast,' or 'It's great,' or 'It's ...' whatever, none of those fit it, because the Universe is beyond our powers to express, in its totality. So he means what Master Gensa is trying to express is beyond categorisation.

To say that it is in a state of vigorous activity or that it is disclosed in perfect clarity do not capture it.

Those two expressions look a bit a strange - "a state of vigorous activity" or "disclosed in perfect clarity." But both of those are from Chinese phrases which were typically used to describe reality. It's very difficult to translate this kind of thing. He's using quotations which everybody there at the time would be familiar with, but which when we read it we can't see why he should use a phrase, "disclosed in perfect clarity" for example. But, again, he's saying that we can't describe the reality in which we are. We do describe it, but in the end we're lost for words.

It is completely beyond our usual interpretations of what living and dying, coming and going are.

Now, again, the phrases "living and dying" and "coming and going" were used as a metaphor for ordinary life - our ordinary life as human beings living and dying; our busy daily life coming and going. We all subscribe to an interpretation of daily life. We all share a social reality. And that social reality which we subscribe to and join in and are part of, is invented by us. So only human beings understand what's meant by a pin number or a bank account. It's useless to try to explain it to a tree or a cat. It's something we invented. It's real, and we share it, but the Universe doesn't care about pin numbers. So he's trying to say that our interpretation of the life that we lead and share, the Universe itself is beyond all that. But then he goes on to say:

Living and dying, coming and going *are* the Universe itself.

In other words, this reality that we subscribe to, social reality, our daily life, *is* reality. In early Buddhism, and in lots of philosophies about the Universe, there's a suggestion that there's a reality behind the reality that we live in and share. And the name for the reality that we live in and share is often *samsara*, in Sanskrit. And I think even some Buddhist groups in modern times use the word *samsara* to mean daily life. And the ultimate Universe which doesn't care about pin numbers is called *nirvana*. Nirvana means the Universe itself without the order that we impose on it. And Master Dogen insists that the daily round, our daily life, with pin numbers and bank accounts, is the same thing as the Universe. Or, in other words, there isn't another perfect state hiding behind the life that we lead. I think Kant in his philosophy talks about the noumenal and the phenomenal. The phenomenal is the world with things, and the noumenal is the world behind all the things. But, according to Buddhist teaching, the noumenal and the phenomenal are the same thing. This would deny, for instance, the Christian assertion that there is Heaven and Earth. In Christianity, Earth, where we live, is one kind of life; but beyond this kind of life, or hiding behind it or above it somewhere, is a perfect place called Heaven. But Buddhism insists that they are the same thing. So in Buddhism, Heaven and Earth are the same. So, "Living and dying, coming and going *are* the Universe itself," is Master Dogen's way of asserting the identity between the unnameable Universe and our everyday life.

So yesterday has gone from this place, and tomorrow comes to this place.

Or, in other words, time passes. But he puts it in a slightly different way – yesterday is gone, tomorrow comes, the present is sandwiched between them. He then goes on to look at our thoughts about what the Universe is in more depth.

Examining the Universe in detail, should we say that it is only an accumulation of particles, or should we conclude that it is something indivisible and whole?

This is, to me, quite a staggering statement from a thirteenth century monk living in Japan, up in the mountains, because this is exactly the problem that atomic physics faces. And anybody who knows about physics will know that there are two theories of light, for instance, or matter – the particle theory and the wave theory. The particle theory says that everything is made of particles, and the wave theory says, 'No, there aren't any particles, it's all a big kind of wave system, unbroken and whole.' So Master Dogen is saying, 'Which is true? Is the Universe made up of lots of little bits? And if we smash atoms up against each

other and find smaller bits and smash those bits against each other and find even smaller bits, will we find the ultimate bits of the Universe?' Some people think so, some scientists think so, and that's what they're trying to do. 'Or, is it something indivisible and whole?' Anybody got any answers?

Both.

Both, yes.

Something in between.

Something in between, yes.

Neither.

Neither, yes. That's that one solved then!

Can you just tell us what the original, or closest we get to the original in translation, of those two phrases is? The way, for example, Nishijima's translated it in the book? I'm just curious.

Well, if you're curious about the original, have a read of it.

Yes, I can't remember it off hand, that phrase.

Right. As it's been translated here, it says, 'When we are pursuing the ultimate, who can see it utterly as separate moments? And who can hold it up for examination as a state of total stillness?' But that's not what the Japanese says. Would you like to know what the Japanese says?

Personally I would, yes.

Yoko, can you read out the Japanese?

In Japanese? Or translate?

The Japanese will be completely useless to me.

Will it?

Yeah.

How about this (inaudible)?

Well why not something in the middle? Another version, any version will do.

Can you understand the one that is written here?

Yes, I trust you, yes. I'm just curious about ... I'm just curious.

I suggest if you want to look back at both versions, what's best to do is to have them beside you and read them and compare them. It's quite a difficult thing to do in the middle of a talk. Actually, some of the sentences in here don't match what I've said, and there are a variety of reasons for that. In this case, what is in the book is not very accurate with the original. If we get into comparisons then we get into quite a difficult discussion.

Another day, then.

Right.

Is Yoko going to translate?

I thought Malcolm was asking for the Japanese rather than the English translation.

What's the point in telling Malcolm the Japanese? (To Malcolm) Do you speak Japanese?

No. No, I said the Japanese itself would mean nothing. But, oh I just thought perhaps a literal translation of the Japanese, whatever, that might do. But when you mentioned it to Yoko, I thought well then I might be able to get something out of this, perhaps a literal translation from the Japanese.

Do you have your flute here? Could you play us a tune?

No, not right now.

Right. ... "Should we say that it is only an accumulation of particles, or should we conclude that it is something indivisible and whole?"

In the end, the whole of reality [the whole Universe] is just endlessly realising that I exist right here in this world, and realising that the world exists right here with me.

That's a very straightforward phrase. What Master Dogen is saying there is that, although we imagine a Universe, the only real experience we have of reality is what is here now. So we can say that reality, for me, is the meeting of me and the world here and now. And he puts it two ways round, which is a very familiar way for Master Dogen to express the meeting of two things: "I exist right here in this world" is from my subjective side; "the world exists right here with me" from the objective side.

So that kind of says to me that it doesn't matter if it's particles or an indivisible whole.

Oh no, of course it doesn't matter, because we can't change it, can we? But it does matter to people who are seeking for the basis of existence. So, for instance, there's a group of scientists who've built a great big new particle-collider, which is seventy kilometres in radius, and in this underground tube, which cost billions and billions of dollars, they're firing little particles round and round in circles and then making them crash against each other to see if they can split the smallest particle they've found into smaller ones. So they want to know the answer to that question. But it doesn't matter to me. "In the end, the whole of reality is just endlessly realising that I exist right here in this world, and realising that the world exists right here with me." We often think about situations in other places than the place we are, and to us it's a kind of reality. And, of course, it is. But something common with both Yoko and me, because we often move about between Japan and England, we both feel that when we're in one place the other place disappears. And normally you think that's quite a subjective feeling. So, in other words, Yoko's come to England and she said the other day, 'Japan's just gone.' And when I go to Japan, England's just gone. And in a sense that's true. Of course, we can say, 'No it's not. I could ring up a friend who lives in Tokyo. Or we can look at the television and see pictures of a reporter in Tokyo.'

But that's not our real experience. It's impossible for us to experience anything other than what is here and now.

That's like being here. We all arrive here and we forget there's a whole world outside and we've just come from wherever.

Yes, you drop off the world when you're here. So the Universe, according to Master Dogen's commentary here, or reality, is keeping on realising that actually I am here in this place and this is real. Other places and other things that might be going on are going on up here (points to head). That doesn't mean that the world's stopped or disappeared, but it's something to do with the nature of our real experience. It doesn't mean that directly we become buddhists we should deny that there's anything else going on in the world, but it's something to do with the nature of our experience itself. And, especially in the modern world, we get pulled out of our state, a simple state of being where we are, in all different directions. We get a phone call from somewhere far away, or we see the news on the television, and we start thinking about places other than where we are, and that takes us out of being in the moment, or being with what we're doing. I don't mean that it shouldn't or we should stop it, just that fact itself.

Just be conscious of it, is that what you're saying?

Ah, notice it. Don't have to go around keeping on noticing it, but it's a fact that the only thing any human being has ever experienced is what is going on around them.

Is that a clue as to conducting yourself in Zazen, to endlessly realise that I am existing here and now.

You can say so, yes. And the easiest way to realise that is to stop thinking. When we stop thinking, we're happy where we are. But it's very difficult; our thoughts come and go. But although our thoughts come and go, in the gaps between our thoughts, we're here. And when we practice Zazen we practice sitting in that gap.

Malcolm and I were talking earlier and I was saying that it's not that long, it's only since the end of April, May, since I started doing Zazen, and what I discovered recently is that when I'm gardening I'm only gardening, but I didn't realise that before. You know, when I'm doing gardening I don't actually think anything else, I'm only there, but I was never aware of that before. But I'm aware of it quite often now when I do things. But then when I realise that then it goes!

(Laughs) Yes, so human beings...

You know, on hindsight I think, 'Well, I'm not anywhere else, I'm only just there, just in that one place and my mind isn't wandering anywhere.'

You've spotted that, obviously you've found it in Zazen and then noticed outside of it?

Yeah... Well I didn't find it in Zazen, no. Just now, when doing things, in hindsight I realise that while I was doing something I wasn't actually thinking about anything else. Because when you garden or you weed you tend to just actually do that, you're not thinking about anything else. Well, I don't. So I just discovered that, and I haven't actually thought about it before, but the reason I think about it now is because we've talked about just thinking about the one thing that you're doing and not other things, because you should just be doing what you're doing

and not thinking ten other things or thinking what you're going to make for dinner or whatever, you know. That's just the point I was making.

Yes. And to notice that fact is to notice how human beings are. So many people, when they hear Buddhist teachings, think, 'Oh, I have to do that, I have to get there.' But that's not the point at all. The point is just to notice how we human beings are, how I am. So sometimes, although I'm doing something, my mind is elsewhere. That's not a criticism, it's just a description of reality. And when my mind is elsewhere I can't put my full energy into what I'm doing. And sometimes in work, in the kind of society we live in, we have to do that, we have to split ourselves. But to notice it clearly is important. Nowhere is there any instruction that we shouldn't do this and we should do that. But just to notice how we are.

Reality is still a personal thing, though, isn't it? If we take what it's saying here, the person is in touch here and now with their reality, and there's another person there looking at something similar, people have vastly different interpretations of their worlds, don't they?

Ah, so not the interpretation, but me...

The particle physicist sees particles, and the wave one sees waves.

Yes, so neither of those, but something different from that. Me here and now meets the world. Me meeting the world is reality. That reality doesn't stop with me, it extends to everything, because you're here. So our reality is not personal; but when we think about it we make it personal. But actually the interface between me and the world is not personal. I can't sit in this room without all you being here, because that's the way it is. So it doesn't mean a personal reality, it means a common reality. We make our reality personal with our thoughts and feelings; but the reality that is not personal, which is described here, is, in Buddhism, the Universe, or everything, or Dharma. We can't grasp it by thinking about it; but when we sit in Zazen, when we stop thinking, there's no edge to what is included in our consciousness, if you like. But not only in Zazen – when you're gardening there's no edge to what you consider your consciousness. Or when you're playing your musical instrument, or when you're doing something sincerely. So the edgeless state is when I stop thinking about myself and seeing the world from inside and meet the world.

Meet the world of emptiness, is it? Because the world of form sort of implies...

Well, it's the same world. There's not another world. But when we stop thinking, there aren't any objects. When you're carrying a cup of tea out to the room out there, as you're walking along, there aren't any objects. Nothing's changed, but you don't look at things and name them, you don't interpret things - you're just acting, just being, just doing. So that's called 'empty', in early Buddhism. But it means the state where we don't discriminate or analyse. And we all have that state all the time, because if we didn't we couldn't live. And it comes and goes. But if we don't give ourselves enough time to be without our busy minds going round, we get stressed. So the answer to stress is just to train ourselves to sit in the gap between our thoughts and then let our mind settle and then just sit. Does that make sense? ... So Master Dogen says, 'In the end, the whole of reality is just endlessly being here.' He doesn't say, 'When I'm here I know what the Universe is.' He says, 'When I'm here, I *am* the Universe.' As usual, he always makes identities between things that we think are separate. But then he goes on to say something else further than that:

Normally we say that our emotions and our thoughts are separate from the Universe,

So, 'I can think about the Universe, but those thoughts are not the Universe itself.'

but our emotions and our thoughts, just like turning our head or changing our facial expression, are momentary actions to take things in, and as such they are the Universe itself.

This is a very strange statement! Although we think that our thoughts are separate from everything around us, in the same way as just moving – moving our face, moving our head – our thoughts take place in reality. So they're the Universe itself.

Mike, can I ask you. (Inaudible) we talked quite a bit about this – thoughts as not having body. So, in one sense, they have no reality. So how does that tie in with the thoughts...

It doesn't. It's a contradiction. So what he's saying is a contradiction with saying that, for instance, our lives are different from what we think about them. And we can see that we can have thoughts in our head about something, but when we meet that something it's completely different to our thoughts. We might have had a picture in our head about coming here this weekend and then when we arrive here it's completely different to our thoughts about it. So that suggests that thoughts are different to reality. But here he's saying something which contradicts that. So he says that all the way through his writings. He says, 'Yes, thoughts are different from reality; but thoughts are the Universe, thoughts are reality.' And we don't like contradictions, so we get stuck – 'But, but, but, but...'

Yes, well I kind of thought that. I thought, 'Oh, yes, I can see what you're talking about now,' and then I thought, 'Right...'

'Now I can't understand it anymore.'

Yes. Now it doesn't make sense at all. I thought I'd nailed that bit!

If somebody wires me up while I'm thinking, the activity is certainly an event, you know, things going on in the world.

Yes.

There are thoughts?

There are such things.

Can I think of it as thoughts being real representations of reality, but they're not actually... The thought of the table is not actually the table, but it's a real thought of a table, so it's real and it's not the table at the same time.

Yes.

Is that not our problem (inaudible), you know, that we all say something like, 'The mind's elsewhere.' But the mind's never elsewhere. The mind's always in the mind. It's just a misrecognition.

Yes, or it's the way we talk. 'My thoughts took me out of where I was.' They don't really.

No, it's a language problem.

But it's a contradiction - they do and they don't.

I thought it was going to be sunny when I came here and it was pouring with rain! But my thought was real that (inaudible) what I thought about.

Yes, so our thoughts are real...

But the reality of what you think isn't always real.

No.

Very seldom.

Yes.

Sometimes they are, though, aren't they?

Mine very rarely are.

It's like, a counterfeit painting is still a painting.

Are we going to say, when Mary's gardening and just one of the activities of that is thinking, are we going to call... I mean I call that experience I suppose. Are we going to say that the experience of gardening is a thought or not?

No. Gardening is you've got something in your hand and you put it in...

But you're aware of doing it, aren't you, at some kind of very (inaudible).

No, that's thinking and gardening.

Action is different to thought.

Thinking is when we create an image in our head and we think about it. And doing something...

So if I said to Mary, 'What did you just do?', you'd say, 'Oh well, I just took this weed out,' and you were conscious, it wasn't like you were unconscious. You were one with your action, but you could say that that experience of pulling the weed out very one pointedly is a thought.

Can you? Pulling a weed out is a thought?

The experience of it.

Ah, we can think about it while we're doing it or after we're doing it, and we can think about it before we're doing it; but doing it's different from thinking about it before, during or after it.

Well that's what I want some clarity on, I think, that when we're... You know, we were talking about tennis the other day, weren't we - when you're playing tennis

you're sentient, you're experiencing it, you're not in a coma, there are experiences. That never stops, your experience, does it, until you die?

No.

But it's different from self-consciousness, isn't it?

Oh yeah. But, I mean, when we're talking about thoughts, you're saying a thought is a representation of reality, so we can say that some thoughts are better than others, because some thoughts are one with what you're doing and some are a dream.

That's the trap of mindfulness, though, isn't it? In a lot of Buddhist books you'll see this theme 'mindfulness', and when I first met you (to Mike), you said, 'Ah, I have a trouble with mindfulness,' because if you try and make yourself mindful you get into the habit of separating yourself from what you're doing. So just do it, basically.

No, I'm not saying do that.

There's a difference between thought and experience, isn't there, in this sense?

Well, we can choose where we're going to draw the line, can't we? It's an arbitrary linguistic thing.

No. Action is not a linguistic thing.

No, action isn't, but experience, you know...

Experience is not linguistic, no.

... if I said, 'What did you just do?' and she said, 'I was just pulling that weed out,' you know, 'and I was doing it with awareness.'

Talking about it is a linguistic thing; doing it is completely different.

Clearly being aware is something additional, isn't it, ...

No.

... because (to Mary) you just said the moment you become aware you disrupt it.

No, no. You can't garden unconsciously.

Well, that's what I'm saying.

You can't say, 'Oh, good gracious! All the gardening's been done!'

(Laughter)

You can't do it.

Well that's what I'm arguing! That's what I'm saying.

So you're saying what is the mental process going on at the same time that you're gardening? How do you define that?

But I didn't say that... My mind doesn't stop when I'm doing the gardening. What I was saying was I just, I'm only there and doing it, it's not...

What Master Dogen's saying here is that although our thoughts about reality are not reality, our thoughts *are* reality. And that's a contradiction, because it *is* a contradiction, in our thoughts. So our thoughts are not real, because we think about things that don't exist, or think about things by abstracting from something in front of us, and that's not real; but our thoughts themselves are real things. So if we strap bits on our head we can see little blips on the graph. Is that... is there something strange about that?

No, I don't think we're quite... I'm just saying that, you know, when Mary's gardening, she's experiencing continuously, you never stop. You're not self-conscious...

That's what we're calling awareness rather than thought, or consciousness rather than thought.

Yes, that's right.

And Harry's saying it's an arbitrary boundary.

Well, I don't... You know, you could say, 'What were you thinking about, Mary?' and she'd tell you. So, I'm saying that, you know, experience itself... are we going to say we're not going to use the word 'thinking' for that?

Do you mean experience, to you, means something about consciously savouring what we're doing?

No, no, I don't think we need to argue that one. That's fundamental, isn't it?

Then I can't understand what you're saying.

Well, it's common to say, when you're experiencing something, that you're thinking. You're thinking about the thing that you're...

It's common to say it, but it's not true. Sometimes it's true; but experience is not a thought process.

Well, you know, that's something that we can debate, isn't it?

Yes.

Yeah, that's your point, isn't it, yes?

That's the linguistics of it really, isn't it?

OK. I understand.

But you can not think and still be experiencing, or do you not feel that? I mean, if you're sitting Zazen you can not think and you can still...

Ah yes, it's unconscious experience, isn't it? Maybe?

(Laughter)

Well, still it's conscious because you're aware of it. I mean you can not be thinking in Zazen, there's no thought there but you're still aware, there's still consciousness.

Yeah, I agree with that.

Well, that's a whole can of worms there!

(Inaudible comments)

I was just thinking, 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow!'

(Laughter)

I might just be thinking, 'There's an awful lot of weeds in here!'

(Laughter)

The realisation that the world exists right here with me is endless. But because the Universe at this moment exists prior to our conceptualisation [that is, before we interpret it], we cannot grasp its essence.

The word *prajna*, as I've explained in previous talks, is a word in Buddhism which commonly means 'wisdom', but it actually means what we experience before we interpret the world – pre-thinking. So, in Buddhism, there's the assertion that before we think or interpret the world there is some experience, we are experiencing it. That may be different from the modern meaning of 'experience' and, as Harry says, we should talk about it in detail some time. But, Buddhism insists that before our conceptualisation, there is something and we're in it. So, being in it, and it being something, there is some experience - we know that we're in it in some way; we *are* in it, it's real. But I understand what you mean.

Gensa's expression, "one bright pearl" is not yet widely known, but it expresses the real situation, and will one day be recognised as such. "One bright pearl" expresses something eternal, and so it brings eternity into the present moment. Although we have bodies and minds that exist here and now, the whole Universe is one bright pearl. Not that grass out there, or those trees over there, not just the mountains and rivers all around us, but one bright pearl.

So he's now moved on from talking about "the Universe" to the second half of the expression, "one bright pearl." And he says the expression "one bright pearl" is expressing something inexpressible. It expresses something eternal about the nature of reality and, as such, it brings that eternal something into the present. "Although we have bodies and minds that exist here and now" – although we're here and now as people and things, and we're thinking and not thinking – "the whole Universe is one bright pearl," suggests something whole and undivided, that is, some undivided state of experience that exists here and now before we start to analyse here and now. Before we start to think about here and now, there *is* here and now, we're all in it. We *are* it. There *is* no here and now without us. Without us there can't be what is here and now. We can imagine this room without us in it, or me talking without you being there, but it's only a thought. The reality in which we exist here and now, which is real, is all of us here at this moment. And that's what is expressed by 'one bright pearl' - that undivided, uninterpreted reality in which we are, right at this moment. So, "not that grass out there, or trees over here, or the mountains and rivers around us, but one

bright pearl." In other words, expressions which are partial don't describe it. We can't describe it, but Master Dogen says that the expression 'one bright pearl' is a beautiful expression of it. So, in that sense, the phrase 'one bright pearl' is a metaphor for something we can't put into words. Ralph will have to do that for us!

He says the expression "is not yet widely known"?

Yes. Well, Master Gensa lived in China, and China and Japan had heard the phrase, but over here in the UK we hadn't heard it. Easyjet hadn't started flights.

That's in the original text, isn't it, that expression "isn't widely known." He's presumably talking about Japan.

Which original text?

This one here. I'm not being difficult! The one in front of me now.

It's in there, "it is not widely known."

I was just going to ask a question, because there's a little story in the Lotus Sutra - a guy gets drunk, falls asleep, somebody sews a pearl into the lining of his coat which he doesn't know he's got, but he's got it all the time. I only mention it to ask what significance was there, if anything, of a pearl, as such? Has he just picked it out of the blue?

Well, we can talk about that when we get to the next paragraph. If we talk about the next paragraph before we get there...

Oh no, I didn't know it was coming up. Good.

I could talk about the last paragraph when we get there.

Good, OK.

Is that what you wanted to talk about, that story?

If it's coming up, I'll wait until it comes up.

Yes. Did I answer your question about "not widely known"?

Well, no, because I thought that perhaps if people knew about the story then they would be familiar with that expression. That's what I'm asking, were they in fact familiar with that expression or was he being totally genuine, nobody had heard...?

No. He says, "it's not widely known." It means people didn't know it, because, for instance, Japan and China were quite small, isolated places. So it wasn't widely known. And people even in Japan didn't know about it until Master Dogen started writing and talking.

That answers my question, thanks.

What Master Dogen is talking about here is difficult to talk about. That's why he uses metaphor and why his description contains contradictions. And we shouldn't be surprised that his descriptions contain contradictions, because reality contains contradictions when we think about it.

Difficult to talk about, but not difficult to experience.

No, we're experiencing it all the time.

As something smooth and seamless and luminous, perhaps, like a pearl.

Yes.

What a great life you must lead!

(Laughter)

You lead a great life too. So what Master Dogen is saying in this chapter is we all lead a great life.

We're all oysters.

We're all oysters? No, we're all pearls.

When we travel, we usually believe that we are in a country. I used to believe that when I'm in France I'm really in France; but now I don't feel it so strongly anymore.

Ah, you're not in France!

(Laughter)

Yes, I don't believe I'm in France, but also I don't believe I'm in England so very much.

Oh, you are.

I don't find anything substantial about being in England. It's rather one bright pearl than England here.

OK, yes, that's right. So England is a name, France is a name.

There's nothing English here, it just seems English.

So we can't be in a name. In our heads we can be in a name, but actually we're just here and now. Yes. One bright pearl. There are no boundaries, no borders.

It doesn't necessarily mean something wonderful, something that makes us feel wonderful, but something beyond all description that may feel wonderful after all, but it's impossible to explain how wonderful it feels.

Yes, that's right. Impossible to explain. So Master Gensa says to his monk, 'What's the use of thinking about it?'

I remember when I was fifteen we couldn't travel because, you know, the eastern bloc, we couldn't travel. But one day I managed to get to Austria and I was so excited that I was in Austria that I kept saying to myself, 'This is Austria! This is so wonderful!' But then I was disappointed because I couldn't find anything Austrian! I was just standing in the middle of a bedroom and it looked like any kind of bedroom. It was like, 'I should be excited because this is it! This is what I wanted so much!' But there was nothing Austrian about it. It just looked Austrian

a little bit. I was there and it was only me so I had to deal with myself and not with Austria. I think that has maybe something to do with this.

Yes. Yes it does, yeah.

Dogen's reminding us that it's wonderful, isn't he? I mean, if we didn't think about it it'd be wonderful all the time.

Ah, it *is* wonderful!

It is wonderful, but many times it's not wonderful...

Even when it's miserable it's wonderful.

The times that it's not wonderful – like you say, when we're facing these contradictions and things like that – it's because we're thinking about it.

It still makes me wonder!

Master Gensa said, 'It is not others who deceive me.' ... Anyway, let's finish there. Thank you very much.

(End of Talk)