

Winter Sesshin 2004

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So we got to the second paragraph on the second column. And in that paragraph, Master Dogen says we normally think that events are part of a journey, as though we are crossing a river or walking over a mountain pass. And we think that these events are “back there”, and we are “here”, so they are behind us in the far distance. But in the following paragraphs he puts his alternative view:

But this is not the only way to think about it. At the time when we are crossing the mountain pass or crossing the river, we are present there, and so time is present there. Time cannot elude the present. Accepting that time does not appear and disappear, the time when we are crossing the mountain pass is also a real time-present.

“Accepting that time does not appear and disappear” is Master Dogen’s statement that the present is always present, and sometimes we try to explain time in terms of the frames of a film, so this moment and then the next moment, but actually our real experience isn’t like that. If we had this moment then the next moment, there would be some kind of gap, and time would disappear in this gap then come back again. But our real experience is much stranger than that, because the present is always here, so something is always here, but at the same time it’s moving on. So it’s a contradiction, he says if we accept that time does not appear, the time when we are crossing the mountain pass is also a real time-present. In other words, when we crossed the mountain pass was a time-present, now is a time-present, there’s no gap between time-present and time-present, so the mountain pass is also time-present. And that sounds very peculiar. He says:

Even if time were to appear and disappear, the time when time is actually present is actually time-present. Then how can the time when we are crossing the mountain pass or crossing the river not be swallowed up in the time when we are illuminated by the present.

So he’s suggesting in a rather unusual way that the present contains the past.

And how can we say that the time when we are crossing the mountain pass or crossing the river does not spew out this present brightness?

So there he’s suggesting that the past contained the present, or if you like, the present contains the future. And this view is very strange. If we look at the next paragraph, he continues the argument:

Although the angry person is an event in the past, and the buddha is here today,

This is referring back to the lines of the poem which the chapter opened with.

we can also think of time as if going up into the mountains and looking out over thousands of peaks, rather than seeing time as passing. The

time-peak when we become angry is then a time-present, even though it seems to have receded into the past. And the time-peak when we become buddha is also a time-present, even though it seems to be back there.

So he's suggesting a rather strange landscape, in which we're present here, and all the past and future is present here, and we can see the peaks of past and future around. He doesn't mean literally that, for example, when I went to the cinema last week, that event is still hanging around here somewhere, he means that the present is the only real existing time. So everything that exists, must be in the present, there is no other place that it can be. So again he's trying to destroy our very strong linear view of time, or rather break it up, and try to suggest another way of looking at things. So the landscape he paints in these two paragraphs of peaks of time over which we can look out, is an alternative view.

But the future doesn't exist yet.

What does exist about the future now?

Nothing.

So why do we use the word?

Because we're projecting the fact that there will be events following this time.

Right, and where are those events? Think of an event in the future, where is it?

I see. But we're talking about the concept of the future is in the present.

Yes we can say so.

The events of the future don't exist yet so they can't be contained within the present. I can understand how the past is, but the future.....

In his sentences, the "time when we are crossing the mountain pass or crossing the river is swallowed up by the time when we are illuminated by the light of the present". So he says when we are in the present, it's the only time when anything about the past can exist. So that something might be the scar on my hand, when I fell over as a child, or some kind of mental result of the past. But the only time when any of that can exist, my memory of the past, my images of the past, the results of the past all exist here. So besides my memory, the results of the past, the cut on my hand, there is nothing else. The past exists here. So turning that around, he says that the past must have contained now in it. But we can't understand that, you're right. He's trying to create an image which is almost impossible for us to grasp in our minds, and that is of something here. So something of now, now, now, everything in one point. Eternity in a grain of sand..... Blake.

So because what we have now is the residue of a past present, then we can say that now contains what will become the residue.

Yes. But the reason we can't understand that the present is contained in the future is precisely because we have this very strong linear view. So how can the present contain the future, the future hasn't come yet – that's a linear view. He's saying ditch the linear view and everything is now. Because there is only now, and in the future it will be a now. And in the past was a now, and all nows are at the same place. Now we've never heard that before, nobody says all nows are at

the same place, we have a very very strong belief that everybody has their individual view, everything has its individual place, and time is stretched out past to present to future, and we can hardly break that. But he wants to break it, not to deny it, not to say it's wrong, but to suggest another view where everything is here. And that's what Blake suggested in his poetry, and other poets as well. But we can't grasp it, even when Master Dogen writes it, we can't grasp it, because we're saying that the future hasn't come yet, but that's why we can't grasp it, because we have a linear track.

But even if we do grasp it intellectually we have to use a linear system to explain it.

Yes, that's right. But what we experience in the moment is infinity, you can't grasp infinity, we experience it but we don't grasp it.

Did Einstein say something about time, infinity as well?

He said a lot about time and infinity yes.

Did he say anything similar to Master Dogen about it?

I don't think so no. Though the relative view is very similar, he didn't posit an eternal now, if you like, or an eternity in the now. Science can't say that, because once you take away process, science collapses. And science is a valid way of looking at reality, so the scientific view is valid, it must be based on process, without a process view you can't separate causes from their effects. And therefore you can't work out what causes anything, so there's no science. So we can't ditch that, the scientific view of the world has created our civilization, and we need it and we believe it. But Master Dogen wants to suggest another view, outside of science, and also outside of religion, and that view is called the middle view, you can say it's the middle between science and religion. It's not based on a process view, and it's not based on a spiritual or eternal view, it's based on real experience in the present. But this is so new to us, even in the 21st century, that it sounds very strange, weird, bizarre.

My understanding of infinity.....we divide time into (inaudible)

One example I remember from my electronics days, was that you get time pulses, if you analyse mathematically what frequencies there are in a time pulse, if you get a big pulse, it doesn't have many frequencies, the narrower you make the pulse, the more frequencies there are, and an infinitely thin pulse has all the frequencies in the Universe in it. And I always remember that, because it somehow says that something infinitely small can have infinity in it.

Given that in the process view the self would collapse, or our idea of the self would collapse, is the self just a kind of personalization of process?

Yes, but I can't get rid of myself, I love myself too much, and hate myself sometimes, but I can't get rid of myself. So people who say that to get rid of the self is the aim of Buddhism for example, or there is no self, to some extent there's a validity to that, but it's impossible to pursue it – we are people, we are selves, we create ourselves at every moment. So in that way we're illusions, but we are real illusions.

The process view seems to be like a kind of skewer, the self going through time.

It's very weird isn't it? The other problem is that of course language is process, and this is something which Wittgenstein analysed in great detail. But unless we get rid of language we can't get rid of process – even the way we're talking now. Process is real, but it's not real. It's real because we all agree that it explains the way reality works, it's not real because only this time, this moment is real, and there's no next moment yet, and the last moment has gone already so there is no process. So we can say there is process and there isn't process. And that contradiction is at the heart of the problem of describing reality, it's the same contradiction actually as freedom and determinism in a different guise.

Where does our discriminating mind come in? Is Dogen saying that time is like this, but it's when we start discriminating that past and present and future come into the picture? Before our self comes on to the scene, time just exists as it is.

Yes, that's called time present, But he wants to use his discriminating mind to describe the situation before he started discriminating. All of Dogen's philosophy is trying to point us to the place before we started thinking about it. But it's impossible, but he tried, and the whole of his life he tried, And he said that it was impossible, he points us out of the area of the intellect again and again. So if someone points us out of the intellectual area we don't know what we should think. If we practice Zazen, we have a practice which is outside of the area of thinking, and all these sentences that he writes are referring to that essential experience in Zazen or in pure activity. We split ourselves when we do things – we do this a lot. We do something and we talk while we're doing it, and this is very common and everybody does it, but we also have activities which demand the whole of us, and the feeling is different, it's a whole and more full feeling. So that kind of activity we can let go of thinking, and that's why we have these activities. And we can find it in all sports and we can find it in Yoga etc. Zazen is the essence. What Master Dogen is trying to do is to describe that essential experience before we start thinking. But because he uses words to do it, we're in a kind of trap in a way. So he creates these strange images

The way he constructs his chapters, ...what you call the pivot of Zazen, is that right? He uses linear language, and then....

He uses four viewpoints. He looks at things from a linear point of view. Well he looks at things from a theoretical intellectual point of view, then from a more practical point of view, then he tries to describe them from a more realistic point of view, which is what we're talking about now. He does it by creating bizarre images, and also by switching around his language and perspective. So instead of saying I'm sitting in the zafu, he'll say the zafu is sitting under me. So he has various devices in the way he writes to try and break up our traditional way of thinking. Then he uses poetry – other master's poetry and his own to try and capture what Blake meant, when he was talking about eternity in a grain of sand. That is, reality which is outside of our words but inside of our experience.

Then a pine tree is time-present, and a bamboo thicket is a time-present.

Not a pine tree is in a time-present, but a pine tree is a time-present – he's making an identity between the here and now, and what is in the here and now, we tend to separate these. We say "I am *in* the here and now", but he says "I *am* the here and now".

We tend to think of time as a landscape that we pass through, but it can also feel like time passes through us.

He wants to go even further than that and say, not that time is flowing through you, but that time *is* you. First we say that we flow through time, and most people agree on that, then someone says that time is flowing through me, and people are a bit perplexed, but he wants to say that time is us, without us, there is no time. Which implies a lot of things, one of which is that time is a human construction. Next paragraph:

Seeing time simply as flowing away is not enough.

He's coming back to breaking up our process view.

Thinking that the only property time has is the ability to flow is not enough. If we think of time only as flowing away, then there must be gaps between the instants of time-present as they pass. Ordinary people only see time as something that flows away, and this is why they do not experience time-present, and have not heard it explained. In actual fact, all the things in the whole Universe are time-presents that are both continuous and separate. Real time is always time-present, and so it is always this time-present.

He touches on a number of things in talking about time. He's also saying that his definition of something being real is something which is present here, and if it's not present here, it's not real in his sense. People then say, well Glasgow is real, but we can't see it right now, and Bristol is also real, but in Master Dogen's terms, we can't use the word "real" about them, in the sense that he means here. But we can say they are "time-peaks" somewhere – time-peaks in his landscape. It's quite complicated, the landscape that he paints, and quite bizarre.

But he comes back here now to make sure that we don't think he's denying process:

But time-present can also be thought of as a process. Time proceeds from today to tomorrow. Today proceeds back to yesterday. Yesterday proceeds on to today. Today proceeds on through today. Tomorrow proceeds on through tomorrow. Although time can be seen as a process like this, times arriving do not pile up on time past, neither do they extend out in a continuous line.

If we try and imagine lots of times in the past and lots of times in the future, we can either imagine them as coming one after the other like a strip of film, or we can think of them as coming down on top of each other – piling up. But he says we can't grasp the true nature of time with either of those images.

And for this reason we see that Master Seigen's life was made up of moments of time-present, and so were the lives of Master Obaku, Master Baso, and Master Sekito.

These four men were famous Chinese masters in Master Dogen's line of teaching, and he's saying that their lives were made up of moments of time-present. But those moments didn't pile up on top of each other, neither did they stretch out in a row. Although we do think of time in that way, that's not the way it actually is.

Both I and the external world exist in time-present, and so practice and realisation of the truth exist at time-present. All our daily struggles are also at time-present.

Now he's just reinforcing the point that everything takes place now, there is no other time for anything to take place other than at this time.

People have their own views today, and they think those views are produced by their own causes and circumstances. Although they think their views form the basis of, and are based on, their experiences, they are not the basis of their reality. They themselves are only reality presenting its result at this time-present as causes and circumstances.

That's a really strange couple of sentences. He's trying to get us to turn around our view completely and see us and our circumstances, and the things that cause our lives and the circumstances which affect us, not from our side, but from the other side. But we can't do it. We can only see the world outwards from where we are, but he says we are just.....the basis of us is the Universe creating us through causes and circumstances. But it's a strange view.

You can't actually identify or define time-present, as soon as you attempt it, it's gone. So in that life it appears that Dogen is saying that time is now, but if you ask him what is now, he can't actually say what is now. As soon as you start to say it, it's gone, the now becomes....it is just part of a wave of whatever, and we're all in that wave, and coming together....(inaudible)

Yes, it's strange isn't it, that we're in the middle of the 21st century, civilisation has been going for thousands of years, but we don't actually know what reality is yet. We are moving towards it, as we move towards it we find very simple things. For example, that we are masters of our own fate, we not dancing on strings held by God above the clouds. Or diseases aren't caused by bad behaviour, they're caused by viruses. Slowly we find that if people are happy when they're working, the company is more efficient, and so on. All these are factors of reality, so human civilisation is very slowly moving towards it. Science is moving towards it, everything is moving towards it, but we don't know where it is. We can't grasp the present, but what Buddhism says is that we can't grasp it, but we have a way to experience it. And if we experience it and try to talk about it, we kind of....we can't grasp it but it grasps us. And in grasping us, it gives us a focus, in modern life, we don't know where our focus is and often our focus is in the next five minutes, the next half an hour, because there is pressure on us. So we're always thinking about what we've got to do next, or we worry about what we've done, so we're on this kind of process-conveyor, which society needs to function, but it also pulls us out of being in the present. What Buddhism says, and it says it in a very ancient way, what Master Dogen says comes from the 13th century, is that we can experience time-present, we can experience reality, and if we talk about it as far as we're able, and if we practice it, it grasps us. And in grasping us we focus ourselves into reality. This is all Tim Henman wants to do, this is all Paula Radcliffe wants to do – to focus into the here and now, forget about the point you just lost and hit the ball, now. That's what all sportspeople want to do, that's what musicians want to do, isn't it?

Yes, I think maybe making music and sitting doing nothing are the same thing, but it's harder to do nothing. I mean sitting in Zazen, it's harder to experience the non-intellectual....

Really? Well it would be harder for me to play the cello. Yes it is harder isn't it? What's harder about it?

Well the actual, the activity of making music, as you said earlier, you lose yourself, and it's very hard to lose yourself in doing nothing. I don't know why it's harder but....

Why is it hard? I agree it's hard... If we just sit down in an armchair and decide that we're going to do nothing, it's very difficult. But if we sit in the posture of Zazen, the posture itself helps us to do nothing. It's not only mental effort, it's something physical too. Even when our mind is really busy, if we sit in the posture of Zazen, we actually settle, whether we like it or not. It may only be a small amount, we may settle into a very nice peaceful state, or we may just settle enough to not get up and run out. The posture itself in Zazen gets us.

Does it get us more than sitting on a sofa or relaxing?

Well it does for me, I'd rather sit in Zazen than sit on a sofa. Because it gets me and the person I learned Zazen from said that it got him, I hope that it will get other people.

But do you think that if we took sitting on a sofa and relaxing seriously, then...

I don't think it would, because there's a physiological side to Zazen, sitting with the spine in a balanced posture has an effect on the autonomic nervous system. And although the physiology of Zazen has not been clarified, it's possible that in a few years' time.... My Dad used to tell us to sit up straight, and he was right. When you sit up straight somehow you feel, somehow lighter or something, you feel different don't you?

Sofas are a really bad design.

Inaudible.....Zazen as you said it just sitting. In terms of....time present contains all things. And that seems to me the other part of the experience, that in sitting in Zazen, you're aware of all things. And the question is what do you do with all things that can appear....?

What do you do with them?

Well, yes, I mean in Zazen....

Are they your property to do anything with? They're there. They're there. So if you go and sit by the lake, you can see the trees and the water, but you don't need to do anything with them, you don't need to twiddle that tree or lift the island out of the water. They're just there aren't they? And you and they share the space. In Zazen we share space with the whole Universe, it doesn't mean that we imagine everything in the Universe going through our minds. But because we're sitting in the Universe, we share it with everything. But normally we have a kind of priority on ourselves, we separate ourselves from the world, but in action, especially in Zazen, but also in every other kind of action, in the moment of acting, there's an equality, a balance between me and the world. And that's what we feel when we sit by the side of the lake and become one with the scenery. That's enough. Just to share the Universe with everything is enough, there's nothing that needs to be done. There are other things that need to be done, but we can wait until we've finished Zazen then get up and do them.

Can the words space and time be interchanged?

Phew!

It's easier to conceive time if you think of it as a space. I suddenly thought that our whole existence from the beginning until the infinity of time, to the end of time which is also infinity is space rather than time, then it's much easier to understand time, because it's just all there all of the time.

It's a big space though isn't it? Yes we can do that.

But is that time or is that not time?

Well there's something in which everything exists, and Buddhism calls that something Dharma, or reality. We don't know what it is, but everything exists in it. Is it a time? Is it a space? Is it a place? Is it a collection of objects? Is it a collection of nothing? Is it a collection of waves? Is it a huge mass of unbroken something? We don't know, so we have to look at it from different viewpoints. Because we're in it, we can't stop trying to work out what it is that we're in. But whether we work it out or not, we're always in it. Master Dogen says whatever we do we can't get out of the present we're always in it, whether we understand it, whether we don't, whether we are puzzled by it, angry, sad, we're in the present. Whether we're thinking about other worlds, whether we're thinking about previous lives, this all happens in the present. Nobody has ever done anything in any other place than in time-present.

Space-present.

Space-present, time-space-present. That's what he wants to say, but it's a bizarre view actually. He wants to add that view to the other views which we have of life, because for him it describes real experience, pre-conceptual experience.

People do not see reality itself as being this time-present – what exists at this moment – and so they feel that the state of a buddha is not time-present, but a state that they must make efforts to attain. But even the moment in which they make their efforts and reject the state of buddha because they cannot see that it is their state is also time-present – it is the time-present of a person who has not realised who they are.

Many people think that buddhas are something you can become after you make very strenuous effort, and when you become a buddha then all your problems are solved, then whatever you do you can't lose it – you've hit the jackpot. And one reason they feel like that is because they can't see that they may be a buddha in the present. And the reason they can't see that is because the word itself has so many connotations. But if we think of the word buddha as meaning someone who is awake, and awake means not asleep, then it's quite straightforward, if you're awake here and you see everything around you, you're a buddha. If you're half here, and half of you is missing and thinking something then you're not. The time when you are simply here, you're a buddha. And the reason you're a buddha is because you are simply here in time-present. But if you don't believe that, then you must think that buddha is something else that you haven't got to yet, so you want to make an effort to get to it. You might want to practice more Zazen, "I'll practice really hard tomorrow, then the day after that I might be enlightened".

Is Dogen's emphasis on how (inaudible).. time-present in terms of containing everything, partly to express the view that you don't actually need to look elsewhere for stuff. Very often we spend time trying to have part of our lives outside of time.

Well we have to actually, to function in society don't we? I mean you couldn't do much research if you were sitting there just saying to yourself "I'm here".

It's kind of tricky because....for example if you're writing for a grant, a grant is getting money to do research later for example, then when you're writing for the grant, you can be very much in the present, so it's not....

You're right, I agree. But there's some kind of difference in attitude isn't there? We can have something like an intention out of the present, but we can do a lot of things which appear to be future orientated, but we're actually doing them now and we know that we're doing them now. That's a very efficient way to work actually.

It can make you very unbalanced though, in my experience with this house buying, when I wasn't certain that I wasn't going to get this house that I really wanted, my whole existence was over on that side, it took over my life, even though I was thinking about the future.

No, *because* you were thinking about the future. Because you wanted something that was in the future and hadn't come yet to be here.

I couldn't sleep, couldn't exist properly. I couldn't be in the present at all.

Right.

Even when you were meditating?

Yes, I couldn't do my normal 25 minutes, I just couldn't do it.

Did you get the house?

I'm still going through it Graham!

This is why people imagine that there's something called a buddha who doesn't have those kind of experiences. Or there's something called a Zen master who doesn't have these experiences, and everything they do has some kind of mysterious perfection about it, but that's a load of rubbish, because all human beings are affected by what goes on in their lives. But we can notice, hopefully, that we are for example being dragged into the future by a house purchase and we're not able to sit in Zazen, we can notice how it affects us, and just that noticing itself is a kind of solution to the problem. To realise, "oh, I'm being pushed into a very paranoid state by this situation", this is noticing who we are. Master Dogen says that even the moment in which people make their efforts and reject accepting that they are buddhas because they can't see that it's their state, also happens in time-present. He's saying that we can't escape it.

So actually when you are able to be in Zazen, in the time-present, if you sit in Zazen and you notice that your thoughts don't focus any more on what you were preoccupied by – the house purchase, then you can also realise that this is some sign of your coming back to.....

Yes, we can feel ourselves coming back to the present, after we've been angry for example, or excited, or disturbed, we feel ourselves coming back to normal.

Would you say that trying to sit Zazen, even if you're thinking about getting a house, and trying to focus on the way is also a way of healing?

Yes, I think it's the most efficient way of healing. But sometimes it's almost impossible for us to sit, especially if we're very angry for example, it's very difficult. But even if we can only make ourselves sit for 5 minutes, it's a very powerful way to calm ourselves down.

It is time-present that causes the hour of twelve o'clock and the hour of 2 o'clock arranged as they are today as they rise up and drop away at their place in the Universe. Two o'clock is a time-present; six o'clock is a time-present; living beings are time-present; buddhas are time-present. The concrete time-present of being angry makes the whole Universe real. The concrete time-present of being a buddha makes the whole Universe real. The time-present in which the Universe makes itself real is called perfectly real.

Now these are very strange images. First he says that events are all in the present, so two o'clock is time-present, six o'clock is time-present, means all events are in the present, when they happen. "Living beings are time-present", means that in the present there is nothing separate from what is here, that we call time, there's time and there's me, and it's all one. Not living beings are *in* time-present, but that they *are* time-present. And buddhas are time-present. And "the concrete time-present of being angry makes the whole Universe real" means even when we're angry; the fact that we're angry here and now is the Universe. Without us being angry here and now in this moment, there's nothing. Or, "the time-present of being a buddha makes the whole Universe real", when we're awake and in the present, at the time when we're awake and in the present, the whole Universe is real. He's suggesting some kind of complete identity between the whole Universe, time, and me. So they are inseparable, and they are real. Then he adds, "time-present in which the Universe makes itself real is called perfectly real".

The state of buddha which wants to search for the truth, practice Zazen, attain the truth, and enter the balanced state to make the state of buddha real, exists at time-present.

That sentence suggests our effort to search for the truth, practice Zazen, attain the truth and enter the balance state, that sincere effort itself is being a buddha, so it's time-present.

It is making perfectly real that the whole of time is the whole of existence, with nothing left over. But since something left over is just left over, even making the whole of time-present only half real is making half of time-present wholly real.

We get so caught up in concepts and objectification, he's trying to shake us out of it by saying that you can't have half-real, you can't have whole-real, something that's real is real, he says it in a rather amusing way.

Even the times when we seem to be blundering along heedlessly are at time-present. To leave those heedlessly blundering time-presents as they are is to see that they have their own place as time-present.

When you felt yourself to be very disturbed, to recognise that you were very disturbed, and to leave them as they are, is to be in reality.

The vivid state of being in our own place in the Universe is time-present. We should neither confuse it with not being present, not force it into being present.

"Force it into being present" suggests some kind of intellectual interpretation of what's happening. These sentences you can see are quite difficult, and they kind of shake you around, but if you read them again and again, there's some kind of taste, or some kind of flavour, of some kind of simple experience. And that

experience is that here and now is real. And so if we want to look for reality, it's here already. Or as Wittgenstein said, the place that we're trying to get to must be the place that we're already at.

I'll stop there.

Inaudible.

If I make the Universe real, if I get up and run around the room, in my action I'm making the Universe real. If I sit here, I'm making the Universe real. The Universe making the Universe real, suggests there's no me. It suggests a situation where there's not separation between me and the Universe, so the Universe is making itself real. He says that's kind of better, it's perfect.

Mike, could you tell us in a sentence the context, these things appeared in a context, a historical context, a philosophical context. You said this is a very central part of the teaching, why is it expressed so strongly, what was it over against...?

It was against traditional Buddhism. Master Dogen wanted to strip away all the misinterpretations and strange beliefs that were around in Japan at the time. Buddhism had been in Japan since the 6th century, and it was then the 13th century. There were all kinds of things around at that time, there were Buddhist sects where monks stood under waterfalls and in that ascetic practice attained pure states, and there were other sects who made strange signs with their hands and chanted the name of Buddha and so on. And he wanted to establish something very simple, realistic, which he had learned in China. He wanted to strip away all the misinterpretations. He took these particular phrases, and in his own brilliant way, tried to sweep away, cut through wrong views. He only had a small group up in the mountains.

The orthodoxy Dogen was speaking against must have been a linear view of time then?

Well, we all have a linear view, we live in a world which we think is linear, time-linear. What he's trying to do is to introduce something else that's missing.

Do you think it's become more difficult for the Universe to make itself real through human beings.....

No it's become easier. Because for instance we've stopped....the crusades have stopped, parts of the world have slowed down in trying to convert other parts of the world to spiritual religions, and instead everybody plays football. And football has a much more powerful effect in making the Universe real than converting someone to another religion. The growth of sport and the growth of human activity in that way has had a huge beneficial effect on the Universe making itself real. We have time to do Yoga and we have time to do Zazen, we have time to do Qi Gong and we have time to make rakusus and so on.

We these Buddhists in the 6th century more like how Dogen saw it?

No the first Buddhists who came from China to Japan brought esoteric Buddhism. Written sutras and spiritual practices, not Zazen. Same thing happened from India.

So Dogen stripped all of these wrong Buddhist practices from his mind?

Yes. He wanted to say Buddhism is about reality not about burning incense. You can burn incense if you like, but it's about something called reality, and reality in Buddhism doesn't mean reality in here, or reality in here, it means reality - reality here.

What about the first Buddhist person who had a thought...

He was called Gautama Buddha, and he was brought up in a palace, and he got sick of all the rich material, it was too much for him. So he went off and tried living in a forest with some yogins who didn't eat very much, and who said you could attain the highest level of consciousness where you could see little atoms popping in and out of existence. He tried that, and it didn't work. So he went out of the forest and this girl handed him a drink of milk which he drank and he felt the milk was real. Then he sat under this tree for some time and saw that it's not in material pursuit, it's not in spiritual pursuit, it's right here. And he sat right where he was and realised, this is it, this is real, this is where the truth is. And he'd been searching for many years.

So Dogen approved of that, but not the stuff that came in between?

Yes he wanted to sweep away what he calls wrong views by dogs in the street and other phrases he uses. But he only had a small group, they were only maybe a hundred at the very most and they had a remote temple. He wrote all this stuff and then people locked it in boxes and didn't read it for hundreds of years.

And there was a lineage as well, a transmission of the right understanding.

Yes there was, yes. We have to stop.

Which team did he support?

Fukui Rovers.