

**On ‘Just for the Time Being,
Just for a While,
For the Whole of Time is the Whole of Existence’**

(Uji)

Translator’s Introduction: “*Uji*” is Dōgen’s discourse on the significance of *anatta* and *anicca*—the Buddhist terms for ‘no permanent, abiding self’ and ‘continual change’—and their application to treading the paths of Right Understanding and Right Thought. It is not, strictly speaking, a discourse, for Dōgen gave the text to his monks in written form, which suggests that he intended it to be read over and studied carefully, rather than to be absorbed by hearing it only once.

Because it is linguistically possible to translate the title as ‘Being and Time’, some modern scholars have been led to assume that Dōgen was engaging in a form of philosophical speculation akin to that of some Western existentialists. Such an approach, however, would seem counter to the purpose behind a discourse given by a Buddhist Master, since speculative thinking—philosophical or otherwise—is a type of mentation that trainees are working to disengage themselves from so that they may progress towards realizing spiritual Truth, which lies beyond the reaches of speculation.

The key term, which is presented as the title, has meanings which no single English rendering fully encompasses. To begin with, *uji* (the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese *you-shih*) has long been a common, everyday phrase in China, as it has been for the Japanese when read as *aru toki*, encompassing in both languages such English equivalents as ‘just for the time being’, ‘there is a time when’, ‘at some time’, ‘now and then’, and the like. During his presentation, Dōgen also explores the two components from which the word *uji* is made, drawing examples of their usage from everyday Japanese. The first half (*u*) refers to ‘existence’ or ‘being’; the second (*ji*) has a variety of close English equivalents, including ‘time’, ‘a time’, ‘times’, ‘the time when’, ‘at the time when’ (as well as ‘hour’ or ‘hours’ when used with a number) or as signifying what is temporal (‘sometime’, ‘for a time’, etc.). The phrase *aru toki* has already appeared with some frequency in several of Dōgen’s earlier discourses, particularly as a phrase in an extended *kōan* story to signal that an important event is about to happen, such as a one-to-one exchange with a Master that will trigger the disciple’s realization of what Truth is. In this context, it conveys the sense of ‘and then, one day’.

Underlying the whole of Dōgen’s presentation is his own experience of no longer being attached to any sense of a personal self that exists independent of time and of other beings, an experience which is part and parcel of his ‘dropping off of body and mind’. From this perspective of his, anything having existence—which includes every thought and thing—is inextricably bound to time, indeed, can be said to ‘be time’, for there is no thought or thing that exists independent of time. Time and being are but two aspects of the same thing, which is the

interrelationship of *anicca*, 'the ever-changing flow of time' and *anatta*, 'the absence of any permanent self existing within or independent of this flow of time'. Dōgen has already voiced this perspective in Discourse 1: A Discourse on Doing One's Utmost in Practicing the Way of the Buddhas (*Bendōwa*), and in Discourse 3: On the Spiritual Question as It Manifests Before Your Very Eyes (*Genjō Kōan*), where he discussed the Shrenikan view of an 'eternal self' and the Buddhist perception of 'no permanent self'.

In the present discourse, Dōgen uses as his central text a poem by Great Master Yakusan Igen, the Ninth Chinese Ancestor in the Sōtō Zen lineage. In the Chinese version, each line of this poem begins with the word *uji*, which functions to introduce a set of couplets describing temporary conditions that appear to be contrastive, but which, in reality, do not stand against each other. These conditions comprise what might be referred to as 'an I at some moment of time'; this is a use of the word 'I' that does not refer to some 'permanent self', abiding unchanged over time (as the Shrenikans maintained) but to a particular set of transient conditions at a particular time. In other words, there is no permanent, unchanging 'Yakusan', only a series of ever-changing conditions, one segment of which is perceived as 'a sentient being', which is, for convenience, conventionally referred to as 'Yakusan'. Both Yakusan and Dōgen understand *uji* (in its sense of 'that which exists at some time') as a useful way of expressing the condition of *anatta*, and in this sense it is used to refer to a state of 'being' that is neither a 'permanent self' nor something separate from 'other'; it is the 'I' referred to in one description of a kenshō experience (that is, the experiencing of one's Buddha Nature) as 'the whole universe becoming I'. Hence, when the false notion of 'having a permanent self' is abandoned, then what remains is just *uji*, 'the time when some form of being persists'.

After presenting Yakusan's poem, Dōgen focuses on that aspect of the poem that does not deal with metaphors, images, symbols, etc., and which is the one element in the poem that readers are most likely to pay small heed to: the phrase *uji* itself. His opening statement encapsulates the whole of what he is talking about in this text, namely: "The phrase 'for the time being' implies that time in its totality is what existence is, and that existence in all its occurrences is what time is."

Dōgen then begins to 'unravel' this statement, describing not only its implications but also its applications to practice. The points that he takes up are dealt with as they come to him, as they 'flow forth'. Therefore, he talks about 'time' for the time being, and then talks about 'existence' for the time being, and then goes back to 'time' just for a while before moving on to some other aspect just for a while. In other words, his text is not only about *uji*, it is written from the perspective of one who lives *uji*, and who also writes "*Uji*" so that the very way in which he presents his discussion reflects what *uji* is about. That is to say, he holds onto nothing as absolute, for all that is phenomenal—that is, every thought and thing that ever arises—is just for the time being.

Within the original text, there are sudden, unexpected shifts, as though Dōgen were deliberately trying to help his readers bypass or short-circuit a purely intellectual comprehension of what he is saying in order to catch a glimpse of that state of being which Dōgen himself had already reached. To help the present-day reader keep from making unintentional links between sentences that appear in sequence but which take up different points, Dōgen's text has been divided accordingly.

Although the entire discourse contains a number of remarks that may require some reflection to penetrate, near the end of his discourse Dōgen has an extended discussion that may prove daunting to some readers because of its succinctness. To make what is being said there more accessible, paraphrases have been supplied in the footnotes, which make explicit in English what is implicit in the original.

Readers who find it helpful to refer to the Introduction and footnotes may find it rewarding to reread just the text of “*Uji*”, for there are aspects of this discourse, in particular, that may well open up for them through encountering the flow of Dōgen’s presentation without interruptions.

A former Buddha once said in verse:

*Standing atop a soaring mountain peak is for the time
being*

*And plunging down to the floor of the Ocean’s abyss is
for the time being;*

*Being triple-headed and eight-armed is for the time being
And being a figure of a Buddha standing sixteen feet tall
or sitting eight feet high is for the time being;*

*Being a monk’s traveling staff or his ceremonial hossu is
for the time being*

*And being a pillar supporting the temple or a stone
lantern before the Meditation Hall is for the time
being;*

*Being a next-door neighbor or a man in the street is for
the time being*

*And being the whole of the great earth and boundless
space is for the time being.¹*

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1. Dōgen appears to understand Yakusan’s image of ‘a figure of a Buddha standing sixteen feet tall or sitting eight feet high’ as referring to one who has realized his or her Buddha Nature and lives accordingly at all times. It is likely that ‘standing’ and ‘sitting’ are references to the Four Bodily Postures: standing, walking, sitting, and reclining. The first two represent active modes, the latter two passive ones: that is, ‘whether one is inwardly or outwardly active, whether one is awake or sleeping’.

‘Being triple-headed and eight-armed’ is an allusion descriptive of several guardian beings who protect Buddhist temples and their trainees. The most likely candidates in the Zen tradition would be Achalanātha, the Steadfast Bodhisattva, and Rāgarāja, the Passionate Bodhisattva. The former is sometimes associated with the firm commitment of trainees to

The phrase ‘for the time being’ implies that time in its totality is what existence is, and that existence in all its occurrences is what time is. Thus, ‘being a golden body sixteen feet tall’ refers to a time. And because it is a time, its time will have a wondrous luminosity—a point that we will be studying and learning about during the present twenty-four hours. ‘Being one with three heads and eight arms’ also refers to a time. And because it is a time, it will be one and the same as the present twenty-four hours. Granted that we may not yet have measured the length of these twenty-four hours as to whether they are ever so long or as short as a sigh, still we speak of them as ‘the twenty-four hours of our day’. The traces of this time having come and gone are clear, so people do not doubt that these hours have occurred. But, though people have no doubt about time having occurred, the past may be something that they have not known through their direct experience. And, just because sentient beings are always having their doubts about anything and everything that they have not directly experienced, this does not mean that what they may have previously doubted is the same as what they may now have doubts about, for doubts themselves are merely ‘just for the moment’ kinds of time, and nothing more.



Since we human beings are continually arranging the bits and pieces of what we experience in order to fashion ‘a whole universe’, we must take care to look upon this welter of living beings and physical objects as ‘sometime’ things. Things do not go about hindering each other’s existence any more than moments of time get in each other’s way. As a consequence, the intention to train arises at the same time in different beings, and this same intention may also arise at different times. And the same applies to training and practice, as well as to realizing the Way. In a similar manner, we are continually arranging bits and pieces of what we experience in order to fashion them into what we call ‘a self’, which we treat as ‘myself’: this is the same as the principle of ‘we ourselves are just for a time’.

Because of this very principle of the way things are, the earth in its entirety has myriad forms and hundreds of things sprouting up, each sprout and each form being a whole earth—a point which you should incorporate into your study of the Way, for the recognition of the coming and going of things in this manner is a first

train until they have overcome all hindrances to realizing enlightenment as they persist in helping others to realize Truth. The latter has associations with a passionate desire to help all sentient beings realize Buddhahood.

Please see the *Glossary* for the metaphorical meanings of a monk’s traveling staff, a ceremonial *hossu*, a temple pillar, and a stone lantern.

step in training and practice. When you reach such a fertile field of seeing the way things really are, then the earth in its entirety will be 'one whole sprouting, one whole form'; it will be comprised of forms that you recognize and forms that you do not, sproutings that you recognize and sproutings that you do not. It is the same as the times we refer to in 'from time to time', which contain all forms of existence and all worlds. So take a moment to look around and consider whether there is any form of being, that is, any 'world', that does or does not find expression at this very moment of time.



When ordinary, everyday people who do not take the Buddha's Teachings as their model hear the phrase 'just for the time being' in Yakusan's poem, they customarily hold a view like the following:

There was once a time when Yakusan had become what he describes as 'someone with three heads and eight arms' and some other time when he had become 'someone eight or sixteen feet tall'. It is as though he were saying, "I have crossed the rivers and climbed over the mountains.² Even though those mountains and rivers may have existed in the past, I have completely gone beyond them and have now made a place for myself atop a vermilion pedestal in the Jeweled Palace.³ I fancy that the mountains and rivers on the one hand and I on the other are now as far apart as heaven and earth."

But such a view is not all there is to the principle of the case.

At the time when, proverbially, a mountain was being climbed and a river was being crossed, an I existed, and it was the time for that particular I.⁴ Since such an I existed, time could not abandon it. If time did not have the characteristic of 'coming and going, being continually in flux', then the time when this I was

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2. An allusion to surpassing hindrances by training oneself to live by the Precepts and to surmounting obstacles by practicing meditation.
 3. A metaphor for being in the state of experiencing what 'being enlightened' is. The reference is to a lotus pedestal upon which an awakened being sits when residing in the Western Pure Land.
 4. Dōgen's point in using the word 'I' as a noun in this and the following paragraph is to indicate that there is no permanent, unchanging self that is being referred to, but rather a cluster of physical and mental characteristics that is flexible and fluid, undergoing change as the conditions and circumstances of what is existing change. Hence, this 'I' refers to a series of manifestations over time, which are perceived as related to 'a sentient being called Yakusan', but which have no unchanging, atemporal 'permanent self' passing through them.

‘climbing atop the mountain’ would have remained forever, eternally comprised of that particular ‘time when’. But, since time retains the characteristic of ‘coming and going, being continually in flux’, there is a flow of ever-present ‘nows’, each comprised of a time when an I exists. And this is what is meant by the phrase ‘just for the time being’. Surely you don’t think that the earlier time when the word ‘I’ referred to ‘climbing the mountain’ or ‘crossing the river’ gulped up the later time when the word ‘I’ referred to ‘being on a vermilion pedestal within the Jeweled Palace’, or think that the former has vomited out the latter, do you?!?⁵

Yakusan’s ‘being a triple-headed and eight-armed one’ refers to a time that he would have called ‘yesterday’: his ‘being someone eight or sixteen feet tall’ refers to a time that he would have called ‘today’. Be that as it may, this principle of a past and a present simply corresponds to the two periods of time when an I had headed straight into the mountains and when an I was now looking out from a vermilion pedestal over the thousands of peaks and the thousands beyond them. Nor have such periods passed away. The time of an I being ‘triple-headed and eight-armed for the time being’ had passed, but even though it seemed to be of another time and place, it was indeed a part of the ever-present now. The time of an I being ‘eight or sixteen feet tall for the time being’ has also passed, but even though it now seems to be something distant from us, it is indeed part of the ever-present now. Thus, we speak of the pine as an analogy for time, as we also do of the bamboo.⁶



Do not look upon time as ‘something that just flies away’: do not teach yourself that ‘flying away’ is simply how time functions. Were we to endow time with the property of ‘flying away’, there would undoubtedly be a gap left by the time that has flown. Should anyone have not yet heard teaching upon the principle expressed by the phrase ‘just for the time being’, he may still think of time only as ‘something which has gone away’.

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5. Most likely this sentence refers to common but erroneous views as to where the flowing moments of the ever-present now go to when they are no longer present, and where such moments come from. Dōgen is asserting that the past does not exist as an entity that ‘swallows up’ the instances of present time once they are over, nor is the present something thrown out from such a past, as fatalism might suppose.
 6. An allusion to the Zen saying, “The bamboo, all up and down its length, has joints (which mark the passage of the seasons); the pine (being ever-green) has no colors to differentiate past from present.”



In short, everything whatsoever that exists in the whole universe is a series of instances of time. Since everything is for the time being, we too are for the time being.



Time has the virtue of continuity: it continuously flows from the today that we are talking about to a tomorrow, from a today to a yesterday, from a yesterday to a today. It flows from a today to a today and from a tomorrow to a tomorrow. Because continual, continuous flow is a function of time, past and present times do not pile atop each other nor do they form an accumulative line. Yet, even so, Seigen, too, represents a time, as does Ōbaku, and likewise Baso and Sekitō represent times.⁷ Because we ourselves and others, as previously stated, are already ‘beings for a time’, our training and practice are times, as is also our awakening to Truth. Our ‘entering the mud or going into deep water’⁸ is likewise a time.



The opinions of ordinary, everyday people today—as well as the source of those opinions—are based on what these people perceive. But this is not what ordinary people consider as being how things operate. For them, the way things operate is that they have ‘simply come about for a while’. Because these people have convinced themselves that this time and this existence of theirs is not related to the way things really operate, they conclude that a golden body sixteen feet tall could not possibly be theirs.⁹ Trying to free oneself from this opinion that “the

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7. Seigen, Sekitō’s Master, was already dead before Yakusan was born, and therefore represents a time that Yakusan did not know through direct experience. Ōbaku, whose Master was Baso Dōitsu, was a contemporary of Yakusan, and therefore ‘a time’ simultaneous with Yakusan’s time. Baso was contemporary with Sekitō, both together representing a time that included a past that Yakusan did not know directly, a past that he did, a present that was also ‘his time’, and a future time that was not theirs. Although Yakusan was Sekitō’s disciple and ultimately his Transmission heir, at one point Sekitō sent Yakusan to train under Baso, who triggered Yakusan’s realization of the Truth. These relationships represent various ways in which the time of a particular sentient being (Yakusan) relates to the times of other sentient beings.
 8. A traditional Zen saying alluding to the actions of a bodhisattva who is willing to go anywhere to help ferry sentient beings to the Other Shore.
 9. That is, they think, “I am no more than what I am right now, so I could not possibly be a Buddha, and being what I am now, I cannot see how I could possibly become a Buddha.”

golden body of a Buddha cannot be mine” is also a bit of what the phrase ‘just for the time being’ implies, and is something about which a trainee who has not yet reached spiritual certainty may say, “Oh, I see, I get it!”



In the world today, we structure time by segments which we name, for instance, the Hours of the Horse or the Hours of the Sheep.¹⁰ Be that as it may, these segments are merely persistent fluctuations in the here and now of thoughts and things which arise and fall. It is the same with the Hours of the Rat and the Hours of the Tiger, which are also ‘for a time’.¹¹ And being an ordinary creature is also ‘for a time’, as is being a Buddha. At such times as these, one will swear that being three-headed and eight-armed is the whole universe or that being a golden body sixteen feet tall is the whole universe. To universally penetrate the whole universe by means of the whole universe is called ‘complete realization’. For us to give proof of a golden body sixteen feet tall by our attaining a golden body sixteen feet tall is to manifest our initial spiritual intention, our training and practice, our realizing of enlightenment, and our experiencing the freedom of nirvana—all of which comprises what existence is and what time is. It is a complete realization that the whole of time is what the whole of existence is, and that there is nothing more than this. Anything else would be a time when there was a partial ‘complete realization’, which would be a full realization of a part of what ‘just for the time being’ refers to.



Even at a stage where it would seem that you have taken a false step, this condition will be a state of ‘being’. Further, should you leave the matter at this, your condition will still constitute a persistence of ‘a time being’, which will include both a before and an after to this ‘having taken a false step’. Dealing with

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10. In medieval Japan, a full day was divided into twelve two-hour segments, named after the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac. The Time of the Horse was 12:00 noon, and the Hours of the Horse were the hours preceding and following noon. Similarly, the Time of the Sheep was equivalent to 2:00 P.M. Except in the imperial court, where a water-clock was used for assuring that a ceremony was performed at the most auspicious time, determining time throughout medieval Japan was approximated based on the position of the sun in relation to the zenith.
 11. The Time of the Rat was midnight, and that of the Tiger was 4:00 A.M., times which were still commonly referred to as ‘segments of time’, even though they could not be determined, since the sun was not visible. Dōgen’s point is that all such divisions are cultural conventions and do not constitute what time really is.

thoughts and things while they persist, like a fish darting about through the water,¹² is indeed what 'being just for the time being' is about. So, do not be upset over what is not, and do not be pressured by what is.



Should you reckon one-sidedly that time only goes by, you will not comprehend time as something that has not yet arrived. Although we can say that comprehending something also constitutes a time, there is no connection that can link the one to the other.¹³ No one with a human carcass who looks on time merely as 'something that rolls on by me' can have any insight into the 'time being' that persists just for a while, not to even mention the time when the barrier gate to realizing enlightenment is penetrated.

Even if we comprehend that It is what persists, who can express in words what This is that we have realized? Even if, over a long time, we have found ways to express It in words, there is no one yet who has not groped for ways to make It be manifest before your very eyes. Were we to leave the matter of what 'being for the time being' means to the way in which ordinary persons understand the phrase, it would be a 'being for the time being' in which enlightenment and nirvana were, at best, merely passing characteristics. The ever-present 'time being' of which I am speaking cannot be snared like some bird by net or cage: it is what is manifesting before us. It is a time when the heavenly lords and the other celestial inhabitants are now manifesting right and left of us, and are making every effort to do so, even at this very moment. In addition, it is a time when beings of water and land are making every effort to manifest. Beings of all sorts, who are visible or invisible for the time being, are all making every effort to manifest, making every effort to flow on. If they did not make every effort to flow on, not even a single thought or thing would ever manifest: nothing would continue on. You would do well to consider this point.



The transiting of time and being is not to be thought of as wind blowing the rain from east to west. And it would be inaccurate to say that the whole world is unchanging, or that it is motionless: it is in transition. The flow of time and being is like spring, for instance. The spring has an appearance of being abundant in its

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12. A traditional Zen simile applied to a person who engages in the practice of all-acceptance and non-attachment.
 13. That is, for instance, one cannot predict the precise moment when someone will comprehend something.

burgeoning, and we refer to this as its 'passage'. We should consider well that the spring 'passes' without excluding anything within it. In other words, the passing of spring is, to be sure, a passing of what we humans call 'spring'. 'Passing' is not what spring is, but refers to the passage of the springtime; hence, it is a transition that is now being actualized during the time of spring. You would do well to consider and reflect on this very carefully, for in speaking of 'transiting', some may think of it in reference to some place physically apart from themselves, which can be reached by turning eastward, say, or by traveling past myriad worlds over millions and millions of eons. But such people are not concentrating simply on the study of the Buddha's Way.



Yakusan, who by imperial decree was named 'The Great Teacher Whose Way Is Broad', one time, at the direction of Great Master Sekitō Kisen, made a spiritual call on Meditation Master Baso.

Yakusan asked him, "The one standing before you has a fairly good idea of what all twelve divisions of the Scriptures as found among the followers of the Three Vehicles* of Buddhism are about, so just why did the Ancestral Teacher Bodhidharma come east to China???"

Being queried in this manner, Meditation Master Baso responded, "There are times when we make That One's eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle, and there are times when we do not make His eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle. There are times when we who make That One's eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle are right, and there are times when we who make His eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle are not right."

Upon hearing this, Yakusan had a great awakening and humbly said to Baso, "When I was with Sekitō, I was like a mosquito climbing over an iron ox, trying to find a place to bite."

Baso's way of putting things is unlike that of any other. 'Brows and eyeballs' would refer to the mountains and the oceans, because the mountains and the oceans are His brows and eyeballs.¹⁴ Baso's 'making Him raise His eyebrows' would be

* See *Glossary*.

14. In this and the following paragraph, the images of 'mountain' and 'ocean' echo the opening couplet of Yakusan's poem. Context suggests that 'mountain' is an allusion to training and practice, and 'ocean' to the realization of one's innate state of 'being enlightened'.

comparable to Yakusan's focusing on the Mountain, and Baso's 'making His eyes twinkle' would be comparable to Yakusan's fixing his eyes on the Ocean. 'Being right' means attempting to learn from 'That One': 'That One' is That which is being invited to teach. 'Not being right' does not mean 'not causing Him to act as He did', nor does 'not causing Him to act as He did' mean 'not being right'.



Mountains are of time: oceans are of time. Were there no time, neither mountains nor oceans could be. Do not think that time does not exist for the mountains and oceans of the present moment. Were time to cease to exist, so would mountains and oceans cease to exist: if time does not become extinct, then mountains and oceans too will not become extinct. This is why the morning star arose, the Tathagata emerged, his clear Eye of Wise Discernment manifested, and the raising of the udumbara flower came about.¹⁵ These are times: were they not times, there could not be any 'being with It' here and now.¹⁶



Meditation Master Kisei of Sekken County was a Dharma descendant of Rinzai, as well as Shuzan's direct heir. One day, he addressed his monastic community in verse, saying:

*There is a time when intending has arrived, but not
expressing,
There is a time when expressing has arrived, but not
intending,
There is a time when both intending and expressing have
arrived,
And there is a time when both intending and expressing
have not arrived.¹⁷*

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15. Allusions to Prince Siddhārtha's awakening to the Truth upon seeing the morning star arise, and then, as the Tathagata, with eyes twinkling, holding aloft the udumbara flower, which set in motion the Transmission of the Truth, starting with his smiling disciple Makakashō.
16. To 'be with It' here and now is an attempt to render the term *immo* when used in its Chinese slang meaning for the condition of persons or things being just what they truly are, without any sense of an existence separate from time and without any sense of a false self.
17. To paraphrase these four conditions from the perspective of Dōgen's analysis of the poem: (1) there is a time when someone deliberately trains with the intention of realizing what the Truth is, but since he (or she) has not yet arrived at that state, he is unable to express what

Both 'intending' and 'expressing' are 'for the time being': both 'having arrived' and 'having not arrived' are 'for the time being'. Even though one may say that "the time of arriving is not yet fully here," the time of 'having not arrived' is here. 'Intending' is the donkey; 'expressing' is the horse.¹⁸ The role of the horse is assigned to expressing; the role of the donkey is assigned to intending. Just as 'arriving' is not synonymous with 'coming', 'having not arrived' does not mean 'still not having arrived', for this is what being 'just for the time' is like. Arriving is hindered by 'arrival', but is not hindered by not having arrived. Having not arrived is hindered by 'not having arrived', but is not hindered by arriving. So, when it comes to intending, we look at our intention as just an intention; when it comes to expressing, we look at our expression as just an expression; when it comes to hindrances, we look at what is hindering us as just a hindrance. It is a matter of 'obstructions' getting in the way of obstructions, all of which are 'just for a time'.¹⁹ Although you may say that 'obstruction' is a word that we can apply to other situations, there is still nothing which I am calling 'an obstruction' that impedes those situations. It is ourselves encountering others; it is others encountering each other; it is ourselves encountering ourselves; it is one who is emerging encountering one who has emerged. If each of these did not have their specific time, being 'with It' here and now would be impossible. Furthermore, 'intending' refers to the time when the spiritual question manifests before our very eyes;

that Truth is, and (2) there is a time when the trainee realizes what this Truth is and spontaneously (that is, without intention) gives expression to It, but without being fully conscious that this is what he has done, and (3) there is a time after having realized the Truth when the trainee deliberately gives expression to It, and (4) there is a time after having realized the Truth when the trainee is simply going on with his training, without deliberately trying to 'make a point of it'. These four conditions correlate with Dōgen's terms 'intending', 'arriving', 'having arrived', and 'having not arrived', which he presents in the ensuing paragraph.

18. That is, trainees should not wait until they have completely finished all training ('doing the donkey work of training') before attempting to give voice to the Dharma ('doing the horse work of teaching').
19. To help simplify this difficult and profound passage: One's arriving at realizing the Truth is hindered by any notion of 'having to arrive', but is not hindered by the fact that one has not yet arrived. One's state of having not arrived is hindered by a notion of 'not having arrived', but is not hindered by arriving. So, when it comes to intending to train, we look at our intention as just an intention; when it comes to expressing the Truth, we look at our expression as just an expression; when it comes to hindrances, we look at what is hindering us as just a hindrance. Similarly, it is a matter of our notions of 'obstructions' getting in the way of our seeing our obstructions (all of which, too, are just for the time being).

‘expressing’ refers to the time when one looks up and unbolts the barrier gate; ‘arriving’ refers to the time when body and mind are dropped off; and ‘having not arrived’ refers to the time when this ‘dropping off’ is left behind [as you go always onward, always ‘becoming Buddha’]. This is the way that you should diligently apply yourself, the way that you should treat whatever arises as ‘just for a while’.

Although the venerable Masters up to the present time have spoken about the Matter* in such a way, might there not be something more that needs to be said? Well, I would add, “There are times when intending and expressing are halfway there, and there are times when intending and expressing are halfway not there.” You would do well to investigate and clarify the Matter in such a way. And again, “Making That One’s eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle is half of what ‘just for the time being’ is about, and making That One’s eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle may also be a counterfeit ‘just for the time being’, and making That One’s eyebrows rise and His eyes twinkle may also be a completely false ‘just for the time being.’”

In such a manner, coming to training, going on in training, training until you arrive, and training beyond arriving are, at all times, ‘just for the time being, just for a while’.

Written at Kōshōhōrin-ji Temple on the first day of winter in the first year of the Ninji era (October 17, 1240).

Copied by me during the summer training period in the first year of the Kangen era (1243).

Ejō