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The Inexhaustible Lamp of Faith

Faith and Awakening in the Japanese Rinzai Tradition

In the modern period, Zen has often been depicted as a faithless form of spirituality that favors discarding authority and encourages existential doubt. The primary objective of this article is to challenge this assumption by highlighting the importance of faith in the Zen tradition. To achieve this goal, I focused on *Shūmon mujintō ron*, a major text of the Rinzai tradition, written by the eminent Japanese master Tōrei Enji (1721–1792). After establishing “faith” as an analytic category for studying Zen, I adopted the philosophical framework of *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions in order to elucidate the relationship between faith and awakening, as well as the interdependency of faith and doubt in Zen training. By examining the role of faith in the text, I shed new light on the role of faith in the Zen tradition, particularly in Rinzai training.

KEYWORDS: Zen—Rinzai—faith—Tōrei Enji—*Shūmon mujintō ron*—doubt

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EVER SINCE the end of the nineteenth century, Japanese scholars such as D. T. Suzuki, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and Nishitani Keiji have extracted Zen from its original cultural and institutional context and promoted it as science of the mind, a spiritual technique that is founded on nothing but one's genuine experience. Adopting what is sometimes regarded as a "Rinzai approach," these Zen advocates and others have emphasized the experience of *satori* 悟 or *kenshō* 見性 over all other aspects of the tradition (FAURE 1993, 55–60).¹ Indeed, in the modern period, slogans such as "Kill the buddhas! Kill the patriarchs!" have been utilized to depict a critical, defiant stance toward authority and iconoclasm as the foundations of Zen training. Though still quite common in popular literature,² this idealized notion of Zen has been criticized by scholars ever since the late 1980s.³ Yet despite significant advances in Zen studies over the last three decades, very little has been written about the role of faith in the Zen tradition.⁴

This article aims to fill in this lacuna by examining the role of faith in the Rinzai Zen School.⁵ It will show that, regardless of popular impressions, faith is an integral part of the Zen doctrine, and therefore a special appreciation of its actual role is imperative for arriving at a balanced understanding of what is considered as traditional Zen practice. As an approach to achieving this aim, I will focus on *Shūmon mujintō ron*,⁶ a text written by the Japanese Rinzai monk

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1. As this article focuses on Japanese Zen, Buddhist terms appear in the Japanese reading, unless stated otherwise. The Chinese and Sanskrit terms are sometimes provided for clarification.

2. For examples, see BATCHELOR (1997) and O'BRIEN (n.d.).

3. Notable examples are FAURE (1991 and 1993); FOULK (1994); and SHARF (1993, 1995a; 1995b).

4. This is perhaps not surprising since according to Robert SHARF, the idea of "faithless spirituality" stands at the heart of scholars' attraction to Zen (1995a, 233). To the best of my knowledge, PARK's work (1983) remains the only full-length monograph that discusses faith in the Zen traditions. Among the few scholars who have engaged in this topic are YANAGIDA (1963); WAKAYAMA (1963); HIRANO (1992); SAKURAI (1992); and MULLER (2013).

5. The Rinzai school or sect (*Rinzai shū* 臨濟宗), which traces its lineage to the Chinese master, Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866–867), dominated Chinese Chan during the Sung dynasty (960–1279). Rinzai was transmitted to Japan during the Kamakura period (1185–1333), where it flourished under the patronage of the shogunate. This school is currently the second largest Zen sect in Japan (the first being Sōtō 曹洞), with fourteen different branches (*ha* 派), and more than six thousand temples. All contemporary Rinzai branches trace their lineage to Hakuin Ekaku and implement different versions of the koan training system, as formulated by him.

6. Literally "Treatise of the inexhaustible lamp of the [Zen] school teaching." For this study I used the version of the text included in the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database (T 2575, 81.581–605),

Tōrei Enji 東嶺圓慈 (1721–1792). This particular text was chosen for three main reasons: 1. the prominence of the text and its author; 2. its extensive discussion of faith; and 3. the fact that this discussion has been largely ignored.

Tōrei was one of the most eminent Zen masters of premodern Japan. He was the chief disciple of Hakuin Ekaku 白隱慧鶴 (1686–1769), and played a major role in reviving the Japanese Rinzai school in the eighteenth century. Tōrei was a prolific writer, but *Shūmon mujintō ron* [hereafter referred to as the SMR] is generally considered as his magnum opus; there he provides the most comprehensive presentation of the Rinzai system, as formulated by Hakuin.⁷

SMR has an entire chapter devoted to faith, as well as numerous references to faith throughout the text.⁸ The word faith (*shin* 信) appears in the text more than any of the other concepts usually associated with the Rinzai tradition, including *satori* and *kenshō*.⁹ However, whereas SMR is largely acknowledged as one of the most important works of the Japanese Rinzai tradition, its discussion of faith was largely overlooked.¹⁰ Consequently, this article will utilize SMR to make a case for the central role of faith in the Rinzai tradition, demonstrating it to be vital to better understand the dynamics of practice, and for achieving the Buddhist goal of enlightenment.

A Matter of Faith

In his popular introductory book to Buddhism, *What the Buddha Taught*, Wal-pola RAHULA argues that faith “as understood by most religions has little to do with Buddhism” (1958, 8). Although few scholars would be inclined to make

accompanying the electronic version checked against the original edition of Kansei 12 (1800), available from the eVols database by the University of Hawaii at Manoa (MOHR 2013). Three modern translations of the text are currently available in Western languages: 1. OKUDA (1996) is rather accurate, but hard to follow due to its integration of modern commentary accompanying the text; 2. CLEARY (2010), on the other hand, tends to lose accuracy in favor of poetic fluency; and 3. for French readers, Michel MOHR’s translation (1997) is undoubtedly the most elaborate and accurate of the translations.

7. Tōrei wrote SMR as his last testament, after he had been diagnosed as being terminally ill. Even though he eventually recovered, and kept revising his work for forty years, the text still possesses a special authority usually reserved for final words (MOHR 2000, 245).

8. The chapter title is *Shinshu* 信修, which literally reads: “faith practice”; see: T 2575, 81.584a27–586c13.

9. For the sake of comparison, the character *shin* appears in the text ninety-one times; *satori*, eighty-six times; *kenshō*—allegedly the key concept in Zen practice—merely fifty-six times; and even the word “Zen” a total of sixty-six times.

10. The most prominent example is the work of Michel MOHR, who is undoubtedly the highest authority on Tōrei’s writing in the West (2000; 2009). In my opinion, Mohr’s choice to translate *shin* as confident (Fr. *confiante*), although perfectly legitimate, indicates his reluctance to discuss faith in the context of East Asian Buddhism (MOHR 1997).

such a direct judgment regarding this matter, Rahula's fundamental position no doubt approaches the norm.¹¹ According to this position, faith is a concept more typically associated with theocentric religions, most notably Christianity, where it has been most prominent. As used in this context, "faith" implies total submission to a transcendental, omnipotent entity, a perspective that is fundamentally alien to both Indian and Chinese thought. Hence, before we can move on to discuss faith in Tōrei's work, we must establish at least two premises. The first is the applicability of the term to the Buddhist context; the second is the presence of corresponding concepts in Buddhist thought.

The first step in applying faith as an analytic category is to clarify the range of its connotations and interpretations. Clearly, not all faith is religious, let alone Christian.¹² Faith is often described as a contrast to "knowledge," a mental attitude of abandonment of artifices in facing the unknown; it can mean *inter alia*, faithfulness or trust, worship and obedience, tradition and knowledge (PELIKAN 2005, 2954–56). Faith is associated with different objects and events and has different degrees of belief and feeling; one can have faith in a person, a thing, a deity, a view, or a doctrine. Faith can range from total conviction, to different levels of practical trust, and even severe doubts. One can have faith, for example, in a political cause, a football team, indeed even in her MacBook (WOOD 2007, 606).

In view of such a variety of conceptions, it is obvious why faith cannot readily be defined as a categorical phenomenon. There is no essential set of features common to the various types of faith, and it is almost impossible to provide a logical definition of the term. To put it in Buddhist terms, faith is an empty concept that strictly (analytically) speaking, does not refer to any (single) reality. Nevertheless, the various conceptions of faith resemble one another, and overlap in function and meaning. Each of the different concepts might be regarded as a synonym of faith; hence "faith becomes an analogical concept that achieves its unity via resemblance, not via identity or commonality" (SESSIONS 1994, 252). Consequently, this article does not apply to any essential definition of faith; rather, it uses the term as a way of gathering together corresponding Buddhist concepts and analyzing them.

11. Illustrative of this position is scholars' tendency to favor other synonymous terms, such as confidence, trust, and conviction; see BURTON (2004, 155, 168–69); ROGERS (1982, 73); UNNO (1981, 157).

12. Even in Christianity, faith is not a unified concept, and we find great diversity between different churches and different historical periods. For example, in the Synoptic Gospels, faith (*pistis*) generally refers to trust in the miraculous powers of Jesus Christ to heal his followers and deliver them from danger (BOLLE 1987, 250). The sixteenth-century reformers emphasized faith as a "firm and certain knowledge of god's benevolence" (CALVIN 1536, 3.2, 7). Indeed, even what is accepted as one of most popular definitions of Christian faith: "The assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen" (Heb. 2: 1) might be applied across a broad spectrum of religious and nonreligious traditions.

Whether or not we accept faith as a generic concept for analyzing Buddhist thought, it has been established that the notion of faith (or its equivalent) plays a prominent role in Buddhist doctrine. In Indian Buddhism the English term “faith” is used to signify at least three major Sanskrit terms: *śraddhā*, *prāsāda*, and *adhimukti*. Each of these terms carries a distinctive meaning, which is not necessarily equivalent to the others. The word *śraddhā* is composed of the root *dhā* (to place, to put, to resolve) + *śrat* (to be trustful, steadfast, confident, and to have conviction). The earliest etymologists considered faith to mean “truth” (*satya*). Thus, we can translate *śraddhā* as “resolve towards truth” or “steadfastness to truth.” *Prāsāda* conveys the meaning of clearness and tranquility and connotes purification. *Adhimukti* actually means to liberate or release, and carries the nuance of freedom that comes with trust (MONIER-WILLIAMS 1976; EDGERTON 1970; PARK 1983, 15). In Chinese Buddhism these three terms are translated as compounds of the ideograph *xin* 信. This ideograph is composed of the radical for “person” (Ch. *ren* 亻), and “speech” (Ch. *yan* 言), and its basic meaning is sincerity, the quality that every person’s words should have, and by extension, the effect produced by them upon others (WIEGER 1965, 186).

Similar to other concepts, our understanding of faith has undergone profound changes across different Buddhist schools, and during different historical periods.¹³ In the Pali canon, faith is mainly understood as the primary motivation for a person to become a home-leaver. It is faith in the Buddha and his teachings that support one’s practice and aid one along the path leading to liberation.¹⁴ Many major Mahayana scriptures emphasize faith as a crucial factor for attaining deep religious insight or liberation. This is especially true for the *Tathāgatagarbha* (*nyorai zō* 如來藏) sutras such as *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (*Dai hatsu nehan kyō* 大般涅槃經) or the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith* (*Daijō kishin ron* 大乘起信論). A famous passage from the *Flower Ornament Sutra* (*Kegonkyō* 華嚴經), one of the major sources for Tōrei’s discussion of faith, states: “Faith is the origin of the way, the mother of merit. It develops all wholesome dharmas, removes all doubts, reveals and opens the supreme path.”¹⁵

Faith in the miraculous powers of buddhas and bodhisattvas is a major part of the Buddhist doctrine and is proclaimed by many Mahayana sutras. The most notable examples are faith in the miraculous powers of the bodhisattva Kannon (Ch. *Guanyin* 觀音) and the Buddha Amida (Ch. *Amitou* 阿彌陀). Some Buddhist schools, most notably the Japanese Pure Land (*Jōdo* 淨土), professed their sincere faith in the Buddha Amida by reciting the *nenbutsu* 念佛, the

13. For a comprehensive survey of the diversity of Buddhist faith, see TRAER (1991).

14. Faith is mentioned as one of the Seven Holy Assents (*shichi shōzai* 七聖財; Sk. *saptāryadhāna*), one of the five wholesome faculties or Five Spiritual Faculties (*gokon* 五根; Sk. *pañcānam indriyāṇām*), and one of the Five Spiritual Powers (*goriki* 五力; Sk. *pañca-balāni*).

15. 信爲道元功德母 增長一切諸善法 除滅一切諸疑惑 示現開發無上道 (T 278, 9.433a26–27).

Alpha, and the Omega of Buddhist practice. However, as opposed to the Pure Land Schools, which are generally acknowledged as “faith-oriented” Buddhism, Zen came to be associated, especially in the West, with existential philosophy and the practice of meditation. In fact, the majority of scholars tend to minimize, if not completely ignore, the role of faith within the process of Zen training. For example, ABE Masao, one of the leading philosophers who advocated Zen in the modern period, and who argued that Zen’s major difference from Christianity, indicated that it is based on Self-Awakening, rather than faith (ABE 1985, 186–87).

Contrary to the above, SMR prioritizes the role of faith in Zen. Relying on other major Buddhist texts, most notably the *Eighty Fascicle Flower Ornament Sutra* (*Hachijū Kegonkyō* 八十華嚴經)¹⁶ and the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (*Engaku kyō* 圓覺經), Tōrei identifies faith as one of the essentials of Zen training. Therefore, SMR might serve as a conceptual grid, a framework for comprehensively investigating the concept of faith in the Zen tradition, and particularly in Rinzai training.

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Tōrei had originally intended his text for advanced practitioners, who were engaged in koan practice and who were very determined to attain awakening (MOHR 2009, 160).¹⁷ Therefore, for the purpose of discussion, I will adopt the philosophical framework of *necessary and sufficient condition* and will distinguish between two types of faith according to their relation to the final goal.¹⁸ Although this conceptual framework is not entirely alien to Buddhist thought, I would like to employ it here merely as a methodological aid, which will help in highlighting different aspects of faith in the Rinzai tradition.

FAITH AS A NECESSARY CONDITION

Like most Buddhist scriptures, SMR emphasizes faith as a primary disposition necessary to achieve Buddhahood.¹⁹

16. For the sake of convenience I will use the abbreviation *Kegonkyō* in all references to this sutra that follow.

17. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the majority of Buddhists, monks, and laypeople alike, actually regard their faith as a means to generate, accumulate, and transfer merit. In contrast, the motivation to achieve the final goal has been, throughout history, restricted to a selected few (LUSBY 2005, 5288).

18. Next are two examples that illustrate the concept of the necessary and sufficient conditions; for a more comprehensive discussion of these concepts, see BRENNAN (2012). 1. Without water, flowers cannot grow; hence, water is needed for the existence of flowers. 2. According to the traditional definition, Jews are defined as those born to Jewish mothers. Hence, birth from a mother having a specific origin is both a necessary and sufficient condition for being Jewish.

19. The excerpts from SMR were translated from Chinese by the author. Unless stated otherwise, all excerpts refer to T no. 2575.

The sutra says: “only those born in the family of the Tathāgata are true offspring of the king of the Dharma.” These are ordinary persons of great mind (*daishin* 大心). As a result of faith [they] realize [Buddhahood] ... [To be] able to believe in this Dharma is called great mind. Those who don’t believe in the Dharma even if they possess the six supernormal powers, radiate great light, accomplish countless Noble Paths... [However] they cannot be born into the family of buddhas. (598a1–12)²⁰

Referring to *Kegonkyō*, Tōrei establishes faith as an attitude involving the will, intellect, and emotions of the Zen practitioner.²¹ For one to be able to practice, one must first and foremost adopt a cognitive attitude of faith, namely, the acceptance of the Buddhist doctrine without fully understanding or actually experiencing its fruits. In this regard, faith might be considered an intellectual approach—because only faith can enable one, in due time, to acquire genuine understanding. Apparently aware of the paradox illustrated in the previous statement, especially with regard to the Zen tradition, Tōrei states: “Now, even though Zen students must not rely on doctrinal vehicles, they first take the doctrine as an object of faith and as the basis for cultivation. [As said in] The *Vimalakīrti Sutra*: ‘just get rid of the illness, and not this teaching’” (583b15–17).²²

Faith as a necessary condition is used to designate the attitude of trust, commitment, and conviction that is essential for initiating and progressing along the Buddhist path. In other words, one should put faith in the Buddhist doctrine as an aid, while still in the process of trying to put it into practice. Thus, the Buddhist doctrine should be regarded as similar to medicine accepted by a patient, even without understanding how it works. In the second chapter of *SMR*, Tōrei describes the nature of this faith:

If you want to accomplish this Way, you should first fully develop the great root of faith (*daishinkon* 大信根). What is called [the] root of faith is faith that you are originally fully endowed with the mind-nature of the buddhas as well as immeasurable wisdom.... Faith that when the time comes and effort is sufficient the Buddha nature will suddenly appear before you, without [using] the discriminating intellect. (584c3–7)²³

20. 經曰。唯除生如來家。法王眞子。即大心凡夫。能生信。證入故 ... 能信此法。是謂大心。不信此法者。縱使具六神通。發大光明。成就無量聖道 ... 不能生佛家故。

21. Tōrei actually cites the *Shin Kegonkyō ron* (Ch. *Xin huayan jing lun* 新華嚴經論)—an influential commentary on the *Kegonkyō* by Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (635–730), which is especially appreciated in the Rinzai tradition—and not the actual sutra; see T 1739, 36.770–771.

22. 今禪學者雖不立教乘。先以教爲信緣及爲修因。維摩經曰。只除其病。而不除其法。This line appears only in Zhi Qian’s 支謙支謙 translation of the sutra; see T 474, 14.526a27(04) (吾爲眾人作自省法。觀以除其病而不除法)。

23. 若欲成此道。先須具大信根。何謂信根。所謂信諸佛心性。及無量智慧。本來具足 ... 信時到功充佛性。頓現前。不假知解分別。

In his description of the credo of Rinzai practice, Tōrei reveals two major dispositions. The first is the belief in the Buddha nature, a major concept in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. This doctrine asserts that all sentient beings (and according to some schools, even plants and inanimate objects) are endowed with the potential to realize Buddhahood. This inner potential or (Buddha) nature is realized only through practice and purification. According to SMR, confidence in the existence of Buddha nature is essential for realizing it.

The second is the practitioner's commitment to the so-called "sudden teaching" (*tongyō* 頓教). This notion states that enlightenment, as an ultimate reality, cannot be attained through relative means. In other words, the awakening of one's innate Buddhahood is sudden and spontaneous, and is not conditioned by one's efforts. This notion of "sudden" versus "gradual" became one of the major controversies in the development of Chan discourse in China.²⁴ The Rinzai School, more than any other Buddhist school, is known for its emphasis on the sudden approach. However, it is not enough for a practitioner to merely accept the doctrinal foundations of the Rinzai School, as Tōrei next clarifies:

Faith that even if the Buddha nature will suddenly appear before you, if you don't encounter a master you won't penetrate the grave barrier and have squandered your entire life... Faith that the master's lineage has its principle, and the effort to carry on the authentic school cannot fail. Thus, give birth to the decisive mind, and be able to initiate the great vow. (584c8–15)²⁵

Zen historians, such as Morten Schlütter and the late John McRae, may consider the above lines an expression of institutional authority, conveyed through lineage-based ideology.²⁶ However, when considered from the practitioner's point of view, this passage expresses a commitment to the idea of the invisible transmission of an inner spiritual power from master to disciple. In any case, the loyalty and obligation to one's heritage helps enforce the practitioner's motivation to advance along a chosen path. Thus, faith is understood not merely as a cognitive approach that involves the intellect, but also as emotional support that helps sustain one's resolution and determination.

Throughout the text Tōrei delineates between the faculty of faith and the great bodhisattva vow, which is the motivation to achieve the Buddhist goal for the benefit of all sentient beings.²⁷ The importance of the vow is constantly being stressed

24. On sudden and gradual approaches in Chinese Buddhism, see GREGORY (1987; 1991, 136–53).

25. 信雖佛性頓現前、不見宗師、不透重關、錯一生了... 信師承一事最有道理、勉繼正宗不可孤負... 如是生決定心了... 可發大誓願。

26. See McRAE (2004, especially 1–22) and SCHLÜTTER (2008).

27. For example:

Therefore, the right way of practice is based on vow. Those with deep power of the vow cannot be disturbed by demons and heretical teachings. Those with weak vow-power will

as the major source of motivation to advance along the path. The vow, according to Tōrei, is the skillful means (*hōben* 方便; Sk. *upāya*) necessary for developing the initial attitude of faith, since without it the mind is weak, anxious, and regretful (586b28 and 589c2–3). Relying on Tathāgatarbha doctrine, Tōrei summarizes the role of faith as a necessary condition in what is one of the key passages of the text:

What is meant by “being born in the family of the Tathāgata”? [When one] regards the marvelous practices after discriminated awakening 差別悟後 as one’s father and the great wisdom of original *kenshō* 根本見性 as one’s mother, at the instant that consciousness of faith emerges from within, one swiftly takes residence in the Tathāgata-womb.²⁸ Henceforth, one sets out on one’s course, regardless of whether the path is long or short. One practices *sanzen* 參禪 according to one’s capacities.²⁹ After a [minimum period of] ten months,³⁰ there will come a time when these efforts will bear fruit: this is called the full moon. [It is] at this time, when various states [of mind] may appear [in front of the student], which indicates the imminent birth. If the student experiences these illusory states of mind, one after the other, and does not become attached to them, after a short while realization will manifest itself. This is what is meant by “born to the family of the Tathāgata.” (589a23–29)³¹

Once a person establishes consciousness of faith for a single instant (*ichinen-shin* 一念信), he or she is already on track to become a Buddha. However, to follow the passage’s metaphor, being planted in the womb does not automatically entail birth. For this to happen, additional conditions are required, namely, Buddhist practice. Thus, faith is preparatory, but is not sufficient for attaining the final goal. Faith as a necessary condition is a factor that contributes to the development of knowledge. It is an essential psychological attitude, a power of the mind that

encounter many obstacles. Vow-power is based on compassion; all those who seek benefits for themselves are curtailed by limited views—like a merchant who pursues richness, but brags about every small profit. Those who wish to help all human beings are never satisfied themselves with little; therefore, they practice the four Bodhisattva vows.

是故修行正路。以願為本。願力深重者。天魔外道。所不能動。願力微劣者。多遇障礙。夫願力者。大悲為本。凡求自利者。皆止小見。譬如商人。圖己榮者。先誇小財。欲普惠物者。終不以小為足。是故四弘願行。 (585a10–14)

28. Here too Tōrei relies on a famous passage from the *Kegonkyō*: “If one instant consciousness of faith arises, one will rapidly ascend to the unsurpassed Way [of the Tathāgata]” (T 279, 10.124a11).

29. This means to practice Zen. In the Rinzai tradition the term usually refers to the student conveying his understanding of the koan in a private interview with a Zen master; see ZGD 402c.

30. This is based on the lunar calendar in premodern East Asian cultures; the standard duration of pregnancy is ten months.

31. 何謂生如來家。差別悟後妙行為父。根本見性大智為母。於中生一念信時。早託如來胎中。從是不論途路長短。發步進修。隨分參詳者。皆十月之消息也。時到功滿。是謂滿月。當是之時。現種種境者。子欲出胎之前表也。學人不著現境。單單參取。一朝豁然現前。是謂生如來家。

enables one to withstand the abundant emotional and intellectual obstacles that comprise Zen training. One's conviction in the truth of teaching, along with the authenticity of the masters and their achievements, is a prerequisite for anyone aspiring to achieve the highest goal of Zen training. The demanding nature of Zen practice and its constant emphasis on moving beyond one's past achievements make faith an indispensable source of motivation for the practitioner.

However, faith of this type is regarded as partial; it is merely a primary step toward realization, a kind of platform that is not at all sufficient by itself. Despite its important cognitive, emotional, and volitional functions, faith is eventually replaced by real knowledge. True realization makes what previously was only presumed to be truth to become known as such.

FAITH AS A SUFFICIENT CONDITION

The preceding account might give the impression that faith plays a preparatory role in Zen practice. However, as will be argued next, Tōrei's understanding of faith goes beyond that of a necessary condition. From a preliminary step towards achieving a goal, faith by itself becomes adequate grounds for attaining realization. As previously mentioned, Tōrei's discussion of faith relies extensively on the *Kegonkyō*, one of the most voluminous sutras in the Buddhist canon; therefore, a better understanding of faith articulated in this sutra is essential to our discussion.

YAMADA (1963) explores the meaning of faith in *Kegonkyō* by focusing on the six sermons that are most commonly identified with faith (chapters 7–12). Two points made by Yamada are especially relevant for our discussion. First, he suggests that a strong correlation exists between wisdom and faith. According to Yamada, although faith is presented in the sutra as a prerequisite for entering the Buddhist path, this represents only a partial understanding of its function. To support his claim, he points out that all the sermons discussing faith in the sutra are delivered by none other than Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva who is most identified with wisdom. Accordingly, Yamada suggests that faith should not be regarded as a temporary substitute, eventually to be replaced by wisdom. Rather, faith and wisdom are complementary, mutually developing one another: "Faith is purified by knowledge, and knowledge is deepened by faith" (YAMADA 1963, 264).

Yamada's second point, which is strongly related to the first, is that faith should be understood as an aspect of ultimate reality, contained in every stage of the bodhisattva path. Although faith, as proclaimed by the sutra, has its objects—Buddha, the four noble truths, dependent origination, among others—the content of "pure faith" (*jōshin* 淨信) is none other than nonduality or suchness. As opposed to the notion that considers the arousal of faith as the initial stage in the bodhisattva's career, pure faith should be understood as the subjective realization of the dharma-realm (*hokkai* 法界; Sk. *dharmadhātu*) of

mutual interpenetration, where all is one and one is all. Since pure faith actually transcends all dualities, an instant consciousness of faith (*ichinenshin*) will inevitably result in perfect Buddhahood, as taught by Mañjuśrī in the sutra (YAMADA 1963, 267). To demonstrate how this understanding of faith is reflected in Tōrei's work, let's consider the following passage:

The bodhisattvas of the one vehicle at the moment they give rise to the aspiration for enlightenment immediately attain perfect awakening.³² This is because seeing nature clarifies and enable[s] realization. Also, all [other] schools stress the predominating conditions of merit accumulated from previous lives, whereas in an instant of single-minded faith you are inside the gate of realization. It is like the case where [one] who wishes to reside in another country, first needs to [accumulate] great wealth. Wishing to enter another house one first seeks the proper circumstances. [Whereas] one's heading towards her own country has no need of great wealth, returning home requires no special circumstances. Of all sentient beings, there is not one who does not hold the great wisdom and great merit of original Buddha nature. Is it not the highest of auspicious circumstances? (604a29–b6)³³

As opposed to faith regarded as the moment of conception—a necessary but insufficient condition to ensure labor—in this section, an instance of firm conviction or faith immediately and inevitably results in perfect awakening, since realization is nothing but identifying the true nature of reality within oneself (or one's no-self). That is, realizing that one's mind is merely an expression of *nature-origination*.³⁴ According to the notion of Buddha nature, as articulated in the *Kegonkyō*, realization is not conditioned, but instead is innate; otherwise it would not have been possible in the first place. In other words, an understanding of faith as a necessary condition derives directly from misunderstanding that the bodhisattva path is gradual and linear.

32. 初發心時便成正覺—literally: "When the intention is first aroused, correct awakening is already achieved." This line, which originally appeared in the *Bongyouhon* (Ch. *Fanxing pin* 梵行品) chapter of the *Kegonkyō*, represents the sudden soteriological approach as taught in that sutra; see: T 278, 9.449c14 (NAKAMURA 1999, 454).

33. 一乘菩薩初發心時便成正覺。見性明了能達一切故。又一切宗要悉假宿福勝緣。見性門中唯在一念生信爾。譬如欲往他國先有多財。欲入他家先求良緣。向自國者不假多財。歸自家者不假良緣。一切衆生一箇無不具有根本佛性大智慧大福德。豈不是最上良緣哉。

34. Nature-origination (*shōki*; Ch. *xingqi* 性起) is one of the principal tenets of Huayan Buddhism. The motivation behind this concept is to bridge the gap between *suchness* and the theory of *store consciousness* (*zōshiki*; Ch. *zangshi* 藏識; Sk. *ālaya-vijñāna*). By implementing the conceptual paradigm of *essence* and *function* (*tai-yü*; Ch. *ti-yong* 體用), nature-origination clarifies the connection between the phenomenal world and the pure mind. According to this concept, all phenomenal appearances are nothing but manifestations (用) of the nature (性) that constitutes their very essence (體). To put it simply, the pure nature of the mind, that is, suchness, is inseparable from the married phenomenal appearance; see GREGORY (1991, 189, 232–34).

However, when the path is perceived to be a matrix of conditions, where every single stage is interdependent of all other stages, the initial stage of resolution already contains the final stage of perfect awakening.³⁵ According to this view, articulated in the *Kegonkyō*, the final stage of the bodhisattva path, that is, perfect awakening, cannot be contained in the initial stage of faith or resolution to attain awakening (PARK 1983, 120–21). SMR makes a direct reference to this view, as can be seen by the following passage: “It is like the teaching of the *Kegon*. With the first aspiration for enlightenment 發菩提心, one directly achieves perfect awakening. Later [the bodhisattva] practices the fifty teachings. When Sudhana was at Mañjuśrī’s place he realized by faith” (589b22–23).³⁶

As opposed to faith as a necessary condition, which requires an object, faith, as a sufficient condition, is objectless. This type of faith might be regarded as a phenomenological description of the mind of awakening, a mind that is not attached to thoughts or views of any kind—not even Buddhist ones (MULLER 2013). In other words, faith is the ability to discard conditioned consciousness, thereby facilitating the true nature of reality. Tōrei articulates this type of faith as follows:

Avoid giving rise to discriminative thoughts. The only thing that is important is to abandon your body and throw away your life. The time will come when you will arrive [to realization]. Suddenly you will drop your illusions and know this state of being. This is called letting go of the sharp cliff, perishing, and coming back to life. (588a12–14)³⁷

Using a famous Zen metaphor,³⁸ Tōrei describes Zen awakening as a “leap of faith”—not in the sense of accepting a certain view as true, even without fully understanding it, but as relinquishing views altogether. Discriminative thinking is conditioned and therefore cannot lead one to realization; only by letting go of all discrimination can one’s mind reemerge as awakened. In another place Tōrei writes: “It is like falling into water, when one’s legs step on the bottom one can

35. The unobstructed mutual penetration between noumenon and phenomena, and the non-obstruction among individual phenomena (*riji muge* and *jiji muge*; Ch. *li shi wu ai* 理事無礙 and *shi shi wu ai* 事事無礙) makes this realization exist in every stage of the Bodhisattva path.

36. 夫如華嚴法中初發心時便成正覺。而後修五十種法門。善財童子 在文殊師利童子處以信證入。The account of Sudhana’s (*Zenzai Dōshi*; Ch. *Shancai Tongzi* 善財童子) enlightenment is an episode from the final and most elaborate book of the *Kegonkyō*, “Entering the Realm of Reality” (*nyū hokkai*; Ch. *ru fajie* 入法界; T 278, 9.418b2). In this episode the young prince Sudhana embarks on a journey, which symbolizes the Bodhisattva path. Sudhana’s first encounter is with Mañjuśrī, who encourages him to develop his faith. After visiting fifty-three teachers, Sudhana returns to Mañjuśrī, where he completes his journey, and accomplishes his final goal (CLEARY 1983, 6–9). According to Park, this episode indicates that the final stage of the Bodhisattva path is already contained in the arousal of one’s initial faith (PARK 1983, 117–19).

37. 切忌起心取捨。只要於中一回放身捨命。時節到來。忽然落節。知此消息。是謂峻崖撒手。絕後再蘇。

38. The cliff metaphor also appears in the Sudhana episode of *Kegonkyō*.

resurface. If due to fear of sinking you foolishly wave your hands and feet, you will get tired out and drown” (593c28–594a1).³⁹

At first glance, faith as a sufficient condition might appear self-contradicting; however, this contradiction applies only if one regards faith as yet another concept, that is, as another object of cognition. However, faith in its ultimate sense is the ability to free oneself from any conviction, to overcome fear and drop into the abyss of the un-cognized. Thus, when regarded as a phenomenological description of the practitioner’s mind, faith infers a state of non-duality, which is the hallmark of Zen practice. As opposed to subject-object relations implied by faith as a necessary condition, here faith is understood as a non-dualistic state of mind, an objectless faith. Understood in this way, faith closely corresponds to awakening, when the entire dharma realm is realized instantaneously. Or in the iconic words of the third Huayan patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643–712): “When faith is complete one becomes Buddha” (T 1866, 45.490a13).

From Faith to Doubt

At this point, the attentive reader perhaps wonders about the place of doubt in SMR. Indeed, it would seem unlikely for Tōrei to neglect what is considered to be one of the most fundamental elements of Rinzai doctrine. However, Tōrei’s treatment of doubt is rather limited, especially when compared with faith. Moreover, except for koan practice, doubt is not regarded as a positive quality, let alone something that should be cultivated. Doubt (*gi* 疑) is generally depicted as an indication of incomplete faith, a pitfall that prevents the disciple from progressing on the spiritual path.⁴⁰ Although in a few passages Tōrei does encourage Zen students to doubt their realization, at the same time, he also emphasizes the need to trust the teachings and those who impart it (583b4, 588c07). Thus, what is actually being challenged is not the Buddhist doctrine, but the disciple’s understanding of it.

I suggest that there is a close correlation between the twofold model of faith presented above and Tōrei’s understanding of doubt. Faith of the first type, as a necessary condition, is meant to counter various doubts that arise in the heart of the practitioner as he or she progresses along the path. If one is to undertake the rigorous lifestyle of Zen training, one should first and foremost strongly believe that this system is right—that it works. Thus, regardless of any iconoclastic rhetoric, doubts are taken, first and foremost, as signs of one’s inadequate understanding.

However, SMR also refers to another type of doubt, which correlates to the second type of faith, and is essentially different from conventional doubts. What distinguishes this Great Doubt (*daigi* 大疑) is that it is not directed towards any external objects; it is not doubt in ... but rather “doubt redirected back to oneself”

39. 譬如墮水直到水底脚跟纔微即能浮出。若恐沈淪妄弄手脚全身疲勞溺死水中。

40. For examples, see SMR 588c4 and 592a19.

(HORI 2003, 6). Pure faith and the Great Doubt are thus two aspects of the same *mind of awakening* (*bodaishin* 菩提心); the former represents total affirmation of emptiness, that is, dependent origination or Buddha nature, and the latter represents total negation of the self. Thus, awakening is not the absence of doubt, but rather, transcending the duality of faith and doubt. In koan practice the disciples advance through a long series of cases that serve as an object of their meditation, and as a catalyst for the Great Doubt. The so-called “breakthrough” is none other than realizing the non-duality of faith and doubt themselves, or in the words of Tōrei: “You should know that true realization is just Great Doubt in the midst of Great Faith; you can’t know them as separated. When the time comes it will naturally manifest itself. This level of awakening is the root of substance for this entire treatise” (581a27–28).⁴¹

The dialectic tension between faith and doubt functions at least at two levels, the first being the dynamics of engaging the koan, which results in a breakthrough—actualizing one’s true nature. However, it has another function, which might be best described as the macro level. Here, faith and doubt are strongly related to another of the text’s major concepts—that is *going beyond* (*kōjō* 向上).⁴² This concept is deeply rooted in Rinzai understanding of Buddhist practice as an endless process of refining one’s understanding, which is not finalized with a single realization, not even by completing the entire koan curriculum.⁴³ The demand to go beyond all temporary spiritual accomplishments is constantly fueled by the tension between faith and doubt, since practitioners are always encouraged to advance forward beyond their current understanding, past that of their master, even beyond Buddha:

[A]fter penetrating the locked barriers (koans) of the Buddha and ancestors one by one. Having deep faith moves one a step beyond Buddha and ancestors. It benefits both cultivation and practice. Do not even think about retreat, this thing is by no means easy. Simply examine the truth in yourself. (581b8–9)⁴⁴

An interesting point about the above passage is that it emphasizes the need for faith even after one has attained the realizations needed to solve the koans.

41. 第四須知真實見性只在大疑大信之中.不可加知解分別.時節到來.自然現前.這般田地是一論體根也. Compare with Dahui: “Beneath the Great Doubt, always there is a Great Awakening” 大疑之下必有大悟, 大慧語錄; see: T 1998a, 47.0886a28.

42. MOHR (2009, 160) regards this concept as the most crucial of the entire SMR.

43. Post-awakening-practice (*gogo shugyō* 悟後修行) is a common notion in Japanese Rinzai, according to which in order to become a truly accomplished master, one should continue practicing even after completing the koan curriculum. Not until after one is able to integrate his awakening into all activities can one be called a Zen master. The importance of post-satori training was highly emphasized by many noted Rinzai masters, and it was during this stage of his career that Tōrei composed SMR; see TAGAMI and ISHII (2008, 201).

44. 第六佛祖關鎖一々透得後.深信有佛祖向上—著子.益修益行.莫生退意.此事最不容易.但就已省實.

Although penetrating a koan usually implies realization (*satori*) of some sort, here SMR proclaims the need for faith as a means to advance beyond this realization. In other words, regardless of their realization, practitioners should consider faith as a source of motivation and determination for spiritual growth. Thus, the dynamics between faith and doubt ensures the practitioner's progress.

Michel MOHR suggests that *going beyond* means that one should continue to practice “until all traces of initial breakthrough have disappeared” (2009, 160). However, the remaining question concerns the process described above regarding what is considered as finite: does one actually achieve the state beyond all doubt, and if so, when? A definite answer to this question, if at all possible, is beyond the scope of our investigation. In this article I have merely tried to demonstrate that whatever the answer may be, faith plays an important role in the process, and it is possible that faith enables the evolutionary nature of awakening, as implied by the concept of *going beyond*.

*The Missing Pillar*⁴⁵

Buddhism has established itself in the modern era as a rational form of spirituality. The Buddhist doctrine has usually been associated with reason, vivified in personal experience. As Donald LOPEZ argues, “Buddhism has been embraced in the West as both an alternative religion and an alternative to religion” (2005, 2). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that Zen advocators have chosen to overlook faith in attempting to appeal to modern and especially Western audiences. In other words, the case of Zen faith is but one example of the attempt to purge Buddhism from any “religious” attribute, which is one of the major trends in Buddhist modernism (MCMAHAN 2008, 5).

The emphasis on doubt is certainly not new to the Zen tradition: notable masters ranging from Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) to Hakuin have all stressed the importance of doubt within Zen practice. Yet Zen advocates tend to overlook the fact that these masters—Tōrei among them—emphasize faith to an equal degree, if not more.⁴⁶ Despite being the first of the Three Essentials (*sanyō* 三要)⁴⁷ of Zen practice, faith has usually received far less attention than the other

45. This is a reference to KAPLEAU (1966), one of the most popular books on Zen practice, which has contributed much to the image of Zen in the West.

46. One notable exception is Meriam LEVERING, who clearly shows that Dahui had emphasized faith, at least as much as, if not more than, doubt (1978, 283–311).

47. The three essentials or necessities are as follows: Great Root of faith (*daishinkon*), Great Determination (*daifunshi* 大憤志), and Great Doubt or great ball of doubt (*daigijō* 大疑情 or *daigidan* 大疑團). Though these terms are most strongly associated with Hakuin Ekaku, it was probably the Linji master Gaofeng Yuanmiao 高峰原妙 (1238–1295) who first formalized them as a trio (HORI 2003, 6, note 4).

two.⁴⁸ Indeed, the common perception of Rinzai practice ignores the fact that faith had played, and still plays, a major role in Zen, as anyone who has spent time in a Rinzai *dōjō* will surely testify.

It is not my intention to contend that SMR is primarily a text about faith; it is not, at least not exclusively. However, as an eminent spokesman for the Japanese Rinzai School, Tōrei establishes faith as one of the essential components of Zen practice; thus, he forces us to reconsider the place of faith in the Zen tradition. Whether the emphasis on faith is unique to Tōrei and “Hakuin Zen” or whether it represents an essential aspect of the Rinzai attitude toward Buddhist practice remains to be determined. Nevertheless, it is obvious that any discussion of Rinzai practice that overlooks this aspect is unbalanced, to say the least. Thus, on the basis of what I have presented here, I suggest that Zen scholars engage in faith in their region of specialty, thus opening up new avenues of inquiry. Perhaps, by avoiding a bias against faith, we might deepen our insight into Zen religious experience, and at the same time, advance our understanding of faith as a universal human phenomenon.

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- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 85 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, eds. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932. Text Database version 2012 (SAT 2012).
- ZGD *Zengaku dai-jiten* 禪学大辞典. Ed. Komazawa Daigakunai Zengaku Dai-jiten Hensansho 駒沢大学内禅学大辞典編纂所. Tokyo: Daishūkan Shoten, 1985.

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48. For examples, see MIURA and SASAKI (1967, 246, note 14); KASULIS (1981, 112–16); NISHITANI (1982, 18–26); HISAMATSU et al. (2000, 11).

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