

Excerpt from Dogen's Genjokoan

“The term Genkjokoan, which appears twice in the work itself, towards the end, and is encountered here and there elsewhere in Shobogenzo, is an important concept for Dogen, one that may even be said to give expression to his personal realization of the Buddhist Dharma. The words themselves are impossible to give adequate English translation. As often is the case, Dogen uses them in his own peculiar way, s~retching the words to their limits in order to get ~the most meaning from them in accord with his own understanding.” - the Eastern Buddhist, from SFZC document

“Originally a KOAN was an official order from a king. So KOAN means the first principle--which we have to understand from various aspects and experience through practice. What we normally call KOANS are examples of realizations by Zen masters of this first principle.

“GENJO means everything. KOAN means first principle. GENJO KOAN means the various activities we do as our practice is extended from z3.zen. It is the oneness of everyday life and practice as attained through pure practice.” - Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

現	成	公	案
manifest present actual revealed self-existing self-evident	become accomplish attain complete perfect	common public general sameness ultimate-equality	proposition suggestion idea plan individuality

Fish move through water and yet [for them] there is no edge of the water. Birds fly through the sky and yet there is no edge of the sky. However, from the beginning fish and birds have not been free from the water and sky. It is just that when the need is great, the use is great. When the need is small, the use is small. Like this, there is no such thing as beings exhausting their frontiers, although there is also no such thing as a place where they do not tread or fly.

If birds leave the sky, they immediately die. If fish leave the water, they immediately die. One should completely know that by means of water life is lived, and one should completely know that by means of the empty sky life is lived.

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以	鳥	爲	命	あり、
I	chou	I	mei	ari
<i>By means of/with/because</i>	<i>bird</i>	<i>for/be of use/do/try/serve as</i>	<i>life</i>	<i>exist</i>

Because of birds life is lived.

以	魚	爲	命	あり。
I	gyou	I	mei	ari
<i>By means of/with/because</i>	<i>fish</i>	<i>for/be of use/do/try/serve as</i>	<i>life</i>	<i>exist</i>

Because of fish life is lived.

以	命	爲	鳥なるべし、	命爲魚なるべし。
I	mei	I	chou narubeshi	mei I gyou narubeshi
<i>By means of/with/because</i>	<i>life</i>	<i>for/be of use</i>	<i>bird must be,</i>	<i>life for fish must be.</i>

Because of life a bird must be [a bird]. Because of life a fish must be [a fish].

There is still more besides this; advanced practice enlightenment should verify that an old person and any person are also like this.

Therefore, if there were birds or fish who would go through water or sky only after thoroughly mastering water or thoroughly mastering sky, they couldn't attain a path or a place. One attains this place when one's daily life actualizes reality (Genkjokoan). One attains this path when one's daily actions actualizes reality (Genkjokoan). This way, this place, isn't great or small, isn't self or other. It isn't from before and therefore isn't now manifest. It is in this way.

In this way, if a person practices and verifies the Buddha way, when they attain one dharma, they [fully] penetrate one dharma. When they meet one action, they [fully] practice one action. In this state the place exists and the way is mastered, since the edge of the knowable cannot be known. The reason it is so is that this knowing and the perfect realization of the Buddha-Dharma appear together and are experienced together.

Do not assume that what is attained will inevitably become self-conscious and be recognized by the intellect. Enlightenment immediately becomes manifest although its mysterious existence is not necessarily a manifest realization. Realization is the state of ambiguity itself.