

# Dōgen, Deep Ecology, and the Ecological Self

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A core project for deep ecologists is the reformulation of the concept of self. In searching for a more inclusive understanding of self, deep ecologists often look to Buddhist philosophy, and to the Japanese Buddhist philosopher Dōgen in particular, for inspiration. I argue that, while Dōgen does share a nondualist, nonanthropocentric framework with deep ecology, his phenomenology of the self is fundamentally at odds with the expanded Self found in the deep ecology literature. I suggest, though I do not fully argue for it, that Dōgen's account of the self is more sympathetic to one version of ecofeminism than to deep ecology.

*... to see mountains and rivers is to see Buddha-nature. To see Buddha-nature is to see a donkey's jaw or a horse's mouth.*

*'This' is Buddha-nature. ... We can find this in everyday life, eating a meal or drinking green tea.*

—DŌGEN<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Following the lead of Arne Naess,<sup>2</sup> deep ecologists contend that the most urgent task of ecophilosophy is the articulation of a new understanding of the self. The autonomous mental substance of Descartes, which still permeates Western thinking, is alienated from nature. This conception encourages environmental degradation since damage to nature does not directly affect an immaterial self. Naess therefore advocates that the narrow, Cartesian self must be expanded to include identification with the whole of nature—nature as Self—thus, eliminating alienation, and with it the deep causes of our mistreatment of the environment.

In exploring a range of possibilities for a new ecological self, I draw heavily on the Japanese philosopher Dōgen (1200-1253).<sup>3</sup> Dōgen is often cited by deep

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<sup>1</sup>Dōgen, "Busshō," *Shōbōenzō*, trans. Kōsen Nishiyama (Tokyo: Nakayama Shobō, 1988), pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup>The most detailed argument of this sort occurs in Warwick Fox's *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>While Dōgen is not well known in the West, translations of his works are readily available.

ecologists, along with the philosopher Spinoza and the poet Robinson Jeffers, as one of the progenitors of deep ecology. In Devall and Sessions' *Deep Ecology*, the distinguished Sōtō Zen roshi, Robert Aitkin, writes about "Gandhi, Dōgen, and Deep Ecology." Devall and Sessions themselves quote liberally from Dōgen in explaining deep ecology. Naess has argued for the unity, though not the identity, of Spinoza's philosophy, Mahāyāna Buddhism, and deep ecology. Warwick Fox quotes Dōgen approvingly at the conclusion of his recent book *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*. Indeed, many deep ecologists have been influenced by Buddhist philosophy, often by Dōgen in particular, including Devall, Naess, Aitkin, Fox, Carla Deicke, Joan Halifax, Dolores LaChapelle, Gary Snyder, John Seed, Jeremy Hayward, and Andrew McLaughlin.<sup>4</sup>

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The complete Japanese text is *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*, ed. Okubo Dōshu (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969-1970). Among the notable translations are: *Flowers of Emptiness: Selections from Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, ed. and trans. Hee-Jin Kim (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1985); *How to Raise an Ox*, ed. and trans. Francis Dojun Cook (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978); *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. and trans. Tanahashi Kazuaki, et al. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985); *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*, ed. and trans. Thomas Cleary (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986); *Shōbōgenzō*, trans. Kōsen Nishiyama (Tokyo: Nakayama Shobō, 1988); *Sounds of Valley Streams: Enlightenment in Dōgen's Zen*, ed. and trans. Francis H. Cook (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); *Zen Master Dōgen: An Introduction with Selected Writings*, ed. Yokoi Yuhō (New York: Weatherhill, 1976). Norman Waddell and Abe Masao have translated several of the important fascicles from *Shōbōgenzō* in the *Eastern Buddhist*: "Bendōwa," *Eastern Buddhist* 4, no. 1 (1971): 124-57; "Ikka Myōju," *Eastern Buddhist* 4, no. 2 (1971): 108-18; "Shōbōgenzō Genjokoan," *Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 2 (1972): 129-40, "Zenki and Shōji," *Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 1 (1972): 70-80; "Sammai O zammai," *Eastern Buddhist* 7, no. 1 (1974): 118-23; "Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature," *Eastern Buddhist* 8, no. 2 (1975): 94-112; 9, no. 1 (1976): 87-105; 9, no. 2 (1976): 71-87; and Norman Waddell, trans., "Uji," *Eastern Buddhist* 12, no. 1 (1979): 114-29. The notable secondary literature includes: David Appelbaum, "On Turning a Zen Ear," *Philosophy East and West* 33 (1983): 115-22; Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time Heidegger and Dōgen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); David Loy, "The Path of No-path: Sankana and Dōgen on the Paradox of Practice," *Philosophy East and West* 38 (1988): 127-46; Carl Olson, "The Human Body as a Boundary Symbol: A Comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Dōgen" *Philosophy East and West* 36 (1986): 107-20; T. P. Kasulis, *Zen Action Zen Person* (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1981); Hee-Jin Kim, *Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987); James Takashi Kōdera, *Dōgen's Formative Years in China* (Boulder: Prajna Press, 1980); William R. LaFleur, ed., *Dōgen Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); David Edward Shaner, *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); David E. Shaner, "The Bodymind Experience in Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō: A Phenomenological Perspective," *Philosophy East and West* 35, no. 1 (1985): 17-35; Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence is Buddha-nature: Dōgen's Understanding of Temporality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> See Robert Aitken Roshi, "Gandhi, Dōgen, and Deep Ecology" *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), pp. 232-35; Arne Naess, "Through Spinoza to Mahayana Buddhism, or Through Mahayana Buddhism to Spinoza" in *Spinoza's Philosophy of Man: Proceedings of the Scandinavian Spinoza Symposium*, 1977, ed. Jon Wetlesen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1978), pp. 136-58, and Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal*

I do not focus on Dōgen, however, because I think environmental philosophers should turn East for enlightenment. If anything, the constant references to Eastern philosophy as a whole in the deep ecology literature have obscured what is unique and individual in Dōgen. Rather, my purpose in examining his thought is to show that deep ecologists have neglected an important conception of a transformed sense of self. Starting from nondualist, nonanthropocentric premises that are consistent with the theoretical framework of deep ecology, Dōgen turns out to be saying something fundamentally different about the ecological self than Spinoza, Jeffers, or Naess. Although I do not develop the point fully here, I believe Dōgen's characterization of the self is even more sympathetic to a possible version of ecofeminism than to deep ecology.

I confine my interest in Dōgen's philosophy to two areas.<sup>5</sup> The first is his idea of Buddha-nature as the impermanence of *all* beings, not just sentient beings. Dōgen thus lays a nondualistic, nonanthropocentric grounding common to all beings (sentient and nonsentient) that reveals their interconnectedness. The second is Dōgen's understanding of the relational self as it is shaped by his concept of Buddha-nature.

## BUDDHA-NATURE

Early in his masterpiece, the *Shōbōgenzō* (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye), Dōgen takes up the question of Buddha-nature (*Busshō*) in a fascicle of the same name. Dōgen's strategy is to begin with classical formulations of Buddha-nature that were well-known to his audience.<sup>6</sup> Then, while partially endorsing Buddhist tradition, he also transforms their meanings. As Norman Waddell and Abe Masao have noted, Dōgen often sacrifices grammatical correctness in his translations from Chinese to Japanese for the illumination of an important and original philosophical point.<sup>7</sup>

He begins by quoting from the *Nirvāna Sūtra*, the principal Mahāyāna sutra on Buddha-nature. The passage, in a traditional translation, reads, "All sentient

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*Ecology*, p. 268. A collection of essays on Buddhism and the environment is *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, ed. Allan Hunt Badiner (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990). See especially the essays by Joan Halifax, "The Third Body: Buddhism, Shamanism, and Deep Ecology"; Jeremy Hayward, "Ecology and the Experience of Sacredness"; Bill Devall, "Ecocentric Sangha"; Carla Deicke, "Women and Ecocentricity"; and John Seed, "Wake the Dead!"

<sup>5</sup> I agree with Thomas Kasulis who has argued that Dōgen's work can be explicated philosophically; he need not be categorized (and dismissed) as a mystic in the popular sense of the word. See "The Zen Philosopher: A Review Article on Dogen Scholarship in English," *Philosophy East and West* 28 (1978): 353-73.

<sup>6</sup> Readers interested in the ways Dōgen connects with and departs from Buddhist tradition can consult Heinrich Dumoulin's two volume *Zen Buddhism: A History* (New York: Macmillan, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Norman Waddell and Abe Masao in introductory comments to their translation of "Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature," *The Eastern Buddhist* 8 (1975): 94.

beings without exception have the Buddha-nature. . . .” By quoting the *Sūtra*, he acknowledges tradition.<sup>8</sup> However, he also knew that this formulation is open to the charge of dualism. Saying that all sentient beings *have* Buddha-nature distinguishes Buddha-nature from the beings that have it, treating it as a potential quality of sentient beings.

The traditional formulation also implies a distinction between daily practice and the actualization of enlightenment. Meditation and ordinary, daily practice are maintained, accordingly, not as ends in themselves, but only for the sake of achieving a future end, an end that exists now only as a potentiality.

To remove these hints of dualism, Dōgen twists the expression “All sentient beings without exception *have* the Buddha-nature” to read “All sentient beings without exception *are* Buddha-nature.”<sup>9</sup> Buddha-nature, for Dōgen, is not a quality that sentient beings can *have* (or lack); rather, all sentient beings *are* Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is fundamental reality.

A second feature of Dōgen’s nondualism is the scope of Buddha-nature. Buddhist tradition often restricted it to those beings that have the potential for enlightenment, either in this life (humans) or in a future life (other sentient beings that can be reborn as human beings). Nonsentient entities such as rivers and mountains are excluded. Dōgen, however, refuses to accept the sentient/nonsentient distinction as fundamental. He says emphatically:

Impermanence is in itself Buddha-nature. . . . Therefore, the very impermanency of grass and tree, thicket and forest, is the Buddha-nature. Nations and lands, mountains and rivers, are impermanent because they are Buddha-nature. Supreme and complete enlightenment, because it is the Buddha-nature, is impermanent. Great Nirvana, because it is impermanent, is the Buddha-nature.<sup>10</sup>

Dōgen is both radical and traditional in his treatment of Buddha-nature. To be nondualist, he believes, Buddhist philosophy must commit to the fundamental reality of all beings as Buddha-nature, not just sentient beings. This point is explained, however, by reference to the most traditional of Buddhist commitments: the impermanence of all being.

These ideas are expressed most strikingly and poetically in the “Mountains and Waters Sūtra” (*Sansui-kyō*). There, Dōgen challenges his audience to understand mountains and rivers themselves as sūtras, as expressions of the Buddha. He quotes a Chinese source, “The green mountains are always walking; a stone woman gives birth to a child at night,” and comments:

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<sup>8</sup> This idea, however, was not original with Dōgen. See William LaFleur’s “Sattva: Enlightenment for Plants and Trees in Buddhism,” *CoEvolution Quarterly* 19 (1978): 47-52, for some fascinating background on this issue.

<sup>9</sup> Waddell and Abe, “Shobogenzo Buddha-nature,” p. 95. Their translation of the second sentence is “All sentient beings-whole being is the Buddha-nature.” I have kept the translations parallel here. On the radicalization of Buddha-nature, see Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*. vol. 2 (Japan), p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> “Shōbōgenzo Buddha-nature,” pp. 91, 93.

Mountains do not lack the qualities of mountains. Therefore they always abide in ease and always walk. You should examine in detail this quality of the mountains' walking.

Mountains' walking is just like human walking. Accordingly, do not doubt mountains' walking even though it does not look the same as human walking. The Buddha ancestors' words point to walking. This is fundamental understanding. You should penetrate these words.<sup>11</sup>

Taken out of context, these lines might be read as an anthropomorphic projection: "Mountains' walking is *just like* human walking." But instead of implying that the mountains' being should be understood in terms of human being, the metaphor of walking points to a dehomocentric understanding of *all* being. Mountains and humans abide together in their impermanence.

Abe puts this dehomocentric reversal succinctly:

When Dōgen emphasizes "all beings" in connection with the Buddha-nature, he definitely implies that man's *samsāra*, i.e., recurring cycle of birth and death, can be properly and completely emancipated not in the "living" dimension, but in the "being" dimension. In other words, it is not by overcoming generation-extinction common to all living beings, but only by doing away with appearance-disappearance, common to all things, that man's birth-death problem can be completely solved. Dōgen finds the basis for man's liberation in a thoroughly cosmological dimension. *Here Dōgen reveals a most radical Buddhist dehomocentrism.*<sup>12</sup>

We fail to understand life and death, the fundamental *human* problem, if we deal with it only in human terms. We fail, as well, if we deal with it in terms of all sentient beings. The life-and-death of human beings is subsumed by the generation-and-extinction (impermanence) of all sentient beings; in turn, the generation-and-extinction of all sentient beings is subsumed by what Abe calls the "appearance-and-disappearance" of *all* beings. There will be no release from human suffering, that is, until human beings experience themselves in the "cosmological dimension" of all beings, until they understand that "mountain's walking is just like human walking."

## THE SELF

Dōgen was emphatic in his rejection of two faulty accounts of the self. The self is not an organic entity, like a seed, out of which other things grow. On this metaphor, Buddha-nature stands in a dualistic relation to its "fruit." Dōgen, therefore, rejects a teleological explanation of self in the style of Aristotle. Self does not become real at the end of a long process. Rather, Buddha-nature is completely actual at each moment.

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<sup>11</sup> "Mountains and Waters Sūtra," in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>12</sup> Abe Masao, "Dōgen on Buddha-nature," *Eastern Buddhist* 4 (1971): 39 (emphasis added).

He also rejects an ancient view called the Senika heresy according to which there is a permanent self that is detached from change in the phenomenal world. Of those who espouse this view he says, “. . . they have not encountered their true self.”<sup>13</sup> His charge is phenomenological: such people have not yet had a certain experience; they have not “encountered” their true self as multiple, as interpenetrating other beings.

Dōgen contends that the introspective search for an enduring, autonomous self is futile. To understand the self is to “forget” the Cartesian self. A famous passage from the *Genjōkōan* of Dōgen states this point precisely:

To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of realization remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly.<sup>14</sup>

To “forget” the self is to penetrate the delusion of the Cartesian self. It is to “Know that there are innumerable beings in yourself”<sup>15</sup> and thereby to realize one’s true self in the cosmological dimension. Dōgen makes a Humean point: careful phenomenological examination does not reveal a “singular” Cartesian self, but “innumerable beings” present to multiple spheres in which beings exist in relation to other beings.<sup>16</sup>

Dōgen advises that to meet this true self, one must “just sit”; one must practice seated meditation (*zazen*). *Zazen* is a practice that reveals Buddha-nature through “undivided activity” (*zenki*), activity concentrated right here and right now. It brings one into the “presence of things as they are” (*genjōkōan*). One of Dōgen’s most revealing descriptions of this state of direct presence reads:

When you ride in a boat, your body and mind and the environs together are the undivided activity of the boat. The entire earth and the entire sky are both the undivided activity of the boat.<sup>17</sup>

What exists at that moment is the undivided activity of “the boat.” Body, mind, boat, and environs are not separate. Neither are they absolutely identical:

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<sup>13</sup> “Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature,” p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> “Actualizing the Fundamental Point” (Genjo Koan), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> “Undivided Activity” (Zenki), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> See “Body and Mind Study of the Way” (Shinjin Gakudo), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, for the two ways of studying the Buddha way. Dōgen accepts the traditional Buddhist understanding of body as “the four great elements” (earth, water, fire, and air) and the five skandhas (form, feeling, perception, impulses, and consciousness). The five skandhas are the mental and physical aggregates into which the phenomenal world is analyzed. The point of the analysis is to show that there is no substantial self.

<sup>17</sup> “Undivided Activity” (Zenki), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 85.

“although not one, not different; although not different, not the same; although not the same, not many.”<sup>18</sup>

This passage shows that there *is* a self for Dōgen; the self does not disappear or merge into the cosmos. He never denies that there are multiple, provisional, contextually defined borders that shape the sense of self. He maintains difference. Self is always experienced *in relation* to other beings, however, and those relations define what it means to be a self. Indeed, each person’s set of defining relations at a given moment are unique.

The realized person, then, is neither a Cartesian unchanging self nor an Aristotelian potentiality. A true self is one that practices undivided activity in the present moment, a practice that reveals the interpenetration (Buddha-nature) of all beings. In each moment there is full and complete realization, unlike the Aristotelian and the Cartesian selves; there is direct experience of the non-substantiality of the self. Thomas Kasulis calls this experience “person as presence.”<sup>19</sup>

We are now in a position to connect Dōgen’s earlier dogged insistence on the impermanence of Buddha nature with his account of the self. To begin with the distinction between sentience and nonsentience, rather than with the impermanence of *all* beings, is to encourage a delusory understanding of the self in relation to other beings. It moves toward a self that stands apart from “nature,” an ideal Cartesian observer that judges rather than participates. It moves away from the ordinary, impermanent self that interpenetrates ordinary beings in daily life. The Senika heresy provides a hierarchical, dualistic picture of self in relation to nature. For Dōgen, this hierarchy is a stairway to delusion, the delusion that permanence is fundamental reality.

#### BUDDHA NATURE, SELF, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

While Dōgen often focuses on seated meditation, and on co-enlightenment with mountains and waters, his nondualism requires that these are never separated from the practice of ordinary, daily life. It has often been noted, for example, that a meeting with a Chinese temple cook was instrumental in Dōgen’s view that practice and realization are one. In *Dōgen’s Formative Years in China*, Takashi James Kodera relates that during a three-month period when Dōgen was confined aboard ship before being allowed to enter China, he had a conversation with a Chinese temple cook from A-yü-wang mountain. The monk was sixty-one years old and had traveled a great distance to purchase Japanese mushrooms. Kodera writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-86.

<sup>19</sup> See *Zen Action Zen Person*, pp. 87-103. There is no better philosophical introduction to Dōgen’s thought than Kasulis’s book.

Dōgen was deeply impressed with the devotion of the old monk and asked him to stay the night on the ship. The chief cook declined the offer for fear that it might interfere with the normal procedures at his monastery the following day. Dōgen wondered why someone else could not prepare the meal in his place. He asked why a monk as senior as this one remained as chief cook and did not instead engage in sitting in meditation in pursuit of the Way. The old monk laughed loudly and said to Dōgen: “My good man from a foreign land, you still do not comprehend discipline; you still do not know the words.”<sup>20</sup>

Dōgen, then a headstrong, young intellectual, misunderstood the old monk because he thought daily chores were in conflict with formal pursuit of enlightenment through seated meditation. His experience in China, however, especially this and other meetings with chief temple cooks, taught him that he was mistaken.

The Mahāyāna claim that nirvāna and samsāra (birth and rebirth) are the same is brashly expressed by Dōgen through the identity of ordinary, everyday activities with nirvāna. Nirvāna is not reached suddenly at the end of a process that leaves daily life behind; it is realized in mindful, everyday action.<sup>21</sup> The fact that vegetarianism has been an important daily commitment in Buddhist philosophy, whereas it has usually been neglected in hierarchical, abstractionist philosophies, is hardly an accident. It reflects a deep difference in the kinds of practices that are regarded as philosophically informative.

Several of Dōgen’s most engaging writings concern a reorientation of life toward the ordinariness, the dailiness, of life, which can occur through mindfulness about food, personal hygiene, and care for others. In *Fushuku-hampō* (Mealtime Regulations), he quotes the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*: “When one is identified with the food one eats, one is identified with the whole universe; when we are one with the whole universe we are one with the food we eat.” He goes on to comment on this passage: “If the whole universe is the Dharma then food is also the Dharma: if the universe is Truth then food is Truth: if one is illusion then the other is illusion: if the whole universe is Buddha then food is also Buddha.”<sup>22</sup> The experience of co-enlightenment, which is expressed paradoxically in talk of “mountains’ walking,” is here expressed plainly and intuitively. Proper relationship to Buddha-nature—mindful practice of the truth of impermanence—is right before us all the time in ordinary life.

Undivided activity is an “everyday activity” (*Kajō*) for Dōgen. In remarks reminiscent of the co-enlightenment of persons and mountains, he says:

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<sup>20</sup> Kōdera, *Dōgen’s Formative Years in China*, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> Nor is there a dualistic preference among everyday activities. Another of the fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō* instructs monks on the dharma of face washing, tooth brushing, and proper use of the toothpick. See “Washing the Face,” in Senmen, *Shōbōgenzō*, trans. Kōsen Nishiyama (Tokyo: Nakayama Shōbo, 1988), pp. 370-80.

<sup>22</sup> *Fushuku-hampō* (Mealtime Regulations), trans. Roshi Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life* (Mt. Shasta, Calif.: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 95. A book that takes Dōgen’s writings of food as central to understanding his philosophy is Kōsho Uchiyama, *Refining Your Life: From Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, trans. Thomas Wright (New York: Weatherhill, 1983).



In the domain of buddha ancestors, drinking tea and eating rice is everyday activity. This having tea and rice has been transmitted over many years and is present right now. Thus the buddha ancestors' vital activity of having tea and rice comes to us. . . . From this you should clearly understand that the thoughts and words of buddha ancestors are their everyday tea and rice. Ordinary coarse tea and plain rice are buddha's thoughts—ancestors' words. Because buddha ancestors prepare tea and rice, tea and rice maintain buddha ancestors. Accordingly, they need no powers other than this tea and rice, and they have no need to use powers as buddha ancestors.<sup>23</sup>

Mindful practice of daily relations with food counteracts the abstractionist tendencies of people (particularly philosophers) to think that only the permanent and abstract are fully real. Food is the dharma because direct presence to the impermanence of food reveals the arbitrariness of borders that we construct when abstracting from immediate experience. Since food becomes the self, and then becomes not-self again (as sayings posted near toilets in Zen monasteries recall), the self must be reconstructed as impermanent and relational.

## DŌGEN AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Naess and Fox have argued that the core of deep ecology is the expansion of the Cartesian self to the broader, inclusive, cosmological Self that identifies with all of nature. We have seen that Dōgen speaks of a relational sense of self that experiences interpenetration with nature in seated meditation and in mindful everyday living. The question I wish to address now is whether the fully realized deep ecological Self is the same as Dōgen's self.

Deep ecologists, Spinoza, Jeffers, and Dōgen, all aspire to a nondualistic, nonanthropocentric orientation that makes their work interesting and important to environmental philosophers. However, the connections between Dōgen and deep ecology as they have been made up to this point are simply too broad to be useful. They conceal Dōgen's most distinctive contribution to the philosophy of self, the centrality of mindfulness about everyday life in formulating an ecological self that is nondualistic, nonhierarchical and dehomocentric.

Consider what Naess says in his classic article "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes":

There is a process of ever-widening identification and ever-narrowing alienation which widens the self. The self is as comprehensive as the totality of our identifications. Or, more succinctly, our Self is that with which we identify. Identification is a spontaneous, non-rational, but not irrational, process through which *the interest or interests of another being are reacted to as our own interest or interests.*

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<sup>23</sup> "Everyday Activity" (Kajo), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 125.

He says clearly that by identification he does not mean identity. Identification, according to Naess, preserves diversity; we identify with the interests of "another being."

Having acknowledged diversity, however, he amplifies his position in puzzling ways, puzzling because the holist, hierarchical language seems to deny what he has just asserted:

Through identification, higher level unit is experienced: from identifying with 'one's nearest,' higher unities are created through circles of friends, local communities, tribes, compatriots, races, humanity, life, and ultimately, as articulated by religious and philosophic leaders, unity with the supreme whole, the 'world' in a broader and deeper sense than the usual. I prefer a terminology such that the largest units are not said to comprise life *and* 'the not living.' One may broaden the sense of living so that any natural whole, however large, is a living whole.

There is a hierarchy in Naess' construction of the process of identification that moves from parts to "unity with the supreme whole." (The very distinction between self and Self by means of capitalization indicates this point.) While he grants that there are multiple ways in which "oneness" can be experienced, including the political means of Gandhi, he also says, "This way of thinking and feeling at its maximum corresponds to that of the enlightened, or yogi, who sees "the same," the *ātman*, and who is not alienated from anything."<sup>24</sup>

In these passages, Naess commits exactly the error Dōgen warns against in *Busshō*. He warned against the Senika heresy according to which the Self is a permanent entity that stands above the manifold changes of nature. Yet, for similar reasons, Dōgen was emphatically rejecting the Indian idea of *ātman*, the Hindu permanent self. The Buddhist philosopher David Kalupahana has written:

The self (*ātman*) . . . is the permanent and eternal reality unsmearred by all the change and fluctuations that take place in the world of experience. In fact, it is the basis of the unity of empirical experience of variety and multiplicity, of change and mutability, of past, present and future. The real self and the unreal or mutable self, the transcendental apperception and empirical consciousness are graphically presented with the parable of the "two birds" perched on one branch, the one simply watching and the other enjoying the fruit.<sup>25</sup>

Kalupahana points out that the distinction between real self and unreal self

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<sup>24</sup> "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes," *Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Tobias (San Diego: Avant Books, 1985), pp. 261, 263. Because Gandhi's understanding of self, though political, derives from the Hindu (Advaita Vedānta) idea of self as *ātman*, the alternatives offered by Naess are not really different.

<sup>25</sup> David J. Kalupahana, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 12.

becomes normatively charged when connected to *brahman* and the caste system. The distinction is both ontological and ethical. The ontological distinction rests on a conceptual hierarchy that is remarkably familiar to Western philosophers, a hierarchy that places the permanent and the eternal above change and mutability, unity above variety and multiplicity. The Self as *ātman* is better (higher) because it experiences the world as, in Naess' terms, "oneness."

Naess frequently distinguishes between the philosophical and popular uses of terms. There is no doubt that he has often been misinterpreted because of his critics' failure to appreciate this point. But it is doubtful whether the distinction is helpful here. It is one thing to choose a term because it carries helpful popular associations; it is another to choose a term whose precise meaning *contradicts* what Naess says about the recognition of diversity. Naess' explanation of the ultimate realization of Self in terms of *ātman* is, therefore, deeply puzzling regardless of whether it is intended to be popular or philosophical.

These troubling connections between the deep ecological self and an eternal self are worsened when other deep ecologists follow Naess in adopting the part/whole model to explain the expansion of self to Self. Freya Mathews is typical of many in distinguishing between atomistic (Cartesian) and holistic (deep ecological) ways of understanding the self. Both understand the relationship as one of "part and whole." However, in contrast to atomism, the holism that Mathews endorses provides that "each element, being logically constituted by its relations with the other elements, is conditioned by the whole."<sup>26</sup>

In spite of casting the two models of self as *distinct* alternatives, it is significant that, in Mathews' own words, they depend on the *same* hierarchical model of part to whole. If they are identical in respect to their model of explanation, where is their difference? This question leads to the suspicion that Self is the Cartesian ego writ large. It would appear that *this* version of the deep ecological Self is still conceptually tied to the old hierarchical project whose goal is to find an entity that is whole, "permanent," "unsmeared by change."

The influence of Spinoza weighs heavily here, and like the Hindu *ātman*, moves deep ecology in the direction of a hierarchical, nonrelational Self. Spinoza, Descartes' best critic, clearly saw that Descartes' claim for human minds—that they are independent substances—must fail because, unlike God, human minds are neither epistemically nor ontologically independent. They require a rational explanation in terms of an external "cause," and they are not self-existent.

Descartes' mistake taught Spinoza that only "the whole" can be truly independent in both senses, so that only God, or nature, can qualify as substance. Substances are nonrelational for Spinoza because, by definition,

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<sup>26</sup> Freya Mathews, "Conservation and Self-Realization: A Deep Ecology Perspective," *Environmental Ethics* 10 (1988): 349.

there is nothing else to which they *can* relate. Similarly, Naess and others are in danger of defining the Self nonrelationally. The whole *cannot* relate to anything else just because it is the whole.

I grant that there are many passages in the deep ecology literature that are at odds with this reading. Naess himself has said in an unpublished essay:

In my outline of a philosophy (Ecosophy T) 'Self-realization!' is the logically (derivationally) supreme norm, but it is not an eternal or permanent Self that is postulated. When the formulation is made more precise, it is seen that the Self in question is a symbol of identification with an absolute maximum range of beings.

With Buddhist philosophy in mind, Bill Devall has written that ". . . all is impermanent. All is changing." Some of his essays can be read as moving in the direction of a recognition of ordinariness as the context in which the ecoself is awakened. Gary Snyder's writings on Dōgen often display an acute sense of the impermanence that is everyday life.<sup>27</sup>

The problem is that the deep ecology literature has endorsed *both* a holist and nonholist, a nonrelational and relational, understanding of Self. There has not been clear, unequivocal recognition that there are (despite Mathews) *three* competing models of self: the Cartesian atomic self, the Spinozist, holist Self expanded to the supreme whole, and Dōgen's relational self. Unlike the Cartesian and Spinozist selves, the relational self cannot be expressed in terms of parts and wholes.

It would be a fundamental misreading of Dōgen's Buddha-nature to say that it is the supreme whole of all impermanent beings, and that the "myriad things" are parts. There is no sense of ascending to higher and higher unities that lead to a "supreme whole" in Dōgen. Abe Masao puts this point succinctly by contrasting Spinoza's understanding of nature with Dōgen's:

In Spinoza the One God has, in so far as we know, two "attributes" thought (*cogitatio*) and extension (*extensio*); particular and finite things are modifications, being called the "modes" of God, which depend on, and are conditioned by, the divine and infinite being.

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<sup>27</sup> Naess is quoted in Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 230, from an unpublished manuscript, "Gestalt Thinking and Buddhism" (1983). See Devall's "Ecocentric Sangha," in *Dharma Gaia*. Among those who have been associated with deep ecology, Gary Snyder's recent writings in *The Practice of the Wild* best express this sense of the everydayness of our relations with nature. Speaking of the passage, Snyder says that "if you doubt mountains' walking you do not know your own walking, Dōgen is not concerned with 'sacred mountains'—or pilgrimages, or spirit allies, or wilderness as some special quality. His mountains and streams are the processes of this earth, all of existence, process, essence, action, absence; they roll being and nonbeing together. They are what we are, we are what they are. For those who would see directly into essential nature, the idea of the sacred is a delusion and an obstruction: it diverts us from seeing what is before our eyes: plain thusness. Roots, stems, and branches are all equally scratchy. No hierarchy, no equality." See Snyder's "Blue Mountains Constantly Walking," *The Practice of the Wild* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), p. 103.

But Dōgen's "myriad things" cannot be understood as *modes* of Buddha-nature. They are, rather, fully real as simple (relational) beings. Abe writes:

A pine tree, for instance, is not a mode of God as Substance, but a mode of "what," namely a mode without a modifier. Therefore, a pine tree is really a pine tree in itself, no more and no less.<sup>28</sup>

Dōgen's Buddha-nature is not a code word for metaphysical unity.

Dōgen's Buddha-nature captures both the unity and diversity of nature without resorting to hierarchical abstractions. The phenomenological description he gives of direct presence speaks as much of diversity as of unity: "although not one, not different; although not different, not the same; although not the same, not many."<sup>29</sup> When Dōgen says "not one," he marks the fact that the direct experience of the everydayness of life is the experience of interpenetration without ultimate, metaphysical unity. An ecological consciousness for Dōgen is not, as for Jeffers or Naess, an experience of "wholeness." It is an experience of interpenetration with a "... concrete existence—a 'this.'" "Thus Buddha-nature is a 'what,' a concrete, real being."<sup>30</sup>

### DŌGEN AND THE DEEP ECOLOGY-ECOFEMINISM DEBATE

Recently, Fox attempted to extend Naess' work on identification with nature by distinguishing three bases of identification: the personal, the ontological, and the cosmological. Roughly, these coincide with ecofeminism, a Zennist or Heideggerian approach, and deep ecology. We are in a position to see that by driving apart ecofeminism and the Zen of Dōgen, Fox misrepresents both. In both cases, his implicitly hierarchical thinking does not allow him to appreciate the coincidence of the personal and the public.

Fox charged that Jim Cheney's version of ecofeminism is incoherent because it is anthropocentric. Expansion of self occurs for Cheney through a "personal," gendered context rather than through cosmological identification with the whole. Fox's conclusion is that "The cosmological/transpersonal voice *is* a 'different voice' from the personal voice, but it does not seem to respect gender boundaries."<sup>31</sup> A transformative ecophilosophy is not inherently feminist for Fox.

Dōgen offers an insight into why we should resist Fox's mutually exclusive distinction between the personal and the ontological. There *is* an ontological phenomenology in Dōgen. Through mindfulness about everyday practices, the ecological self is awakened as we immediately experience interpenetration

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<sup>28</sup> Abe Masao, "Dōgen on Buddha-Nature," pp. 41-42.

<sup>29</sup> "Undivided Activity" (Zenki), *Moon in a Dewdrop*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>30</sup> Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, p 82.

<sup>31</sup> Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels" *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 12-13.

with that pine tree which is “really a pine tree.” Everyday mindfulness draws us out of our deluded, narrow selves through the experience of co-enlightenment.

But Dōgen’s recommendations are intensely personal as well. Each mindful act is an act of personal ontological commitment, a moment to moment reaffirmation of multiple selves in multiple relations to other beings. The movement in Dōgen’s thought is to undercut the public/private, personal/impersonal distinctions on which Fox’s classification rests.

Similarly, ecofeminism is not merely a personal approach to the self. For feminists, “the personal is the political.” Women have been marginalized through the public/private dualism. Women’s lives have been constructed as less important than men’s lives because they are constructed as merely domestic and private. Feminists do not protest this point by claiming that their lives ought to be constructed as public.<sup>32</sup> To do so would just reinforce the public/private distinction, and further marginalize the domain of the ordinary. Rather, their theoretical aspirations are nondualistic. They argue that the public/private distinction cannot be maintained as it has been espoused by the Western liberal (atomic) self. The kind of self required by the public/private distinction does not exist. In basing his criticism on a version of the public/private split, Fox affirms a dualistic stance when he claims to reject it.

Dōgen would also challenge the way Fox draws the distinction between ontological and cosmological identification. Ontologically based identification “refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact *that* things are.” Though this view, which he associates with Zen Buddhism, cannot be adequately expressed in words, according to Fox, it points toward the experience of “this state of being, this sense of commonality with all that is simply by virtue of the fact *that* it is, at a certain moment. Things *are!* There is something rather than nothing! Amazing!”

In comparison, “cosmologically based identification refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality.” Fox confirms that

the inspiration for this concept derives from Gandhi and Spinoza, both of whom explicated their views within the context of a monistic metaphysics, that is, within the context of a cosmology that emphasized the fundamental unity of existence. Gandhi was committed to Advaita Vedanta (i.e., monistic or, more literally,

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<sup>32</sup> This is too broad. Actually, liberal feminists accept these dualistic frameworks and work to be included on the masculine side of the dualism. Other forms of feminism seek to undercut the dualisms altogether. See Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), especially chaps. 3 to 6, for a discussion of the differences between liberal feminism and other forms of feminism.

nondual Hinduism). . . . Spinoza developed a philosophy that conceived of all entities as *modes* of a single substance. . . .

Despite the apparent intellectual distinction, the difference between ontological and cosmological identification is practical rather than theoretical. Fox says that “it would seem to be much easier to communicate and inspire a cosmologically based sense of identification with all that is rather than an ontologically based identification.”<sup>33</sup>

It is simply not true, however, that the distinction between the self in Zen literature (at least as represented by the Zen philosopher most often cited by deep ecologists, Dōgen) and the deep ecological, Spinozist, Gandhian (Advaita Vedānta) Self is one of practice rather than theory. Fox does not recognize that the holist self, which is part of a “monistic metaphysics,” is not the relational self.

Fox’s characterization of the Zen self reads more like a description of the first premise of the medieval Christian cosmological argument for the existence of a holist God than Dōgen: “Things *are!* There is something rather than nothing! Amazing!” The basic Buddhist commitment to the impermanence of all being, is not the same as the Christian challenge to give a metaphysical explanation for why there is something rather than nothing. The demand for an ultimate metaphysical explanation of existence only makes sense in an abstractionist metaphysics that marginalizes everyday experience. Ordinary things, according to such a metaphysic, “demand an explanation,” an explanation that only terminates in the whole.

#### DŌGEN AND ECOFEMINISM

Feminists, ecofeminists in particular, have criticized deep ecologists for their attempt to find oneness with nature through Eastern philosophy. This attempt is viewed as a maneuver to overcome masculine alienation without confronting the connections between sexism and naturism. I am sympathetic to this charge. In looking to Dōgen for clarification, I am not implying that ecofeminists ought to look to the East. Neither am I suggesting that the ways in which Dōgen is suggestive will be of interest to all ecofeminists. Ecofeminism is a variety of approaches, some of which reject any hint of spirituality, even the “a pine tree is really a pine tree” literalism of Dōgen.

Early on, I said that I was interested in the *particulars* of Dōgen’s philosophy, and that a general turn to the East can obscure the individuality of Dōgen. Philosophers ought to be willing to sharpen their views against those of any important philosopher. Dōgen is relevant to the deep ecology/ecofeminism debate because he provides a common ground between deep ecologists and

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<sup>33</sup> Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, pp. 250, 251, 252, 259, 260.

ecofeminists that could result in productive conversation. Those who are familiar with the ecofeminist literature on the ecological self will have noticed already that there are some tempting connections between ecofeminism and Dōgen. Consider only two examples: one from the work of Val Plumwood and the other from the work of Jim Cheney.

Val Plumwood, in an article titled, "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism," concludes:

Thus it is unnecessary to adopt any of the stratagems of deep ecology—the indistinguishable self, the expanded self, or the transpersonal self—in order to provide an alternative to anthropocentrism or human self-interest. This can be better done through the relational account of the self, which clearly recognizes the distinctness of nature but also our relationship and continuity with it. On this relational account, respect for the other results neither from the containment of the self nor from a transcendence of self, but is an *expression* of self in relationship, not egoistic self as merged with the other but self as embedded in a network of essential relationships with distinct others.<sup>34</sup>

Not a single word of Plumwood's summary requires alteration to describe Dōgen's self: for Dōgen the self is not indistinguishable from nature; nor is it an expanded or transpersonal self that becomes one with the whole. Dōgen's is a relational self which is distinct, but defines itself through mindfulness about its network of essential relationships. Dōgen's relational self resists the abstractionist language of "the whole" by highlighting the provisional, contextual borders of the self in relation to other things: *this* pine tree, and *this* meal.

In a similar fashion, Jim Cheney has written of the differences between the ways self is defined in a gift economy and a market economy: "In a gift economy . . . selves tend to get defined in terms of what I call 'defining relationships'—where our relationships with others are central to our understanding of who we are."<sup>35</sup> The idea that a self is defined, not through relationship with a metaphysical whole, but through defining relationships with specific others, is also deeply reminiscent of Dōgen. The relational self of Dōgen, then, intersects neatly with at least these two ecofeminist accounts of the self.

A second way in which Dōgen coincides with ecofeminist interests is that his radical nondualism leads him to provide a sympathetic account—rare in all the world's philosophical literature—of ordinary, daily practices. It is not accidental that these practices are expected of women in Japan and elsewhere. I

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<sup>34</sup> Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 20.

<sup>35</sup> Jim Cheney, "Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology," *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 122. In *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), I argued for just such a feminist sense of self as might arise from mindfulness about our defining relationships to food.



conclude by sketching out one possible version of the ecofeminist self that is informed by Dōgen's emphasis on the ordinary.

Dōgen was not a feminist. Early in his career, nevertheless, he was forceful in advocating the view that women and men are equally capable of enlightenment. It is possible he realized that the kinds of ordinary activities through which enlightenment can come—and about which Dōgen wrote in minute detail—are just those sorts of activities that are typically regarded as “women's work.”

I see Dōgen as challenging the same kinds of philosophical hierarchies that have plagued and marginalized women. Plato's metaphor of the cave set the tone for Western philosophy by depicting ordinary, daily life as a mere shadowy reflection of the Good and the True. Ways of experiencing the world that are shaped by ordinary, everyday practices are invisible to philosophers trained in these conceptual hierarchies. Practices such as growing and eating food, care for the land, cleaning and maintenance of the home, and daily care for children and others—in short, care for the environment, broadly conceived—are regarded as sub-philosophical, as not worthy of a philosopher's interest.

This dualistic split between the extraordinary and the ordinary has long been gender-based. One need only look at the cosmology of the Pythagoreans for a set of conceptual dualisms that has played a devastating role in marginalizing women's lives: “limit and unlimited, odd and even, one and plurality, right and left, male and female, resting and moving, straight and crooked, light and darkness, good and bad, square and oblong.”<sup>36</sup> We have been taught that what is thus defined as “women's work” is “lower,” “female,” “bodily,” “animal,” “natural,” irrational,” “bad,” and “dark.”

Aristotle and Aquinas are notorious among environmental philosophers for their perpetuation of these hierarchies. As Aristotle put it:

It is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved. Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.<sup>37</sup>

For Aristotle, other animals, women, and barbarians are naturally suited to slavery. It is a single issue for him. They form a natural servant class whose purpose is to serve men.

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<sup>36</sup> *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle*, ed. Reginald E. Allen (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 39. Quoted from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 985b23.

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. 1, chap. 5. See *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, ed. Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989).

Women have been located at the border between culture and nature. Their “natural” work involves translation of nature into culture: cooking (translation from raw to cooked), agriculture and childbirth. In a culture that naturalizes women it is not surprising that women have been expected to perform caring labor.

Because they have been positioned at the border between nature and culture, women have had no choice but to focus on ordinary, everyday activities. In one sense, then, the ordinary is oppressive to women; it does not necessarily lead to sound environmental practice. Third World women, for example, who are deprived of the right to own land, “ordinarily” may be involved in deforestation for fuel. They have no choice.

Dōgen, in contrast, understands ordinary, daily practices transformatively, as the possibility of *mindfulness* about everyday practices. For ecofeminists, a philosophy that allows us to value the ordinary on its own terms, rather than as a defective reflection of the extraordinary, permit us sympathetically to understand the roles of those who have been expected to mediate men’s commerce with the ordinary. Through consciousness of typically women’s practices, a new ecological self might develop.

My point is not the essentialist point that women “by nature” are closer to the rhythms of ecological awareness. Many feminists have been clear in pointing out that this association only strengthens sexist categories by reifying them as if they were metaphysical: women then are constructed as bodily, nonrational creatures who *should* be engaged in manual rather than intellectual practices. Nor is my point that all women possess ecological wisdom. Clearly women, as well as men, are implicated in the degradation of nature.

I am, rather, making points about the ways in which *gender* is constructed in sexist cultures (not a point about individuals), and about the kinds of actual *practices* that have been defined by patriarchal and naturist cultures as “women’s work” (or “animals’ work”). These are the kinds of marginalized practices that such cultures make available precisely to those who are constructed as women (or animals).

The insight provided by ecofeminism is that women, who have engaged in these practices, who have been expected to practice compassionate entrance into others’ worlds, have expert knowledge about the ordinary practices through which an ecoself is awakened.<sup>38</sup> As Sara Ruddick has said about the practice of mothering, for example, “Caretakers are immersed in the materials of the physical world.” Because of this immersion, “caring labor” is regarded with disdain and marginalized by intellectuals. Yet, its very standpoint as “subjugated knowledge” produces a “superior” version of experience.<sup>39</sup> Be-

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<sup>38</sup> In “Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care,” *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 60-74, I explore some of the conditions for an ecofeminist ethic.

<sup>39</sup> Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), pp. 129-30.

cause of the practices in which they have engaged, women have firsthand experience with “the presence of things as they are.”

Taking daily practices as guides to philosophical reflection reveals that it is not the project of ecophilosophy to connect us to the “environment” (as if we could be disconnected), or to provide abstract rules for our interaction with the “environment” (when we are already environmentally engaged at every moment of our ordinary lives). The ordinary lives of women and men are already grounded in practices that are morally, spiritually, and physically healthy.

The ecological self is not something new, brought into being from nonexistence in an atomic self. The issue is not whether something new can be created, but whether we can become aware of ordinary practices and respond to them mindfully. Activities such as “eating a meal or drinking green tea,” or seeing the ordinary everywhere around us—seeing “the donkey’s jaw,” as Dōgen says—are daily routines that mark the ways in which we are already, and inevitably, ecological beings despite the distortions of dualist, hierarchical, homocentric, and sexist thinking.

Ecofeminism is in a position to reinterpret the idea of a bioregion in terms of ordinariness: a bioregion is that “home” in which we can be our ordinary selves. Warwick Fox has recalled that the word *ecology* is derived from the Greek word *oikos* meaning “the family household and its daily maintenance.”<sup>40</sup> A truly transformative ecophilosophy must work to make this original meaning common knowledge.

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<sup>40</sup> Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 31.