

Flashlight Analogy of Dharma Position, Total Exertion and Total Dynamic Function

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To describe dharma position (hoi, ju hoi), total exertion (gujin) and total dynamic function (zenki) I have a flashlight analogy that I can demonstrate (or you can do this at home). We start with a flashlight shining on the wall in the dark. When the light shines on the wall we see a round spot of light and all around the light there is the dark. The spot is the entire universe at that moment. Master Dogen, states in his Genjo-koan fascicle, “When one side is illumined the other side is dark.” What was he saying about this?

In your dharma position you are 100% that position whatever it happens to be (walking, running, playing music, eating, sharing, caring, etc.), as you exert that position fully you are self-obstructing. This is not negative, it just means that you are obstructing anything that would otherwise obstruct your position. When the light shines it is self-obstructing the dark (keeping it out of the light). When you totally exert, the universe moves with you, acting in concert. Your position is completely independent (and free), since it is cut off from past and future (worries) and from anything else that might obstruct it—hidden in the dark. It is not that you have completely eliminated the past and the future. Though they are cut-off (in the relative sense), they are included (in the absolute, spacious sense) with you and everything else in the universe, in (and as) your dharma position.

Total Dynamic Function (Zenki) is the union of light and dark—the whole thing. That is a higher order realization. The fully exerted dharma position is a lower order realization that then makes way for the higher order realization of Total Dynamic Function. Both orders of realization are liberative and transforming. Exertion is of the quality of yielding. It is the absence of resistance. Your exertion is focused in the one moment of your dharma position. It becomes full because nothing is leaking out, the more it is exerted. Then there is a point where we realize the light and the dark are one thing. They are the entire universe.

Question: Who is holding the flashlight? In the relative sense, the one in the dharma position is the one with the flashlight. In the absolute sense, there is no one holding the flashlight. It IS the entire universe along with the spot on the wall and the darkness that surrounds it. This is the Total Dynamic Function in its most complete sense.