

Questions for Reflection
Series 7 Talk 10

Here are some points for reflection during the week:

1) First: Ryokan doesn't care for social climbing but leaves everything to "heaven's truth." Heaven's truth (tenshin) means reality as-it-is, before being processed by human thinking. What does "reality as-it-is before being processed by human thinking" mean to you?

2) Second: By studying Shobogenzo, Ryokan says that he experienced the pivotal point for transforming himself. Until then, he probably thought "Ryokan" studied and practiced the dharma using his own power and effort to see the true reality of all beings, but he now found that all beings came to him and allowed him to practice. Can you explain the difference between these two points of view?

3) Third: "When I am hungry, I eat rice, when I am tired, I sleep. Foolish people laugh at me , but wise people know what I mean." What does this now somewhat Zen cliché really mean?

4) Fourth: I think that Ryokan found he could not live like Dogen because, internally, his impractical personality could not work with others within an organization and, externally, because of the situation of the Soto School and its temples. He had to create his own lifestyle and practice as a bodhisattva inspired by Dogen's teaching, but without imitating Dogen's style as it was practiced at Soto Zen monasteries of the time. Hearing this, I myself feel enormous freedom in creatively structuring my own personal Zen practice according to who I am. I wonder how YOU feel?

5) Fifth: Ryokan's lifestyle after returning to Echigo is a typical example of "Zen laziness." But what is that? How does it show up in your life?