DAVID HUME AND DŌGEN ZENJI:
PERSONHOOD, SELF, AND IDENTITY AS EVOLUTIONARY IMPERMANENCE

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Abstract

Personhood, self, and identity are typically terms used with the assumption that human beings are cohesive units of existence or fixed reference points. In other words, personhood, self, and identity often have permanent, stable, and consistent referents; a five-year-old version of an individual and a twenty-year-old version of that individual are the same person, contain the same self, and have the same identity at the individual's core. The individual's fundamental essence does not change, or does it? We find comfort and ease in familiarity, stability, and constancy; thus, when we refer to a unitary self, that particular conception of the self is invented out of fear – the fear of unfamiliarity, instability, and change. However, what if we can dispel this fear? What if the unitary self is an illusion, or rather a delusion, that binds and chains us to the existential anxiety and dread that come with fearing the possible loss of a consistent self due to inauthenticity or death? What if the concept of an impermanent self is more liberating than the concept of a permanent self? David Hume and Dōgen Zenji together would uphold the impermanent and furthermore evolving self. A cross-cultural investigation of the similarities between their philosophies points to the existential empowerment induced by an acceptance of change and impermanence as inherent to the natural order.

Personhood, self, and identity have all been terms designated to the primary subject of our respective experiences: ourselves.[1] We are the referents of these terms. It is more often than not the case that we are the protagonists of our own stories. As distinct persons, selves, and identities, we have the propensity to observe and interpret our surroundings in an attempt to decipher and respond appropriately to our very existence as well as our position relative to external entities. Our existence, therefore, is a crucial reference point that we find comfort in. It is a part of the equation that is our perceived reality; by identifying the elements of this reality, we perhaps feel one step closer to comprehending the enigma that each of us play a role in. Yet, we can also find comfort in stability, in constancy, and in unity. If our existence as persons, selves, and identities is consistent, then we have a stable reference point that we can turn to with relief, a relief nestled in familiarity. If each of our existences is unitary, then each of us is a cohesively contained, idiosyncratic individual.

However, both Scottish philosopher David Hume and Japanese Buddhist philosopher Dōgen Zenji may beg to differ. What if personhood, self, and identity are not terms grounded in constancy and should not be understood only as such? What if we are infinite in that, rather than defining personhood, self, and identity as fixed reference points in our daily experiences, we are actually impermanent, in perpetual states of change?[2] If so, perhaps we could further appreciate and accept change, unfamiliarity, and instability as inherent facets of our existence instead of shying away from them in fear of uncertainty and the unknown? In this paper, I will argue that David Hume and Dōgen Zenji, prominent figures in Western philosophy and Zen philosophy

[1] For the purpose of this paper, I will specifically discuss humans' relationship with personhood, self, and identity. While I do acknowledge that animals have self-awareness and a sense of identity, they will not be addressed so that this paper is less complicated and more narrowly focused on the thesis that it serves to defend.

[2] The consistent use of pronouns such as "I", "myself", and "we" fundamentally subscribe to the idea that we have constant personhood, self, and identity to which we can refer. I recognize this fundamental assumption in the culture of language and will have no choice but to, nevertheless, employ the same language in order to communicate my thesis.

respectively, view personhood, self, and identity as evolutionary impermanence instead of prescribed finitude and thus offer an alternative perspective on how to conceptualize our existence. I will also incorporate secondary literature on Hume and Dōgen in order to further develop specific ideas raised by both thinkers.

David Hume's Impression-Idea Paradigm and Idea of Existence

David Hume undertakes an ambitious philosophical endeavor in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, seeking to delineate the very machinery that the human mind customarily employs with Book I. His program is contingent on *experience*, and this empirical foundation, he argues, allows us to have perceptions which consist of *impressions* and *ideas*. We obtain our impressions from our senses or from reflexion; ideas are subsequent copies of those impressions. The impression-idea paradigm is enforced as the underlying mechanism for numerous phenomena, from personal identity to existence. In other words, according to Hume, the very phenomena that constitute our "reality," including the idea of existence and of external existence, are perceptions.

Hume's argument on the idea of existence and of external existence is consolidated in T 1.2.6 of the *Treatise*, aligning with his impression-idea paradigm. He is adamant that ideas follow impressions based on his principle that "any impression either of the mind or body is constantly follow'd by an idea, which resembles it, and is only different in the degrees of force and liveliness" (T 1.1.1.8; SBN 5).[3] Moreover, since "we never remember any idea or impression without attributing existence to it, the idea of existence [itself] must either be deriv'd from a distinct impression, conjoin'd with every perception or object of our thought, or must be the very same with the idea of the perception or object" (T 1.2.6.2; SBN 66). It is in our *nature* to derive ideas

[3] References to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton, hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, and to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, cited in the text as "SBN" followed by the page number.

from impressions or ideas of impressions. Moreover, it is in our *nature* to understand our perceptions as indicative of an external reality, of objects existing outside ourselves, and we remember ideas and impressions as such.[4] Hence, arise the subjects and objects of our experiences. That being said, our idea of existence and external existence must be derived from an impression that is connected to each and every perception that we can conceive of, since existence is attributed to all of our perceptions, *or* derived from an idea of an impression.

David Hume's Impression-Idea Paradigm and the Self, featuring Galen Strawson

Hume believes that there are no two distinct impressions that are "inseparably conjoin'd" (T 1.2.6.3; SBN 66). Although certain sensations may ostensibly be united, they ultimately do have a separation between them and "may be presented as apart."[5] His view on separation and unity comes from his ideas of space and time. He explicitly lays out that the "existence in itself belongs only to unity" and that the idea of existence can arise due to the illusory concept of "unity" (T 1.2.2.3; SBN 30). The very "term of unity is merely a fictitious denomination, which the mind may apply to any quantity of objects it collects together."[6] Hume, therefore, questions our natural propensity to subscribe to certain illusions. This explanation, in the context of Section 6, establishes that the idea of existence is *not* "deriv'd from a distinct impression" that is "conjoin'd with every perception…of our thought," but is rather "the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent" (T 1.2.6.4; SBN 66). Here, we see Hume's "Conceivability Principle,"[7] which houses a profound implication: it is not that we conceive that an entity *possibly* exists when

[4] At T 1.2.6.7 (SBN 67), Hume once more underscores that "nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions…, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion."
[5] Ibid.
[6] When Hume says that unity is a "fictitious denomination" in T 1.2.2.3 (SBN 30), he means that unity is *fiction.* I take this to mean that unity is an illusion that is readily subscribed to and shaped by the human mind, if one were to return to the etymological roots of the word "fiction."
[7] Lightner, D.T., "Hume on Conceivability and Inconceivability," 114.
Furthermore, this principle corresponds to his earlier claim that "[w]hatever can be conceiv'd by a clear and distinct idea necessarily implies the possibility of existence" (T 1.2.4.11; SBN 43).

we conceive of it to begin with, but rather that we conceive that it *exists*.[8] So, when we conceive of a phenomenon such as unity joining a series of impressions, that unity exists.

In *The Evident Connexion: Hume on Personal Identity* (2011), Galen Strawson presumes that although Hume may have understood the self as a "bundle or collection of different perceptions" at T 1.4.6.4 (SBN 252), he eventually realizes that the self really exists as "some sort of real continuity of mind."[9] Strawson's take on Hume's account of personal identity depends on notions of constancy, stability, familiarity, and thereby illusion. However, Hume explicitly states that an individual's "understanding *never observes any real connexion among objects*, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into *a customary association* of ideas " (T 1.4.6.16; SBN 259-260; emphasis added). The separation that Hume notes about the self, as a series of successive perceptions, only *appears* as unity through how we process space and time.

To Hume, no two distinct impressions that are "inseparably conjoin'd" (T 1.2.6.3; SBN 66). Although impressions may appear united, they are ultimately separate from one another. He asserts that the idea of existence can arise due to the illusory concept of "unity." This idea of existence which "belongs only to unity" is applicable to the self. As he explains personal identity, Hume concludes that "[a]n object, whose different co-existent parts are bound together by a close relation, operates upon the imagination… as one perfectly simple and indivisible… *feign[ing] a principle of union* as… the center[ing anchor that holds together] all the different parts and qualities of the object" (T 1.4.6.22; SBN 263; emphasis added). Hume explicitly notes that the unity that binds together our perceptions to form, according to Strawson, "some sort of real continuity of mind" is feigned, ostensible, and fictitious. Therefore, there is no real, evident

[8] At T 1.2.6.4 (SBN 66), Hume states that "Whatever we conceive, we conceive to be existent."
[9] Strawson, G., *The Evident Connexion: Hume on Personal Identity*, 46.

connection that binds perceptions, and there is no "real unity/continuity of a mind." It is by mere association influenced by customary practices and "attended with a fiction" that one perceives a sense of unity and, thus, identity (T 1.4.6.7; SBN 255).

Perhaps the self *is*, in fact, a bundle of perceptions. If we grant this possibility, then the self is "not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos'd to have a reference" (T 1.4.6.2; SBN 251). It is not a real, unitary existence, but a reference point that we find comfort in through the illusion of unity, an illusion that we should question.[10] After all, "there is no impression constant and invariable" (T 1.4.6.2; SBN 251). It is only that the mind is "a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an *infinite* variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time…*whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity*" (T 1.4.6.4; SBN 253; emphasis added). Identity, like unity, is an imagined, fictitious phenomenon. The self is, thus, elusive: we are in perpetual flux, passing, re-passing, gliding away, and mingling, as Hume puts it.[11] He later claims at T 1.4.6.10 (SBN 256) that a "change in any considerable part of a body destroys its identity; but 'tis remarkable, that where the change is produc'd *gradually* and *insensibly* we are less apt to ascribe to it the same effect." Any significant kind of inconsistency destroys the constant, the stable, and the familiar, which we usually attribute to identity. When inconsistencies are subtle and undetectable, however, we are prone to mistake these changes for a "continu'd existence and identity" that Strawson argues for (T 1.4.6.10; SBN 256). Nonetheless, it is indubitable that these changes are still occurring. The self, therefore, is

[10] Hume is committed to skepticism, as evidenced by the fact that he "was openly skeptical about many important aspects of religious belief" (T Intro. 13). He retains this skepticism throughout the *Treatise* as well as in his other essays.

[11] This is not to say that Hume's earlier distinction between separation and unity, together with his argument that unity is an illusion, leads to the conclusion that separation is necessarily the same as change. For my paper, Hume's distinction between separation and unity serves to show how unity can be an illusion with regard to conventional views of the self and personal identity.

continuously *evolving*. It is not finite, but *infinite*.[12]

Dōgen's Teaching about Self in His Essay "Genjokoan"

Dōgen Zenji understands the self in a strikingly similar light, most notably in his essay "Genjokoan," also known as "Actualizing the Fundamental Point." A famous koan, analogous to an aphorism, within the essay is the fourth, which delineates fundamental tenets of Zen Buddhism:[13]

> 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.[14]

A *prima facie* interpretation of this koan would be that the proper way to practice Zen Buddhist tenets is studying the self with a non-egocentric approach, or the *no-self*, which would then lead to a form of self-actualization and liberation. The study of the Buddha way, based on this interpretation, can thus be partitioned into four phases: (1) a study of the self; (2) forgetting the self; (3) actualization by myriad things; (4) fading away of bodies and minds, including our own. A deeper investigation of these phases ultimately reveals that detaching ourselves from the familiar frees us, *even detaching ourselves from our (notions of) "selves"*; thus, what results is the no-self.

Zen Buddhism draws from the Buddha's original teaching about the no-self, or *anatta*, which functions on the premise that "no matter how hard or long we look, we are not going to *find* anything enduring, inherent, or graspable thing we can call 'self!'"[15] The koan coaxes us to question and challenge how we conceptualize the self. Our natural propensity to see the self as a

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[12] I argue that the self is both a non-self and evolving, and these two concepts are compatible in that if we do not have a designated self (in that we do not limit the self to one designated concept), then we are free to subjectively determine and change the self, not bounded by the limits of designation.
[13] Takeuchi, K., "*Genjo Koan* (Complete manifestation of established truth)," 1.
[14] Zenji, D., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, 70.
[15] Domyo Burk, "To Study Buddhism Is to Study the Self (and Why That's Not Selfish)," *The Zen Studies Podcast*, episode 15, podcast audio, May 18, 2017, http://zenstudiespodcast.com/studytheself/

fixed reference point is, in fact, a delusion.[16] If we devote enough attention to examining our sense of self, we will "notice where the gaps appear in what usually seems to be an *enduring, very real self*."[17] Do we not undergo intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal changes in our daily lives? Do we not change our beliefs due to personal or circumstantial reasons? Do we not adapt to different situations in order to survive? Do we not then ask if the five-year-old that we fondly have in our memories is the same as the current twenty-year-old writing this paper? Such a critical, introspective approach to the self would constitute "studying the self."

It follows that forgetting the self may as well be the inevitable outcome of studying the self. Upon realizing how unstable the self actually is, we have the opportunity to let go of that instability, which may be easier than one thinks since we already seem to have an evasive response to the unfamiliar. Confronted by the dissonance between a permanent self and an impermanent self, we are presented with the choice to relinquish our grasp on both in discomfort and, perhaps, even in frustration. Forgetting subsequently empties the space filled by our conventional view of the self; it makes available a contemplative void for continued questioning and meditation on how we conceptualize the self.

Within said void, multiple considerations can come to the fore through the "actualization by myriad things." When our understanding, a space initially filled by preconceived notions and assumptions, is devoid of its original content, numerous possibilities are able to enter that space for contemplation. Such occurs for our conventional ideas regarding personal identity. In this

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[16] In Miri Albahari's "Insight Knowledge of No Self in Buddhism," she defines delusion as the following:
"Delusions, at least the non-clinical kind, are commonly thought to be types of stubborn, false belief. Building on this idea, I hypothesise that the gaining of insight knowledge, through losing the sense of self (of a particular nature), would involve the uprooting of a deep-seated and reflexive *false belief* that one is a self, along with the re-alignment and integration of one's emotional, cognitive and behavioural dispositions in accordance with the correct belief that there is no such self" (4).

[17] Domyo Burk, "To Study Buddhism Is to Study the Self (and Why That's Not Selfish)," *The Zen Studies Podcast*, episode 15, podcast audio, May 18, 2017, http://zenstudiespodcast.com/studytheself/

phase, open-mindedness can be practiced and boundaries can be expanded to not egocentrically view ourselves, the subjects of experience, as the main focal point, but instead view ourselves *in relation to* external entities to recognize how personal identity changes according to context. In other words, the self does not exist independent of "other" entities; it is substantially affected by circumstance. Thus, "actualization by myriad things" constitutes (1) the realization of various perspectives other than the conventional view of the self in the new void and (2) the realization of how external entities exist in relation to the self and consequently allow for harmonious coexistence between the self and external entities[18] rather than a dichotomous "Othering."

Finally, as a result of such actualization, bodies and minds, including our own, fade away. Once the understanding that one is not limited to the conventional unitary view of the self is attained in the new void, then the egocentric illusion that one has subscribed to falters. Hence, our own bodies and minds begin to fade away.[19] Subsequently, when we clearly see a harmonious coexistence between the self and external entities instead of accepting a dichotomous view between the self and external entities, as they are typically perceived *prima facie*, our own bodies and minds as well as the bodies and minds of others fade away. There is no longer a conceptual separation between the self and external entities; there is no conspicuous independence attributed to each "self."[20] One could then argue that separation is an illusion; the boundaries drawn to outline each "self" can be blurred and permanence can be transcended.[21] This echoes Hume's view

[18] The "self versus external entities" is how the players in human daily experiences are typically interpreted.
[19] "One's own body and mind" implicates that the individual's body and mind are unique to that individual, and that individual alone. This alienates the individual, separating the individual as a subject from external entities, otherwise considered "others." We can then segue into the second part of "actualization by myriad things," which I have previously interpreted as harmonious coexistence between the self and external entities rather than a dichotomous "Othering." In our case, coexistence and impermanence do not necessarily preclude uniqueness.
[20] External entities, in their respective experiences, are their own selves.
[21] In the Translator's Introduction of *Shōbōgenzō: The True Dharma-Eye Treasury, Volume IV* (2008), Gudo Wafu Nishijima establishes that:
"First, *Dōgen recognized that things we usually separate in our minds are, in action, one reality*. To express this *oneness of subject and object* Dōgen says, for example:

of the self as separated – that is, as a series of successive perceptions, only *appears* as unity through how we process space and time. Here, we would then see evolution through transcendence upon the acceptance of impermanence.

Consequences of a Permanent Self, According to Buddhist Tenets

Developed in Japan, Zen Buddhism is its own sect that traces its origins back to the early Buddhism of India.[22] Life is full of suffering, and early Buddhist principles align with this awareness, thus teaching Nibbāna as "the *summon bonum* of Buddhist practice…yield[ing] a complete understanding of the truth of no-self…[which is] the realisation…[that allows one to be] permanently free…from the affective, behavioural, and motivational drives that stem from having a sense of self"[23] In other words, Nibbāna is the liberation from suffering that comes with fully understanding the "no-self," which, as elaborated before, is the letting go of our familiar conceptions of a unified sense of self. Yet, what precisely is the "suffering" that Buddhists and, by extension, Zen Buddhists speak of? Our suffering and fears result from our insecurities

> because the reality is that we are constantly changing. Now we fear all the threats to the invented self: death, sickness, accidents, old age. Thus we suffer from what we perceive as threats to the self and this suffering colours our entire lives. However, all of this suffering is based on the *fundamental illusion* that 'I' exist as a self, and on my emotional *attachment* to this 'I' or self which I have invented. But this suffering is completely unnecessary because no self really exists which can be threatened by death, etc. All that exists is constantly changing.[24]

As King maintains, "Life, and especially human life, in the Buddhist view, is constant change…[yet] all human beings have a very deeply rooted desire for security and self-

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> If a human being, even for a single moment, manifests the Buddha's posture in the three forms of conduct, while [that person] sits up straight in samādhi, the entire world of Dharma assumes the Buddha's posture and the whole of space becomes the state of realization" (Nishijima and Cross 2008, xv).

[22] King, S.B., "The Buddha Nature: True Self as Action," 255.
[23] Albahari, M., "Insight Knowledge of No Self in Buddhism," 2.
[24] King, S.B., "The Buddha Nature: True Self as Action," 256 (emphasis added).

preservation…[and thereby wish to] find something permanent in us that we invent the idea of a self."[25] This desire, simply put, stems from fear: the fear of letting go of our attachments to our comfort zones, the fear of losing *who we are*, whether it be due to inauthenticity or death. If we do not have a sense of who we are, what does our existence mean? This question is rather existentially deflationary. How does one come to terms with such a conclusion?

Dōgen discourages such deflationary conclusions. Following through with this existentially deflationary conclusion would be an adoption of a new perspective on the self, and the new perspective would supplant the initial, unitary view of the self. The net result of this replacement would ultimately be nothing. There is no progress here; we would be begging the question by, once again, submitting ourselves to illusions, thereby regressing to square one. To reiterate, "to forget the self" is to relinquish all preconceived notions of the self and, instead, be able to accept uncertainty for what it is. Another take on Dōgen's discouragement would be to not fear losing who we *are* since to worry about who we are may as well be a return to grasping some feeling of familiarity, constancy, and stability.

Dōgen's "Gabyo" - Power of the Mind in "Painting of a Rice Cake"

So, how should we take Dōgen's teachings? We may turn to another one of his works: "Shobogenzo Gabyo," or "Painting of a Rice Cake." In "Gabyo," the Zen Buddhist thinker famously begins the second passage of his discourse with "An ancient Buddha said, 'A painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger.'"[26] This saying suggests that a fictitious entity is intangible and has no practical effect on our immediate reality, which in this case is the state of being hungry. To this, Dōgen responds:

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Dōgen Zenji, "Painting of a Rice-Cake," trans. Dan Welch and Kazuaki Tanahashi, in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 134.

> Because the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting…*there is no remedy for satisfying hunger other than a painted rice-cake.* Without painted hunger you never become a true person. There is no understanding other than painted satisfaction. […] When you understand this meaning with your body and mind, you will thoroughly master the ability to turn things and be turned by things. If this is not done, the power of the study of the way is not yet realized. To enact this ability is to actualize the painting of enlightenment.[27]

A natural reaction to his response would be to ask the following questions in disbelief: How could a painting fulfill the desire for food? Would a painting of a rice cake provide physical sustenance? As was the case for the "Genjokoan," these questions would be reflective of yet another *prima facie* interpretation. Dōgen's koans are not to be taken literally, by any means.

An analysis of Dōgen's response above reveals that everything in our immediate realities is *created* based on our presumptions, including our conceptions of the self. The beginning portion of the excerpt, that "the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and Buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting," metaphorizes daily human experiences as works of art, fabricated illustrations. As such, Dōgen's view is a form of idealism, a position on a particular metaphysics of experience: the reality painted in our minds is not the physical world, but the world of meaning and affordances. By doing so, "Gabyo" conveys a profound insight concerning our realities: they are constructed or "painted" by our minds. So, it follows that a state of being as visceral and immediate as being hungry can be ameliorated by a painted rice cake since the very nature of the realm that we encounter and interact with is fictitious. A subset of this realm is personal identity, for the self is a key reference point to which we often turn to. By this logic, the self is also fictitious; furthermore, our view of the self can be *reconstructed*.

Dōgen continues, claiming that "[w]hen [one] understand[s] this meaning with…body and

[27] Zenji, D., "Painting of a Rice Cake," 138-9 (emphasis added).

mind, [the individual] will thoroughly master the ability to turn things and be turned by things." The structure of this claim resembles a positive feedback loop. Upon embracing our ability to create our selves and thus our realities, it becomes evident that not only can we create realities, but also be influenced and shaped by the very realities that we create. This is a responsive loop that is perpetually evolving as our creations, such as our conception of the self, accumulate and cause our realities to ceaselessly expand. We subjectively make our realities, and these realities affect our perceptions; we respond to these perceptions with more creations only to be affected by our own creations again. Therefore, when we come to terms with our ability to reconstruct our view of the self, we will then be influenced and shaped by the reconstructed view of the self. Our reactions to our insecurities[28] could consequently change, and our existential fears may be significantly reduced or even subverted.

Hume and Dōgen Together Subvert Natural Propensities

Between separation and unity, determining which is the true illusion is not the issue at hand for both Hume and Dōgen. In fact, while Hume sees unity as an illusion, Dōgen sees separation as an illusion.[29] The two thinkers, however, converge on their faith in "the human mind and its powers" along the lines of the following thought expressed by philosopher Alexander Broadie:

> we human beings have active power, and centrally what it permits us to do is to pause between alternative lines of action and then to perform one and not the other, though in that very circumstance we could instead have performed the one that we did not choose…[I]t is instead the agent himself, exercising active power and therefore free not to do whatever he does and whatever the strength of his motive.[30]

The human mind possesses the power to shape and change our realities. Both Hume and Dōgen underscore that we need to critically examine our conventional presumptions so that we do not fall

[28] See footnote 24.
[29] See footnote 19. Also, see footnote 11 for a clarification of how I understand Hume's distinction between separation and unity.
[30] Broadie, A., "The Human Mind and Its Powers," 75.

prey to binding illusions and delusions. Through critical examination, not only can we change the circumstances of our realities, but also how we perceive ourselves, which in turn provides us the strength to quell our natural propensities to succumb to various insecurities and fears, especially those that are existential. Personhood, self, and identity need not be solely viewed as unitary and permanent. Limitations of the human condition such as inauthenticity and death, which are considered threats to the existence of a permanent self, or to *who we are*, can be accepted as inevitable facets of life rather than phenomena to be avoided or dreaded. Moreover, instability, uncertainty, and change can be embraced as an intrinsic part of the natural order, and we would be able to sit in the ensuing discomfort and acknowledge the discomfort for what it is without running away. We would no longer fear the unfamiliar as we may learn to leave attachments behind and, instead, face it boldly. Dōgen affirms this with the conviction that "one must be deeply aware of the impermanence of the world…, [for i]mpermanence is a fact before our eyes."[31] The world is impermanent; moreover, the self can be seen as evolutionary impermanence, and that is not as frightening as it seems.

[31] Zenji, D., *A Primer of Sōtō Zen,* 39.

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