

Master Dogen's Dharma Hall Discourse number 453. (Adapted)

“Polishing a tile to make a mirror is our reward for accumulating merit and virtue. Polishing a mirror to make a tile certainly depends on the nourishment from wisdom. Polishing a mirror to make a mirror brings a laugh - how are my hands and the Buddha's hands similar? Practicing Zazen to make a Buddha is putting our jagged karmic stones at the site of awakening - why is it like this?

(After a pause) When one cart is hit, many carts go quickly. One night a flower blooms and the world is fragrant”

Commentary:

He is plainly talking about our practice. The tile is our karma - a chaotic concatenation of selves which we become all too aware of when we start sitting. And understandably wish to be free of. Even though it's just noise.

The mirror is Buddha, and we imagine that through practice we can make the tile a mirror. Yet he didn't say that. He never said that. Paint a Buddha face on the tile if you wish, but it will never go.

In our sincere and wholehearted practice a true person appears. Sometimes, this person is like vast space. And the noise doesn't matter, at all.