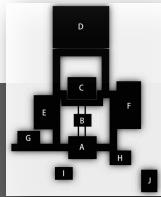


FORM, FOUNDATIONS, AND THE ETHOS OF FOREMOST:

# Zen Practice, Epistemology, and Ontology in Reflective Knowledge Organization



## REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

In reflecting on the practice of knowledge organization, we tacitly or explicitly root our conceptions of work and its value in some epistemic and ontological foundation. Zen Buddhist philosophy offers a unique set of conceptions vis-à-vis organizing, indexing, and describing documents.

When we engage in knowledge organization, we are setting our mind to work with an intention. We intend to make some sort of intervention. We then create a *form* a realization of an abstraction (like classes or terms) [1], we do this from a *foundation* of some set of beliefs (epistemology, ontology, and ethics), and because we have to make decisions about what to privilege, we need to decide what is *foremost* in our minds. We must ask what is the most important thing?

*Form, foundation, and the ethos of foremost* require evoke in our reflection on work number of ethical, epistemic, and ontological concerns that ripple throughout our conceptions of space, “good work”, aesthetics, and moral mandate [2,3]. We reflect on this.



## ZEN PERSPECTIVE

1. Beginner's Mind | If you are not an expert, how do you do your work [4]?
2. Impermanence | If what you do is to be overwritten or destroyed, how do you approach your work?
3. Forms Make Manifest Intentions | If you're making something visible, what is its nature? Is it beneficial?
4. Work to Alleviate Suffering | How can your work make a difference?



## PHOTOS: SAN FRANCISCO ZEN CENTER

SCHEMATIC: Eihei-ji Monastery in Japan

QR Code: SFZC and iSchool in UW Today News Story >



"Words and ideas are a description of reality, silence is a negation of reality. What is the reality itself?" [5]

- John Daido Looi

## References

1. Tennis, J. T. (2011). Forms, Knowledge, and Forms of Knowing. Talk given at ISKO-Brazil
2. Tennis, J. T. (2011). Precepts for an Engaged Knowledge Organization. Talk given at UNESP, Brazil
3. Looi, J. D. Eight Gates of Zen. Dharma Comm.
4. Suzuki, S. Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. Shambhala.
5. Looi, J. D. The True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Three Hundred Koans. Dharma Comm.