



PROJECT MUSE®

Echoes of No Thing: Thinking between Heidegger and Dōgen

NicoJenkins

Published by Punctum Books

NicoJenkins.

Echoes of No Thing: Thinking between Heidegger and Dōgen.

Punctum Books, 0.

Project MUSE., <a href="

<https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/66820>

Access provided at 22 Nov 2019 04:37 GMT with no institutional affiliation



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Dōgen's Being-Time

Like Heidegger's incipient thinking towards the in-between in the *Contributions*, Eihei Dōgen's thinking is not based solely on a "predictable" logic, nor is it a mere metaphysical speculation, but, as we have seen already with the German, relies to a great deal on both the practice of *thinking* and an equally authentic encounter *within* a world (and not *without* it) through the event of the disclosure of truth. One of the fundamental agreements between Heidegger and Dōgen is that both imagine that an essential fundamental discomfort of beings in the world relates to a basic, profound misconception of the question of time. From this quotidian misconception, as we have already seen with Heidegger, grows an existential crisis that relates to the limitations of metaphysical thought and the creation of a "ground" which is viewed, utterly erroneously, as solid. While the two thinkers can never, as we have already written, be entirely compared, the concept of finding an echo of one in the other remains necessary to understanding their respective positions in a deeper way. One objection to reading Heidegger through Dōgen and Dōgen through Heidegger might be that one believes fundamentally in something, while the other believes in nothing. Though Heidegger seems to feel that there is a something (*even within the quivering between, even within the abyss*), Dōgen represents, to a certain degree, the traditional Buddhist notion that everything in the universe arises, changes, dies and there is nothing that is

not subject to these laws of impermanence and death; that is, there is no thing there, and this nothingness underlies all that is. Yet, both thinkers tread close to defying their own understanding; Heidegger writes again and again about nothingness while to read in Dōgen the doctrine of emptiness as a mere nihilistic negation (as Nietzsche read Buddhism) is to miss the point that each entity or phenomena is absolutely without a perduring or permanent self, that is, that emptiness goes far beyond mere nothingness.

Dōgen presents, in his fascicle “Uji” (which we will translate, with Abe and Waddell, as “being-time” though Hee-Jin Kim chooses “existence-time”) an entirely unfamiliar, disquieting understanding of the way time, or being-time, presents itself, or makes itself apparent. In “Uji” we see a time that is always occurring, not as discrete separate moments, but as *all time, all the time*. This fascicle, unlike the previously examined “Genjōkōan,” was written not for lay people but for monks, and Dōgen’s language, as well as his choice of examples and metaphors is at times, or often, obscure and even impenetrable. Using Heidegger’s imprecations as a guide, however, we must attempt to “leap” into the space of no space between thoughts, and to plumb our way into “Uji.”

In a very real sense, time, or “being-time,” for Dōgen, is the primordial underpinning of all phenomena, or *dharma*s; being-time is what “allows” phenomena to presence and come to be. Before going forward, it is critical that we pause to examine, if only briefly and in coarse terms, the historic time that Dōgen is thinking within, or from. As a Buddhist, Dōgen was practicing in and reacting to, certain traditions and historical events within his own lifetime, and within Buddhism itself. In this sense, he is not unlike Heidegger, who could not avoid a thinking which too often grappled — and is constrained — by the historical issues of his time. Thirteenth century Japan was, for the most part, a foreboding and corrupt place, torn apart by warring factions and corrupt landlords; the old order was withering and a new order had yet to replace it. A Mongolian invasion from the North threatened to wipe out the entire society. Like Hobbes’s

world come real, life was, in general, rather “nasty, brutish and short.” People despaired of the world and retreated into the external and material pleasures of sensuous enjoyments. Much of this was due to a rapidly changing world and a devolution of society (in this again we can see echoes of Heidegger’s own situation within the Weimar Republic, and the emerging, disastrous — yet initially attractive, to Heidegger — ideology of National Socialism.)

The sect of Buddhism¹ which exerted the most control over Dōgen’s thinking, at least initially, was a philosophy practiced in China during the T’ang Dynasty (618–907 CE) called Hua-Yen. Hua-Yen philosophy, itself a syncretic school based as much on both Indian Buddhist and Hindu systems, as on native Taoist thought, describes a world of deep “interpenetration” and “non-obstructionism” of all phenomena in their relations with each other. Hua-Yen is based most closely on the conception of The Great Jewel Net of Indra which describes a vast net which at each interstice is studded with a rare, multi-faceted jewel within which is reflected, in an infinite way, each other jewel of the infinite net. Described by Francis Cook in this brief paragraph, the parable works to describe the interdependence of each phenomena within the occurrence of each other arising, or presencing, phenomena.

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net that has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each “eye” of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in all dimensions, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glit-

1 I use the term sect loosely here; unlike Western conceptions of the internecine struggles of sectarian differences, a sect in Buddhism refers more closely to a differing doctrinal opinion, and it was common, according to Francis Cook, for a Buddhist to follow one “sect” in thought and another in practice; according to Cook, the Chinese have a saying, “Hua-Yen for philosophy, Ch’an [Zen] for practice.”

tering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.²

While this may seem a far-fetched descriptor, it accurately grasps the most profound aspects of Hua-Yen philosophy; all things are inter-dependent and have mutual co-origination. Each *dharma*-occurrence comes to be with and within the occurrence of each, other discrete *dharma*-occurrence, infinitely repeating itself through endless reflections and echoes. In commenting on this concept, Joan Stambaugh refers us to Leibniz's monads which reflect, through a Western interpretation, a similar idea. Stambaugh writes comparing Leibniz to Dōgen, that "every being that exists is a finite monad [... and] contains or mirrors the whole world."³ Of course, for Dōgen, Leibniz's concern for an ultimate monad, a metaphysical "ground," is not a concern. Hee-Jin Kim,⁴ also writing on Dōgen, describes the Hua-Yen process as a philosophical and religious attempt to understand the self and the world in its totality. Without giving in to essentialism, Kim writes that each *dharma*, or occurring phenomena, is infinitely formed not through a self-nature (nor does any thing abide in anything approximating a self-nature), but rather that,

2 Francis Cook, *Hua-Yen Buddhism; The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park & London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1977), 2.

3 Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha-Nature: Dōgen's Understanding of Temporality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 33.

4 While it is not my desire to draw on modern interpretations of the thinking of Heidegger and Dōgen, I prefer, as I am writing for an audience not entirely versed in Buddhist philosophy, to occasionally refer to a contemporary thinker, at least in the case of Eihei Dōgen.

[t]he entire universe consisted of creative processes in which the multiplicity of things and events interacted with and interpenetrated one another without obstruction. Particularities were not obliterated or deficient in any way, yet were unhindered in the perfect harmony of the total Dharma-realm. This non-obstruction (*muge*) was possible through the mediation of emptiness. This grand cosmic process of interaction, interpenetration, and integration in all realms, dimensions, perspectives of the self and world that went on endlessly (*jūjū-mujin*).⁵

This is a radical, almost Heraclitean way of observing the worlding of world. Nothing is permanent, everything is in flux, and, as something comes to be, it is always already reliant in its phenomenological presencing on everything else. As something comes to be, therefore, it carries with it — as a stain, or trace — everything else. Far from resting, however, in nihilistic resignation, it is precisely this flux, this movement which gives to phenomena a soteriological freedom to be, to *be-come*. In this freedom precisely lies its radicality. To recognize that no thing has a perduring essence, and indeed that each thing is a reflection of everything else, is a far cry from how ontologically we have traditionally viewed the world. To a certain extent, and Dōgen was intimately aware of this, linguistic convention is to blame for giving this artificial permanence to the world. We observe a phenomena and language requires us to name it, thereby using a term that identifies only the limited set of properties that characterize the phenomena in the same way through all points of time. Language denies the occurring flux of a dynamically changing world and replaces it with an inauthentic permanency. Viewing the entire “universe” as a vast and infinite interaction and interpenetration of all things takes us beyond language, and this is the exact point of the Hua-Yen philosophy, if not Buddhism itself; if we move beyond language to a point where we can see that things are entirely inter-manifesting in their total-

5 Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen* (Sommerville: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 145.

ity, we are no longer “claiming” things in the world for us, but “allowing” things to be as they are. We are allowing things to come to be as authentic, presencing phenomena in their own field; we no longer bend and form things to conform to our own conceptions and ideas of what world is. This standpoint, potentially, has massive implications for who and how we are in the world. If language is able to fix a point, and to give it permanency, what happens when we take away this language, the right to name? While there lies a temptation to go further into the study of Hua-Yen and its theory of interpenetration, for the purpose of this study we must restrict ourselves to Dōgen; suffice it to say, much of what Dōgen is writing to and thinking through is deeply influenced by the philosophies of Hua-Yen.

Dōgen begins “Uji” quoting extensively a long, poetical description of what “happens” in being-time. He writes:

An old buddha said:

For the time being, I stand astride the highest mountain peaks.

For the time being, I move on the deepest depths of the ocean floor.

For the time being, I’m three heads and eight arms.

For the time being, I’m eight feet or sixteen feet.

For the time being, I’m a staff or a whisk.

For the time being, I’m a pillar or a lantern.

For the time being, I’m Mr. Chang or Mr. Li.

For the time being, I’m the great earth and heavens above.⁶

Each line begins with *uji*, and is as if, as Joan Stambaugh has written, someone had asked Dōgen, “What is *uji*?” Stambaugh writes that what is important here is not that things are in time, but that *they are time*. Dōgen ends the passage by declaring (and no longer in verse) that “the ‘time-being’ means time, just as it is, and being is all time.”⁷ By joining the two phrases, “be-

6 Eihei Dōgen, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, trans. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). 48.

7 *Ibid.*

ing” and “time” to each other, he has created a single concept which is very different from how we might imagine time to be, or even how we conceive of being. There is a long history — especially in the West — of imagining that being *becomes* within time, or that time, as a separate phenomenon, passes (or flies) by being. But, however being and time are conceived, they remain two. For Dōgen the two concepts, like Heidegger’s time-space, are equiprimordial; they originate on, and as, a deeper and more profound ground than anything that rests on them. Though we might perceive them as separate categories (though tightly joined), for Dōgen, they appear, through closer examination, as a single occurrence. Thus the concepts of time and being emerge, through the conjoining of *uji*, to mean “being-time”; time becoming being and being becoming time — each exists in a mutually interpenetrated position to the other which is primordial and profound. There is no time without space, nor can there be space without time, but this does not mean to Dōgen, that one is separate from the other; they are one on a primordial level, and only come to be experienced as separate within the world of mundane reality. This is not to say that a conception of time as flying by, or as a container, or as anything separate is not categorically false, but only, for Dōgen, partial and derivative, secondary to a deeper understanding of primordial time. Dōgen is careful not to grant being and time an essential nature; like Heidegger, one can imagine the resistance that such a notion would carry for Dōgen; rather, *uji*, or being-time, emerges as the fundamental principle, always in flux, of everything that is. Whether one “is” a whisk or a pillar, Mr. Li or Mr. Chang, eight feet or sixteen feet, standing astride great peaks or at the bottom of deepest oceans, one *is* time, rather than *within* time.

It would be a mistake to imagine that what Dōgen describes in these verses are different discrete moments, as in for *this* time being, I am such and such, and for *that* time being, I am something else.⁸ In the above dialectic, Dōgen is not describing a

8 Waddell and Abe address this concern in a footnote where they note that the characters for *u-ji* (有時) literally mean being-time but could be read

mere transformation of one thing into another, not a child into a woman, nor even a river into the sea. His description does not match up to the comfortable notions of time already discussed in Aristotle, nor do they ring true as some form of *potenza*. When time is seen as a container (as in modern physics) or even as the singular passage of one's own life (or even the "lifetime" of human history) it falls short of an actual, authentic experience of time. Dōgen is describing the presencing of time-being within all things, all apparent phenomena. Time here is not a thing but the "taking place" of all things. For Dōgen, "for the time being" refers to our prosaic, everyday experiences of time. In this instance, I am on a mountain peak, in another instance I am at the ocean, sometimes I am a pillar and other times a whisk. For most of us, these are merely the phenomena of us — *at this moment I am writing these words, later, when I have picked up my daughter, I will drive home. Yesterday I did the same thing.* Time moves in a predictable, understandable pattern, one which we can easily interpret our *self* into, a *self* that we do not have doubts about. Yet this perception of us "in" time remains inherently partial.

Continuing the fascicle, Dōgen writes that "even though you do not have doubts about them [the myriad *dharmas*], that is not to say that you know them." Like Heidegger, for the most part we never are aware of world as it "worlds" around us. World is always ready at hand and accessible as such on a certain mundane level. In our everyday selves, this is all we need world to be, but a deeper approach is existentially necessary and experienced in, for Heidegger, the crisis of the event (or equally in the *Stimmung* of boredom and anxiety.) For Dōgen, this deeper approach is found within a practice that is both profound and difficult, and which requires strong exertion (*gyoji*). We must drive ourselves towards a radical doubt (which is opposed to a mere

as *aru toki* which means "at a certain time" or "sometimes." Translated this way, *u-ji* would lend a profoundly different reading to the above quotation. Like Heidegger however, Dōgen is referring us to an older, more fundamental understanding of a term, a term that Waddell and Abe translate here as "for the time being."

acting out of doubt used by Descartes) in which the everyday mundane falls away and we experience the unglossed, unvarnished authentic nature of the world. For most “sentient beings,” the “doubting of the many and various things unknown to him are naturally vague and indefinite [and] the course his doubting take will probably not bring them to coincide with this present doubt.”⁹ We are comfortable within our ignorance and though we claim to “know” the world, or to “know” things in it, world as such remains withdrawn and inaccessible to us. Nevertheless, writes Dōgen, “the doubts themselves are, after all, none other than time.”

Dōgen presents a wholly different understanding of time than the one we have “come to know” as mundane beings in the world. Rather, he is describing a self that sets itself out (that is) atop the highest peaks and in the deepest depths of the ocean, *at the same time*; that is both eight feet and sixteen feet, that is a staff and a whisk, a pillar or lantern, *all at the same time*; the self is both Mr. Li or Mr. Chang; the self is both me and not me, you or I, *or not you or I*. The self that Dōgen describes is not the self of an immutable I or controlling ego, it is, in a Hua-Yen-istic way of thinking, a self that is all selves manifesting as all times at the same time. If we consider again the parable of Indra’s jeweled net in reference to a self, we see that though there may be a self on a mundane level (*I am hungry, I am bored, I desire more*) this self is simply a self interpenetrated by world, unable to parse enough of itself to discover an original or authentic self. Dōgen writes that “we set the self out in array and make that the whole world.”¹⁰ He means here not that we discover, through introspection or practice a self that we then project, or throw, into world; rather, through the exertion (*gyoji*) of being, the self (which is not a self) is viewed as so many *dharma*-times, so many interpenetrated occasions, or even moments.

9 Ibid., 49.

10 Ibid.

Dōgen writes that “These things do not get in each other’s way any more than various times get in each other’s way.”¹¹ Things are not substantial phenomena (they are always empty of essential nature), and this lack of inherent substantiality allows for a mutual inter-penetration of all things by all things. There is no hierarchy of times, and more importantly no individuation of discrete times; various modes of time-being cannot get in each other’s way, because they are already inter-penetrated. Separating them would be like attempting to identify separate waves in the ocean. There is no clear single substance, nor are there a variety of substances; rather each thing both is (as appearing phenomena) and is not (in the sense that it does not, nor cannot, appear on its own.)

Critically important to the entire project, Dōgen is articulating a non-dual conception of time. Time is not time past or time future, nor even the Great Now, or more precisely, time is not restricted to being *only* these things (though, in an everyday sense, it seems to act like this). Time is, also *at the same time*, always arriving, occurring, and passing (though, as in Heidegger, these temporal or geographical descriptors fail us in understanding truly Dōgen’s thinking). Time is always already occurring at different times *at the same time*. We come to be within time, but time is not a something — a vessel, a passage, a *thing* — within or through which we take place. Time is as we are, and “we must see all the various things of the whole world as so many times.”¹² Being *be-comes* as being-time, and not, as might be more commonly imagined, through time.

When we begin to recognize that objects have no temporal beginning nor end, we glimpse the inherent, originary emptiness of all things; we can set ourselves out as many things and see that we are not just one, and indeed are never just one. This does not mean that the self we set out is not important nor vital, only that it is not singular and unique, nor even discrete. This is not a nihilistic view of the emptiness of things, but rather its op-

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

posite; because each thing is Buddha-*dharma* and being-time, *all of it at the same time*, we come to recognize the infinity of all things *within their own finitude*. If no thing begins, then no thing can end. Prosaically, there is birth and death, but primordially there is no birth and death, no arising and passing — *all things simply are, as they are*. Dōgen writes:

Since such is its fundamental reason, we must study and learn that myriad phenomena and numberless grasses [things] exists over the entire earth, and each of the grasses and each of the forms exists as the entire earth. [...] when you have arrived in this field of suchness, it is a single grass, a single form. The forms are understood and not understood, the grasses are grasped and not grasped.¹³

Each of the myriad *dharmas* appearing, or phenomena presenting themselves, are only that — an occurrence of world worlding. We deny this when we claim selfhood and permanency for ourselves and others, but this becoming is no more than the “numberless grasses” becoming. Only through study and practice do we come to recognize that, rather than individual entities standing in each other’s way, each time opens (like the multi faceted jewels studding Indra’s net) to another time, to each other time.

As the time right now is all there is, each being-time is without exception the entire time. A grass being and a form-being are both times. Entire being, the entire world, exists in the time of each and every now. Just reflect: right now, is there an entire being or an entire world missing from your present time, or not?¹⁴

Though Dōgen writes “Uji,” as we have already observed, for monks and not for lay people, he, referring to the rest of us,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 50.

points out the common mistake that many of us make, one which is very difficult to pass beyond: that we conceive of time, when we bother to consider time at all, as passing us by, and that once past it is no longer with us. The time that many of us observe — even those of us aware of our own death — is that a single time is occurring now, and later, another time will occur. While we can conceive of times being interpenetrated, it is not ordinarily how we consider the *passage* of time; for us, on an everyday level, we pass over (or time passes us) in a predictable fashion. Thus Dōgen says, of most of us, in reading “the time being,”

think that at one time the old Buddha became a creature with three heads and eight arms, and that at another time he became a sixteen foot Buddha. He imagines it is like crossing a river or a mountain: the river and mountain may still exist, but I have now left them behind, and at the present time I reside in a splendid vermilion palace. To him, the mountain or river and I are as distant from one another as heaven from earth.¹⁵

To attune ourselves to Dōgen’s way of thinking, we need to be freer in the way we imagine things; our unenlightened self is stuck in a dualistic, reactionary universe in which we view ourselves and the mountain or river as somehow separate; if everything — every Buddha-*dharma* and every being-time, thus *everything as time* — exists as interpenetrated, then there can be no river and mountain left behind when I am residing in a “splendid vermilion palace.” I carry with me the experiences not only of my own life, but of all times. Dōgen explains this is exactly how things occur in the world. He writes that “at the time the mountain was being climbed and the river is being crossed, I was there [in time]. The time has to be in me. Inasmuch as I am there, it cannot be that time passes away.”¹⁶ Time cannot simply

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

pass away (except in a prosaic way); time-being is occurring at the same time as I cross a river, or reside in a vermilion palace. In a similar fashion to the wood that *be*-comes ashes in the *Gen-jo-koan*, both reside in being-time, both separately and *interly*.

The nature of the truth of this yesterday and today lies in the time when you go directly into the mountains and look at the myriad peaks around you — hence there is no passing away. [...] Although it might seem as if it were somewhere else far away, it is the time right now. The sixteen foot buddha-body also makes a passage for my being-time. Although it might seem as if it were somewhere else over there, it is the time right now.¹⁷

If we imagine time to be flying past, we are imagining time right now, from this instant present. We cannot see the past from the past — the only way we can experience it is as right now; if we see the past, we see the past solely from the immediate now. The same holds for the future; if we imagine future times (*soon I will be residing in the vermilion palace*) it is directly informed by the immediate now (which is in turn, if only partially, informed by the reflected past and the expectant future). Mountain peaks may seem solid and permanent, but even they are simply a modality of being-time; they are *none other than time*. They are, they will always be, and yet they change. Being-time is like this; mountain peaks exist and from this moment they will always be — *in this time* — thus they are permanent. Mountains peaks exist and from this moment to the next they have changed; thus they are impermanent. What Dōgen is referring us to is precisely not a diffuse reality in which everything blends into everything else; rather, things are exactly occurring as things both in individual states (of being) and as interpenetrated (*non*)entities; things are not opposed to each other, rather they exist as being-times *within* each other.

17 Ibid., 51.

The essential point is: every entire being in the entire world is each time an [independent] time, even while it makes a continuous series. Inasmuch as they are being-time, they are my being-time.¹⁸

Leaving aside the problematic of the excluded middle, being-times both are and they are not; one does not oppose or contradict the other but rather makes itself *both* independent and dependent. “Hence, pine trees are time. So are bamboos.”¹⁹ This is called *penetrating exhaustively*.

To immediately manifest the the bodying of the tall golden Buddha with the body of the tall golden Buddha as the arising of the religious mind, as practice, as enlightenment, as nirvana — that is being, that is time. One does nothing nothing but penetrate exhaustively entire time as entire beings. [...] [E]ven the being-time of a partial exhaustive penetration is an exhaustive penetration of a partial being-time.²⁰

Dōgen describes a philosophy of practice which is far from being locked in a mere anthropological way of being. Penetrating exhaustively refers us back to the exertion (*gūjin*), or total exertion (*ippō gūjin*) of phenomena. A *dharma*-time manifesting itself fully is engaged in profound exertion not as a separate thing coming to be, but in concert with all other *dharma*-times. It exerts and comes to the fore, as Dōgen writes in the *Genjo-koan*, and “when they realize one side, the other side is in darkness.”²¹

It is not just ourselves that exert the “self” into the world; if we limited our understanding to in this way, we would risk inauthentically making world merely *our* world. All things exert themselves equally in the world; so the bamboo, so the boat, so my self. Mountains and rivers as all things (times) come to be

18 Ibid., 50.

19 Ibid., 51.

20 Ibid., 53.

21 Ibid., 41.

in a state of exhaustive, unrestrained, unending exertion. This exertion can be seen as a presencing (of being-time), as a coming to be in the immediate now of a *dharma*-time amidst myriad *dharma*-times. Our time, effectively our being-time, is no more important (to anything or anyone but us) than any other time. The pine trees and the bamboo are engaged in the same exertion as am I. While a *dharma* reveals itself, is “illuminated,” the rest of the world is in darkness. This does not mean that one *dharma* is raised up while the others fall to the back in a dialectical hierarchy of being-times; rather, in the flux of everything, it is the total exertion of a single *dharma* that brings the “event” of *dharma*-being to Being. Hee-Jin Kim writes that “A *dharma* is never juxtaposed to others; therefore, dharmas never oppose one another in a dualistic fashion. A *dharma* is, by definition, that particularity which transcends all forms of dualism; it is both independent of and harmonious with all dharmas.”²² A single exerting *dharma* is necessarily, by definition, beyond the manifesting of dialectical opposites; it extends itself beyond “is” and “is not” to just be being-time.

As already noted Dōgen is speaking to monks in his fascicle, and as a result, without practice, as lay people we inevitably remain outside an entirely complete understanding of what is being said. Our exegesis will necessarily always be partial, always already lacking, and yet, with Heidegger (as with Beckett), we must try. For Dōgen, as mentioned before, practice cannot remain simply in the head—though it may, expediently, begin there. We must also sit in contemplation, in *zazen*, and only through a devoted practice can we come to the Dōgenistic realization of “mind and body falling off.” We will discuss this further in another chapter, but it is essential to not forget the necessity of praxis in our understanding of Dōgen. But despite the lack of a concerted effort in practice in a contemporary thinker like Heidegger, the line of thought that Dōgen is describing is

22 Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection on His View of Zen*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 63.

not that far away from our own contemporary understanding of the event of truth.

Though the gulf between Heidegger and Dōgen may at times seem wide, it remains possible to, if not compare the two, at least to anticipate in our reading, an echo of each within each other. In his leaping forward into the abyssal beyond, Heidegger urges thinking towards the outer perimeter of thinking's boundaries, far beyond the safety net of Descartes' *cogito* (which, after methodological doubt, returned thinking to the safe and logical space of rational thought) and into a sphere of creativity which, it seems, not even Heidegger was able to "think" in its entirety. He resisted any answer, and in this sense, Heidegger was urging us towards a practice of pure thinking, far more than putting forward a system *per se*. His concern lay, as already noted, with the activity of, or towards, thinking, through the *praxis* of strength, decisiveness, mildness, and simplicity. At least in the *Contributions* Heidegger resisted describing a system more methodological than a leap towards a new beginning. Like Descartes, Heidegger's thinking throws us into uncertainty, into doubt, yet, unlike the Frenchman, resists returning us to the bourgeois safety of our chateau, pajama clad, pipe in hand.

In a similar way, Dōgen, though more systematic in his approach, destroyed an almost eight hundred year tradition of inherited and corrupted (in his eyes) Buddhist thinking through his directions toward a form of radical doubting which would have been familiar to Heidegger. Until Dōgen began teaching, Buddhism was, in many places, mired in corruption and easy answers, defining a way of belief (as opposed to doubt) that brought thinking away from the brink of nothingness and emptiness towards a complex metaphysical system which deified the idea of the Buddha (the historical personage of Siddhartha Gautama) and reserved enlightenment for those who could afford it. Dōgen's contribution to the religion was to break open the doors of what was rapidly becoming an ossified and oppositional thinking in favor of a more ambiguous, even abyssal, form of radical thought.

Not only did the two thinkers radically “destroy” the idols of rational tradition, but each engaged in a restructuring and reorienting of the grounds from which true thinking could come to be. We have so far examined the new beginning in thinking (explicit, in Heidegger, and less so in Dōgen) as well as the radically different conceptions of time. Both thinkers move in this direction with the explicit aim of persuading us to carefully think *thinking* differently; in Heidegger’s case, this meant a chance to rethink the ground and to think it abyssally, while with Dōgen, we have seen that his aim was to “cast off one’s body and mind and the bodies and minds of others as well.”²³

As we will see in the next chapter, the terms that Dōgen and Heidegger use can, at times, be read as not that far apart. Heidegger’s the *Augenblick*, which we have so far only alluded to — that “glance of an eye” through which the presencing of the event of truth — of *Ereignis* — takes place, can be contrasted with the profound insight offered by Dōgen’s treatment of *nikon*, or the absolute now. Both require an attunement that takes one away from the common, temporal understandings of time and into the primordial experience of the moment *happening*, removing it from the idea of a moment-to-moment experience.

Heidegger describes the *Augenblickstatts* as a site (*Raum*) which one enters or falls into at a given time (*Zeit*), yet it is in these moments — reserved again only *for the few, for the rare* — where the experience of truth as unconcealment is experienced through the event of appropriation. Heidegger writes that “the *site of the moment* arises out of the solitude of the great stillness in which appropriation becomes truth.”²⁴ This moment — these moments — are approached, as we have seen, through an intimation of the nothingness of the clearing. It is within these moments, that the leap has taken place, that the

23 Dōgen, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, 41.

24 Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 255.

falling is no longer a negative, but in fact a finding, if only a finding of oneself with, and within, the abyssal *space between*.

Dōgen describes the entering of being-time, or *uji*, as a “penetrating exhaustively.”²⁵ In their primordial “time,” things — all things — are already being-time, but to attend to them, to recognize them within their ownmostness, a practice of thinking must be undertaken, a practice in which an utter penetration of each other’s time (as being-time) must be embraced, and not resisted. Hence, *pine trees are time*. So are bamboos.²⁶ Our logical, rational world, since Aristotle, and repeated subsequently in the sciences as too obvious to question, describes a separation between pine trees and bamboo, and certainly between myself and bamboo. For Dōgen, each phenomena, while containing no essential nature, no absolute, is at the same time, inhabiting, at this moment, its ownmost time. Dōgen writes “You must not by your own maneuvering make it into nothingness; you must not force it into being.”²⁷ Being-time is unaffected by our own “maneuvering,” it exists whether or not we attend to it; enlightenment follows through observing it, allowing it to be, but not seeking to control it in any fashion whatsoever. In a similar way, the thinking that Heidegger calls and points us towards, especially as it occurs with the *Augenblickstätte*, cannot be forced; it must appropriate itself to itself in order to be authentic, in order to be itself. If you insist the bamboo to be bamboo for you, rather than imagining or allowing (Dōgen would use *seeing*) the bamboo to simply be bamboo (as well as everything else — all the myriad *dharma*) then you strip it of what it actually is — bamboo in this present time.

In the following chapter, we will examine more deeply Heidegger’s *Augenblick* and Dōgen’s *nikon* in an effort to bridge the large chasm which still separates the two.

25 Dōgen, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, 53.

26 *Ibid.*, 51.

27 *Ibid.*, 53.