

Dōgen's Time and the Flow of Otiosity

- Exiting the Educational Rat Race -

A Beginning

This paper represents an intercultural adventure: Not only is it written in English and for a (predominantly) Anglophone readership by someone who is trained in German ways of educational thinking (and German pedagogical notions cannot be easily translated into English), it also attempts to relate educational concepts from different cultures to each other to answer a systematic question on pedagogy. As such an endeavour, it carries the burden of all the methodological conundrums present in intercultural dialogue (e.g. problems of general untranslatability, double bind of comprehension-enabling and -limiting prejudices, references to completely different cultural contexts, etc.). Moreover, it carries this burden without being able to devote the necessary space for discussing all those problems. However, leaving all reflections on problems of translation aside here, one concession has to be made. To start with, the nowadays most widely used and still only rarely reflected of all notions within the Anglophone education discourse has to be discussed as it provides the foundation for the whole argument presented here: the very notion of *education*. This can only be a short glimpse into a very long and complex discussion, and for some readers the argument unfolding might represent a mere thought experiment of a possible world (maybe predominantly inspired by the German version of Education Studies, the academic discipline *Erziehungswissenschaft*) in which this definition of *education* was accepted. The paper therefore begins with presenting a definition of *education*, followed by a discussion of the problematic state of (parts of) contemporary humanity to which (a so understood) education contributes. The diagnosis is followed by suggestions on how to remedy this situation, and an inter-temporal and intercultural exploration of the role *education* might play in this. But, to start with, we need to engage with the easiest and yet hardest of all educational questions:

What is Education?

People change. Together with body and mind, our personality changes all the time. Sometimes we actually want those changes to occur in us or in others, and we want those changes to last. We then deliberately either support or counteract what's changing naturally; or we deliberately support or counteract the arbitrary changes caused by the circumstances and by the environment that surrounds us; or we deliberately try to induce those changes we hope for. This aspiration of change – that is *education*: *Education* is the deliberate effort to bring about the changing of someone – of ourselves or of others – because we assume that this change is for the better. *Education* can fail because those efforts might fail to succeed but they still represent *education*: The acting upon aspirations of change is *education*; *education* is not solely the result of those efforts.

What is it that we change when we try to change someone? We attempt to change the relations this person has – the relations s_he has to the world and to her_himself. We change the relations of someone with regard to their knowledge about or of something, as knowing-that (factual knowledge) or knowing-how (skills, capacities). This is usually called *learning*. In addition, we try to change the relations a person has to other people or to him_herself, e.g. relations of respect or self-respect, compassion or self-appreciation, and love in general. This can be called personal (*trans*)*formation*. *Education* therefore is the deliberate attempt to engage with the relations someone has in order to change and improve those relations; *education* is about initiating, guiding, supporting, directing of learning and (*trans*)*formation*. Both, processes of learning and (*trans*)*formation*, do occur often, maybe all the time – but neither those which are natural, nor those which are accidental, are *education* in the terms of this essay, that is, natural and accidental changes are not 'intended' changes. They might be 'formative', i.e. result in a perceivable, maybe even important change of a person's relations, but they do not represent an instance of *education*. This, however, makes them of no less value than had they justifiably been defined as *education*: a change does not become better or more important just because it was intended to occur. It just simply was intended.

Our aspirations to change people and to improve their relations to the world or themselves are expressed in the ways we organise our social life; they inform our institutions, policies, laws; and they are expressed in the ways we organise our personal life; they inform our self-conduct, our relationships, our life choices. Much of what we intentionally do is about *education* since much of what we intentionally do is about changing and hereby improving us and others. Wherever people aspire to bring forth lasting change in themselves or in others through the improvement of their relations in the hope of a better future for the individuals and, often, for

the whole society and, sometimes, for the whole of humankind, *education* is present. *Education* is the people's way of enacting their utopian visions.

This, somewhat fragmentary, definition of *education* represents the foundation; *education* as a descriptive notion that can be used to distinguish certain human actions from others in any given normative framework (i.e. with regard to different cultures and times) without being normative itself – it is an analytic tool in the hand of those interested in *Education Studies* who can and need to distance themselves from the values that govern their own educational endeavours. To refer to a source which might be familiar in Anglophone contexts: It is a perspective on *education* which R.S. Peters links to social scientists:

A sociologist or anthropologist might speak of the education system or moral code of a community without implying that he thought it desirable. But in such cases the implication is that those whose system or code it is consider that it involves what is desirable. The social scientist would be merely describing what others think worth while.
(Peters, 1966, p. 25)

Education understood in this way (as an analytic notion) and the conceptual discussions around this notion then provide the hermeneutic foundation for the academic discipline *Education Studies* (something from which Peters distances himself immediately after introducing it: a social-scientific understanding of *education* seems to play no role at all in the unfolding argument of his book). However, what is to follow from here now is a somewhat deeper analysis of *education* in a specific direction.

Education and Time

Education takes time. Not more or less time – but time in general – awareness of time: There is no education if there is not a peculiar idea of time that embraces the idea of a future (and, respectively, a past). There is no education without *ἔσχατον* (eschaton: a final end) as education is what we intentionally do in order to arrive at a different, in some respect better state of being. The *ἔσχατον* can be of different kind: it can be very concrete and clear – learning how to read, or how to ride a bike –, it can also be very broad, maybe even vague, like *reaching someone's full potential* or *realising one's freedom* or, in general, *realising oneself*. Whether it is abstract or concrete there will still be an understanding what progress along this line, towards this goal,

would look like; it is only with regard to those criteria that we can actually speak of progressing and therefore of education achieving something, of being successful, or not. Education does not exist without an image or a concept of what a better future looks like. And for imagining a specific future which we perceive to be better than the present, we have to be able to be future-minded in general. The existence of education depends on the characteristics of a culture's temporal consciousness; as social anthropologists have shown: it is not necessary for a culture to be obsessed with the future as a promised land (Hall, 1983; Everett, 2008), and different concepts of time result in different theories and practices of education, and vice versa. Temporality as such might be fundamental to human beings (and I avoid a discussion of Heidegger as that would inevitably have to remain superficial here). However, to think and live with a more or less distant future is certainly not. However blurry the line between both kinds of temporality (short or far reaching, so to speak) is – it is there, and it is important: it is the future that is a little more distant that provides the foundation for education as concept and practice.

Time and Alienation

Education aims towards the future. The future and past, however, can be only as a present thought of the Other (Kenklies, 2012); the future and past always are nothing but a presence of that which is in some sense not now: present as thought and experienced as such. As Augustine puts it: The time present of things past is memory; the time present of things present is direct experience; the time present of things future is expectation (Confessions, 11, 20: 26) (Augustine, 2016). As such, the future (and past, for that matter) can only be a thought in the minds of those who are able to leave the experienced Here & Now and envision another state of being while still being in the Here & Now. And while not all those visions and not all those dreams induce an activity to realise this envisioned state, some do have this effect and generate certain actions – they generate education: education is the intentional acting towards this change, a process that relates two moments of being in a temporal but also modal relation; education connects one point in time to another point in time as imagined succession and evolution. This means: Education and its intendedness is founded on the ability to give space to the distant Other in the Here & Now; education demands the ability to enter a state of dissociative disorder and to alienate oneself, the ability to see this life and another life in the

same moment. The alienation inscribed in education is greater than the alienation inscribed in pure intentionality; there is a difference in assuming that my momentous actions have some sort of immediate effect in contrast to producing a change in some distant future; education is always intended acting, i.e. intentional, but intentionality is not (yet) education.

Even though education is based upon the alienation from the present, it is the very introduction of a future that also introduces a past: having a future also means having a past; the alienation from the present that is the future emerges together with the alienation that is the past. Education as an intentional action to change rests on both, future & past, and on the ability to alienate oneself from the present.

Alienation and Imbalance

Realising that education is necessarily alienating from being in the moment into an imagined future, and that, in the same way, remembrance is an alienation from being in the moment into an imagined past, the philosophical mind is drawn to a model of balance – a balance between moments of present, moments of past, and moments of future. This balance is threatened by too much future and too much past: the first usually termed *Futurism*, the latter *Historicism*. Those can – and have been – regarded as pathological states in which the delicate temporal balance is somehow disturbed; as moments where too much history prevents an active engagement with the present moment and the future, and where too much futuristic thinking loses sight of its own history and with it its own foundations which at once enable and limit our concepts of future. A balance is necessary between those moments of alienation in one or the other direction, and those fleeting moments where we are in the present.

The problem of keeping a balance is not new: it has been discussed in numerous ways. For example, Feuerbach (1980), Benjamin (1968), and Santayana (1953), have discussed what it means to have too much future, whereas Nietzsche has analysed what it means to have too much past (Nietzsche, 1980). However, reaching even beyond this, contemporary discussions refer to an imbalance not so much between future, present and past, but between temporality and what is here for now called *atemporality* in general: Ehrenberg (2016) and Byung-Chul Han (2015) draw attention to the late-modern *conditio humana*, to human weariness and tiredness under the condition of an ever-accelerating life (Rosa, 2015) which demands a state

of constant dissociative disorder in the ways it demands attending to numerous states and times in the same moment, a state of constant absence in a very much disliked present.

So, systematically, it is not only a balance between past, present, and future that needs to be maintained, but also the one between temporality and atemporality. Within temporality, balance rests entirely in the realm of our temporality: the present is seemingly nothing but the infinitely small point where the future passes through and becomes the past. In an important sense, there is no present here; living like that means to live an alienated life; living like that means to live with too much temporality. Education with its necessary alienation from the present into the future plays an important part in creating this imbalance, often disguised in euphemisms like *lifelong learning* or *future-mindedness*. The more one's mind is obsessed with education, the more one is sentenced to live in two worlds at the same time; the more we let ourselves be governed by educational thinking, the more dissociative we become as we are trapped into constantly imagining a future that supposedly is better than the one we experience now; thinking educationally or being subjected to education sentences us to disavow the beauty of the present and to eternal dissatisfaction with who we are now. There might be no better exemplification of this lifelong imprisonment than Goethe's Dr Faust who trusts to be on God's side as long as he is striving for insights, and who agrees to be the devil's prize as soon as he rests:

When thus I hail the Moment flying:
"Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!"
Then bind me in thy bonds undying,
My final ruin then declare!
Then let the death-bell chime the token.
Then art thou from thy service free!
The clock may stop, the hand be broken,
Then Time be finished unto me! (Goethe, 1890, p. 48f., Vers 1700ff.)

Oh, no – the conspiracy that is education is not new, and with it a general delusion of betterment. And, as psychologists would add: the more we pursue something like happiness, the less we achieve and the unhappier we become (Kim & Maglio, 2018). We maybe need to live with education, i.e. with past, fleeting present, and future – but the analyses of the modern *conditio humana* seem to suggest that we might need to take care for ourselves in a better way. What systematic possibilities does the model offered provide?

Speaking somewhat metaphorically: to avoid being constantly alienated by being constantly drawn into past or future, the line at which future turns into past has to be made broader; a simple threshold has to become an extended field – the moment has to ‘expand’ to represent a state of being in which there is neither past nor future.

Maybe counter-intuitively, it is the emphasising of the present that breaks the temporal lock and ensures a balance between temporality and atemporality. This refers to those often described moments without obvious time – the moments of which we cannot tell how long they lasted. Psychologists have described those as states of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and also in education, some theorists have pointed out the value of those moments, e.g. Montessori in her concept of the ‘polarisation of attention’ (Montessori, 1919). In some sense they are fundamentally temporal as they are experienced as dynamic and not as static, but in another sense they are atemporal in that they do not alienate us from the present into either past or future. Those moments become extended, they grow from being a mere point of passage to something different. We need those extended moments to remain sane and healthy; we need to find the right balance within temporality and between temporality and atemporality; we need a temporal equilibrium.

Two questions are to be drawn from this diagnosis: 1) Do we need to give up on education in order to create a temporal equilibrium, or is there a way to think education that leads out of this conundrum of education being bound to the future and therefore being at least partially responsible for our present-alienation? And 2) Is there a general rule about the right balance, or, so to speak: Is there a theory that can tell us how much time, how much education, we should only be subjected to in order to remain sane? Let’s look at the second question first.

(Im)Balance and Education

Fundamentally a psychological question, philosophical psychologies as e.g. by Nietzsche might offer certain insights. Drawing on Nietzsche, his concept of *plastic power* might be convincing enough to assume that the point of balance is different for everyone (Nietzsche, 1980). *Plastic power* for Nietzsche is the individual’s capacity to transform that which is alien to something which is one’s own, i.e., in Nietzsche’s terms, the capacity to digest something and to absorb it and have it not as indissoluble stones rumbling in one’s stomach. Those who have only a small capacity should take care to not expose themselves to too much that is alien

– their horizon will be narrower than the horizon of those who are capable to embrace more without falling ill (and, indeed, Nietzsche's use of medical metaphors is not completely irrelevant here). Whereas it might be true for all that everyone needs to find this point of equilibrium between past, present, and future, and between temporality and atemporality, we still might find those points of equilibrium to be very different for everyone (and, actually, it would pose a certain difficulty to establish some frame of comparison anyway as the question for the duration of the atemporal might make no sense after all). In other words: there probably is no rule about the distribution of time – and maybe all that can be said Here & Now is that all parts of the temporal equation have to be there: past as well as future, and those extended moments where the present has real presence, where neither past nor future seems of any relevance.

The first question concerning the extent to which we have to give up education in order to achieve a temporal equilibrium, however, opens up a horizon for very different reflections. And, as will be seen, possible answers to this question will lead us into different realms – temporally and spatially. Let's consider first the idea that to embrace the present we have to give up – at least occasionally – education and all its emphatic and destructive emphasis on the future. To do this, a term could be re-introduced into the Anglophone discussion that has been around for quite some time before it got lost in the haze of modernization – a term that is as old as European culture. I am referring to *otiosity*, or, as it was often called in Britain in the 18th century, *idleness* (notions that refer to something that, e.g., in German has been perpetuated as *Muße*).

Our laborious journey into *otiosity* (Sadlek, 2004) begins in Classic Rome where a distinction was drawn between times when soldiers were unoccupied, resting and bored to death since there was no war; this was usually referred to as *otium otiosum* (André, 1966), an unoccupied and pointless, therefore idle time of leisure. On the other hand, there was *otium negotiosum* (busy leisure), i.e. a time in which one was able to pursue a hobby or one's own personal affairs. The meaning of the latter shifted later: the positive *otium negotiosum* now became differentiated into what then for centuries was known as either *otium* or *negotium*. Both are two types of being busy, but whereas the *negotium* is the somewhat hideous form of labour (one's job, profession, business), *otium* became the much more elevated intellectual sort of labour where one was musing about the affairs of the state and one's own estate, about the world in general and its principles, in short: philosophy in its broadest sense. In this distinction,

the pair of *negotium* and *otium* corresponds to the maybe more known Greek distinction of *ασχολή* and *σχολή* and the much later re-translation into Latin as *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa*. However, before the philosophers see this happily turn in to yet another defence of philosophical contemplation as an important part of life, let me disappoint this expectation right away: What is defended here is not the *Vita Contemplativa* which is just yet another kind of a purposeful and therefore future-oriented spending of one's time, and which even today carries the mark of preposterousness: Based on the times when some people did have the time to freely muse about the world whereas others were working themselves to death, we still can see how this type of 'intellectual work' often enjoys not only a much higher social prestige but also fetches much higher salaries than, let's say, manual labour; it is not the *otium* as *Vita Contemplativa* (and, of course, not the *negotium* as *Vita Activa*) that we should embrace again, but the *otium otiosum*, the pointless idle time of simply doing nothing purposeful at all (Barrett, 1989) and in which we refrain in particular from any educational endeavours.

Every man is, or hopes to be, an idler. Even those who seem to differ most from us are hastening to increase our fraternity; as peace is the end of war, so to be idle is the ultimate purpose of the busy. Scarcely any name can be imagined from which less envy or competition is to be dreaded. The Idler has no rivals or enemies. The man of business forgets him; the man of enterprise despises him; and though such as tread the same track of life fall commonly into jealousy and discord, Idlers are always found to associate in peace; and he who is most famed for doing nothing, is glad to meet another as idle as himself. (Johnson, 1837, p. 357)

It is Samuel Johnson who asserts this conviction at the 15th April 1758 and who issued a great number of essays under the title "The Idler". Even though one might contest this to be true with regard to the human nature, it is exactly this purposelessness that I am referring to here as one possible way out of the educational treadmill: the ability and capacity to be without a plan, without purpose, without goal – the ability to be positively bored or to simply float around in the river of life, without steering, without hopes and dreams. Johnson himself, as true Christian, dreaded what he saw as deeply human, and so he prays: "O God enable me to avoid sloth, and to attend heedfully and constantly to thy word and worship." (Johnson, 1902, p. 42)

It is characteristic for most views on otiosity and idleness that they oscillate between being fascinated by the mere possibility of a complete inactivity and the urge to circumvent the

apparent danger in such futility by rendering it a purposeful and therefore socially accepted rest or contemplation. However, it is exactly the ability of leaving philosophy and contemplation aside that the otiosity envisioned here refers to. That is not to say that occasionally we need to move into sense deprivation chambers to block out the world as much as possible – it is to say that we sometimes do not need to do anything at all: no need to do something, no need to want something, no need to achieve something. And whereas *flânerie* (Benjamin, 2006) and *dérive* (Debord, 1956) are still burdened with observational and even openly critical purposes, otiosity is here imagined to be the absence of all this: Only when we, occasionally, manage to totally disengage from past and future and with it from all ambitions, the present will become a presence; only when we renounce any educational aspiration, we become unoccupied enough for the Here & Now and with it, we become temporarily balanced beings. S_he who needs hope in being presented with such a seemingly bleak picture – s_he looks into Lao Tzu 老子: “When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.” (Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching 道德經, chap. 48)

Giving up on education now and then is, of course, a very charming and, I might say, even exciting prospect. However, looking into another tradition, we might be able to generate a notion of education that somehow, at least partially, avoids the traps of the all too future-oriented version of education that people are far too ready to embrace. For this, however, we need to leave Europe, and the quote above already hints at the goal of our journey: East Asia, or more specifically: Japan, where a concept of purposeless and therefore futureless ‘education’ can be found in the writings of Dōgen Zenji 道元禪師, the founder of Sōtō Zen (曹洞宗 *Sōtō-shū*).

One of the main problems Buddhist philosophy in general and of Zen in particular is to reconcile two apparently contradictory claims: Firstly, that everything has and always had and always will have Buddha nature, and secondly that seemingly this needs to be achieved somehow through different sorts of practices (not unlike the paradox expressed by Pindar: “γένοι' οἷος ἐσσι μαθών – Learn and become who you are.” Trans. D.A. Svarlien). Especially for Dōgen, founder of the *Sōtō* School of Zen, the assumed simultaneousness of the presence of enlightenment and the necessity of the process of training to become enlightened presents itself as the main theoretical problem – and with it the problem of temporality and atemporality: “In general, we do not stray from the right state: of what use, then, are the tiptoes of training?” (Dōgen, 2007, p. 363) asks Dōgen, introducing a solution to this problem that deserves more

attention with regard to it being a suggestion for the problem of a purposeless and therefore futureless education – an education that could play a crucial role in the theory and practice of education in a temporally balanced life.

Here is not the place to present the full philosophy that has been developed in Zen over the centuries, and even only Dōgen's texts are too rich to be discussed in full here (for an introduction: Heine, 2012). This is made even more difficult by the very nature of the subject: Zen has always been the tradition of thinking that was the most critical of thinking itself, and much of it is not to be talked about but to be practiced. Indeed, this then is the first problem when encountering the texts of Dōgen (and, probably, Buddhism in general): they are far away from being written in propositional language, and every attempt to squeeze out a set of propositions that counts as theory in academia will fail and miss something very important. (Wright, 1998) Indeed, in large parts, those texts are not written to convey a philosophical message – they are written to initiate a practice. In a much stronger sense than what we are used to, those texts are comprehensible only for those who already understand; intellectually grasping a theory is not what the text is trying to enable. It is at the same time lucky and unlucky that people do indeed **not** fall silent on what cannot be talked about – since not talking is for a context of academic writing no solution either. However, it needs to be remembered: Intellectually understanding Dōgen's text somehow misses the point.

In considering how Dōgen offers a different approach towards (not a 'theory' of) education, we should indeed return to our musings about a different time. We have seen that the problem lies in the idea that even though we know that there must be a present, we usually do not experience this except as a fleeting moment where future turns into past: the present here is nothing more than the border between future and past. The idea suggested was to open up, to extend, to stretch out what is usually only a thin line into a broad experiential field of present. This is exactly what Dōgen is suggesting in his way to describe time: the present begins to take space. And, not only does it take *a* space – it takes the whole world. But before I jump too far here, let's hear Dōgen himself on this:

The view of the common person today, and the causes and conditions of [that] view, are what the common person experiences but are not the common person's reality. It is just that reality, for the present, has made a common person into its causes and conditions. Because he understands this time and this existence to be other than reality itself, he deems that "the sixteen-foot golden body is beyond me." Attempts

to evade [the issue] by [thinking] “I am never the sixteen-foot golden body” are also flashes of existence time; they are glimpses of it by a person who has yet to realize it in experience and to rely upon it. The [existence-time] that also causes the horse and the sheep to be as they are arranged in the world today, is a rising and falling which is something ineffable abiding in its place in the Dharma. (Dōgen, 2007, p. 146)

This is a quote from the main text Dōgen’s on time: *Uji* 有時, part of the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 which was completed in 1240. Here, Dōgen explains what he means with what he calls *uji* – *existence-time* (in other translations: *being-time*) (for a discussion, see: Ōhashi, 2012; Stambaugh, 1990; Heine, 1985). Time here is nothing else than being, being is nothing else than time. Reminding ourselves of Augustine, we can maybe meander ever closer to the meaning of this: for Augustine, past and future were mere thoughts in the present soul – past and future are always only present as momentary thoughts in the present of the soul. Coming from here, it only needs one more little step to Dōgen: to actually realise (which means more than grasping intellectually) that whatever is present in me is always everything – whatever is in me at any given moment is the whole world, and there is absolutely nothing else beyond what is within me in that moment: past, present, future, doubts, the visible, the invisible, the world, the absent – all is ever present in me right now – all is always right now as fleeting moments of conscious thoughts. Remember Wittgenstein: the I as the boundary of the world (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 82) – the I as the boundary of the world *is* the whole world in every given moment, and the whole world is in the I at any given moment. There simply is nothing that is not in me, that is not me in every moment – present as present or absent, present as now or past or later, present as me or other. Or, in Dōgen’s words:

It is nothing other than the perfect realization of the whole of time as the whole of existence; there is nothing surplus at all. (Dōgen, 2007, p. 146)

Now, becoming aware of this and being able to see the world as this, means then to realise that there is no past, no future – that there is always only present, there is always only the presence of the whole world in me and before me and with me and as me; what looked like a difference between an only imagined future or past and a somehow lived experience of the present turns out to be always all-together lived experience of the continuously unfolding existence-time.

Being able to really become aware of this means in Zen language to be enlightened. However, we don't need to burden ourselves with such words which are probably reminding many of the days when this was brought to the West and turned into New Age and lifestyle and, lately, mindfulness. What on the contrary is indeed relevant is that those moments of all-encompassing presence can provide the necessary balance to our lives which tend to be all too heavily burdened with alienating times of past and present to which we are sentenced and sentence ourselves by dogmas of lifelong learning and elevation. But, how then is this education?

Dōgen is, of course, aware that even though people are indeed always ever present, they are not aware. To use a Hegelian distinction: They are present in themselves but not present in-and-for-themselves. However, they can become aware: Through certain ways of practicing, one is being transformed to be consciously present. In founding the *Sōtō* sect of Zen, Dōgen established a practice of life that makes awareness possible – a practice that revolves around what is called *Zazen*, seated meditation. To be clear: the practice does not *cause* awareness, there is nothing *causal* here, and therefore there cannot be any aim here, no intention that tries to reach out to a distant future called *enlightenment*. There is an intention to sit down and breathe, but if there is an intention to become enlightened through doing this, it will be exactly this intention that prevents the very insight that is enlightenment. Sitting to achieve is, indeed, exactly the way of being one tries to get rid of in *Zazen*. One has to sit in order to sit; the short temporality that is intendedness replaces the long temporality that is future-mindedness. This seems to be a general characteristic of many of the Japanese 'art ways' (芸道, *geidō*) (e.g. for *Noh* 能 theatre training: Nishihira, 2009, 2012). Once one has let go of all aspirations, all is gained – the whole world then is in the I and is the I. In Dōgen's words:

At just the moment when we dignify body and mind with training, eternal original practice is completely and roundly realized. Thus the body and mind of training manifests itself in the original state. (Dōgen, 2007, p. 76)

As long as we are not enlightened, this will be education because we aspire to some change, to some improvement of ourselves, and most people who start to engage in this kind of practice do this exactly to achieve this kind of change; it is education because we cannot depart from future-mindedness. And as education it might have all the advantages related to education. But, at the same time, it has the disadvantages described above: it becomes yet another future-

oriented alienating activity. However, if lucky, the person so eagerly meditating to improve will be struck by the insight that it is the eagerness that prevents all from happening, and s_he will learn to abandon those hopes and dreams; were we able to let go of the future, we might be on a good way to become enlightened. And only based on such insight, a non-educational but still formative and non-alienating practice might evolve.

The teacher will not pretend that this practice is trying to achieve something else than is done in that very moment; the practice is intentional without being alienating from the present: sitting down for the sake of sitting down, breathing for the sake of breathing. Of course, whoever practiced this will know how the alienation that we are so used to is creeping in all the time – making the mind wander away into some distant place, some distant past, some distant future. But, in keeping with the attempt to be present and therefore *have the present* and *be the present*, the practice is not about trying to get rid of this wandering of the mind as that would again just be a conscious attempt to change and therefore would eliminate the possibility of being present – the practice now is to simply accept the wandering mind as what it is: a mind that wanders in this very moment of time; it is about not following those thoughts, not actually thinking them, but observing them emerge and disappear again into what Hegel has called the ‘unconscious abyss’. Once one realises that the aspiration itself is the very present, once the future has been accepted as happening now – then what looked like education ceases to be education, and becomes simply life unfolding. From an unenlightened perspective, looked at it from outside, this seems to be education as it seemingly attempts to transform someone into something better, into someone who manages to lead a temporally balanced life; from here, this looks like a better future. From the standpoint of enlightenment, this might look different, as it then is a practice which tries to achieve exactly nothing, and which is formative precisely because it is not education and therefore not future-minded.

Final Remarks

It probably needs to be left to each individual to decide whether it should be *otiosity* or *Zazen* (or another practice) that breaks the temporal habits that are clouding the present. Maybe, both are actually the same ... but it needs an enlightened person to decide that. So far, both seem to be different ways to escape the educational disequilibrium. Of course: Looking at the state of contemporary society, nothing seems to be more counter-intuitive or even more inappropriate

than preaching to let go from all aspirations to change oneself and the world. However, it maybe is exactly the relentless attempts to change everything and everyone that prevents the change from happening. Maybe we need to let go from all this, at least occasionally: let's not be progressive, let's not be conservative, let's not be subversive, let's not be well-adapted, let's not be a force of preservation, let's not be a force for change, let's not be traditional, let's not be utopian – instead, let's have tea and do nothing at all. It might eventually save the world.

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