

# Dōgen on Time and the Self

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***Abstract:** In this article, we examine Dōgen’s paradoxical theses concerning the passage of time. In one instance, he denies the commonsense view that time passes but, in another, accepts time’s aspect of coming and going. Although the two theses look incompatible, there is a way to come to a coherent interpretation. The key is Dōgen’s peculiar concept of the self. Unlike the other no-self doctrine of Buddhism, his theory of no-self indicates not only the refutation of self as the independent subject but also the acceptance of SELF, which is equal to the myriad things existing as the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. When we look at our initial problem on the paradoxical theses based on the above observation of Dōgen’s theory of the self, we can understand why he needs to describe time as possessing two different aspects.*

## 1. Introduction

This article presents preliminary research for our future study of an Asian analytical-philosophical approach to Dōgen’s theory of time.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this article is to examine several important passages from the fascicle “Uji” of the *Shōbōgenzō*<sup>2</sup> to give a plausible explanation of his two paradoxical theses with respect to the passage of time:

(T1) Time does not pass.

(T2) Time has the aspect of coming and going.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is partially based on Moriyama 2019, a critical review of Vorenkamp 1995.

<sup>2</sup> There is a number of studies on the fascicle “Uji”, for instance, Abe 1992, Chaps. III & IV; Kopf 2001; Tsujiguchi 2012, Chap. 4; Yorizumi 2014; Izutsu 2015; and Roberts 2018. Our reading in the following is mostly influenced by Izutsu’s analysis.

It seems that T1 and T2 are incompatible because T2 is naturally read as saying that time passes. If T1 is true, T2 must be false and vice versa. Nevertheless, Dōgen seems to assert the two theses, especially when he states that time has both characteristics of coming and going and neither-coming-nor-going. Although one might think that such a paradoxical expression is a usual practice of Zen, we can try to offer a reasonable account by assuming the different purposes of the two theses: while T1 aims to reject the commonsense view of time's passage, T2 aims to establish the ultimate nature of time that is discovered in Zen meditation, in which things interpenetrate and exhibit real transition without the distinction of past, present, or future.

## 2. Time Does Not Fly Away

Let us start with T1, namely, the denial of the passage of time. In the commonsense view, the passage of time is expressed using various phrases, like “time flows”, “time flies away”, etc. According to Dōgen, however, this notion of the passage of time is untenable. He begins with the following observation:

Text 1: 十二時の長遠短促, いまだ度量せずといへども, これを十二時といふ。去来の方跡あきらかなるによりて, 人これを疑著せず, 疑著せざれどもしれるにあらず。(SG II: 47)

Even though one does not measure the length of twelve hours, one calls it “twelve hours”. Since the mark of coming and going [of time] is obvious, one does not doubt it. Although one does not doubt it, one does not know it.<sup>3</sup>

In the above passage, Dōgen raises an objection against the commonsense view that time passes at a certain rate. People simply assume that 12 hours (i.e., 24 hours in the modern calculation of time) pass per day without questioning what “time” denotes or how long (or short) 12 hours is. Why do they tend to hold such an ungrounded belief regarding the passage of time? To answer this question, Dōgen points out the following two fallacies in the commonsense view: First, the passage of time can be considered analogous to movement in space; second, time is supposed to exist independently of its observer.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Raud 2012, 159f.; Roberts 2018, 57; Uchiyama 2018, 188f.

Text 2: しかあるを，仏法をならはざる凡夫の時節にあらゆる見解は，有時のことばをきくにおもはく，あるときは三頭八臂となれりき，あるときは丈六金身となれりき。たとへば、河をすぎ，山をすぎしがごとくなり。いまはその山河，たとひあるらめども，われすぎきたりて，いまは玉殿朱楼に処せり，山河とわれと，天と地となりとおもふ。(SG II: 48–49)

Nevertheless, the understanding of an ordinary man who has not studied the Buddhist teachings is such that on hearing the word ‘at one time’ (*uji*), he thinks: ‘At one time someone had become a demon [three-heads-eight-arms], at another time he had become an enlightened one [six-jo-eight-shaku]’. This [passage of time] is just like crossing a river, passing a mountain. Even if the mountain and the river still exist, I have passed them and now stay in this jewel palace and vermilion tower. Me and the mountains-rivers are like heaven and earth to each other”.<sup>4</sup>

An ordinary person misunderstands the term *uji* as merely indicating “(at) one time”. Such a misunderstanding would lead us to think that just as Kyoto and Tokyo exist as two different places, one time (e.g., the moment of crossing a river) exists independently of another (e.g., the moment of staying at a palace). Depending on which position in space one occupies, it may be said that such-and-such is the case at one place and so-and-so at another. Similarly, one tends to say that such-and-such is the case at one time and so-and-so at another according to the passage of time. This is how time is treated analogously to space, as the first fallacy shows.

Dōgen also remarks that the commonsense view presupposes “I”, or a self, as a subject of experience existing against the objective background of time and space. Thus, one firmly believes that the self moves from one place to another or from one time to another. Dōgen’s conclusion is that the ordinary conception of time’s passage presupposes the distinction between *what passes* and *what is passed*: Time (or place) and I (i.e., the subject of an experience) are distinct, as the second fallacy shows. Against such a misconception, he presents the following argument:

Text 3: 時は飛去するとのみ解会すべからず，飛去は時の能とのみは学すべからず。時もし飛去に一任せば，間隙ありぬべし。有時の道を経聞せざるは，すぎぬるとのみ学するによりてなり。(SG II: 50)

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Raud 2004, 39; Raud 2012, 162; Roberts 2018, 86; Uchiyama 2018, 190.

One should not understand that time just flies away. One should not learn that it is time's capability that it flies away. If time [really] retains [the capability of] flying away, there must be a gap. One does not know the true doctrine of being-time (*uji*) because one has learnt only time's passage.<sup>5</sup>

Here is our reconstruction of what Dōgen suggests in the above text: First, for *reductio ad absurdum*, suppose that (i) time flies away, as the ordinary expression states. Dōgen then points out that (ii) if time flew away, there would be a gap between one time and another. Since (iii) there is no such gap, he concludes that time does not pass.

The absurdity might be obscure at first. As for premise (ii), the analogy of time and space will do the expected job. If something (say, a bird) flies from one place to another, there must be a gap between the two places. Likewise, if time “flies away”, there must be a gap between a certain time and another.<sup>6</sup> Dōgen suggests that if the passage of time is treated analogously to movement in space, a gap between two given times should be unavoidable.<sup>7</sup> Premise (iii) may be more difficult to grasp, but we suggest that Dōgen's phenomenological tendency plays a crucial role here. In our view, Dōgen means to say that if one looks carefully at what s/he really experiences, s/he will know that no gap is *experienced* at any time and that, therefore, time must be seamless. This phenomenological interpretation of Dōgen is surely controversial. What is crucial for our purpose is whether Dōgen

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Roberts 2018, 107; Uchiyama 2018, 191f.

<sup>6</sup> There are mainly two possibilities to consider when interpreting the “gap”. While some previous studies (Shaner 1985, 150; Tanahashi 1995) show that the gap is between oneself and time, others assume that the gap is between two times, as Raud (2012, 164) states: “[I]f we would, indeed, against the text's admonition, presume that moments fly past, one after another, like the stages of the moment of Zeno's arrow, it would be very logical to ask what is present during the almost imperceptible interval when one moment has already passed and another one is still not yet here”. Although we follow the latter in our interpretation of the text, we do not deny that, as its implication, the former's view is also concluded.

<sup>7</sup> This argument reminds us of Nāgārjuna's famous refutation of motion in the second chapter of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, where the concept of motion is rejected because, by grammatically analyzing the verb  $\sqrt{gam}$ , i.e., to go, it is revealed that the object of the present-tense motion (e.g., the path to be traversed) is impossible for both the path already traversed and the path not yet traversed. This is because there is no third place that is neither the path already traversed nor the path not yet traversed. As such, there is no possibility of establishing the object of the motion. Without the object, the motion itself is also unestablished. To explain the third place that is neither the past place nor the future place, the later commentator, Candrakīrti, describes the place's infinite divisibility, like Zeno's paradox of flying arrows at rest. Cf. Katsura & Siderits 2013, 32.

would accept or reject the idea of an independent reality. To answer this question, it is necessary to analyze what Dōgen thinks of the self and the world.

### 3. SELF as the Entire World

As seen in the previous section, the commonsense view of the passage of time rests upon the distinction between *what passes* and *what is passed*. Once the distinction disappears, the passage of time is experienced in a completely different manner. Then, how does the distinction disappear?

On this point, as several previous studies have already clarified, Dōgen's notion of self (*jiko*, *ware*) gives us a clue regarding its answer.<sup>8</sup> To put it briefly, we should distinguish two different meanings of self in Dōgen's usage: while the term denotes an independent entity as the subject or agent, the same term also signifies the true self as the Buddha-nature (*bussō*). For convenience, we shall write the former as *self* and the latter as SELF. Dōgen denies *self* and affirms SELF. It should be noted here that Dōgen's idea of no-self differs from the orthodox Buddhist Reductionist view that *self* is reducible to five aggregates of physical and mental elements (*pañcaskandha*). While this view still allows distinctions between my body and mind and another's body and mind or between internal elements and external elements, Dōgen radically removes such distinctions by referring to "body-and-mind-dropping-off" (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落). Note, however, that the negation of body and mind does not mean mere nothingness, because it implies the "dropped-off-body-and-mind" (*datsuraku shinjin* 脱落身心), namely, the affirmation of body and mind that newly emerges through discarding wrong conceptions concerning the dichotomy of body and mind.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, when the so-called *self* is denied, SELF newly emerges.<sup>10</sup> According to Dōgen, this SELF is equated with the entire world as being-time. Let us look at the following passage from the fascicle "Uji":

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<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Mitani 2019 clearly presents Dōgen's position as the "pan-self-ism" through his fusion-philosophical reading of Dōgen, Nishida, and Sellars. Cf. also Kopf 2001, Chap. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See Izutsu 1982, 5.

<sup>10</sup> In this connection, Dōgen's famous phrase of Genjōkoan, "To learn SELF is to forget *self*. To forget *self* is to be illuminated by myriad things" is well understood. To be aware of SELF, it is necessary to forget *self* that is grasped mistakenly as being restricted to a certain body and mind. To forget such *self* is nothing but to emancipate oneself from the limitation of a certain body and mind.

Text 4: われを排列しおきて尽界とせり、この尽界の頭頭物物を時時なりと見すべし。物物の相礙せざるは、時時の相礙せざるがごとし。このゆゑに同時発心あり、同心発時あり。および修行成道もかくのごとし。われを排列してわれこれを見るなり。自己の時なる道理、それかくのごとし。(SG II: 47–48)

Having unfolded SELF, the entire world occurs.<sup>11</sup> One should regard each different thing of the entire world as each different time. Just as different things do not obstruct each other, different times do not obstruct each other. Therefore, the resolution of each mind [for Buddhist practice] occurs simultaneously. The occurrence of each [different] time is shared by the same mind (i.e., SELF). The practice and the enlightenment are also considered in the same manner. Having unfolded SELF, I see this [SELF].<sup>12</sup> The principle “self is time” is as such.

According to the oldest commentary of *Shōbōgenzō*, Kyōgō’s *Shōbōgenzōshō*, the “*ware*” in this passage means the “SELF as the Buddhist entity” (*buppō no ware*), which is likely the same as the Buddha-nature.<sup>13</sup> Against our commonsense view that *self* exists as a subject in front of the world as an object, this SELF as the Buddha-nature becomes manifest as the entire world.<sup>14</sup> Dōgen describes the world

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<sup>11</sup> On the translation *hairetsu* 排列, several translations are possible. Cf. Raud 2012, 160: “The I unfolds and become the world in its entirety, ...”; Roberts 2018, 61: “We set the self out in array and make the whole universe”; Mitani 2019, 14: “The self extends itself and [as a result] it contains the whole universe.” We follow Mitani’s direction but choose “(to) unfold” for *hairetsu*’s translation.

<sup>12</sup> In this peculiar worldview, a situation where I see a flower can be paraphrased as “the entire world sees the entire world” or as “time sees time.” Cf. SGS 10: 排列の様如前云、尽界が尽界を見る程の道理なるべし、時が時を見る心地也。

<sup>13</sup> SGS 10: 此の我は仏法の我也。...唯我が尽界なる所を排列とは云なり。

<sup>14</sup> The implication of SELF as the entire world is to deny an opponent’s view that the Buddha-nature is hidden inside oneself. Shirō Matsumoto (2000, 192–193) named it *bussō naizai ron* 仏性内在論, which presupposes the independent agent distinct from its environment. In Genjōkōan, their opinion is: “To carry *self* forward to undertake the practice and to attain the enlightenment of myriad things” (自己をはこびて万法を修証する). To this, the sentence “Myriad things go forward and undertake the practice and the enlightenment of SELF” (万法すすみて自己を修証する) represents Dōgen’s position. Contrary to the opponent’s view, this view, *bussō kenzaï ron* 仏性顕在論, accepts that myriad things already exist as the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. Cf. also Sueki 2009, 248–250.

as having no obstruction, namely, no boundary between the self and the other, between the subject and object, and between one moment in time and another. However, it does not refer to a genuinely monistic worldview. To accept SELF as the entire world is nothing but to accept a seamless connection of different entities (*dharmas*) of different times in *one* SELF. Therefore, it is said: “[T]he resolution of each mind [for Buddhist practice] occurs simultaneously. The occurrence of each [different] time is shared by the same mind (i.e., SELF)”. If *one* SELF makes the resolution, other *SELVES* make the resolution simultaneously. Thus, the entire world makes the resolution. If the resolution occurs at *one* time, it occurs at other times, too. Thus, the resolution always occurs. This co-relation of “oneness in multiplicity”/“multiplicity in oneness” forms the core of Dōgen’s philosophy.

### 4. Time Recurs

On the basis of the above understanding of Dōgen’s SELF, we can begin to comprehend the reason why he describes the nature of time using such paradoxical expressions. In the following section of “Uji”, we find that he allows two different aspects (*sou*, 相) of time, namely, coming and going (*kyorai*, 去来) and its negation. The following is the subsequent paragraph from the previous Text 2:

Text 5: しかあれども、道理この一條のみにあらず、いはゆる山をのぼり河をわたりし時にわれありき、われに時あるべし。われすでにあり、時さるべからず。時もし去来の相にあらずば、上山の時は有時の而今なり。

時もし去来の相を保任せば、われに有時の而今ある、これ有時なり。かの上山渡河の時、この玉殿朱楼の時を吞却せざらんや、吐却せざらんや。

三頭八臂はきのふの時なり、丈六八尺はけふの時なり。しかあれども、その昨今の道理、ただこれ山のなかに直入して、千峰万峰をみわたす時節なり、すぎぬるにあらず。三頭八臂もすなはちわが有時にて一経す、彼方にあるににたれども而今なり。丈六八尺も、すなはちわが有時にて一経す、彼処にあるににたれども而今なり。(SG II 49–50)

[1.] Nevertheless, the principle of time is not only this one. At the time of climbing the mountain and crossing the river, SELF has already been. Time belongs to SELF. Inasmuch as SELF has already been, time does not pass.

As time does not retain the aspect of coming and going, the time of mountain-climbing is the “immediate now of being-time” (*uji no nikon*).

[2.] If time retains the aspect of coming and going, the “immediate now of being-time” belongs to [my] SELF. This is [my] being-time.

[3.1] Does not the time of climbing the mountain or crossing the river shallow up the time of the jewel palace and vermilion tower?

[3.2] Does not that time spit out this time?

[4] The demon with three heads and eight arms is yesterday’s time. The Buddha with six-jō and eight-shaku is today’s time. Nevertheless, the principle of naming “today” and “yesterday” is used at the time when one enters directly into mountains and look at the myriad mountain summits. [Such events] do not pass away [in its ordinary sense]. [The event of] having three heads and eight arms recurs in *my* being-time (*waga uji*). Although it looks to have occurred in a remote time, it recurs at the immediate now. [The event of] being with six-jō and eight-shaku also recurs in my being-time. Although it looks to have occurred in a remote place, it recurs at the immediate now.<sup>15</sup>

Two metaphorical expressions, “swallowing up” and “spitting out”, are important here. While the former indicates time in the past being integrated with time in the present in one’s experience (i.e., oneness in multiplicity), the second indicates that time in the past is distinguished from that of the present in one’s being-time (i.e., multiplicity in oneness). While the former is described in paragraph [1], the latter is described in paragraph [2].

Paragraph [1] is summarized as follows: Unlike the commonsense view that the moment in time of crossing a river (i.e., practice’s time) differs from the time of living in palace (i.e., goal’s time), Dōgen claims that the two times are connected seamlessly because they share the same SELF. In this case, since practice’s time

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<sup>15</sup> For other translations, see Raud 2012, 162-163; Roberts 2018, 91, 96, 103; Uchiyama 2018, 191. Among previous studies, the important point of the relationship between Dōgen’s self (i.e., the selfless self) and time as the immediate now has been explained several times. Cf. Kopf 2015, 184: “In contrast to inauthentic experience of time, which Dōgen compares to the experience of an individual who “passes mountains and rivers,” authentic experience of time is characterized by an internal relationship between the (selfless) self and time and in the sense that time functions as the internal negation of self and vice versa. In short, time temporalizes itself as the internal self-negation of the self qua from the present to present.” Our analysis repeats the same point by emphasizing the two paradoxical aspects of time, namely, coming and going and neither-coming-nor-going.



does not pass away, it is called the “immediate now”, just as goal’s time is called the “immediate now”. Thus, each time of each entity of the entire world is called the “immediate now”.

In paragraph [2], on the other hand, the same situation is analyzed from a different angle. Dōgen states that the idea that time has the aspect of coming and going is also acceptable. Of course, its meaning is not same as the commonsense view of time’s passage, which was already refused in the first section. What Dōgen claims here is a different kind of “passage of time”, which should be called more correctly by the term *kyōryaku* 経歴 as we will see later. Broadly speaking, in meditation, *one* SELF (*waga uji*) reexperiences what the Buddha and ancient Zen masters experienced in the exact same way. Dōgen says elsewhere, “Qingyuan 青原 is time, Huangbo 黄檗 is time. Mazu 馬祖(江西) and Shito 石頭 are also times” (SG II: 51). Since the empirical *self* is already removed, one SELF is not restricted to a certain body and mind. It contains each different time of each different Zen master. Thus, at the “immediate now” of *my* being-time (i.e., SELF), each different time becomes manifest.

Thus, it is now clear that two paragraphs [3.1] and [3.2] metaphorically express [1] (oneness in multiplicity) and [2] (multiplicity in oneness), respectively. The image is like Indra’s net, where each jewel reflects other jewels in the net, and in its totality, every jewel reflects every other jewel. In the same manner, one being-time is reflected in all other being-times, and all other being-times penetrate into one being-time.

Moreover, paragraph [4] again explains [2]’s point. If one is not yet familiar with Zen meditation, such an unskilled practitioner might think that s/he experienced a demon’s image yesterday and experienced the Buddha’s image today; when Buddha’s image is experienced, the yesterday’s demon image has already gone. To this, Dōgen claims that yesterday’s demon is not gone; it recurs in one’s being-time. In the same manner, today’s Buddha also recurs in one’s being-time.

To understand time’s aspect of coming and going in its special sense, we need to turn to Dōgen’s technical term *kyōryaku*, which indicates a recursive time in our interpretation.<sup>16</sup> One usually considers that an event that happened at one time

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<sup>16</sup> On *kyōryaku* 経歴, there have been several translations in previous studies. For instance, Raud (2012, 164-165) proposes “shifting”; Roberts (2018, 243, n. 1) summarizes previous translations of *kyōryaku* and proposes “seriatim passage”; in Uchiyama (2018, 192f., fn. 172), a translator D. T. Wright comments: “Translators have variously translated *kyōryaku* as “flowing”, “passing”, “continuous existence”, “changing”, “moving”, and so forth. However, all of these words only articulate the seemingly moving aspect of time. This is

is now passing away and never again recurs because we believe that the subject “I” moves along an objective timeline. This is an illusion. Through Dōgen’s lens of meditation, all events recur without passing away in one direction. On the basis of the Huayan thought of the gate of ten different times,<sup>17</sup> he states that a time and another time are connected in multiple manners: from today to tomorrow, from today to yesterday, from yesterday to today, from today to today, from tomorrow to tomorrow, etc.<sup>18</sup> However, notice that such multiple connections of times do not commit the fallacy of the gap involved in time’s flying away, as pointed out in the criticism of the commonsense view of time’s passage. In the Huayan manner, times are connected in the “interpenetration” (相入), a seamless connection without any gap between two times.

With respect to this *kyōryaku*, we should not misunderstand that it denotes a successive occurrence of different times one after another. According to Dōgen, spring does not pass away winter, nor does summer pass away spring. Spring only passes away spring; that is, spring recurs without presupposing the distinction of *what passes* and *what is passed*. Dōgen states:

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why Uchiyama Rōshi uses the term *kokkoku* (刻々), or “moment-by-moment”, to express the nuance of *kyōryaku* in ordinary language”. Although those previous translations each have merit and demerit, we do not have any decisive idea for a better translation here. However, the striking aspect of *kyōryaku*, on which we would focus in our context, is its nature of “recurrence”; that is, time does not fly away, but it recurs again and again in a Zen practitioner’s pure experience. Note, however, that time’s being recursive does not imply time’s one-way recurrence; rather, it expresses that all moments in time penetrate into the religious time (i.e., *my immediate now*) in multiple ways. At any rate, for a more precise understanding of *kyōryaku*, we need to examine Dōgen’s other arguments on time, especially the notion of the “discontinuity of before and after” (*zengo saidan* 前後裁断). However, this will be a future task.

<sup>17</sup> In the theory, nine kinds of time, i.e., past in past, present in past, future in past, past in present, present in present, future in present, past in future, present in future, and future in future, are said to interpenetrate. In addition, there is also one all-inclusive time as the 10th time. The 10th time stands as the ground upon which past, present, and future times are mutually connected to each other in multiple directions. Cf. *Huayan wujiao zhang*, T. 1866 Vol. 45.506c16-22: 八者十世隔法異成門。此上諸雜義遍十世中同時別異具足顯現。以時与法不相離故。言十世者。過去未來現在三世。各有過去未來及現在。即爲九世也。然此九世迭相即入故，成一總句。總別合成十世也。此十世具足別異同時顯現成緣起故。得即入也。

<sup>18</sup> SG II: 50: 有時に経歴の功德あり。いはゆる今日より明日に経歴す，今日より昨日に経歴す，昨日より今日に経歴す。今日より今日に経歴す，明日より明日に経歴す。

Text 6: 経歴といふは、風雨の東西するがごとく学しきたるべからず。尽界は不動転なるにあらず、不進退なるにあらず、経歴なり。経歴は、たとへば春のごとし。春に許多般の様子あり、これを経歴といふ。外物なきに経歴すると参学すべし。たとへば、春の経歴はかならず春を経歴するなり。経歴は春にあらざれども、春の経歴なるがゆゑに、経歴いま春の時に成道せり。審細に参来参去すべし。経歴をいふに、境は外頭にして、能経歴の法は東にむきて百千世界をゆきすぎて、百千劫をふるとおもふは、仏道の参学、これのみを専一にせざるなり。(SG II: 53–54)

*Kyōryaku* 経歴 should not be understood like wind and rain moving from east to west. The entire world is neither changeless nor motionless. It recurs. It is like spring. That many things (e.g., birds, flowers, glasses) appear in spring is called *kyōryaku*. One should learn that it recurs without external objects (i.e., *what passes* and *what is passed*). For instance, spring's *kyōryaku* definitely means that [spring] passes away spring (i.e., spring recurs). The recursive passage itself is different from spring. However, since it is the recursive passage of spring, the recursive passage is established at the time of spring. This point should be examined in detail. Hearing the term *kyōryaku*, people think that external objects exist and *what passes* moves toward the east and passes a hundred thousand worlds and a hundred thousand *kalpas* away. It is because they have not been devoted to learning only the Buddhist path.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that something passes without *what passes* and *what is passed*. However, if we remember that Dōgen's SELF is no longer an agent and that a simple grammatical structure of S-V-O is paraphrased in many manners, we will notice that his idea of *kyōryaku* is also understood in a similar manner. For instance, when one says, "Spring comes", since neither *what passes* nor *what is passed* exists, there is only a situation that should be called *spring-ing* or something similar. Birds fly, flowers blossom, plum trees boom, etc. That the entire world is full of such spring things and events may be called *spring-ing*. Or, it can be said that everything is integrated into spring. By using the metaphor of spring's *kyōryaku*, Dōgen teaches us how to understand time's recursive passage in Zen meditation. It is wrong to consider that time's passage happens outside oneself. It is also wrong to consider that it happens inside oneself. It should be a pure experience in which the seer and

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Raud 2012, 166; Roberts 2018, 172; Uchiyama 2018, 197.

the seen (or *what passes* and *what is passed*) are interpenetrated. It might be helpful to present Toshihiko Izutsu's explanation to understand how such a religious experience beyond subject-object dichotomy works in the Zen tradition:

Zen argues as follows. One cannot *become* water because one is observing it from outside, that is to say, because the ego is, as an outsider, looking at water as an 'object'. Instead of doing so, Zen continues to argue, one must first learn to 'forget one's ego-subject' and let oneself be completely absorbed into the water. One would then be flowing *as* the flowing river. No more would there be any consciousness of the ego. Nor would there be any 'consciousness of' the water. Strictly speaking, it is not even the case that one *becomes* the water and flows on as the water. For in such a dimension there would be no ego existent to *become* anything. Simply: The water flows on. No more, no less. (Izutsu 1982, 81)

In the pure experience of looking at water, *self* as the subject or ego disappears, and only flowing water remains. In our context of being-time, it can be said that in *becoming* water, one experiences water's time. Likewise, when Dōgen states, "A pine is time, a bamboo is time" or "The ocean is time, a mountain is time", in *becoming* a pine, a bamboo, the ocean, or a mountain, one experiences a pine's time, a bamboo's time, the ocean's time, and a mountain's time. Dōgen's notions of being-time and recursive passage *kyōryaku* show us how it is possible to think of the radical transformation of time's experience.

### 5. Is It a Non-Experience View or an Error Theory?

To repeat, Dōgen denies time's flying away, which involves a distinction between what passes and what is passed. On the other hand, he endorses time's coming and going, which does not involve such a distinction. How can this line of thought be justified? Our proposal is that it is supported by the phenomenological fact that the latter is really experienced, whereas the former is not: *A fortiori*, one never experiences time flying away (from the future to the past), but one does experience (or live in) some transition that Dōgen expresses as "coming and going" (*kyorai*) or "recurrence" (*kyōryaku*). If Dōgen is a radical phenomenologist or idealist who holds both that true experience itself constitutes reality and that there is no

independent reality, he would think that time's coming and going is real, whereas time's flying away is not.

Is this a realist view of time's passage or not? If our interpretation is correct, it is clear that Dōgen holds a realist view with respect to time's coming and going. What about time's flying away? To examine the implication of his philosophy of time, let us consider this question: Does Dōgen hold a non-experience view or an error theory with respect to time's flying away? We suggest that he could go either way.<sup>20</sup>

If Dōgen holds a non-experience view, he would argue as follows: (i) Time is real only if it is experienced as it appears; (ii) Time is not experienced as flying away while it is experienced as coming and going. Therefore, time's flying away is not real, whereas time's coming and going is real. This form of a non-experience view regarding time's flying away would be a natural way of thinking that fits nicely with our interpretation of Dōgen's philosophy of time.

However, Dōgen could also be an error theorist. In this case, he would argue as follows: (i) It is *believed* that time is experienced as flying away; (ii) In reality, for the Buddhist practitioner, time is not experienced as flying away while it is experienced as coming and going. Therefore, the belief that time is experienced as flying away is false. It seems that this is also a natural way of thinking if our interpretation is correct.

It is important to note that this form of error theory is very different from usual error theories. They typically assume an independent reality and argue that it falsifies certain human beliefs: Things are not as they appear. Dōgen's error theory would lead us in the opposite direction. It says that there is no independent reality. Instead, it points to the fact that there are two layers in one's experience: pure experience and belief. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to explain what "pure experience" means, except to say that it is supposed to be achieved through

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<sup>20</sup> According to a preceding survey by Miller (2017, 772), Dōgen is regarded either as a "hard-nosed" realist who is called an A-theorist in contemporary metaphysics after McTaggart (1908) or as a "middle-way" realist who is called a B-theorist. Miller attributes the latter reading to Vorenkamp (1995) and the former to Heine (1985) and Stambaugh (1990), although she also points out Vorenkamp's hesitation in classifying Dōgen as a simple B-theorist. Miller's own diagnosis is that Dōgen is a moving-spotlight theorist who belongs to the hard-nosed category, contrary to what we have argued in the present paper. In our view, what was missing in the preceding discussion is the phenomenological tendency found in Dōgen's writings and his rejection of an independent reality. If our interpretation is correct, Dōgen is neither an A-theorist nor B-theorist; at best, such a classification is not clear in his case. Cf. also Moriyama 2019.

practice (Zen meditation). In ordinary life, one's pure experience and beliefs may affect each other, as what one perceives may affect what one believes, or vice versa. Nonetheless, the core of experience is pure experience. What Dōgen's error theory implies is that one may mistake what s/he believes for what s/he really experiences in Zen meditation.

This error theory is not a metaphysical error theory that assumes an independent reality but, so to speak, a phenomenological error theory in which pure experience plays a crucial role. Regardless of whether Dōgen actually adopts an error theory or a non-experience view, his message is now clear: The truth consists not in an independent reality but in what is really experienced. Insofar as how the world really appears to be *is* how it is, time does come and go (i.e., time recurs). However, this is not to say that time flies away. Time is not a thing that flies away according to Dōgen. This is either because such temporal passage is not truly experienced or because the belief in flying away is falsified by the pure experience of time's coming and going or recurrence.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

So far, we have seen the main argument of Dōgen's theory of time. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. Dōgen criticizes the commonsense view of time's passage because the view is based on preconceptions of time's being measurable independent of its observer and analogous to space. In particular, since the view presupposes a subject-object dichotomy, Dōgen presents an alternative, innovative view of time beyond this dichotomy.
2. To go beyond the dichotomy, Dōgen deconstructs another common view of the self and demonstrates the entire world as the unfolding of SELF. In this view, the true self, or the Buddha-nature, is manifest in each and every entity of the world, and no space remains for *self* as an independent subject.
3. From 1, it is concluded that time does not pass (T1). Dōgen explains that even though a past event contains all other events in different times, it remains as the immediate now.
4. Since each time interpenetrates, time's recursive nature (*kyōryaku*) is also admitted as an alternative conclusion (T2). Unlike our ordinary view that everything

happens only once and passes away, Dōgen's claim is based on his meditative experience, in which everything recurs and never passes away. The recurrence of religious events in one's meditative state can be best explained by *kyōryaku*, which is said to be possible only when one abandons the preconception of the subject-object dichotomy.

5. If our interpretation of Dōgen's philosophy of time is correct, he is classified as a realist with respect to "coming and going" (*kyorai*) or "recurrence" (*kyōryaku*), while he may adopt a non-experience view or an error theory with respect to time's flying away. In any case, the truth consists not in an independent reality but in what is really experienced—that is, pure experience.

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