Actualizing *Uji* Through Composition

by

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01. introduction

My two primary objects of study at Wesleyan have been music and East Asian philosophy, one because I wanted to learn how to interact in the world and be a better person and the other because it has been my longstanding passion. My study of Buddhism has impressed upon me the idea of non-duality and the fundamental unity of all things. This concept of unity inspired me to find a meeting point of my two areas of inquiry and exploration – this thesis examines the theorization of time in Zen and the actualization of that theory into musical composition.

In the course of this essay, especially the first few sections, I will examine Dogen, a prominent Soto Zen philosopher from medieval Japan, his monumental work the *Shobogenzo*, and the ideas expressed therein about time. Briefly, to Dogen, both the past and the future are created in the present in the mind as memory and as projection of memory and present experience, respectively. Dogen introduces a concept called *uji*, often translated as “Time-Being” or “Being-Time.” *Uji* is the eternal present and represents the fundamental unity of time and physical reality in Dogen’s thought. I interpret Dogen’s words to mean that reality is a constant state of change actualized in a process that humans call time, and experiencing *uji* is the enlightened experience of time, something akin to direct, unbuffered experience.

This interpretation led to the creation of a musical piece, 有時音, pronounced *ujion*. 有時 is *uji*, mentioned above, the meaning of which explored in the later sections of this essay. 音, *on*, means “sound,” and thus 有時音 means “*uji* sounds.” The progression of 有時音 mimics the linear model of time – the past, present, and future – and the break into experiencing *uji*. The score of 有時音 is not written in the
five-line staff notation familiar to those who have studied Western music, but is rather made up of three parts: Mobius strips with graphic notation called pitch parameters, circles depicting rhythms called rhythmic wheels, and written instructions. Mobius strips are two-dimensional surfaces with only one side, easily visualized as a long strip of paper with one end twisted 180 degrees and then attached to the other end. As will be discussed in more detail later, rhythmic wheels and Mobius strips were designed to remove ideas of beginning and end, relative pitch scale, rhythmic density level, and direction in which to read. When clearly writing about a pitch parameter, I sometimes refer to it simply as a parameter.

Moving on to matters of language, the reader should be familiar with several choices of words and phraseology that I employ. The words past, present, and future refer to the words as one normally conceives of them – that which has gone, that which is, and that which is to come. The words past, present, and future, when italicized, refer to the first three sections of 有時音 and stand for the past, present, and future respectively. Experience, when italicized, refers to the fourth section.

I often note when a discussion that has already passed or is yet to come is relevant to the point at hand; I refer to sections of this essay as “section xx: name,” e.g. section 01: introduction. The number preceding the section is its place within this essay.

The “bed of tonality,” sometimes referred to simply as “bed,” refers to a slowly oscillating drone present in every rendition of 有時音. It begins playing before the concert-goers arrive and ends after they have left. Its specifics are explored in detail in section 07: bed.
Each of the rhythmic wheels has spokes emanating from the center: past has seven and present has eight. These spokes represent even divisions of time. However, they are not beats because the musician determines the rate at which the spokes occur. Because of this, I refer to past and present as being not in seven- and eight-beat cycles, but rather in seven- and eight-spoke cycles.

In the interest of egalitarianism, when referring to an individual I use gender-neutral pronouns. Instead of saying “she” or “he,” I use the word “ze,” and instead of saying “his,” “her,” or “him,” I use the word “hir.”

As will be discussed in section 06: score & performance, the playing of 有時音 is not supposed to be a “performance.” It is rather the creation of a sonic area-space that hopefully will induce thoughts that help one to experience uji. In keeping with Buddhist ideas, I also hope to break the perceived duality of performer and audience member. For this reason, I feel hesitant using the word “audience” to describe those listening to the piece. Those people perceiving 有時音 who are not the musicians are referred to as attendees, in hope of recognizing a shared presence amongst those gathered together in the same sonic space.

Finally, this paper is meant for a wide audience, so please forgive me for going into too much detail about what one might assume to be common knowledge.

02: Dogen

Unlike many of the important figures in the founding of different Zen sects, including Bodhidharma, Lin-ji, and Hui-Neng, Eihei Dogen has a well-documented biography. He was born in 1200 as the son of a noble and his mistress. His father died
when he was two and his mother passed away just five years later. At the age of thirteen, Dogen went to Mt. Hiei, a mountain on the outskirts of Kyoto, to study the Tendai school of Buddhism. Scarcely a year later he began to experience his great doubt. This doubt revolved around a central tenet of Mahayana Buddhism – that all humans are, in their basic state, enlightened, and have merely forgotten their intrinsic enlightenment because of their obsession with self. Dogen wondered why, if everyone was endowed with Buddha Nature at birth, humans had to seek enlightenment. He was unable to find a satisfactory answer on Mt. Hiei and left for Kyoto proper, where he studied with a Rinzai teacher who was also unable to answer the question that burned within him.

Convinced that true Buddhism did not exist in Japan, Dogen left for China at the age of twenty-three. After several years of going from teacher to teacher, remaining unsatisfied, Dogen met Tiantong Rujing, the abbot from whom he would receive his Dharma transmission. Dogen achieved sudden enlightenment after about two years of study when he heard his teacher say the phrase “the dropping off of body and mind” during a meditation session. Soon after his enlightenment, in 1227, he returned to Japan.

He spent a few years in Kyoto at the Rinzai temple in which he had studied previously, but soon moved to the southern outskirts of Kyoto and founded his own temple, Anyo-in. Any speculation as to why he moved away from Kyoto is merely speculation: however, the Rinzai Zen sect had power in the court and they did not view his Zen as legitimate. His new sect could not gain enough political traction or followers in Kyoto, and Dogen disliked the attitudes of the Kyoto-based Zen
establishment. In 1233, he relocated again to another temple south of Kyoto, this one named Kosho-horin-ji. He lived in this temple for ten years; in this time, he began to write his masterwork, the *Shobogenzo*. Many of the most famous chapters, including *Genjo Koan*, *Uji*, and *Bussho*, were written during this time period. He moved farther into the country in 1243, passing off leadership of Kosho-horin-ji to a student, and founded another temple known as Eihei-ji or Daibutsu-ji.¹ He was the abbot at this monastery until he grew ill in 1253 and died on his way to Kyoto seeking medical attention for what is now assumed to be tuberculosis.²

The *Shobogenzo* is a mixture of sermons that Dogen delivered to the monks in the meditation hall, which were then transcribed by his student Ejo, and essays or chapters that Dogen physically wrote himself. The chapters that were written down were probably meant for more careful study than the sermons that were only heard once. Notably, both *Genjo Koan* and *Uji* were physically written; these two complex chapters each figure prominently into my reading of the nature of time as reflected in the *Shobogenzo*.

The new school of Zen that Dogen founded after returning from China is known as Soto Zen. It was not the Zen of the nobility, but was rather the Zen of the laypeople. This new school flourished in the countryside and Soto Zen is now larger than the two other schools of Zen in Japan, Rinzai and Obaku, combined. In Soto Zen, practice is no different than life for the enlightened individual. As Dogen says in the


first chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, when one has reached enlightenment, one “will be detached even from enlightenment but will practice it continually without thinking about it.” Once the idea of the self has been tossed away and one has realized one’s Buddha Nature, every moment and action should both be caused by one’s enlightenment and be a constant form of enlightenment practice.

A wonderful section in Dogen’s “Instructions for the Cook” describes how the cook in a temple should prepare the ingredients for the evening meal. Washing rice is a mindless task for many people, one in which they lose themselves to their thoughts. However, Dogen implores the reader to wash rice and prepare vegetables “with close attention, vigorous exertion, and a sincere mind [without indulging] in a single moment of carelessness or laziness [or allowing] attention to one thing to result in overlooking another.” Mindfulness of and attentiveness to the action or actions that one is performing in the present moment is a way of being that Dogen encourages. However, do not let this paint a picture of Soto Zen as monks performing any actions that they want in the moment with full attentiveness. The reality of much of Soto Zen practice is seated meditation, called *zazen*, followed by *zazen*, with some time for food and sleep.

The first two major works Dogen produced, *Fukanzazenji* and *Bendowa*, were on the importance of *zazen*, and in the *Shobogenzo* there is a chapter entitled Zazengi,

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5 “Dogen, Eihei.”
meaning “Rules of Zazen.” In this chapter, Dogen states that “the study of Zen means the practice of zazen” but that “zazen is not the means to enlightenment… zazen itself is pure, natural enlightenment.” Soto practitioners, especially those in monasteries, spend hours and hours every day simply sitting. The koan system that exists in Rinzai Zen, and for which Zen is quite famous (i.e. “what is the sound of one hand clapping?”) is not traditionally used in Soto practice. Instead of sitting and considering or not-considering a koan, Soto monks just sit.

While reading the Shobogenzo in order to understand Dogen’s conception of time I ran into several difficulties. Firstly, the Shobogenzo is written mostly in 13th century court Japanese, with certain phrases from the Buddhist canon that Dogen quotes written in Sung Chinese: some even contend that Dogen wrote in his own form of Japanese. In any case, I am not proficient enough at Japanese to read the original, and thus have had to rely upon translations for the majority of my research. However, reading several different translations has proven fruitful. Oftentimes translations of the same passage or phrase are remarkably different – for example, “Genjo Koan” is translated as “The Actualization of Enlightenment,” “The Spiritual Question as It Manifests Before Your Very Eyes,” “Manifesting Absolute Reality,” “The Issue at

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Hand,”11 and “Presence of Things as They Are.”12 In Appendix A, I include multiple translations of the same passage when the translations are different enough to change meaning significantly. The footnotes will indicate when multiple translations are included.

When reading translations, one must remember that interpretations of the Shobogenzo are intrinsically bound up with the reader. Thomas Kasulis describes the Shobogenzo as “written for us, or more precisely, for each of us, for me personally. It is a literary dokusan, the personal interview between master and disciple.”13 Each human is bound by hir context. I am not a 13th century Japanese layperson – I am a 21st century white American undergraduate. I have read scores of authors, if not more, that Dogen or any of his contemporaries could not have read. I am bringing multiple new ontological boxes and familiarity with ideas not yet introduced in Dogen’s time – how do I know “what I read in the text versus what I may have read into it?”14 If one assumes that this lens of interpretation exists, then each translator is an unreliable transmitter of Dogen’s ideas.

Kasulis goes on to say, “Dogen (through his text) and I (through my interpretation) are equally responsible for defending the content of the statements I have made. We have each contributed our half.”15 I have read many people’s interpretations of Dogen’s words, have shifted my mental creation of the world to

12 Kasulis 85.
13 Kasulis 91.
14 Kasulis 95.
15 Kasulis 96.
accommodate his views, and have probably changed his views to fit better with my own mental constructions. My statements about Dogen’s thoughts now come through many lenses whose effects cannot be undone: Dogen’s use of discursive words to communicate sometimes non-discursive ideas, the translators’ biases, my biases, and now your own. I noticed in the course of my reading that each translator seemed to stress different ideas, more heavily emphasizing themes like the subjectivity of experience with subtle choices of words. I imagine these are the themes in the text with which the translator personally resonated, themes that existed in Dogen’s thought before but which were made more prominent by the interpretation and translation of each individual.¹⁶

Moving into issues regarding ideas rather than translation, the contents of the Shobogenzo run the gamut from Zazengi to Sansuikyo, the practical to the mystical. In Zazengi, Dogen outlines very specifically the correct posture and breathing technique for zazen meditation, whereas in Sansuikyo he conjures up imagery of mountains crossing oceans and rivers. The Shobogenzo is Dogen’s masterwork about the Dharma: Dogen must have considered all the chapters of the Shobogenzo to be the Dharma, otherwise he would not have included them. That Dogen considered all of these forms of imagery to be Dharma, from the real to the fantastic, may imply a recognition on his part that “the Buddha’s truth is communicated at times discursively in ordinary words that can be rationally understood and at other times esoterically in ‘intimate words’ that must be grasped immediately without discursive thinking... both

¹⁶ See the passage from “Uji” in Appendix A beginning with the phrase, “The world of life and death...”
[ways] are equally legitimate.”\(^{17}\) It is difficult to know what is metaphor, what is truth meant to be understood non-discursively, and what is actually meant literally.

While reading the *Shobogenzo*, one also runs into issues of logical consistency.\(^{18}\) Intellectually, a book that seems to be a philosophical guide to life that contains inconsistencies and contradictions within paragraphs may seem unacceptable. However, Dogen may have done this deliberately. Gudo Nishijima contends that these contradictions were Dogen’s manifestation of the Zen idea that enlightenment must be understood viscerally and holistically as opposed to intellectually. With them, he “was pointing to an area which was outside the area of intellectual debate; he was pointing to existence outside the rational and intellectual area.”\(^{19}\) Humans make neat mental boxes for the phenomena surrounding us, and when those boxes are challenged or broken – tigers playing with orangutans,\(^{20}\) Dogen using discursive words to evoke non-discursive ideas, my discussing Dogen’s firm biography while simultaneously dismissing an objective past – one is inclined to see inconsistency or apparent contradiction. However, it is the mind that forges the ideas of inconsistency and contradiction; reality simply exists, replete with its own “inconsistencies.” Living deeply in one’s own experience allows one to accept what one might otherwise label as contradiction because it is simply what is.

\(^{17}\) Kasulis 88.


\(^{19}\) Nishijima 5.

Finally, Dogen’s thought on any given subject is often not as deliberatore logic-motivated or as fleshed-out as the thoughts of European philosophers on the same subject. This probably has to do with the context in which he was writing: Dogen was not trying to create a “fully developed Western theory on freedom vs. determinism” but was rather “thinking through the questions of his own society and his own personal context” and sharing his thoughts with monks and the occasional layperson.\footnote{Kasulis 87.} Again, Nishijima contends that these brushstrokes of thought are Dogen’s deep understanding of Dharma, because instead of “trying to construct a self-contained intellectual theory… he is trying to use all the tools of philosophy and logic to point to something else; something beyond them all.”\footnote{Nishijima 6.} In any case, this lack of direct reasoning laid out as a logical progression challenged my ability to draw meaning from Dogen’s words. However, despite these difficulties, I have drawn some pertinent strains of thought about time from the \textit{Shobogenzo}: these are explored in the next section.

\textbf{03: Shobogenzo}

Dogen believes in a concept called \textit{uji}, a Japanese word that I have seen translated as “time-being,”\footnote{Konrad Ryushin Marchaj, telephone interview, 07 Nov. 2013 - this might be the most common translation. This interview is transcribed as Appendix B; further footnotes will read “Marchaj xx,” where xx is the number of the page in this thesis where the quote or idea can be found, in this case Marchaj 159. Marchaj is introduced more fully in section 04: \textit{uji}.} “being-time,”\footnote{Dogen, \textit{“Uji – Being-time,”} trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 68.} “[f]or the time being,”\footnote{Marchaj 159.} and “Just for
the Time Being, Just for a While, For the Whole of Time is the Whole of Existence.”26 All of these seem to be accurate translations of different meanings of the term, although none of them imply the nuance of the term to a native English speaker unfamiliar with Dogen’s work. Let us take a moment to analyze the Japanese characters themselves. The word *uji* is written 有時. The character 有, in its more common use, means “to have,” “to own,” or “to possess.” However, it seems that its meaning in the word *uji* is based in its other definition, which is “to exist” or “to be,” although Dogen may also have chosen that character in part because of its first meaning – people “have” only their experience in the present moment. The second character in 有時 means time, or when preceded by a number it means hours. Although for centuries the phrase 有る時 or 有時, when read as *aru toki* in Japanese and *you-shih* in Chinese, has meant something akin to the English phrases “for the time being,” “now and then,” and “at some time,”27 the word 有時 in Dogen’s writing works as a physical representation of the fundamental unity of existence and time.

One of Dogen’s most dominant strains of thought in the *Shobogenzo* in relation to time is its inseparability from physical reality. Dogen believes that most people perceive time as a fourth-dimensional tube that physical reality moves through – this conception can easily lead to the conception of time as a series of moments stacked

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atop one another, leading to popular notions of time travel if only one could figure out how to navigate the aforementioned tube. It may also lead to the idea that the future is static and unchangeable. However, in keeping with the underlying Buddhist truth of non-duality, Dogen believes that “one blade of grass, every single object, each living thing is inseparable from time. Time includes every being and all worlds.”

Physical reality and time are not separate things that act upon each other. Physical reality does not flow through time, and time does not wash through physical reality; the latter could imply, for example, that time came from somewhere and is going somewhere else with physical reality as a stopping point. In actuality, physical reality cannot exist without time and time cannot exist without physical reality to actualize itself upon. The two are not two at all. Rather, “time in its totality is what existence is, and… existence in all its occurrences is what time is.”

The scope of time defines the limits of what humans believe existence was, is, and will be; physical movements, manifestations, and changes are the only markers of the “passage” of time. It is more accurate to conceive of them together as the way in which reality creates itself. All instants are tied to place and all physical objects are the objects perceived only for a moment before they change to become another state. All instances, no matter how wildly different they may seem on the surface, exist because of the symbiotic nature of time and physical reality and are thus a part of uji.

In the first passage of the chapter “Uji,” Dogen tries to illustrate this by presenting the reader with images seemingly opposed to each other – standing atop the highest

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28 Dogen, “Uji – Being-time,” trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 69. There is an additional translation of this passage in Appendix A.

29 Dogen, “On ‘Just for the Time Being, Just for a While, For the Whole of Time is the Whole of Existence’ (Uji),” trans. Nearman, 109. For an additional translation, see Appendix A.
peak and lying on the bottom of the deepest ocean, a Buddha and a demon, the earth and heaven – and calling them all uji. \(^{30}\) Despite their difference in location, appearance, and demeanor, Dogen implies, all the aforementioned physical objects are manifestations of uji simply because they exist.

Implicit in this conception of time is the idea that time is better perceived through uji than through the ideas of past, present, and future. Rein Raud agrees, saying “the ‘immediate now’… has a higher ontological status” for Dogen than the differentiated, object-through-time view of the world. \(^{31}\) The non-differentiating mind and non-duality are essential features of Dogen’s thought and Buddhist thought in general, and experiencing uji comes after one has deconstructed both the ideas of past, present, and future, and the distinction between reality and time. From the way that Dogen speaks of uji throughout the Shobogenzo, I gather that experiencing uji is absolute presence in one’s own experience, the continuous enlightenment practice that was mentioned in section 02: Dogen.

It is hard to conceptualize a unity of matter and time. Ontological and linguistic lines, by which one mentally processes the world, often draw distinctions between physical reality and time. Consider the phrases and ideas “the first three dimensions” and “the fourth dimension,” respectively. I find that it is easier to imagine this unity without words such as “flow,” “through” (e.g. “movement through time”) and “passage,” which generally imply motion of time through reality or reality through time, and thus a duality of the two. Rather, I now conceive of uji as referring to reality

\(^{30}\) For multiple translations of this passage (and thus multiple translations of uji), see Appendix A.

as the eternal present, a single perpetual change state bound by the laws of causality and actualized in a process that humans call time.

I use the phrase “change state” to mean a constant, continuous state of change. The piece of reality I am currently sitting on is not a couch. It is a manifestation of the continuous change state around me that I currently perceive as a couch. It is changing in this moment – not a lot, not enough for me to notice easily, but the electrons are moving and the seams are fraying and the whole thing is shifting just a little bit. In the same way, everything else is changing constantly.

The idea of reality as continuous change state dovetails nicely with the fundamental Buddhist belief that all things are impermanent. In fact, I see the two phrases as different verbalizations of the same idea. If reality is fundamentally change then all things must change, and so all things are impermanent. Conversely, due to impermanence, there is nothing that is continuous though time and so all things are change.

Dogen believes that the previous states of this eternal present are gone and inaccessible, saying that “[b]ecause continual, continuous flow is a function of time, past and present times do not pile atop each other nor do they form an accumulative line.”

Prior states do not exist elsewhen, although they did once exist. He uses firewood or kindling as an example of this phenomenon in “Genjo Koan,” saying “when firewood is persisting in the physical state of being firewood, there will be a before and there will be an after. Although there is a before and an after, there is a

32 Dogen, “On ‘Just for the Time Being, Just for a While, For the Whole of Time is the Whole of Existence’ (Uji),” trans. Nearman, 112.

33 A phrase I use to mean something akin to elsewhere, but in relationship to time and not space.
‘now’ which is cut off from ‘before’ and ‘after’.”\textsuperscript{34} This passage, as with much of “\textit{Genjo Koan},” is hard to translate: another reading is “firewood abides in its own state as firewood, and has [its own] prior and subsequent. Although it has [its own] prior and subsequent, it is cut off from prior and subsequent.”\textsuperscript{35} The key difference between these two translations is whether or not the firewood has its own prior and subsequent or \textit{reality as a whole} has a prior and a subsequent. In any case, Dogen believes that the “now” – the eternal present – is cut off from the past and the future. Chains of causality created the current manifestation of the present and will continue to change physical reality. One can construct hir ontology to call some perceived object firewood and then base hir future emotional state on whether or not that ontology continues to be true (e.g. whether or not it remains firewood), or one can experience the firewood as it exists in the moment. It is constantly changing, shifting between instants from one beautiful state to another entirely different, equally beautiful state all extant in the now.

Recognizing that reality is in its most fundamental form a change state is a key ontological shift necessary for understanding \textit{uji}. The fact that reality is changing enables humans to create the concept of time: the reality of what was exists in one’s mind as memories, so one might decide that it must exist elsewhere in the continuum of time. As mentioned previously, Dogen does not believe that moments stack on top of moments to create a time continuum. In the now, the past does not exist and neither


\textsuperscript{35} Dogen, “\textit{Genjo Koan}: Manifesting Absolute Reality,” trans. Cook, 67.
does the future. There is only an eternal present, the state of reality that currently exists.

As previously mentioned, this state is a change state governed by laws of causality. Broadly, if one imagines reality’s changing as a windmill turning, causality is the wind that makes the blades move. Dogen uses the metaphor of a human body, which he says, “clarifies the relationship of existence and time [because] the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow which make up our body and mind are related with and emerge through time and causality.”

A human’s body changes and so humans say that time has passed. In this way, Dogen sees time as the process by which physical reality’s change is played out, change governed by causality. Similarly, he says, “spring… is the actualization of the wind and sunshine of spring,” which I take to mean that when spring arrives, the flowers are not blooming and the bees are not buzzing because the universe has decided that it is spring – humans call it spring because the flowers bloom and the bees come out. The Earth changes its position in its orbit around the sun because it has velocity. The sun keeps creating light and heat and the atmosphere refracts it. Flowers open or grow because of the extra light and heat, and pheromones stir within animals and cause them to wake up or seek food. All of these things are part of a larger transition state – the eternal present – that operates via the laws of causality, playing out the natural consequences of its previous state.

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36 Dogen, “Kaiinzammai – Sagara mudra samadhi,” trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 42. This may also be a reference to Bodhidharma’s four disciples, who received his skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, respectively (Kasu 92).

37 Dogen, “Uji – Being-time,” trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 70. For an additional translation, see Appendix A.
Thus, even though Dogen believed in the eternal present and did not believe in the existence of the past and the future in the now, he also believed that the past was felt in today’s experience by way of chains of causality. In the chapter “Uji,” he discusses a man crossing a river and climbing a mountain to get to a palace (perhaps making an oblique reference to following the Buddhist path), and eventually says that “[c]rossing the river, climbing the mountain, living in the palace exist together, interrelated, in being-time [uji]… Yesterday’s time is experienced in our present existence. It appears to be passing but the past is always contained in the present.”

The past is contained in the present for two reasons. First, although extant exclusively in the present, humans carry memories, subjective interpretations of past experiences. These exist in the present because the mind that creates them only exists in the present. One may think of recalling memories as looking behind oneself on the road of time but in reality the only way one can consider the past is by bringing it to the present. Second, the chains of causality that create one’s present experience both acted through and were influenced by the events of the past. If one broke one’s foot yesterday and woke up today to find the foot still sore, one would not be surprised, and if it was snowing while one went to sleep one might even expect to wake up to a winter wonderland outside the next morning. Today’s state would not be the same state as yesterday’s – the pain in the foot would hopefully be diminished, the snow would probably be slightly melted or trod upon or frozen over – but it would be similar to and influenced by the events of the past.

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Dogen certainly believes in causality. But what sort of causality does he believe in? Is it the sort of causality that causes someone who defames the Buddha to fall into the Buddhist hell for thousands of kalpas? Or is it the type of causality that causes the ground to become wet when one knocks over a glass of water? In other words, does Dogen believe in specific Indian Buddhist ideas about karmic retribution and reincarnation or does he believe in something more akin to the laws of natural consequences?

The Shobogenzo certainly has several chapters and passages that suggest Dogen shared classic Buddhist beliefs about karma and reincarnation. The principle of causality, he says, is “straightforward: those who do wrong fall into hell; those who do good attain enlightenment.” He opens a chapter entitled “Deep Belief in Causality” with a famous koan about a temple headmaster reborn as a fox five hundred times because he denied that enlightened people were subject to causality. The fox is only released from his cycle of rebirths when a monk tells him that enlightened people, just like everyone else, are indeed subject to causality. To start a chapter about causality with this story implies that Dogen is affirming both the idea of rebirth and the idea that one’s actions in one life affect one’s birth in the successive ones, that one’s karma carries over from life to life.

The karmic consequences of one’s actions through successive rebirths is explored more fully in the chapter “Karmic Retribution in the Three Periods of Time,” in

39 In the Classical Indian cosmological system, one kalpa is 1000 mahayugas, and one mahayuga is 4,320,000 years. Thus, one kalpa is over 4 billion years.


which Dogen rather explicitly explores three ways in which the karmic fruits of one’s actions in this life can be manifested: “(1) in one’s present life, (2) in one’s next life, and (3) after two successive lives.”42 The examples he gives are quite fantastic: for the example of the present life, he relates the story of a man saved by a bear in a forest. When the man goes to leave, the bear tells him not to give his location to any hunters, but greed convinces the man to tell some hunters where to find the bear. Upon the bear’s death, the man’s arms physically fall off simply due to his negative karma. The man created this negative karma by betraying the bear’s trust, and “[w]hen the karma of our actions matures no one can avoid the results… all our actions will finally be met with just retribution.”43 This chapter in particular paints a picture of Dogen’s thinking as completely in line with classic Buddhist beliefs about karma and rebirth within the wheel of samsara, a belief that could imply linearity in time and the existence of both the past and the future.44

However, some other parts of his writings and lectures suggest to me that he was toeing the line, minimizing the influence of some of his other views in “Deep Belief in Causality” and especially “Karmic Retribution in the Three Periods of Time” in order to help prove that the sect he had just founded was indeed legitimate Buddhism. This strain of thought can be seen in the passage in “Genjo Koan” about the firewood discussed earlier. The passage goes on to say that after it has become ash, firewood


44 The wheel of samsara is a visualization of the cyclic nature of birth, life, death, and rebirth in many Indian religions. It will be discussed in more detail in relationship to this project in section 06: score & performance.
does not attain the state of firewood again, and, similarly, after becoming dead, a human will not again attain the state of life. Does this mean that Dogen does not believe in zombified corpses inhabited by their original personalities? Or does it mean he believes, in direct contradiction to the theory of reincarnation, that once a being dies, it really dies and is never reborn again? Francis Cook argues for the latter, saying Dogen sees reality as “a series of states that follow one after another, each state enjoying a brief career as what it is (abiding in its own dharma state), ceasing to be, and then being followed by a successor with the same career, and so on. Thus, nothing about a dharma state ever changes. While it is, it is, and when it ceases, it is replaced by another.” Prior and subsequent are not manifestations or versions of the same thing. Each is entirely new. Thus, reincarnation could not occur because there is no self that remains the same in life and death and then in life again. One is not even the same person one was five minutes ago: how could the “same” consciousness be reincarnated when there is no underlying continuity to it?

Another possible reason for their inclusion in the Shobogenzo is that Dogen may use the ideas of karma and rebirth as a cosmological rationalization for bad fortune befalling good people, to prevent followers of his school of Zen from escaping to something more akin to nihilism when confronted by this phenomenon. In “Karmic Retribution in the Three Periods of Time,” he writes that, when confronted with undeserved or unwarranted suffering, people begin to “doubt the existence of

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45 See Appendix A for multiple translations of this passage.

causality and fail to see its relation to happiness and sorrow.”

People might not ascribe to the principle of causality if they consistently see others do bad actions and receive good results, or live good lives only to be struck by bad fortune. In addition, the spiritual stick of eons of torment (to go with the carrot of enlightenment) is a preventative measure to stop wicked people from committing evil acts for fear of long-term future reprisal.

Returning to the story of the fox at the beginning of “Deep Belief in Causality,” Dogen seems to be using this parable to emphasize that all things are subject to causality, not that all things are subject to laws of reincarnation. Indeed, later in the same chapter, he says that “[r]ecalling your past lives, whether it be one-thousand or ten-thousand, has no relation to Buddhism.” All sects of Buddhism in the 13th century still officially believed in reincarnation, and Dogen may also have believed in some form of reincarnation, although it does not seem to be the reincarnation expounded by early Indian Buddhist thinkers.

In a broader sense, his thinking about reincarnation is reminiscent of a famous Buddhist parable about a man shot by an arrow and dying. Another man comes and offers to take out the arrow, but the dying man asks him about the length of the arrow and the number of feathers it has and the type of metal in the head instead of letting him operate. This parable is often taken to mean that one should ask relevant questions during the quite limited time that one is human and able to follow the Buddhist path, instead of asking questions like, “When and how did the karmic

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streams that make us up come into being?” or, in this case, “What were my past lives and how did I end up in this one?” Whether or not you were a demon or a deva in a past life does not matter today. In Dogen’s mind, all that matters is working in this life to find one’s Buddha Nature and free oneself from the karmic entanglements of the past.

Dogen’s thoughts on karma and reincarnation, which bear on his ideas about time, are cloudy at best, but this may be because their answers are distracting from what Dogen considers to be important. He believes firmly in causality – certainly in natural consequences, and maybe in far-reaching karmic consequences as well. He also believes that full acceptance of causality leads to enlightenment or simply is enlightenment, saying that those people “with confidence in the law of causality realize no man to be beyond its effect; consequently they gain relief from all present suffering.”

Another extremely important strain of thought in the Shobogenzo is that our universe is created exclusively through the mind. I use the phrase “our universe” and not “the universe” quite deliberately to imply perceptual lens and not radical solipsism. I do not believe Dogen was a solipsist, but I do believe that he saw each human’s perceptual lens as strong enough that ze could not accurately perceive every nuance of the world around hir. Dogen makes several statements throughout the Shobogenzo that spell this out in no uncertain terms. In a chapter entitled “The Three Worlds Are Only Mind,” Dogen says quite simply that “[t]he reality of all forms is

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49 Devas are heavenly beings in the Buddhist cosmology.
mind,” and in the chapter “Jippo” he contends that “[o]ur pure mind contains and illuminates [jippo],” a phrase which is translated by Nishiyama and Stevens throughout the chapter as “the ten quarters of the world” or “the entire universe.” To Dogen, everything is mind and mind is everything.

In what way is a world that one may perceive as outside of oneself created in the mind? Humans necessarily perceive and process all sensory input through the lens of the five sense organs and the mind, which causes the entirety of human experience to be created in the mind – these lenses are explored more fully in section 11: present and Appendix D. The summation of one’s experience is one’s universe because it is all that one knows. Dogen makes this point in “Uji,” saying, “[t]he world of life and death and everything in between them is being-time; it continually exists, actualizing itself in your present experience. Everything exists in the present within yourself.”

The key here is that all objects exist as an actualization within present experience. There is no reality for any human besides hir personal experience, and so objects are real to one only when they somehow trigger a sensory or mental response: that is, when one can hear or see them or when there is room for them within one’s ontological structures. An individual’s version of events is real to hir even though it may not be “objectively” accurate or similar to another person’s mental image of the


53 Dogen, “Uji – Being-time,” trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 70. For an additional translation, see Appendix A. In this passage in particular, one author seems to be stressing the subjectivity of perception.
same event – although, due to our lenses, no one would be able to provide the “objective” standpoint in the first place!

To Dogen, humans exist as a part of the world of physical phenomena, a world that is real and not created in the mind. With the mind, which stems from the self, each individual creates a lens that necessarily colors hir perception. The world around hir does not exist in hir head: ze exists in hir head, and the world and memories ze creates in hir head, reality filtered through the lens of physical and mental perception, are real to hir. In “The Three Worlds Are Only Mind,” Dogen addresses those thinkers who believe the physical world we perceive is created by the mind, saying:

“The Great Teacher Shakyamuni said, ‘The three worlds are only mind; outside the mind, nothing exists… Yet we should not say that the three worlds are ‘mind’ since the three worlds clearly show themselves in all three directions, yet remain three worlds’… We may mistakenly believe that the three worlds do not exist; nevertheless, we cannot separate ourselves from them. Inside, outside, center, beginning, middle, and end are all three worlds.”

In other words, the world around one exists, one is a part of it as opposed to separate and living within it, and all ways in which one divides the world are arbitrary divisions of a grander whole. One creates the distinctions of the three worlds, turning one into three, with the mind. Past, present, and future could be three worlds by his definition because they are another way to divide the world of physical phenomena.

Despite the inherent subjectivity in human perception and the idea that reality is a change state, Dogen maintains that there are a few constants that exist without regard

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to time, including the Buddha Nature, the Buddha Dharma, the yokes of illusion, and the process of enlightenment. These constants are not physical phenomena: they are more like inherent truths of the universe. Their presence provides a thread of unity and consistency through the constantly shifting world of physical phenomena. The Buddha Dharma is a phrase that means the Buddhist teachings, generally the teachings of Shakyamuni, with an implication of the inherent truth of the Buddhist path. Dogen calls it an “eternal, perfect law,” a law that will hold true without regard to the specific state in which physical reality currently exists.

The Buddha Nature is a concept introduced in the Mahayana strain of Buddhism – in fact, it is one of the main differences and points of contention between Theravada and Mayahana, especially East Asian Mahayana, Buddhism. To Mayahana Buddhists, all humans are innately enlightened but have forgotten their enlightenment, obscuring it with false notions of self and desire. In this view, attaining enlightenment is not finding something new: it is remembering or recovering something one had lost. Zen Buddhism is a Mahayana sect, and after realizing his own Buddha Nature in China, Dogen began to believe in the constancy of the Buddha Nature resting within each human. This idea is reflected in a passage in the chapter “Uji”, in which he says, “Every living being is rooted in pure, original Being... Most people think time is passing and do not realize that there is an aspect that is not passing.” Finding this original, enlightened being within us is not shocking when it occurs. Rather, it seems

56 I use the phrase “East Asia” to mean China, Japan, and Korea.
to be quite comforting, for “when Buddhas and Patriarchs are enlightened they are simply returning to their original home: [the original Buddha Nature].”

The final constants that Dogen elucidates in the *Shobogenzo* are the ways in which humans can perceive reality: as form or as emptiness, through the lens of illusion or enlightenment, respectively. He states this quite explicitly in “Daigo,” saying, “Great Enlightenment is without beginning or end, and so is illusion.” He discusses this in more depth in a chapter entitled Kuge, which Nishiyama and Stevens translate as “The Flower of Emptiness.” The entire chapter is an extended metaphor in which “[t]he ‘flower’ [kuge] is the manifold forms of existence while emptiness is the essence pervading each form.” All physical objects have ever-shifting form and their only constant is change, impermanence, the inherent emptiness of all things and concepts. A flower does not remain eternally a flower because a flower will decay. A human does not remain eternally a human because a human will die. A rock does not remain eternally a rock because a rock will turn into sand. Choosing to view these objects as permanent is to see reality through the goggles of illusion. One can view reality in this way without regard to its current state; thus, the lens of illusion exists without regard to time. As Dogen says, “[the lens of illusion and kuge can be seen as ‘functions of reality’ or ‘absolute conditions’ that] are not concerned with past, present, and future or with beginning, middle, or end. They are independent of generation and destruction.”


Enlightenment is the process of freeing oneself from the yokes of illusion and seeing physical objects as the emptiness that they truly are. If one can see via the lens of illusion without regard to time, then one can have a satori experience at any time to lift the veil and allow one to view reality through the lens of enlightenment.62 There is not much duality in Buddhist thought, but illusion and enlightenment are quite opposed: one can either view reality through the lens of enlightenment (in fact, this may not be a “lens” at all) or one cannot, in which case one must be perceiving through the lens of illusion.63 They are the only two ways in which one can perceive reality, and reality can be viewed through either lens without regard to the specifics of its current manifestation. Thus, the two lenses exist without regard to time.

The perceptual shift that occurs after satori is another part of the Shobogenzo that factors into 有時音, even though it does not seem directly related to time, change, or causality. Enlightenment in Zen is sudden and overwhelming: after trying to grasp at the mystery for months or more likely years, all of a sudden something clicks and one understands. This moment of understanding is called satori and is often influenced by some external circumstance: the words of a teacher, the cry of a crow. I have never experienced satori, but the writings of several major Zen practitioners indicate that a hard worldview shift occurs at the moment of enlightenment.64

62 Satori is a Japanese word used almost exclusively by Zen Buddhists to describe the moment of enlightenment.

63 A way I have heard to bring non-duality to this seeming dualism is to say that the enlightened person remembers what it is like to see through the lens of illusion. Thus, he is really always seeing through both, one because he cannot unsee enlightenment, and the other to have empathy with all living beings yet to unshackle themselves.

64 For a memory of mine that I think is my closest experience to satori, see section 08: past.
This new worldview is nearly incomprehensible to the unenlightened person, is often said to be indescribable with words and only knowable through experience, and is perhaps why it is sometimes hard to read Dogen “discursively in ordinary words that can be rationally understood.”\textsuperscript{65} This non-discursive writing is perhaps best expressed in “Sansuikyo – The Mountain and Water Sutras,” in which Dogen says, “We should know that the east mountains walking across the water is the bones and marrow of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. All types of water are actualized at the foot of the east mountain. Therefore, all the mountains go beyond the clouds and walk over heaven. The peak of the water is various mountains.”\textsuperscript{66} The chapter may use mountains and water as an extended metaphor, although Dogen never explicitly states what they represent. When reading “Sansuikyo” as a direct metaphor, I take the mountains to mean the large undertaking of committing to Buddhist practice and the water to mean the great ocean of enlightenment, although both could also signify things that are part of the natural world and appear to be unchanging through time. With such a view, it is possible to draw discursive meaning from a style of writing that sometimes borders on mysticism, although it is still hard to make sense of passages like, “Not only is there water in the world. There is a world of water with a world in it. This is not just true for water, but for all material things – there are animate worlds in clouds, wind, fire, earth, Dharma worlds, one blade of grass, and a staff.”\textsuperscript{67} Passages like this suggest to me that Dogen was indeed trying to

\textsuperscript{65} Kasulis 88.
communicate non-discursive ideas through the vehicle of discursive language, and that surface-level meaning may have become obscured in favor of creating meaning by osmosis and not intellectualism.

In 有時音, I try to represent this worldview shift in the hard transition to *experience* with the use of unpulsed musical space and a more intimate experience of music for the attendees. I will describe the methods used to achieve this shift in much more detail in sections 06: *score & performance* and 17: *experience*.

Another aspect of the *Shobogenzo* seemingly unrelated to time that factors into 有時音 is that the enlightened person acts spontaneously in the moment without preconception of how to act. Dogen says, “Great Enlightenment is the daily activity of the Buddhas and Patriarchs but they never think about it.”68 For the enlightened person, every action in their day-to-day life is enlightenment practice. This right action seems to be a mixture of actions that promote the Dharma, compassionate and selfless actions that help others, and actions that express personal flair and identity, although the seemingly random Zen actions like slapping the ground, slapping each other, and making noises like an animal are more typical of Rinzai than Soto. The enlightened person does not put a mental buffer between sensory stimulus and responsive action by considering how to act in the present moment. Instead, ze simply acts. The lack of mental buffer is a result of the “dropping off of mind and body” that Dogen considers key to enlightenment. As he says, a person following the Buddhist path should “[n]ever try to become a Buddha.”69 If one is seeking enlightenment, one

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should not be seeking at all, for seeking is a form of desire and desire is one of the indicators of unenlightened life. One has to be acting spontaneously as oneself in the moment for one’s action to be enlightenment practice. Trying to follow established models of what a Buddha should be and how a Buddha should act necessarily makes you not yourself, which is unenlightened.

In summation, Dogen believes that time and physical existence are fundamentally intertwined in a concept called *uji*, meaning “being-time” or “existence-time.” Rather than snaking through time and leaving the past behind, reality exists as the eternal present. Reality, in its most fundamental form, is a change state: this change state is actualized via laws of causality in a process that humans call time. Denial of the current existence of the past is not a denial of the fact that the past once existed. Instead, Dogen believes strongly that the past must have existed because the chains of causality that are currently actualizing themselves to create the present must have been started at some point in what humans call the past. Although his thoughts on karmic retribution and reincarnation specifically are murky, he certainly believes that causality is the reason that reality changes and that time is the name for the process in which it creates itself. This is *uji*: time creating reality, which in turn creates time in a non-dualistic relationship.

He also believes that each human creates his or her personal universe by and in his or her mind with personal experience filtered through sensory processes, ontologies, and prejudices. These personal experiences can range from the visceral, like learning to wear a scarf during the winter while walking down the street with ice-cold wind whipping one’s neck, to the more mental, like reading a book to learn about an
author’s conception of what life was like for Jews in 14th-century England. This mental universe is quite malleable – one constantly changes one’s opinions and mental conceptions based on new sensory input as with the examples above.

The past and the future do not exist in the eternal present. Rather, humans create them in the mind as memory and projection of memory, respectively. The past did exist but no one observed all aspects of it correctly, and thus no one can comment with authority on its nature. People can only provide filtered interpretations. The future has never existed and thus all ideas of the future are simply that: ideas.

Dogen believes that there are several concepts that remain true without regard to reality’s current state, including the Buddha Nature, the Buddha Dharma, the chains of illusion, and the process of enlightenment. These can be considered constant through time, and are often associated with the Buddhist path. With this assertion of constancy in a reality made of change, Dogen reinforces the idea that Buddhism is the path to follow for greater meaning in this life.

Finally, the ideas of a hard worldview shift at the moment of enlightenment and spontaneous personal choice in all moments as enlightenment practice, although seemingly unrelated to time, both factor into the creation of 有時音 and so should be mentioned as well.

04: uji

I am certainly not the first person to interpret Dogen’s words as referring to time as inseparable from existence, manifested in the form of an eternal present. Reiho Masunaga, a Dogen translator and scholar, believes that for Dogen, “[t]ime
does not have a separate substance [from physical reality]: it is established by existence,” and goes on to say that “no matter how long time continues, there is only the moment.” Ronald Purser agrees, saying, “For Dogen, time is always related to existence and the present moment is the only time.” Every moment is the present, a particular state in the being-time process of the universe.

The scholarly argument against this notion is sparse. Rein Raud contends that his rereading of Dogen’s theory of time is different than the standard approach, saying that he provides a translation of uji that stresses the moment as a grand concept as opposed to a point in the duration of time. This idea is differentiated from others in that its “‘moment,’ although without dimensions, is not something atomistic or infinitesimally small [as the analogy of a point on a line might imply]… after all, something small also has dimensions, a length of zero units; the “moment” as understood here does not have dimensions at all and is thus simultaneously unmeasurably brief and everlasting, always present.” Despite the article’s claim to be rereading Dogen’s theory of time, I do not see this as a view that opposes my conception of Dogen’s idea of time, the eternal present.

I am also not the first to point out that an eternal present does not deny causality, nor the previous existence of the past or soon to be existence of the future. As mentioned in section 03: Shobogenzo, Dogen believes firmly in the laws of


72 Raud 159.
causality as the governing laws of the universe. Living in the eternal present does not mean “one should forgo all plans or thoughts about the future.”73 In fact, quite the opposite is true. In the chapter “Zuimonki” of the Shobogenzo, Dogen says that “[b]ecause tomorrow is unfixed and difficult to know, you must think of following the Buddhist way while you live today.”74 The acknowledgement of causality means that there was a past and there will be a future.

Or, more accurately stated, there was a present in what we call the past, and there will be a present in what we call the future. However, the past and the future do not exist in the now except in the form of thought. In a phone interview, Konrad Ryushin Marchaj, the current abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mount Tremper, New York, agreed with this denial of the presence of the past and future, saying, “in terms of not a philosophical approach, but an observational approach, a phenomenological approach, I only always have the present moment, and the picture of the past or the future is only accessible to me through thought, through a memory or through an anticipation.”75 Each human creates his own version of the past and vision of the future based on his sensory experiences and extrapolations of these experiences. These range from the incredibly visceral, like the taste of grandma’s cookies or the smell of a rose, to the more intellectual, like reading a history textbook or hearing that a political leader has been assassinated. In this way, each individual lives in a universe created by and in his mind. Marchaj stressed this inherent subjectivity heavily during our conversation, saying, “outside of mind, we can’t speak

73 Purser 5.
75 Marchaj 151.
of reality because that reality is not observable, not accessible to us, and within our minds, that reality is purely subjective.”

Due to inherent subjectivity of perception, each human’s creation of both the past and future within hir mind in the form of memory and projection, respectively, must be purely subjective. Thus, as a human collective, we cannot ever know the “truth” of the past as there is no way of determining whose memory is more correct. At both a societal and personal level, humans “assume that the past happened, but it’s passed – it’s gone – so there is no way to concretely verify that it happened.”

It is no surprise that Dogen considers the past to be inaccessible now, except in the form of memory – one of the fundamental truths of Buddhism is the impermanence of all things. Nothing is stable in this universe. All things are constantly changing. As discussed in section 03: Shobogenzo, this can be interpreted to mean that reality is, in its most basic form, a change state. Purser agrees with this fundamentality of change, saying, “Change is inherent in the nature of reality. Stasis and permanence are illusory, relative notions.”

Physical reality exists and influences itself via causality in a process known as time, a great interrelated mess of matter and energy in a constantly shifting state. Marchaj elaborated on this idea at two points during our conversation, saying, “It is purely relatedness that I’m looking at, and that relatedness is continuous… it’s not a relatedness between things because that

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76 Marchaj 152.


78 Purser 4.
postulates [their existence]. No, the only thing is change. The only thing is utter and complete impermanence and ever-evolving conditions and relatedness.”

The process by which this change state actualizes itself is what many people call time. As mentioned in a previous example, humans say that it is spring because the world comes back to life – the world does not come back to life because humans say it is spring. This linear model of time, the model made of successive days, months, and years that Purser calls ordinary time, is a construct of the human mind. It is based in regular changes in the state of the physical world brought about by the laws of causality, including most notably the rotation of the Earth on its axis and its orbit around the sun. Time doesn’t cause things to happen – humans say time has gone by because the world around us is different. Abbot Zoketsu Norman Fischer puts this well when he says, “A picture of you twenty years ago is different from a picture of you today, so we conclude time has passed.”

Purser’s ordinary time, a way of viewing time “characterized by a past-present-future nexus,” can be contrasted with Masunaga’s “specific time.” In Masunaga’s interpretation, “[t]he word Uji [sic] refers to a specific time taken from infinite continuity. It points to the existence of a discontinuous time expressed as ‘this time’ and ‘that time.’” Specific time is a certain time-space, a moment in a place – snow on your tongue underneath a streetlight in New York, pulling fresh cookies out

79 Marchaj 155, 157 – 158.
80 Fischer.
81 Purser 3.
82 Masunaga, “The Standpoint of Dogen…”
of the oven, coming into the world, having a child, or, in Dogen’s words, standing at the top of a mountain or diving to the bottom of the ocean.

However, specific time may not be broad enough to really encompass Dogen’s thoughts on uji. Specific time may have an implication of some verb, something happening. Uji is much more. Dogen says staffs, whisks, Buddhas, and demons are all uji. These are not actions in a time and place. These are pieces of matter put into ontological boxes. Uji is everything: all times, all places, all actions, all things, every single manifestation of reality is uji. Someone screaming to the sky at the top of hir lungs, “This statement is not uji!” is uji. The chain of causality begins by expelling the air in a certain way from hir lungs plays itself out, changing and being changed by the rest of physical reality, in the only moment that ever happens: the now.

All of physical reality exists in a state of uji, being-time, as a change state actualizing itself in an eternal moment. Ordinarily, many humans see time as a linear phenomenon. However, if one can remove oneself from the equation, “stop investing in that solid reference point [of the mind/self], and get intimate with the experience itself, time ceases” and one begins to see reality as uji. To see reality as uji is to live in the eternal present, fully intimate with oneself and one’s experience in the now, without any of the conceptual and analytic buffers between experience and doing.

There is a definite break, a hard shift in perception, between experiencing ordinary time and experiencing uji. Marchaj describes being able to “enter the state of samadhi where my experience is not separate from what it is that I am doing, so there

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83 Marchaj 150.
This implies the process of entering, of changing one’s perceptive state. Indeed, Marchaj described the state of samadhi as one where time does not exist, a perceptive state from which he has to “shift [his] mind back to the conventional way of operating.” Perceiving uji and perceiving objects through time as permanent objects undergoing changes are two very different ways of looking at the world with a hard break in perception separating them.

While Marchaj, along with many other Buddhists, maintains that the ability to see reality as uji is best cultivated through meditation, he acknowledges that the creative process is another path to this unfiltered way of being. This creative process is not only apparent in what we define as art – ordinary tasks like the way one moves and talks are also manifestations of this process. All actions, because one has chosen to take them, are representative of a “creative process that presents what [one’s] understanding of the world is, how clear [one is] about the nature of [one’s] experience and the nature of the world.” One’s actions are informed by and indicative of the lens through which one perceives; when one is experiencing reality as uji, one’s actions are uji. Dogen was constantly experiencing uji, “which for him in [some] particular moment [was] writing [the chapter] ‘Uji’ or putting the pen down and going to the kitchen and making a meal.”

For those people without a meditative practice, the creative process, a nebulous term that is not simply the arts, is the way to experience uji. However, this

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84 Marchaj 159.
85 Marchaj 151.
86 Marchaj 160.
87 Marchaj 160.
experience of *uji* in daily actions – putting down a pen, going to make a meal – is very difficult for most people to attain. For the layperson interested in experiencing *uji*, it seems that the best activities to engage in are the ones where absolute presence in the moment is required: dance, sports, or music, to name a few. When someone becomes “utterly at ease within their narrow field of expertise… there is a distortion of time” in both how they perceive and talk about their art.\(^{88}\) The moment in which one is dancing or running or playing becomes eternal. There is no mental buffer – should I play this note? Should I run left or right? Should I bend my knees? There is simply doing.

\[\textbf{05: indeterminacy}\]

Enlightened action in Soto Zen is a spontaneous expression of self, a creative process that in its actualization intrinsically presents one’s understanding of the world. While writing the score, I felt that prescribing the notes that my musicians had to play in every moment, as I would have done with Western five-line notation, was directly contrary to a central tenet of the philosophical system upon which 有時音 is based. I wanted to strike a balance; musicians needed to be simultaneously actualizing my intention in creating 有時音 and actualizing their internal melodies in the moment. In order to allow musicians to sonically represent the passage of time and the break into *uji* while concurrently giving them the opportunity to experience *uji* while playing 有時音, to stop their mental buffer and simply act, I created a flexible system of graphic notation that is open to interpretation in the moment. The composition of an

\[^{88}\text{Marchaj 164.}\]
An indeterminate piece of music is “distinct from performance. One cannot determine exactly what effect the notation causes – thus, indeterminacy.” Every time a musician makes a deliberate sound while rendering 有時音, ze makes several choices about how to translate the score into audio phenomena. In this way, 有時音 is necessarily an indeterminate piece of music, one whose full sonic details cannot be known before the concert.

The ideas of indeterminate music and the interaction of musicians’ choice and composer’s intention draws to mind John Cage, the composer whose Zen-influenced worldview as reflected through his compositional strategies revolutionized the musical world in the 1950s. The influence of Zen on John Cage is well documented. Cage had read Alan Watts before moving to New York City, but was more fully introduced to Zen ideas in 1950 when he began attending D. T. Suzuki’s lectures at Columbia University. In the next ten years, Zen became such a large influence in his thought (and thus his compositional development) that part of the introduction to his book *Silence* reads, “What I do, I do not wish blamed on Zen, though without my engagement with Zen… I doubt whether I could have done what I have done.”

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is not to say that Zen ideas were the only forces in play in the growth of Cage’s thought, but they were certainly a major factor.\textsuperscript{92}

It is important to remind ourselves at this juncture that reality is a change state, nothing is static, and thus the way in which Cage’s compositional and performance strategies resonated with Zen ideas changed over time.\textsuperscript{93} Thus, in the scope of this section, I will be considering his work from the 1950s to the early 1960s, the decade following his introduction to Zen in which its ideas were still new to him and immediately relevant to his compositional methods.

In the early 1950s, influenced in a large part by Suzuki’s lectures, Cage decided that there should be non-intention of the composer during the compositional process. Cage has described non-intention as the thread holding his work together, saying, “the thing I think that is consistent in my work, where otherwise inconsistency appears – like the difference between indeterminacy and the \textit{Music of Changes} which is not indeterminate at all – the thing that is in common between them is non-intention.”\textsuperscript{94} He first tried to realize non-intention with chance, but within several years moved on to a broader-scope indeterminacy in which decisions are sometimes made in concert by the performer.


\textsuperscript{93} Cage himself acknowledges this, saying that he constantly needs new ideas in art, or, in his own words, “Those things that we used have been consumed. We have to have fresh food now. You wouldn’t ask me in the case of a steak I ate ten years ago somehow to regurgitate it and eat it over again, would you?” See Cage and Kostelanetz 24.

Cage’s initial non-intention based compositions relied upon chance to determine all aspects of the sound, including pitch, duration, and timbre. According to Jill Johnston, “In 1950, as a result of his already advanced ideas and actions, as well as his studies in Zen, he moved into an era of ‘chance operations’ by implementing methods established in the I Ching… establishing sounds and continuities by flipping three coins six times.”95 This method of composition created concrete scores whose many component parts were determined by chance, musics reflecting the results of the I Ching (or other chance methods) in the course of the piece’s creation. This style of composition is reflected best in works such as Music of Changes.

However, Cage came to realize that with this method, even though the composer had not made any volitional decisions, he was still exerting almost absolute control over the performers during the performance. By 1955, he had begun to drift away from this compositional style in favor of one that would “eliminate this dictatorship over the performer and make him the creator of what he does (under the most fragmentary specifications), thus introducing what [Cage called] indeterminacy.”96

Cage’s move towards indeterminacy and his opinion that chance composition was too controlling of the performer was solidified by 1958, when he gave a lecture entitled Indeterminacy in Darmstadt, Germany. In this lecture, he critiqued Music of Changes, saying, “The fact that these things that constitute it, though only sounds, have come together to control a human being, the performer, gives the work the

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96 Johnston 147.
alarming aspect of a Frankenstein monster." In this lecture, he sought to distinguish the new indeterminacy from his earlier work, which was based in chance results at the time of composition. With methodology governed exclusively by chance, the composer, although trying to remove his intention from the compositional process, still prescribes every choice made by the musicians and keeps set lines between composer and performer. Cage recognized the potential in blurring or breaking such boundaries. Indeterminate works have much more flexibility in the moment of performance than the earlier chance-based works. To perform these works, the musician makes personal decisions about interpretation of the score or ze actualizes the results of chance operations in real time at the concert. This creates sounds in concert from the results obtained or interpretations created in the moment of the concert, not in the moment of the score’s creation.

Cage’s ideas about personal choice in performance in relationship to indeterminacy are nuanced. Rebecca Kim, discussing Cage’s 1958 lecture series in Darmstadt, describes Cage’s indeterminate works as characterized by a “thorough-going use of chance applied especially to performance.” Heinz-Klaus Metzger, writing in 1959, on the other hand, describes Cage’s indeterminacy as “setting the musicians free, allowing them to do what they liked in his works and giving them… the dignity of autonomous musical subjects.” There are perhaps at least two broadly defined types of indeterminate works in addition to determinate chance-based

98 Cage and Charles 127.
99 Kim 142.
compositions: those whose scores specify chance operations to be taken by the performer in concert, and the more interpretable compositions like 0′00″ and Variations IV.\textsuperscript{101}

The indeterminacy of 有時音 is more like the indeterminacy that Metzger describes; the musicians do not use chance operations in concert, but rather use personal interpretation in every case.\textsuperscript{102} I hope by this method the musicians can experience 有時音 in concert, non-verbally communicating to the attendees the freedom from time created by absolute presence in one’s experience. After all, Marchaj says losing oneself in music is one of the easiest ways for a layperson to experience 有時音.\textsuperscript{103}

For Cage, indeterminacy was a way to remove the composer’s intention from the compositional process. With the creation of 有時音, I have the intention to convey a non-discursive idea via composition and real-time musical creation. 有時音 sonically represents the passage of time and the shift into experiencing 有時音. While listening to 有時音, I hope that an attendee might think about time and perhaps have a moment where the passage of time ceases and 有時音 simply exists in the musical space created by 有時音. I do not want to beat the attendees over the head with musical symbolism, but I did have a specific intention in creating 有時音 – a goal to communicate ideas about ordinary time and the value of experiencing 有時音 – that I hope will be communicated non-verbally through its playing.


\textsuperscript{102} In many ways, this is similar to La Monte Young, who utilized personal choice and freedom within a loose framework in works such as The Well-Tuned Piano, discussed further in section 07: bed. For more examples of Young’s use of spontaneous composition (improvisation) in performance, see Potter 56 – 61, 80.

\textsuperscript{103} Marchaj 164.
Though my relationship to intention and the compositional process is differently situated, one statement by Cage resonates strongly with me. In a conversation with Michael Zwerin, he stated, “the essential thing… about a work of art is that it somehow be useful to us in connection with our daily lives.”

A piece of music has the potential to introduce new ideas to the listener, ideas that may manifest themselves in unexpected parts of the listener’s life after the concert. As will be discussed more in section 06: score & performance, the playing of 有時音 is not the rendering of a piece of music that is supposed to be listened to intently by the attendees. Rather, it is the creation of a musical area-space that will hopefully induce thoughts in the attendees that help them to understand the nature of time as presented by Dogen in the Shobogenzo. The thoughts that the music conjures hopefully linger past the time of the concert. In this way, the music is “useful,” meaning that thoughts it stimulates may change an attendee’s mental patterns or actions in the future.

Based on his own statements, Cage would likely think of experiencing uji as useful. He speaks of the mental buffering that humans unconsciously partake in, discussed more in section 11: present, saying, “The ego can act as a barrier to daily experience (the senses) by cultivating its judgment-making faculty… Disciplined, the ego is no longer a barrier. One’s attention is placed so that ‘ego’ is open, fluent with its experience.”

This mindset, the opening of the ego to unbuffered experience, is similar to being intimate with one’s experience, the phrase Marchaj uses to describe

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experiencing *uji*.\(^{106}\) Cage has said that the times he is “most full with the enjoyment of life are precisely those times when the ticking of the clock, the passing of time, is forgotten,”\(^{107}\) which immediately draws to mind the mental shift into experiencing *uji* and the movement of 有時音 from pulsed to unpulsed space. Cage also speaks of his love for works that create the feeling of “Zero time,” which “exists when we don't notice the passage of time, when we don't measure it.”\(^{108}\) Cage, although he never called it *uji*, often spoke of the virtues of perceiving and interacting with the world in a way that I would call *uji*.

Cage’s indeterminate work was based in deliberate non-intention, but he considered “useful” music good and may well have seen something akin to *uji* as a very good way to experience sensory input. With this in mind, consider this passage from Cage’s introduction to *Silence*: “My intention has been, often, to… permit the listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it.”\(^{109}\) This idea, the non-verbal communication of sometimes non-discursive ideas, is the intention behind 有時音.

The quote from Cage in the above paragraph shimmers with paradox and contradiction. Cage has extensively discussed his desire for non-intentionality in the compositional process. Is his quote not about intention? Was his intention to be non-intentional, and impress non-intentionality upon the listener? Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. The paradox exists. Indeterminacy is chance. Indeterminacy is choice.

\(^{106}\) Marchaj 150, 159 – 161, 164.  
\(^{107}\) John Cage, quoted in Zwerin 165.  
\(^{108}\) Cage and Charles 209.  
\(^{109}\) Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, ix.
I have intention to create non-intention. I verbally communicate about what I am trying to non-verbally communicate. And, above all, these statements do not negate each other despite their apparent contradiction, because, as discussed in section 02: *Dogen*, it is the mind that makes them contradictory. Reality simply exists.

Ultimately, 有時音 is a highly indeterminate piece of music that strives to be “useful,” by which I mean specifically in the manner that Cage describes: conjuring thoughts that linger with listeners after the music has finished. In keeping with Zen ideas about spontaneity and presence in the moment, its indeterminacy is not chance-based, but rather based in musician choice in the moment. The framework of the score is designed to allow musicians to lose themselves in the music, experiencing *uji* and non-verbally communicating it to the attendees simply by way of living it.

06: score & performance

The next six pages are the full score to 有時音. Each page is labeled at the top with the name of the section of 有時音 in which it appears, and the words “pitch parameters” or “rhythmic wheel,” if necessary. Since Mobius strips cannot be included in a two-dimensional form, the pitch parameters are graphic representations of the entire pitch parameter read from left to right.
past: rhythmic wheel

Figure 06.1

110 Josef Mehling, past: Rhythmic Wheel, digital image.
As will be explained more fully in section 09: actualizing past, the fourth pitch parameter in past stands for personal identity and is created by each individual musician.

\[\text{Figure 06.2}^{111}\]

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\[\text{111 Genna DeGroot, past: Pitch Parameters, digital image.}\]
present: rhythmic wheel

Figure 06.3

112 Josef Mehling, present: Rhythmic Wheel, digital image.
present: pitch parameters

Figure 06.4

113 Genna DeGroot, present: Pitch Parameters, digital image.
As the future is merely a projection of the past and the present,

The musicians are invited to use the scores of past and present

With the express intention that they “spin the wheel”
experience

Find a friend

Don't let a flower be a flower among a bed of flowers
Let its color alone dazzle you both

Repeat until finished
The structure of 有時音 as a whole is supposed to represent the transition from experiencing ordinary time to experiencing *uji*. The first three sections are *past*, *present*, and *future*, the nexus that Purser says creates ordinary time. *Past* transitions seamlessly into *present*, which transitions seamlessly into *future*. Musicians exclusively use the scores of both *past* and *present* while playing *future*, just as the future is made in the mind as extrapolations of memories and present experience. The first three sections are “pulsed,” adhering to periodic demarcations of time, because the experience of ordinary time is pulsed by seconds, days, weeks, years, and more.

In *past*, the pitch parameters enact ways in which humans create the past in the present. In *present*, they shift attention to the sensory experience that is the present. The rhythms in *past* are nods to musical styles that I have studied in my past; those in *present* are a conversation, mimicking the interaction with the world that is a part of experience in the present. The more specific nature in which the scores of *past* and *present* conjure ideas of the past and the present is explored in sections 09: actualizing *past* and 13: actualizing *present*.

The final section, *experience*, seeks to create the feeling of *uji*, and follows a break into unpulsed time. It tries to mimic the intimacy with one’s experience inherent in perceiving *uji* by having each musician create a moment of musical connection and transmission with only one other person, either an attendee or another musician. These concepts are discussed further in section 17: *experience*.

As mentioned in section 05: *indeterminacy*, I designed the score of 有時音 to be open to interpretation. To this end, I created a system of graphic notation that separated pitch and rhythm, enabling combinations and permutations of the two types
of score objects. Rhythmic wheels and pitch parameters were designed with the intention that they not imply beginning and end points, rhythmic density level, relative pitch range, and direction in which to read. Both unconventional graphic representation of pitch and circular representation of regular periods of time are not uncommon in new musical notation. Wheels can be found in the work of Joe Catalano, Pozzi Escot, John Kannenberg, Martin Sebastian Loyato, and James Tenney, and graphic pitch notation can be seen in the work of Ellen Burr, John Cage, Henrik Colding-Jorgensen, Suk-Jun Kim, Chiyoko Szlavnics, and Yuji Takahashi.

The pitch parameters are lines and the occasional symbol drawn on Mobius strips. For months I called these objects melodic contours, but eventually decided that the name was not fitting for several reasons. Most importantly, the word “contour” implies continuity. Two of the pitch parameters in present do not have a single continuous line going through the entire Mobius strip, so it felt like a misnomer to call them contours. Another factor in play in the decision to move away from “melodic contour” is that the word “melody” has many connotations in formally trained musicians’ minds. The interpretations of these pitch parameters should not only be a single “melodic” line – they can be tone cluster strikes or feedback loops or whatever sounds the pitch parameter invokes in the musician’s mind. I hoped not to accidentally linguistically inhibit the musicians playing.


115 As above, this list is not comprehensive. The works referenced can be found in Sauer 43, 44, 54 – 55, 117, 244, and 246 – 247, respectively. Similar graphic pitch notation is also found in Anthony Braxton’s unpublished Tri-Centric Music.
Intervallic relationships of individual parts are not expressly defined, allowing shifts in relative pitch range; consider the pitch parameter from *past* shown below.

![Figure 06.5: The first pitch parameter in past.](image)

In very logical interpretations, one musician may play the pitch parameter thinking the maximum height difference is an octave, and another may interpret the same difference to be a minor third. Both of these interpretations are quite valid. Hopefully this ambiguity of pitch range will also help musicians resist falling into the mental trap of interpreting the parameters as pitch through time from right to left.

Moving now to rhythm, the physical design of the rhythmic wheels is supposed to call several images to mind. First, the experience of pulsed ordinary time is evoked in that the wheel resembles a clock, the ever-present reminder of the seconds and minutes ticking away. More importantly, though, the wheel resembles two fundamental Buddhist concepts: the wheel of *samsara* and the Dharma wheel.
The two pictures above are different versions of Bhavacakra, a visual representation of the Wheel of Life, sometimes known as the wheel of samsara. The left is a more abstract version of the wheel, discursively explaining its component parts. The right is a more common rendering. Although it is missing its characteristic bright colors, to the reader it may be more reminiscent than the stripped-down image on the left of traditional Buddhist imagery of the wheel of samsara.

The wheel of samsara is especially pertinent to the past, present, and future, because while we live in unenlightened, ordinary time, “we are continuously cycling in the wheel of samsara… habitually perpetuating our own volition. That’s… what the definition of samsara is: it’s being stuck on a wheel and not being able to get off.

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it, just repeating, repeating, repeating, endlessly.” Just as the turning of the rhythmic wheel creates past, present, and future, the turning of the wheel of samsara keeps each being in the nexus of past, present, and future, the material world of impermanence.

![Figure 06.8: the Dharma Wheel](image)

The Dharma Wheel, shown above, is strikingly similar in resemblance to the rhythmic score of present especially, as both are circles with eight equally spaced spokes. The Dharma wheel has eight spokes to represent the Eightfold Path, the eight-step way in which living beings can free themselves from desire and suffering and achieve enlightenment. According to Marchaj, “when the Buddha began to teach, he turned the wheel of the Dharma… the wheel of reality. And there are some expressions (that are somewhat esoteric and Zen) that when he did that, that wheel

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118 Marchaj 166.

turned in both directions at the same time.” Thus, musicians are encouraged to read rhythmic wheels and pitch parameters in multiple directions. Interestingly, if one notates a rhythm read clockwise in five-line notation and then reverses it, it does not always produce the same rhythm as simply reading the rhythmic wheel counterclockwise. An example of this can be found in Projection 7 of section 16: projections.

On a logistical level, the design of the wheel does not specify density levels. Each rhythm occupies one ring of the circle. The spokes emanating from the center of the wheel are even divisions of time. The musicians decide the overall rate at which these divisions occur. The divisions are not specified to be “half notes” or “whole notes” or “eighth notes,” so any of those durations would be valid interpretations of the rhythm. Switching pulse rates and density levels is encouraged and allows for interesting polyrhythmic texturing of familiar rhythmic patterns.

Musicians are encouraged to play at those points in the cycle in which an unfilled X appears. A filled X is optional and will hopefully differentiated from an unfilled X. The duration of each X is not specified on the rhythmic wheel. The innermost rings of the rhythmic wheels of past and present are the same, a single X at the “top” of the wheel, giving the musicians the ability to engage with duration-based interpretation by exploring a pitch parameter in one breath. It also allows musicians the play constant rhythms – a string of quarter notes or eighth notes, for example – by moving about the wheel at a rapid constant rate.

\[120\] Marchaj 166.
To play 有時音, each musician begins with one rhythm, instrument, and pitch parameter (these implying density level and pitch scale) and switches one or more of those when ze feels that ze has explored hir particular rhythm-instrument-melody to hir fulfillment. Musicians should not feel obligated to complete a rhythm or pitch parameter before switching. Each musician’s unique thought processes while playing 有時音 are refracted through its framework in the moment.\textsuperscript{121} For several ideas of how the score might be interpreted, see section 16: projections.

Because of the interpretability of the score, the playing of 有時音 is more like the creation of a mutable sonic area-space than the rendering of precomposed piece of music.\textsuperscript{122} 有時音 takes place within the aural context of the bed of tonality, which will be playing in the space before the attendees arrive and after they leave. The bed creates a musical cocoon that colors every sound that happens within it. The specifics of the bed of tonality are discussed in section 07: bed. Additionally, because there are only four or five rhythms to draw from during past and present, and many musicians are not familiar with division of beats into complex pulse rates, there is a constancy to the rhythms and rhythmic texture of past and present.

The combination of the bed of tonality and the constancy of the rhythms is meant to function as a sort of sonic home base for 有時音. People, both attendees and musicians, exist within this aural space and hopefully sometimes forget that it is there, just as some individuals may forget about the constant flow of time while they are

\textsuperscript{121} This is similar to how each individual’s actions are their personal choices within a pre-established societal framework consisting of spoken and unspoken rules of interaction, but the full depth and complexity of this thought is not pertinent enough to this project to be included.

\textsuperscript{122} For more in-depth analysis of the area-space phenomenon, see Braxton.
immersed within it. The live creation of sound made by the musicians is not meant to be attention-grabbing at all times; indeed, it ebbs and flows like a breath, the ocean, or many other natural cycles. Sometimes 有時音 is in crescendo, but at other times the pulse is barely audible. This is meant to give the attendees some time with their thoughts, as opposed to making them feel like they have to focus fully on the act of musical creation happening near them for the entirety of the concert. In this time with themselves, I hope attendees will begin to feel a deeper presence in their own individual experiences in the concert moment. Receiving these ideas about time sonically does not force them into words, ideas bounded by ontology and language, but may instead allow them to exist fundamentally within the being that is hearing them.

The time-space in which 有時音 occurs begins with the bed of tonality before the attendees arrive or musicians start playing, to help ease the attendees into the concert space and blur the lines between “pre-show” and “show.” Symbolically, it enacts Dogen’s constants through time by existing beyond the confines of the official start and end times of the concert.

The spontaneous, human-generated generated part of the sonic area-space of 有時音, in addition to representing the tripartite model of ordinary time and the break into experiencing uji, is also a slow decontextualization of familiarity for the attendees. Various rhythms and melodies will show up again and again, just as patterns emerge while living through time. However, their placement and relationship to one another shift dramatically, especially in future and experience, just as
relationships between parts of the change state that is reality shift as reality actualizes itself.

To render 音, one begins playing the bed of tonality before the concert is supposed to begin. While the bed is playing pre-show, musicians sit in chairs onstage, but should not all sit together. It should not be clear to the first attendee to arrive that all of the seated people will be playing music in the concert. Several minutes after the official start time, the first musician stands up, walks to a percussion instrument, and begins playing one of the rhythms. This marks the beginning of past. The musicians all begin playing over the course of several minutes on a rhythm, pitch parameter, and instrument of their choosing, playing the rhythms so that the tops of their wheels all align as often as possible, given their restrictions of density level and pulse rate. In this section, the musicians only use the pitch parameters and rhythms from past.

After about ten minutes, when 音 has swelled and fallen several times, one musician begins using the score of present, both pitch parameter and rhythmic wheel. Present is in an eight-spoke cycle; past is in seven. Musicians, as they like, join the person playing present until eventually the transition is complete. This creates a cycling space of eight and seven between past and present, intended to realize the seamless transition of the past into the present in the linear model of time. I use the term “cycling” to mean the beating pattern and eventual node of confluence created when two periodic patterns of different length are played simultaneously: cycling and its relationship to 音 is explored in detail in section 10: cycling. Musicians may be tempted to let present be played alone after some multiple of 56 spokes so the cycling comes out evenly. This is unnecessary, but is also a completely
valid interpretation as long as the final musician playing past feels that ze should stop playing after that number of cycles. Personal action and choice are more important for the creation of 有時音 than paying homage to mathematics.

Present is similar to past in that all musicians use the same rhythmic wheel and set of pitch parameters, with the rhythms played such that the tops of the wheels align as often as possible. In both present and past, musicians should try to create rhythmelodic motifs, one motif being a repeated consistent interpretation of a single rhythm and pitch parameter. Attendees will begin to recognize these motifs and will hopefully be surprised by their decontextualization in future.

After 有時音 has ebbed and revitalized several times, there is a change in the score again marked by the choice of a single musician. However, instead of starting to play present, this time the musician begins to play past. The two together in this context do not represent the seamless transition from the present back into the past (that does not exist), but rather indicate the creation of the future in the mind as a projection of the past and the present.

Future is different from the previous two sections in that the musicians are asked to “spin the [rhythmic] wheel.” There should no longer be a beginning to the cycle: the musicians should pay no mind to whether or not the tops of their rhythmic wheels align. Only a pulsed sonic space in which familiar rhythmelodic motifs appear with unexpected rhythmic relationships to the other motifs and surrounding sonic space emerges.

The final step in the decontextualization of the rhythmelodic motifs established in past and present is the loss of pulse, the hard break into experience.
Again, the rhythm melodic motifs the musicians play should be familiar, although they might be played in a slower or faster pulse, or even with a flex pulse. However, I don’t see the most marked difference between *experience* and the previous sections as the lack of pulse. It is instead that each rhythm melodic strand created by a musician in *experience* is created for one person in one moment. This intimacy is meant to mimic the intimacy with one’s own experience that comes with experiencing *uji*.

有時音 does not end with a bow from the musicians. Rather, as *experience* continues, the musicians slowly trickle offstage when they feel that their playing is done. When the final musician leaves, the bed of tonality will continue ringing in the space and the seamless transition from concert moment to post-concert moment will be completed.

The remainder of this section will discuss the specifics of the rendering of 有時音 on April 4th in Crowell Concert Hall. The layout of the stage itself was quite deliberate; the next several images are pictures of the stage taken after the sound check and during the concert itself. For more images of the stage and the movement of the musicians during the sound check, see Appendix C.
Figure 06.9: the Crowell stage after the sound check.\textsuperscript{123}

Figure 06.10: the Crowell stage during the recital.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{123} Stage Layout, Crowell Concert Hall, Middletown, CT, personal photograph by author, 2014.

\textsuperscript{124} This photograph and the next are Scott Zimmer, \textit{Tennessee Mowrey's Senior Recital}, 2014, Middletown, CT.
Figure 06.11: the Crowell stage during the recital from a different angle.
The stage contained two aisles, an inner small ring of attendees, a middle ring of musicians, and an outer large ring of attendees. The shape was based on both the rhythmic wheel and the Dharma wheel. However, due to fire code regulations about the widths of the aisles and a desire to put as many chairs onstage as possible, only four of the eight spokes were physically represented as aisles.

In keeping with the Zen ideas of non-duality and non-verbal transmission of the Dharma, the recital as a whole was supposed to subvert ideas of audience/performer duality and provide an intimate space for the transmission of ideas about uji nonverbally. Any given attendee was not supposed to watch or listen to 有時音. Rather, ze was supposed to understand uji just for a moment; in order to do this, ze had to connect deeply and intimately with hir own experience in the now, which was partially made up of the ideas expressed sonically by the musicians.

Changing the lighting of the Crowell helped to create this intimate space. Crowell’s normal lighting implies to me a performer/audience duality, and is not meant for attendees both onstage and in the green chairs in the hall. To remedy this I kept the house lights on dim throughout the concert and scattered lamps that produced yellow light about the stage. These lighting choices were more subdued than the lights in Crowell in most other concert settings, to provide a more familiar, house-like environment.

Another way that this intimacy and subversion of duality was created was by placing seats for the attendees on the Crowell stage, on the same plane in which the musicians were playing. This is not to say that attendees were forced to sit onstage. All of the green auditorium style seats were still be available and open for sitting. I
told the ushers very deliberately to not tell the attendees where to sit so that they chose for themselves the level of intimacy they wanted to have with 有時音 upon their arrival. In the program notes, attendees were encouraged to “change seats throughout the course of the performance to get a different sonic and visual experience of the piece.”\textsuperscript{125} This worked remarkably well, in ways that will be explored more fully later in this section.

The placement of the seats onstage, radiating out from and nested within the ring of musicians, was the reflection of two important decisions: to have the attendees face themselves and to have the attendees face the same way as the musicians. Allowing attendees to see and interact with other attendees, and especially to see each other’s faces, breaks down the duality of performer and audience member. The attendees watch the other attendees in addition to the musicians, and so everyone onstage is a performer to varying degrees.

The musicians were surrounded by attendees, both inside and outside of the wheel. In a more general performance context, having audience members face a performer implies performance, whereas having them face in the same direction as a performer creates empathy with the actions that the performer is taking.\textsuperscript{126} Due to the layout of the stage and the placement of the chairs on it, attendees had both of these experiences of each musician because each musician was at some times facing them but at most times was not.

\textsuperscript{125} Tennessee Mowrey, 有時音, 04 April 2014, program notes.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the subversion of audience member/performer duality was the switching of seats mentioned earlier. The attendees were encouraged to change their physical relationship to the musical creation around them; the musicians were encouraged to occasionally sit down in the chairs onstage throughout the course of 有時音 when they were not playing. As the concert continued, the attendees really began to take advantage of the different visual and auditory perspectives offered by movement, making the stage akin to a large game of musical chairs. People also stood and sat onstage when all the chairs were filled. I noticed throughout the course of the concert that attendees moved more frequently when 有時音 was in crescendo and were more sedentary when the music had lower energy. In this way, the attendees and musicians were responsive to each other in the concert moment.

Interestingly, this correlation of high-energy music with more movement between chairs onstage was upended after the end of experience, when the concert was supposed to be over. As there was nothing telling attendees that the concert had finished, they remained in the concert space, listening to the bed of tonality. At this point, the movement of attendees onstage reached a frenetic pace not achieved while the musicians were playing.

Much of the use of the Crowell stage was meant to challenge the notion that playing 有時音, and thus the concert, was a “performance.” It was not a performance. It was the creation of a sonic area-space that hopefully induced thoughts that non-discursively helped to illuminate uji.
The bed of tonality is supposed to represent the constants that exist without regard to time, including the Buddha Nature, the Buddha Dharma, and the lens of illusion or enlightenment. Like these constants, which subtly contextualize all of one’s perceptions and actions in the world – all of my perception is filtered through the lens of illusion, all of my actions can be seen by their relationship to the Buddha Dharma\textsuperscript{127} – the bed of tonality is meant to harmonically contextualize all the tones and lines played above it.

The bed of tonality creates the sonic area-space in which 有時音 occurs, a constant tonal timbre in a set physical space that the attendees will hopefully associate with 有時音 and nothing else, a sonic color that reinforces every pitch chosen by the musicians.\textsuperscript{128} The presence of the bed also provides a thread of continuity through what should be a highly varied piece of music – the attendees should have an idea that everything played in the context of the bed is the same piece, despite outward sonic disparity. This is reminiscent of La Monte Young’s work with the Theatre of Eternal Music, in which a “the drone from the motor that powered [their tortoises’] aquarium was amplified and… provided the fundamental pitch to which the group tuned, and… sounded continuously throughout the set.”\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127} Any action can be seen as in line with or not in line with the Dharma and expounding or not expounding the Dharma, for example; in this way, any action can be contextualized by Dogen’s constants.

\textsuperscript{128} A sonic area-space the shared space among all listeners of a certain sound. It can imply a perceptual unity between the individual listeners. For more analysis of the area-space phenomenon, see Braxton.

\textsuperscript{129} Potter 70.
The bed is not meant to be overbearing. It will be played at a low volume no louder than a speaking voice; the higher frequencies should be soft enough that the attendees sometimes mistake them for tinnitus. Another important aspect of the drone’s existence is that it will be playing in the concert space before the attendees arrive and after they leave. Upon arriving, attendees might actively listen to the bed of tonality; however, I hope that while the musicians are creating sound onstage the bed will become an unnoticed sonic base that brings out the resonant frequencies of the notes the musicians play.

I chose to have each component sine wave of the bed slowly oscillate between 100.5% and 99.5% of the Hz value of the tone initially chosen, because while Dogen’s constants do exist without regard to time, it seems that sometimes their manifestations within physical reality shift through time as well. As Marchaj says, “If there was truly an atom or a thought or a principle that was… constant, the universe would jam against it.”130 Let us take the Buddha Dharma as an example. Zen is a subset of Mahayana Buddhism, a type of Buddhism that emerged in India about 500 years after Shakyamuni taught, branching off from an earlier tradition known today as Theravada Buddhism. Mahayanists have many of the same basic beliefs as Theravadists – impermanence, no-self, the importance of studying the Dharma, etc. – but they have added several others, including the intrinsic Buddha Nature in each human, compassionate bodhisattvas who forgo enlightenment to help all living beings along the path, and the idea that anyone can reach enlightenment in this life. Dogen

130 Marchaj 158.
might argue that Shakyamuni was utilizing *upaya* while alive and teaching.\textsuperscript{131}

Ancient Indians were living in a society that stressed the religious benefits of asceticism and single-minded pursuit of spiritual revelation: the teachings they needed in their particular context were more rule-based because that type of religious practice had precedent. This Dharma, the particular Dharma that Shakyamuni expounded, was true. However, as a Mahayanist, Dogen would have to acknowledge that the Mahayanist Dharma is true as well. The two are different, and so the explanation must be that the Dharma shifts based on the particular context of the person or society who needs teaching in order to communicate the way to enlightenment most effectively.

In making the bed, I tried to create a minor harmonic series that implies a fundamental frequency of a very low D. All of the tones are sine waves, as opposed to square waves or other more complex waveforms, which drastically reduces the presence of overtones in each tone itself. This is necessary because each tone is meant to be an overtone of the aforementioned fundamental frequency. This also creates a spatial phenomenon, meaning that the tones are much harder to localize because they permeate the concert space.

This immediately calls to mind La Monte Young’s *The Well-Tuned Piano*, a piece in which, according to Alvin Lucier, all of the strings of a piano are tuned to

\textsuperscript{131} *Upaya* is the Sanskrit word for “skillful means” or “pedagogy,” and is explored in the parable of the burning house in the *Lotus Sutra*, in which the many sons (living beings) of an old rich man (Buddha) are trapped in a burning house (*samsara*) but do not notice the fire. The old man convinces his sons to leave the house by promising them each different chariots if they come outside immediately, but when his sons arrive they all have the same chariot (enlightenment), more splendid than any of theirs had been described to be. The old man had used a lie to get his sons out of *samsara* and into enlightenment, but did it because it was the skillful means to bring them to enlightenment fastest.
overtones of a very low fundamental.\textsuperscript{132} To perform it, a piano that has been tuned for months in a specific just intonation system created by Young is played for about six hours. Young’s tuning system is explored in great detail by Kyle Gann; however, it is not within the scope of this project to summarize his results.\textsuperscript{133} The piece is played with very minimal notation, despite its length. Some sections are merely notated with whole note chords or scales, and even the longest themes are relatively short – ‘Theme for Orpheus and Eurydice in the Elysian Fields,’ for example, is only 45 beats long.\textsuperscript{134} To extend these short themes into a performance, Young relies upon “their development, which involves variation, extension, and combination, not merely repetition.”\textsuperscript{135}

The bed of tonality is not a minor version of \textit{The Well-Tuned Piano}. Both are made up of tones that are supposed to imply a low frequency, but the bed of tonality is not supposed to draw much attention to itself. It has no melodies, no motion (except a subtle oscillation over time), and no motifs or thematic development. It simply has a presence, which may or may not be noticed at different points throughout the concert.

The playing of 有時音 above the bed involves the creation and development of rhythmelodic motifs by individual musicians, which may be varied and recombined in various ways throughout the course of the piece. These motifs dance


\textsuperscript{134} This theme, along with several others, is found in Potter 85. See also p. 86.

\textsuperscript{135} Potter 88.
against each other and recombine in many different ways throughout the course of time; motifs introduced in *The Well-Tuned Piano* combine and reappear later in the piece. The bed of tonality, like the just intonation system Young created, is a sonic contextualization of each note in each melodic line. Because of all of the consonant and resonant frequencies present in the air, motifs are able to spring from this contextual bed as manifestations of all the sounds that are already implicitly there.

I opted to have the tuning system used to create the bed of tonality be something more akin to equal temperament, as opposed to just intonation, a system of intonation which involves strict fractional relationships between intervals, for several reasons. First, the musicians are accustomed to a twelve-tone system and, more importantly, since pianos and guitars are used in concert, the instruments are tuned to the equal tempered twelve-tone system. Second, I do not think that there is a single objectively correct system of intonation. I instead prefer to think of either just or equal temperament as simply one tuning system among many. I would welcome the opportunity to work with different tuning systems for future renderings of *The Well-Tuned Piano*.

After consulting Gann’s website, I realized that many fractional relationships can define each of the non-perfect intervals, including both major and minor seconds, thirds, sixths, and sevenths. I believe that my ear likes the tension and release created by the beating pattern and nodes of confluence when tones consisting of Hertz values with integer relationships are played simultaneously: I explore this idea further in section 10: *cycling*. Different fractional relationships produce tones that have

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roughly similar intervallic relationships (e.g. there are many fractions that make a “major third”). The different tuning systems from which more standard fractional relationships emerged – Pythagorean or Javanese, for example – were solidified because people presumably liked the harmony made by the tones. Due to this ambiguity in intervallic distance, I choose to see any two tones produced by fraction relationships as legitimate intervals of the range in which they fall (major third, minor seventh, minor second, etc).

I based all of the tones in the bed on the lowest frequency in the bed, D 36.67. There are many acceptable frequencies for each tone in a D minor scale due to the many fractional relationships that create each interval – an F could be created with one of many “minor third” fractional relationships in addition to being extrapolated via the circle of fourths or fifths. Considering that the tones slowly oscillate and that each tone could be a multitude of different Hertz values, I made each tone somewhere in the middle of the acceptable pitch range so that its oscillation would not make it a “different” note in relationship to D 36.67. I did this with the help of the fraction relationships given in Gann’s website and the frequencies provided by the Michigan Technological Institute.137

In terms of the specific tones making up the bed, I initially replicated the harmonic series of the relative major of D minor (F major), and put a low D beneath all of it with the hope that it would color the entire sound with its minor tonality. However, to my ears this harmonic series still sounded like F major.

I then used a fraction relationship \(\frac{3}{2}\) based on A440 to determine the Hertz frequency of D, then halved the total until I reached 36 \(\frac{2}{3}\) Hz, the lowest frequency in the bed.\(^{138}\) This tone is barely audible, more easily felt in the chest than the eardrums. As in the harmonic series, I added another tone an octave above the first, a fifth above that, and a further fourth above that, bringing me to a D two octaves above the starting tone. Here, however, is where my series departed from the harmonic series. The harmonic series would add a major third after the perfect fourth – I found that adding a third (major or minor) to the bed in this octave muddied the sound and drew attention to itself, so I included another 5 and 1, adding another octave to the series. From this point, the tones were cleaner while played closer together, so I added the 3\(^{rd}\), 7\(^{th}\), and 9\(^{th}\) tones of the scale in addition to the 1\(^{st}\) and 5\(^{th}\). Finally, I added all of the other notes in a D minor scale, ending on an E, including the tritone, G\#/Ab, because it appears in the harmonic series. The addition of the 4\(^{th}\) before the tritone is different from the harmonic series but contributes well to the wash feeling that I want the bed to evoke. Notably, I used two fractional relationships given in Gann’s website for the tritone: 11/8, the eleventh harmonic, which Gann calls the “undecimal tritone,” and \(1/\sqrt{2}\), the equal-tempered tritone. The addition of these two tones means that there are four distinct frequencies in the bed in a three half-note span, between G and A, which also contributes to the wash feeling mentioned above. Another significant feature of the bed is that, like the harmonic series, I lowered the volume on each new tone that was added on top, except between the first two tones because a very loud 36 Hz frequency blows most speakers. See the table below for

\(^{138}\) The reader may wish to consult the table at the end of this section while reading the following paragraph.
the note names, frequencies, and relative volumes of all of the sine wave overtones in the bed.

## Components of the bed of tonality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Volume (dB FS)</th>
<th>Field size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>36.66667 Hz</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
<td>.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>73.33333 Hz</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>110 Hz</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>146.66666 Hz</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>220 Hz</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
<td>.684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>293.33333 Hz</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>349.2 Hz</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td>.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>440 Hz</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
<td>.603</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>523.25 Hz</td>
<td>-5.4</td>
<td>.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>587.33333 Hz</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>659.25 Hz</td>
<td>-7.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.407</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>783 Hz</td>
<td>-9.4</td>
<td>.339</td>
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<tr>
<td>G#</td>
<td>807.5 Hz</td>
<td>-10.8</td>
<td>.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>830.6 Hz</td>
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<td>.288</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>880 Hz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1174.66666 Hz</td>
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<td>.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1318.5 Hz</td>
<td>-14.8</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 07.1

08: past

To Dogen, the past is created in the mind because there is only the now; anything that is not the now is thus necessarily a mental construction. Dogen would not deny that there was a present of what we call the past, for the causality that

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139 dB FS (Decibels Full Scale) is a logarithmic computer-based way of measuring loudness in which 0 dB is the point of peaking and clipping. To halve the volume, one removes 6 decibels.

140 The conversion from dB FS to field size was done on “DB Calculator,” Audio Calculations, Sengpel Audio, n.d., Web, 11 Mar. 2014, <http://www.sengpielaudio.com/calculator-db.htm> and rounded to three decimal places. A field size of .716 means that the waveform is 71.6% of the computer’s clipping level.
creates the present must have begun at some point. However, that present is gone, and exists for humans to access only by way of memory.

A human creates hir sense of self with the help of hir memories, which are based in sensory experience and reaction to that experience, from cold wind on the back of the neck to warm fresh cookies. Hir senses and the other skandhas (Buddhist aggregates discussed in section 11: present) are the lenses that color hir perception; due to these lenses, each human lives in hir own mental universe, unverifiable by anyone else. Despite the fact that it contains the idea of a universe made by the mind, this belief is not solipsism. It is simply acceptance of the fact that no human can “objectively” perceive the world around hir. Memory anchors one by marrying one’s current perception to one’s remembered experiences to create identity through time, grounding one’s present experience by providing context.

There is nothing tangible to the past. There is no way to prove the specifics of any event; all that exists are different individuals’ memories of specific moments in time and space, and each of these memories are inherently subjective.141 This is not to say that there are not higher and lower likelihoods of accuracy: if a car went by a video camera that was recording at 3 p.m., and later the camera showed a red car going by with a time-stamp of 3 p.m., one would assume with a very high likelihood of correctness that the car had been red. However, one can never be sure. As mentioned in section 04: uji, humans collectively assume the past happened, but there is no way to verify that it did.142 The lens of the individual removes the possibility of finding an “objective truth” of the past. Each individual’s lens provides the truth of

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141 Even cameras and audio recording devices cannot record every frequency.

142 Fischer.
hir experience: none of these truths are more legitimate than another because each is true for the observer.\(^\text{143}\)

I find that when considering my own memories, instead of conjuring up a specific bank of images and other sensory input, my mind draws strains of thought out of multiple experiences. As opposed to remembering a specific dinner at my grandparents’ house, I remember generally what the meatballs tasted like. I remember car rides with my mother and brother but do not remember the specifics of many of the conversations or destinations at all. Patterns, the sensory input that makes one memory similar to another, are reinforced for me through multiple experiences; I mostly remember patterns with a few notable exceptions.

I have had many experiences that inform the creation of this thesis. Several memories in particular stand out to me as the beginning of strains of thought that manifest themselves within 有時音. These memories are often characterized by a very sudden “aha!” moment, an almost instantaneous change from confusion or turmoil to clarity. This “aha!” moment, the quick change from ignorance to understanding, is reminiscent of the shift between experiencing ordinary time and experiencing uji.

One of these moments occurred at a North Indian classical music concert that my father and step-mother had organized.\(^\text{144}\) As an aside, I should relate that at the outset of this project, I believed I was seven or eight at the time of this concert. My memories were of myself with my bowl cut and favorite sneakers from that era of my

\(^{143}\) Marchaj 152.

\(^{144}\) *Classical Music of North India*, by Rabindra Narayan Goswami and Ramchandra Pandit, Vajrayogini Temple, Point Richmond, California, 23 Apr. 2006, performance.
life watching the music. While writing this thesis, I contacted my father, who sent me the program. After reading it, I realized that in reality I had been fourteen at the time of the concert. Upon reading the program, my memories changed – when presented with compelling sensory evidence (reading a poster that I know has been unchanged) I will change how I remember events. In this way, present sensory experience informs the mental creations of both the past and the future.

At the aforementioned concert, I was fourteen years old and was hearing Indian music live for the first time. Two North Indian musicians, a tabla player and a sitar player, were touring through Northern California and my father and step-mother booked them for a small show in a temple not two blocks away from our house in Point Richmond. I was astounded by what the musicians were playing because I had never seen or heard live music that sounded anything like it. I certainly did not understand the music in real time. I do not remember much about the show – there was Indian food but I do not remember what, I was wearing clothes but I do not remember which ones, the musicians were in colorful garb but I do not remember which colors they were wearing. What I remember very distinctly is a conversation I overheard my father and step-mother having just after the musicians left the stage. They were both amazed by the concert and, when discussing why, my father mentioned that one of the musicians had been playing in “eight” while the other one was playing in “seven,” meeting up at beat number 56 and both playing in “eight” again.

The ideas of sonic real-time interaction and division of time in such a way shattered my conception of music. I had taken piano lessons at that point and have
always had a mind for math, so I understood the concept of pulse and could almost visualize falling out of phase and meeting up again at a point of confluence. However, I was raised on music in 4/4, mostly classic rock, reggae, and other pop music designed for radio audiences in the 1960s – 1980s. I had never considered that musics in multiple divisions of time could be played simultaneously and still be called music.

As my father mentioned the music in seven played alongside the music in eight, different musics that simultaneously existed next to and with each other, I realized that this music could be interpreted as an allegory for peaceful coexistence. This realization became one of the main germinating points of my strain of thought about music as allegory for and representative of experience. This project and itself are based on actualizing conceptions and experiences of time through musical composition and real-time creation of sound; the genesis of can be partially traced to the emergence of this strain of thought, and thus to this concert.

This experience was also one of the first times I had considered cycling, an idea that is now integral to my musical thought; the sonic space in between past and present references this concert directly. In this space, past and present beat against each other in seven- and eight-spoke cycles until past finally stops being played and all musicians are playing present.

Another memory of mine that informs this piece is a vision quest I undertook at the age of eighteen. I went to Death Valley in Southern California with a group of about fifteen people. After several days together at a base camp that we set up, many of us did a three-day “solo.” This solo is what most of us thought of as the Vision Quest itself. I, like many others, fasted for the duration of the solo, instead subsisting
on one gallon of water and one pack of Emergen-C a day. I took a long walk the first day, but spent the majority of the second two days meditating on a crag fairly near my tent that overlooked desert stretching for miles, punctuated by a single mountain.

At some point during my meditation, I had a moment of breakthrough. I felt like, in an instant, the energy-being that comprised my self stepped into the shell of my body completely. It was like putting on a glove that was made specifically for my hand. In the same moment I felt a profound acceptance of the darker parts of me that I didn’t like as much or wanted to change, because they were in that moment a part of me. I loved them simply for being, and accepted and appreciated myself simply for being myself. I would not describe this experience as satori because I am certainly not enlightened, but I would say that this is the closest feeling I’ve ever had to what satori is said to feel like.

Immediately following this sensation, I was overcome by joy and began singing. However, I was not singing a song I had heard before. At this point I had a good amount of experience with contemporary Western music and improvisation within its idioms. This song was different. I was not thinking chordally or modally. Instead, I was making the sound that I wanted to make in that moment simply because I wanted to make it.

The actualization of these internal melodies – the songs you want to sing, not the songs you’ve been told to sing – is a key part of 有時音, and informed the interpretability of the notational system created. I was comfortable enough in the framework of the desert space to sing my inner melody uninhibited. I hope that the area-space of 有時音 is an intimate atmosphere for reasons described in section 06:
score & performance, and that the combination of this intimacy and the framework of
the score will allow the musicians to actualize the pitches they want to create in the
moment, their internal melodies.

I do not remember the song I sang in the desert that day. It was lost to the
wind as soon as it came out of my mouth – in my head at the time I was in no position
to remember anything, and there was no one else around to hear it. And, more
interestingly, I didn’t try to remember it after I was finished singing. It was a song for
the moment only. This helped to impress upon me the beauty of the ephemerality of
the unique sonic moment happening at all times, the present. Sounds exist in the “now”
and then they are gone.

After this experience, my compositional process started to move towards a
place that was more accepting of variation and improvisation in composition and
performance; I now feel that trying to dictate what every musician has to say in every
moment only limits what a piece of music can be. I began to see a piece of music as a
nebulous concept, some harmonic changes and a melody, that could be interpreted in
numerous ways. This recognition that multiple interpretations of a single piece of
music are all “correct” informs the structural ethos of 有時音 – as mentioned
previously, the pitch parameters and rhythmic wheels are designed to not be
prescriptive in a manner associated with traditional Western notation.

A final memory I will share marks my change from hearing sounds containing
idioms like pulse and melody as music to hearing all sound as music, breaking my
perceived duality of music and non-music. It was probably October of my freshman
year and I was in Alvin Lucier’s course Introduction to Experimental Music. I do not
remember what we were listening to on this particular day, though the lights were off and I was surrounded by sixty other students in a large room with small desks. Professor Lucier, as usual, was at the back of the room. In my mind, the collective listening was proceeding like many of the listenings that had come before it in class.

Though I forget the name of the piece we were listening to, I clearly remember feeling as if suddenly my blinders had been lifted. It was music! It was beautiful! The sounds made, the concepts being explored, and the general ethos of breaking ontological barriers between sounds and giving them all a space to be heard appealed to me immensely, and I went home after class and listened to everything else we had covered previously to hear it with fresh ears. To begin to hear all sounds as sounds and love them for what they are is close to experiencing *uji* and is part of the point of 有時音.

*09: actualizing past*

Rhythmic wheels and pitch parameters are the methods by which the musicians make sound and actualize the ideas behind 有時音. Their interpretability, and the subsequent sonic influence of the mind of the musician, helps to make each rendering of 有時音 distinct and ephemeral.

Since they create *past*, this set of pitch parameters was constructed to refer to the ways in which the mind creates each individual’s version of the past. I chose to create four pitch parameters representing reliable natural cycles, memories of events, major occurrences in life, and personal identity.
As mentioned in section 06: score & performance, all of the pitch parameters are actually on Mobius strips to remove ideas of beginning and end. The fourth pitch parameter in this section is shown as a Mobius strip; the other visualizations given in this paper are two-dimensional representations of the pitch parameters drawn from left to right starting at one point and ending at the same point. The first pitch parameter can be seen below.

![Mobius strip](image)

**Figure 09.1:** the first pitch parameter in past.

This parameter stands for cycles, regular oscillation, and reliable change through time. Memory is often defined by its place within several concurrent cycles of different lengths – a day, a week, a year. Many of these cycles are so reliable that humans structure their lives around them, have created a calendar that represents them, and can extrapolate them hundreds of years into advance. There are other natural cycles besides just the ones in the Gregorian calendar that have been used by other civilizations, like lunar cycles. Our bodies and the bodies of the beings around us are attuned to these natural repetitions, most notably in the form of bodily processes known as circadian rhythms, whose cycles last about 24 hours.\(^{145}\) However, this attunement to natural cycles can also be seen in more long-form animal behaviors like hibernation, migration, and spawning. These cycles are reminiscent of the

\(^{145}\) Circadian rhythms for all living beings naturally occur in almost 24-hour cycles: circadian rhythms for mice occur in 23.5 hour cycles, and the period of human circadian rhythms is about 26 hours. When regulated by daylight, these rhythms adjust to 24-hour cycles. For more information on circadian rhythms, see Steven Strogatz, *Sync: The Emerging Science of Spontaneous Order* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), especially 70 – 82.
colotomic structure in Javanese music, which is “[the] use of specified instruments to mark off established time intervals.”

Natural cycles provide an inaudible colotomic structure to our lives, creating a reliable temporal framework in which to create and contextualize memory.

The cycles that make up this framework are often physically manifested as circles and rotations around them. The earth orbits the sun to create years, the earth spins about its axis and the sun goes around the sky and the shadow moves around a sundial to create days, the hands tick around a clock to create hours and minutes. I chose a form based in the sine wave to represent these circles because a circle can be drawn through time with the equation $x = \cos(t)$, $y = \sin(t)$, meaning that if one moves around a circle from left to right at a constant rate and graphs the $y$-values, one will create a sine wave. The simple back and forth structure of a sine wave also mimics the reliability of the framework, both visually and audibly. In rehearsal for 有時音, I have noticed that the parts that I rely on to sonically contextualize other sounds in past are usually created from this parameter.

The second pitch parameter represents major occurrences in life. These are the rare moments in life that dramatically change present experience, expectations about the future, and interpretation of past events; this could mean a death in the family, a breakup, having a child, losing a job, or some other such life-altering event. The pitch parameter can be seen on the next page.

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These types of events are paradigm breakers. A pillar in one’s life vanishes and all of a sudden many of one’s thoughts about the future change quite dramatically. In an effort to highlight this, the pitch parameter contains “backwards” motion on the Mobius strip so that it cannot be interpreted as pitch-scale through time. The previous two pitch parameters lend themselves well to a pitch-scale through time interpretation; I wanted to be sure that, when choosing this parameter, musicians actualized what a large spiral was to them rather than mentally superimposing a five-line staff on the Mobius strip and reading from left to right.

I am positive that most of my memories are not wholly accurate – if pressed, I extrapolate what probably occurred based on other memories and patterns I have noticed through time. Most of what I draw from experience are strains of thought that begin to emerge as summation of memory leads me to notice broader patterns. However, the types of events represented by this pitch parameter are different. These memories can be quite vivid. I remember exactly where I was standing and what I was doing when, at the age of eight, I heard that my parents got officially divorced.\footnote{I was with my friend George on the back porch of my house in Greenbrae, California, in a chair facing the yard. We were talking about a live-action version of Terminator we had just been playing when my mother came up to us and told me that the lawyer was no longer on vacation and she and my father were officially not married anymore.} These memories are not lost in the sea of memories one possesses because they change so much in one’s life so quickly. Similarly, I hope that this pitch parameter is
what attendees remember more distinctly about the recital. This pitch parameter is not meant to occur often throughout because these types of events don’t occur with frequency throughout one’s life. I imagine that in a sea of oscillations and static (the third pitch parameter) during *past*, this parameter will stand out like the occasional percussive exclamation point and thus be more memorable.

The third pitch parameter is shown below.

![Figure 09.3: the third pitch parameter in *past*.](image)

This pitch parameter represents multiple memories of the same event. I like to describe this pitch parameter as static around a drone. It is for two or more voices, one of which takes a drone pattern on a single tone. Any others dance around the drone on the same rhythm but with melodic variation (hopefully with no more deviation than a third, though this may vary according to the spontaneous will of the musician).

As mentioned previously, during my conversation with Marchaj I asked him whether or not one person’s memory of an event was more legitimate than another’s. His response was an unequivocal no. Anyone’s truth is as valid as anyone else’s. All memories are only memories and are all true to the rememberer. In the same way, when confronted with this pitch parameter I want the attendees to be unsure as to which line being played is the melody and which is the harmony, which is primary

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148 Marchaj 152.
and which is secondary. Eventually I hope an attendee will realize that they are sitting next to other people perceiving the “same” thing, and will wonder which of their memories will be the most true.

The fourth and final pitch parameter in *past* represents personal identity. Personal identity is an integral part of experiencing through time – the things that happen to “you” are your experiences and memories. To create this parameter, musicians were asked to represent their identity with a pen on a Mobius strip. Each musician thus had a different parameter; mine is shown below.

![Figure 09.4: the fourth pitch parameter in past for Tennessee Mowrey.](image1)

![Figure 09.5: the fourth pitch parameter in past for Tennessee Mowrey from another angle.](image2)
My parameter consists of my name written in English, Japanese, and Hindi. If the reader would like to create one of hir own, ze should write hir identity twice on a thin strip of paper, once on the back and once on the front, and then twist it into a Mobius strip.

The instructions say to write one’s identity. How does one interpret one’s own identity with a pen? Many of the musicians in the April 4th recital wrote their names in English, both in print and in cursive, but some wrote their names in other languages and others still made art or a series of lines on the paper. All of these interpretations are valid. This pitch parameter should be the collection of lines and curves that a musician feels represents hir identity, and can only be made by the musician hirself.

I don’t know what these parameters sound like because I don’t know what they look like. It is reasonable that some musicians will do an interpretation of their parameter that is based in the logic of pitch-scale through time, and that some others will have more metaphorical interpretations. This parameter is supposed to be a way for musicians to express their own identity while playing 有時音, but musicians should not fall into the trap of expressing their identity by playing their favorite licks. The pitch parameter is visual interpretation of identity and should be interpreted strictly as a visual symbol. The sonic output created by this parameter is thus two steps removed from identity because it is an auditory interpretation of the visual stimulus chosen to represent identity.

The rhythms in past were chosen for their connection to my past and musical growth. The rhythmic wheel is shown again below. In the next few paragraphs, I will
explain the rhythms from the top down. Every rhythm was repeated twice on the wheel for aesthetic reasons.

![Rhythmic Wheel Diagram](image)

**Figure 09.6:** the rhythmic wheel in *past*.

The first parameter is loosely based in common *kagan* rhythms from West Africa. My experience with West African music is almost exclusively in Abraham Adzenyah’s classes at Wesleyan, which I took for four semesters. In this class, my favorite instruments to play were the cyclic percussion parts that provided the constant base to the piece: the *axatse*, *kagan*, and bells, usually the *gankogui*. The
kagan often plays groups of two notes and then a pause. For example, if dividing two beats into six pulses, the kagan would probably play on pulses 2, 3, 5, and 6, and if dividing two beats into eight pulses, the kagan would probably play on pulses 3, 4, 7, and 8. The evenness of this spacing would not be easily achieved in groups of seven. The groups of two were more important to me than the evenness of the spacing, so I widened the gap between the final two strikes by a factor of two.

The second rhythm is a common Balkan rhythm with one X added, the optional strike. I have been singing Balkan music in Slavei, Wesleyan’s student-run Eastern European music ensemble, for almost three years. This rhythm has been a weekly presence in my life for that period of time, and so it is highly ingrained in my psyche; once I had decided that past would be in a seven-spoke cycle, I immediately added it to the wheel.

I call the third rhythm “the gankogui rhythm” in rehearsal because to many of the musicians it sounds like a pattern present in some South American music that is played on a bell similar to a gankogui. However, I did not write this rhythm to sound like a bell. I wrote it mostly in reference to my study of South Indian music at Wesleyan. In South Indian classical music, called Karnatak music, this rhythm is known as inverse misra capu tala. Misra means seven and talas are cyclic rhythmic patterns; misra capu tala is a folk tala in South India that has become a standard tala in Karnatak music. If one were to play this rhythm while moving right on the wheel, starting at the third spoke from the top, one would be playing misra capu tala.

The fourth rhythm is the same as the innermost rhythm of present, a single X on the top spoke, and is designed to allow musicians to explore a pitch parameter
deliberately in a single breath or hand motion. It is also meant to help remove the notion that each X should be read as an “eighth note” or a “quarter note.” Each X has the length assigned to it by musicians in the moment. This rhythm can also be interpreted as a series of regularly spaced strikes – constant quarter notes or eighth notes – by rapidly moving in either direction around the wheel.

In contrast with the rhythms in present, the rhythms in past were not created to be a conversation. This idea of the rhythms as conversation is taken from Abraham Adzenyarah. In his class, Professor Adzenyarah constantly tells students to understand the conversation as a whole, the sound of the composite rhythm, instead of only their part. This helps the gears of the rhythmic whole lock together because musicians know the relationship of their part not only to the pulse, but to every other part as well.

The rhythms in past are not a deliberate conversation because the creation of the past in the mind is a very personal process, tied up with one’s own experiences and personal identity. Each human creates hir own past in hir mind, and although there might be many similarities between memories, memories are not necessarily constructed to be similar to others’. Similarly, each rhythm exists on its own, and while the composite rhythm exists, it was not chosen before the individual rhythms themselves – the creation of the rhythm was from the bottom up, rather than the top down. The composite rhythm was a byproduct of the individual rhythms’ creation.

10: cycling

As we are leaving past and entering present, it is a good time to talk about an intersection of the two that is featured prominently in both 有時音 and my musical
thought in general. As I mentioned before, I use the term cycling to describe going out of and coming back into phase, the beating pattern created when two periodic patterns of different length are played concurrently. To me, cycling is one of the most beautiful long-form contours to exist in sound. Below is a visualization of the beating of seven against eight, a beating that occurs both in my memory quite distinctly and in 有的音 between past and present. 149

Figure 10.1: the cycling pattern of seven and eight. 150

In this graph, one line is \( f(x) = \sin(x) \) and the other line is \( f(x) = \sin(\frac{7x}{8}) \), in the range \( x = [0, 51] \). Suppose that these were musical cycles (beats or measures) and \( x \) was seconds. The graph can be read from left to right along the x-axis at a constant rate.

Cycling patterns simultaneously exist in both the past and the present, both in real-life experience and in 有的音. By way of memory, a person may be able to recognize a periodicity to a pattern that is projected into the future. In the present, the actualization of this projection as expected provides hir with a sense of fulfillment. Say one is on the graph above at the point of intersection at about 25 seconds. From past experience, ze would be able to project how whichever line ze was on (seven or eight) would continue through time. Ze would also know that hir line was out of

149 See section 08: past for my memory.

phase with the other line and would come back into phase. Speaking for myself, when
that happened and I heard both begin together at about 50.2 seconds, I would feel a
sense of completion because I would have been waiting for it to occur. And so,
beyond just being a musical device, cycling is also a use of memory to create
happiness and appreciation in the present moment.

In a smaller sense, I believe that my ear (or perhaps my mind) likes the sound
of two audible sine waves with regular beating patterns played simultaneously. Along
the lines of some of was discussed in section 07: bed, a relationship of 2:1 produces
an octave, 3:2 a perfect fifth, and 4:3 a perfect fourth (its inverse). Other fraction
relationships create other types of harmony.\textsuperscript{151} I believe that the nodes, the points of
confluence of these waveforms where both cycles begin again simultaneously, are
points of release after the tension created by the beating. I also believe that that my
ear is sensitive enough to notice the beating of the waves, and that the human mind
subconsciously takes pleasure in the tension and release created by the cycling of
these waves.

Beating occurs in 有時音 between past and present. In keeping with the idea
that ordinary time moves forward, I wanted there to be a forward movement in the
quantity of each component of the score itself. Thus, past has one fewer rhythm, pitch
parameter, and spoke per cycle than present. I chose to have an equal number
rhythms and pitch parameters in each section. Present was given five rhythms and
pitch parameters because five is inclusive of both Western and Buddhist ideas of
perception in the present in a way explained more in detail in section 11: present –

\textsuperscript{151} As discussed in section 07: bed, depending upon how one extrapolates – via the harmonic
series or via perfect fourths or fifths, for example – tuning systems can vary greatly.
this meant that *past* necessarily had four. Eight spokes per cycle was chosen because it provided the ability to make something very similar to the Dharma wheel with the rhythmic wheel. This eight could have been for either *past* or *present*, so I made an aesthetic decision that I would rather play in seven than nine. This also paid homage to the memory of the concert discussed in section 08: *past*. Since *past* transitions seamlessly into *present*, these cycles of seven and eight are played simultaneously. This transition space should last long enough that at least one full cycle is completed, although the full transition to *present* may actualize itself in the middle of a cycle.

Beating patterns and cycling are not limited to music. One of my favorite long form contours in experience through time is the phases of the moon on the first of the month through the course of a year or years, and its beating against the calendar. The beating isn’t perfect like the beating in the picture above because the Gregorian calendar isn’t perfectly regular. However, it is an interesting exercise to see how long it takes for the new moon to appear on the first of the month again.

The circadian rhythms of humans, mentioned in section 08: *past*, occur in cycles with a period of about 26 hours when “divorced from the influence of the 24-hour world outside.”152 When governed by daylight, our natural rhythms become 24-hour cycles, but many people operate on a 26-hour natural clock when placed in isolation.153 These rhythms can beat against the 24-hour day if one does not perceive the natural light cycle around us: many blind people “roll in and out of phase with the rest of society every few weeks.”154 La Monte Young speaks of the “twenty-seven-
hour day which he and [Marian] Zazeela began observing in the 1960s,” claiming that it was more in line with their natural sleep cycles.\textsuperscript{155} I am sure that the nodes, the points of confluence of those cycles, provide release from tension for those people operating on natural cycles that are longer than 24-hours, when they wake up at the same time as most other people.

I find another example of real-life beating when I walk to class every day. I live a four or five minute walk down Pine Street from Church Street. Every day I walk to class in the CFA on the same route. At a certain point on Pine Street, I have a multisensory experience of the beating of two against three when the sidewalk tiles shift slightly in length and for about thirty paces I walk at a pace of exactly three footsteps per two tiles.

This is a cycling pattern played out in three senses simultaneously. I see my stepping, the lines between sidewalk tiles, and the placement of my feet within the sidewalk tiles. They visually confirm that I am still moving at a rate of three steps per two tiles. I feel the concrete as I walk, and more specifically don’t feel the break in the concrete that means I stepped on a line between tiles and the pattern is broken. I hear the tapping of feet, but instead of grouping them into patterns of two like I often do when I walk,\textsuperscript{156} my mind groups them into patterns of three because three footsteps occur at the same rate of the patterns of two that I see played out on the ground as concrete slabs. In this way, three of my senses affirm a beating pattern of me alongside the environment in which I exist. As in the other examples, the

\textsuperscript{155} Potter 61.

\textsuperscript{156} I believe this has something to do with bipedality, but the question deserves more scholarship.
continuation of the expected patterns from the past causes happiness in the present moment when it plays out as expected and both cycles begin again simultaneously.

11: present

The present seems to be the only part of the nexus of ordinary time – past, present, and future – that is not accessible exclusively through thought. In the present humans have constant multisensory experience; through analysis of this sensory input we create meaning and memory. However, physiological and mental buffering time, explained later in this section, prevent humans from experiencing “the present” in the actual moment in which “the present” occurs. There is no such thing as absolute presence in the present because one cannot experience the present before it has become the past.

The majority of the present, as conceived of in the nexus of ordinary time, is sensory experience. The number of senses can be contested: a person with a physical disability may be missing one or more of the five senses typically associated with sensation, and the classical Buddhist system maintains that nonsensory mental processes or thoughts are another sense. However, for 有時音, I chose to melodically represent all of the five Western senses, and only those five, to create present. The parameters are explained in section 13: actualizing present.

The number five was chosen to be inclusively representative of both Buddhist and traditionally Western scientific notions about present sensory experience. There are six senses to the Buddhist, but there is no Western six-item aggregate that

represents the present or perception. However, there is a Buddhist five-item aggregate of the same nature: the five *skandhas*, the shifting processes that Buddhists contend create what many humans call self. In Sanskrit, the names of the five *skandhas* are *rupa*, *vedana*, *samjna*, *samskara*, and *vijnana*. The first is a form-based *skandha*, the next three are mental formations and factors, and the final is related to both.

*Rupa* is “‘material shape’ or ‘form’: the material aspect of existence.”\(^{158}\) This includes both the physical phenomena of the world outside of the body and the matter that makes up the body itself. There are two important clarifications to make at this point. First, the more important part about *rupa* is not its material presence, but its ability to be sensed. This immaterial quality is the criterion that determines if something can be called *rupa*. Second, Buddhists do not believe that every human conceives of the summation of physical matter in the universe as their body. A human being is made up of an aggregate of the five *skandhas* – it is partially *rupa*, but the *rupa* that makes it up is not all of the *rupa* that exists in the universe. *Rupa* is all matter that can be sensed. Humans are attached to both physical objects around us and the matter that we call “ours,” that is, the matter of the body. However, the *skandha* “*rupa*” refers only to the matter that each human believes makes up their body.

The body includes the physical material of the five sense organs. In traditional Western medicine and science, all five senses are associated with specialized neural receptors that create electrical responses to environmental stimuli, including variations in air pressure, heat, light, and chemical makeup. Although all five

receptors look physically different, they are similar in that they transduce energy or molecules received from the outside world into electric signals. These electrical signals, created by the receptors in response to environmental stimuli, physically travel to the brain via neural networks. This electrical signal transmission takes time and thus necessarily removes one from the absolute present.

Humans can sense electricity – it buzzes underneath our fingertips and in our ears and shocks us when we accidentally complete a circuit. For these reasons, think of electrical signals as rupa. However, the electrical signal received in the brain is as far as rupa takes us. There is a good amount of research on the fact that physiological responses to electric currents in the brain are correlated with experience, not simply sensory input but experience rooted in ontological framework – recognition that a form is a flower or a cookie or that a sound is being caused by the whistling wind. This leads to what is known in the field of perceptual physiology as the hard problem of consciousness; namely, “how do physiological responses become transformed into experience?” This problem is still unsolved in this field, perhaps because finding correlation between neural activity and reported experience is often not enough to determine the reason for the correlation, and thus the “how” or the “why.”

A Buddhist might answer that the human being is not simply form, a sack of meat and bones housed in skin and a number of chemical reactions in the brain creating decisions and consciousness, but rather that is it an aggregate of form (rupa)

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159 For my own brief summations of the sensory processes, based largely in the work of E. Bruce Goldstein, see Appendix D.


161 Goldstein 39.
and four other skandhas, three of which are purely mental. The what may be rupa – electrical signals in the brain correlated with experience and emotional response – but the why might better be ascribed to the other skandhas. Does the firing of electrons in the brain make volitional decisions? Or does something else, something besides physical form, make these decisions and cause the electrons to fire? To a Buddhist, the other skandhas begin doing the work where rupa stops.

Vedana is the first of the three mental skandhas and means sensation or feeling. Vedana is not “feelings” in the emotional sense of the word that an American might be familiar with, feelings like anger, sorrow, pride, pain, love, and irritation, to name a few. In the Abhidharma, an ancient and foundational Buddhist text, vedana is simply the “bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either pleasant, painful or neutral.”\(^{162}\) It determines if an experience is enjoyable, not enjoyable, or neither. When one tastes a bite of hir favorite dessert one has a pleasant feeling, and when one does not wait for the tray full of the aforementioned dessert to cool down and burns hir finger, one has an unpleasant feeling. When one is not experiencing any other feelings, one is experiencing a neutral feeling.\(^{163}\)

The third skandha is samjna, meaning “‘cognition,’ recognition and interpretation – including misinterpretation – of sensory or mental objects,”\(^ {164}\) and

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\(^{163}\) Thich Naht Hanh, a prominent Vietnamese Zen monk and peace activist, disagrees with the tripartite division of feelings done by the Abhidharma, saying that neutral feelings can become pleasant feelings with minimal effort. While meditating, one only has to recognize that one “[doesn’t] have a toothache, that [one’s] eyes are capable of seeing forms and colors” to create the arising of a pleasant feeling. Eventually, one’s neutral feelings are replaced entirely by pleasant feelings based in recognition of the good things one might otherwise take for granted. See Thich Nhãt Hanh, “Feelings and Perceptions,” *Being Peace*, ed. Arnold Kotler (Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 1987) 32.

\(^{164}\) Harvey 77.
includes each human’s “ideas or concepts about reality.”\textsuperscript{165} This is the \textit{skandha} that takes one’s sensory input, distinguishes it, and names it: I smell a rose, I hear wind, I feel amazement. When talking about ontological placement, both \textit{samjna} and \textit{vijnana}, discussed later, are at work. The written word is just ink lines on paper and the spoken word is just highly controlled variations in air pressure, but humans are able to draw meaning from them, meaning that is often the same as the creator’s intention. \textit{Samjna} recognizes that these black lines are words on paper, words meant for reading, and \textit{vijnana} accesses memory in the form of vocabulary in order to assign meaning to what one has distinguished as words.

The fourth \textit{skandha}, the final of the three mental factors, is made up of \textit{samskaras}, often defined as “constructing activities.” A \textit{samskara} is any of “a number of states which initiate action, or direct, mould and give shape to character,”\textsuperscript{166} including active states like determination, joy, hatred, and passive states like sensory stimulation. Perhaps the most notable \textit{samskara} is \textit{cetana}, a Sanskrit word meaning a mental factor that pushes the mind in a specific direction, toward a desired end. \textit{Cetana} is often translated as ‘will’ or ‘volition’; \textit{samskara} is often enough \textit{cetana} that it is sometimes simply translated as volition as well.

The fifth and final \textit{skandha} is \textit{vijnana}, often translated as “consciousness.” \textit{Vijnana} has the quality of discrimination; humans see both the component parts of a larger object, parts recognized by \textit{samjna}, and the object as a whole. Recognizing the sum of smaller objects as an object in its own right is one of the processes of \textit{vijnana}. \textit{Vijnana} is the \textit{skandha} most associated with the sense of self, and can be thought of

\textsuperscript{165} Hanh 33.

\textsuperscript{166} Harvey 77.
as basically the mindset of the person in question, some parts of which change from moment to moment and some parts of which recur often enough to be considered part of the person’s character. *Vijnana*’s “form at any moment is set up by the other mental [aggregates], but in turn it goes on to determine their pattern of arising – in a process of constant interaction,”¹⁶⁷ meaning that one’s consciousness is both created by and reinforces or changes one’s mental patterns and processes. One’s volition influences one’s consciousness, and one’s consciousness in turn influences one’s volition; similar interactions occur with the other *skandhas* as well. Consciousness allows one to take sensory input and place it within the context of memory and societal framework – I see red, I hear sirens, there is a fire truck going by. *Vijnana* is different from *samjna* in that it references memory and knowledge to create a frame in which to interpret sensory input.

To summarize, the five *skhandas*, the aggregates that create what is called a human being, are *rupa* (form), *vedana* (positive or negative feeling or sensation), *samjna* (perception or differentiation), *samskara* (mental constructions including volition), and *vijnana* (consciousness). Both the five *skandhas* and the five sense organs are lenses through which one perceives the outside world, if there is an outside world at all; mental formations and constructions color one’s worldview to an large degree, much like the eyes’ inability to perceive light outside of the visible spectrum leaves one with a constant inability to see what is truly happening.

Goldstein speaks of a three part process of perception, consisting of perception, recognition, and action: one perceives that the color on the wall is

¹⁶⁷ Harvey 77-78.
different in one particular area, one recognizes that the differently colored shape is a spider, one decides to go take a closer look.\textsuperscript{168} Although perception and recognition may seem to be the same process, they are actually two separate links in the perceptual chain, as evidenced by the famous case of the man with prosopagnosia, or face blindness, who mistook his wife for a hat. The man in question could perceive an object’s component parts but could not determine its function as a single object.\textsuperscript{169}

Goldstein also states that all three of these processes – perception, recognition, and action – are informed by prior knowledge. These three processes can be seen in some ways as reflections of the skandhas just discussed: the sensory reception itself is rupa, the perception that there is both white and black is samjna, the recognition that the black is a spider is partially samjna and mostly vijnana, because it draws heavily on previous knowledge, and the volitional decision to take a closer look is samskara. The five physical sense organs are part of rupa, but other perceptual processes like recognition and volition, the hard question of consciousness, can be seen as alternate wordings of the other skandhas.

Because of the time it takes for the physiological processes correlated with sensation and recognition to occur, the present in which one experiences stimulus is not the present of the moment in which that sensory stimulus was created. Perception is indirect. Although one may feel that one is in “direct contact with the

\textsuperscript{168} Goldstein 8-9.

\textsuperscript{169} The man could once described a glove he was given in the following way: “A continuous surface, infolded on itself. It appears to have five outpouchings, if this is the word.” He went on to describe that it might hold coins of five different sizes. Though the object in question, the glove, was quite universal in human society at the time, he was unable to recognize it. See Oliver W. Sacks, “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,” \textit{The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales} (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998) 8-22.
environment… this feeling of directness is largely an illusion.”¹⁷⁰ An individual does not experience the world around hir, but rather experiences electrical signals triggered by outside stimulus and interpreted by the brain. These processes, the movement of electrical signals, take time. Placing sensory input within one’s ontology removes one from actual experience, and causes one to be constantly living in the past. Unconsciously trying to decipher experience creates a buffer between the senses and the self, causing one to be unable to actually live in the present moment. Dogen would probably argue that since one cannot experience the past, the future, or the absolute reality of the present, one should do away with the notion of this nexus of ordinary time and instead live in deep intimacy with and absolute presence in one’s own experience.

12: the present

In the present, I am sitting quietly with my housemate. Our breaths are beating against each other. I breathe for a slightly longer time than he does. I can hear him falling out of phase with me. My typing takes up much of the sonic space, but the creaking of the pipes (really quite loud in my house, louder than any place I’ve lived before) and the cars that go by are also audible. I see the page in front of me, experience my fingers on the keys and watch as my feeling and seeing senses are stimulated simultaneously. The line lengthens; I feel the keys depressing like they have so many times before. I don’t have to look at my hands anymore, so I can watch my fingers’ movements play themselves out onscreen. Joey just sighed. He is

¹⁷⁰ Goldstein 68.
working on the crossword. It’s only a Tuesday but I just finished it and it’s much harder than usual. I feel for him. I wonder if he will ask me something about the crossword again (he already has today). There is a couch beneath me, and I think it’s kind of broken because I am slowly sinking down the back and towards the floor. I notice that Joey and I take a breath at the same time, but he doesn’t. He’s deep in the crossword. He cracks a knuckle as a truck begins to go by. I can hear the lower end of its rumble for about ten seconds.

This has become a memory by the time I have written it. In trying to decipher the meaning of the sounds, I have forgotten to listen to them.

13: actualizing present

Let us now examine how the pitch parameters and rhythmic wheels in present are reflective of present experience. As mentioned in section 11: present, I chose to use five pitch parameters and rhythms because there are both five skandhas and five senses. I chose to translate the senses instead of the skandhas into pitch parameters because the senses all have physical processes associated with them that could be mimicked or drawn upon to create the parameters. The parameters are meant to be visual interpretations of the physiological processes explained in more detail in Appendix D.

Musicians actualize both the five sense and the five skandhas in the playing of the pitch parameters. The senses are represented graphically in the pitch parameters, and the skandhas are present in a more interactive way, focused on the cognition and realization of the score. While playing, a musician differentiates the black and white
making up the physical pitch parameter (*samjna*), contextualizes it within hir memory (*vijnana*),\(^{171}\) decides how to interpret it (*samskara*), and finally plays it in the context of the sounds ze hears around hir.

In my discussion of each pitch parameter, I will first be describing the visual stimulus, the actual lines and other symbols that make up the parameter, and then will describe ways in which musicians might interact with the pitch parameter in the present to interpret and play it. As in sections 06: *score & performance* and 09: *actualizing past*, the pitch parameters given are projections of what the Mobius strip would look like if its single surface was laid out flat. The first parameter is shown below.

![Figure 13.1: The first pitch parameter in present.](image)

This pitch parameter represents sight. The circle is meant to stand for the eye itself. The wave going through the circle is the light waves coming in and the optic nerve going out to the brain. Since the “ends” of the wave attach to each other in the Mobius strip, the wave coming in and the wave going out are one single wave. A musician cannot know where the optic nerve stops and the light wave begins again. I deliberately created this ambiguity to stress the non-duality of observed and observer, the light wave and the optic nerve.\(^{172}\)

\(^{171}\) For example, one might interpret the oscillations parameter in *past* as a sine wave, or the feeling parameter in *present* as fingerprints.

\(^{172}\) For more on the non-duality of observed and observer, see Marchaj 153 – 154.
A musician will probably interpret this parameter similarly to how ze interpreted the oscillations parameter from past. However, unlike the oscillations parameter, which is simply a wave, the sight parameter has a circle that breaks up the regular back and forth motion. This circle cannot be interpreted as pitch-scale through time because it moves “backwards” on the Mobius strip. In this way, I imagine that this parameter will sound similar to the aforementioned pitch parameter from past, but with the occasional percussive point created by the circle. This was intentional – as mentioned in section 06: score & performance, the motion through 有時音 is meant to be a slow decontextualization of familiarity for the attendees. The similarity of this pitch parameter and the oscillations pitch parameter allows musicians to sound like they are varying melodic motifs in present that they have already established in past.

The second parameter stands for the sense of feeling.

Figure 13.2: the second pitch parameter in present.

The designs are reminiscent of the pads of the fingers. Fingers do not constitute the entirety of the skin, and thus are not the entirety of the sense of feeling, However, they are highly important, as evidenced by their larger representation in the processing area of the brain despite their small size. As with fingerprints, the ovoid objects on the parameter are each slightly different.

\[^{173}\text{Goldstein 333 – 334.}\]
Two interpretations of this pitch parameter immediately stand out to me. One involves very slow movement horizontally, with the parameter as a whole taking up twenty or thirty cycles, exploring the many different nearly parallel lines as nearly parallel harmony. The other involves use of the fingers in unexpected ways on the instrument. This could be in the form of tapping on the neck or fretboard of a string instrument, simply depressing the keys on a saxophone without blowing air through the horn, or putting one’s fingers down on the piano.

The parameter below is representative of the auditory process.

![Figure 13.3: the third pitch parameter in present.](image)

This parameter is a visual abstraction of the physiology of the sensory process in question. Very simply, to create the perception of sound, air pressure comes in to the ear through a tube, rattles three bones, goes through another tube, and ends up going to the brain in the form of electricity – this process is represented almost directly in the parameter.\(^{174}\) As with the parameter representing sight, the wave on the left and line on the right connect to each other, again representing the non-duality of observed and observer.

This parameter is the only parameter in present that does not repeat itself somehow. Several musicians have told me that when they want to play something fun and take some stage while playing 有時音, they choose to interpret this parameter.

\(^{174}\) For more detail, see Appendix D.
The combination of waves, parallel lines, vertical lines, horizontal lines, and jagged edges gives musicians the opportunity to play radically different sounds in quick succession. Like the parameter in *past* representing major life change, this parameter will probably stand out among the other parameters in *present*.

The fourth pitch parameter represents the sense of smell.

![Figure 13.4: The fourth pitch parameter in present.](image)

The two circles are the nostrils, inhaling all of the molecules in the air. This parameter is one that I sometimes read from top to bottom. When reading this way, I generally play two constant tones in a slow crescendo on the innermost rhythm. A musician has related to me that he generally interprets this pitch parameter as flurries on his saxophone because it reminds him of snowfall, which comes in flurries.

The final pitch parameter stands for the sense of taste.

![Figure 13.5: The fifth pitch parameter in present.](image)

The visual stimulus of the parameter itself is simple and repetitive, a series of boxes in two rows going all the way around the Mobius strip. This visual representation was chosen for two major reasons. First, the taste sensation only occurs in the mouth; the character ⊙, pronounced *guchi*, is the Japanese symbol for mouth. Second, the two rows of boxes are meant to be reminiscent of a set of teeth.
When interpreting this parameter, musicians have to decide how to actualize boxes. I typically play the electric guitar for at least fifteen minutes during each run of rehearsal, both in rehearsal and during the recital on April 4\textsuperscript{th}; when interpreting this parameter on the guitar, I generally stay within a pentatonic form on the fretboard known as a box.\textsuperscript{175} I try to keep my pattern quite consistent because the pitch parameter itself is so consistent. When playing piano, I occasionally read this parameter from top to bottom, like the smell parameter, and play as many keys as I can at once. Other musicians have told me their methods for interpreting this parameter, including box-based finger shapes on keyboard and saxophone and physically trying to represent the harsh angles present within the parameter. In the ways described in the last few pages, the pitch parameters in present (as well as those in past) can be played in ways ranging from highly literal pitch-scale through time interpretations to more abstract interpretations like fingerprints or flurries.

As mentioned in section 09: actualizing present, the specific rhythms in present were created as a unit, as opposed to the rhythms in past, which were created separately based on my varied musical experiences to fit into the same number of spokes. The rhythms in past were not created to be a compound rhythm because the creation of the past in the mind is a highly personalized activity. The rhythmic wheel for present is shown again below.

\textsuperscript{175} A box is created by a given note, a note on the same string two frets higher, and both of those fret positions on the next string.
For *present*, I first wrote the larger scale rhythmic pattern – the composite rhythm – that I wanted all of the parts together to create, then parsed that pattern into five different rhythms. The rhythms as a whole are intended to behave like a conversation, giving and taking space in a natural flow, one saying something and then another responding, two hung up on a single idea, one who likes to listen. The uppermost rhythm and the second rhythm from the top have a very distinct back and forth that defines much of the rhythmic complexity of *present*. The other three
rhythms are more repetitive. Present is based in rhythmic conversation because much of one’s experience in the present moment is based in interaction with other humans and the rupa nearby.

14: another present

In the present, I am sitting on a couch in a white room. Yellow fades in through the blinds, all pulled down, interrupted only by black, the shadow of the windowpane. Strings in the air, violins and violas, back and forth between two notes. Crashing gong. Typing. The music fades – I can now hear Caroline twisting her hair. She brings her hand down and the noise stops, but now the typing begins again. There is a pink tree in the corner, made of what appears to be tinsel, strung with a gold plastic boa and white Christmas lights. It is not alive. It was never alive. It occupies much of my visual space.

I am wearing my Uggs. My feet are warm even though it is late February and the house we are working in is a little drafty. I like the feeling of the fake wool. I rub my toes against it. My mouth tastes like chocolate, like the cupcake I was given when I arrived and have eaten half of since. I should take another bite.

I just did, followed by a nice swig of soy milk. My phone beeped in the middle of the gulp. I want to look at it but I won’t. Caroline’s fingernails scrape against the keys. She is moving them, not typing anything. Perhaps it is for concentration. I like the pattern of her sweater. It has wide blue and red stripes separated by a yellow sine wave on a green background. Three red shapes on the front. Roses? Negative space peace signs?
Caroline says she just hit the eighty page mark. I respond enthusiastically!

She likes to listen to film scores while writing. The music has swelled again. I find it hard to concentrate on anything else when music is playing. A minor, modal, string-based attention grabber with lots of upward motion. Very motivating. I can almost feel myself typing faster. Sirens go by, drowning out the strings, but are soon gone.

I look down at my timepiece, hanging on a metal chain around my neck. I have rehearsal in fifteen minutes. It is time to leave this for the time being.

15: future

As mentioned throughout the course of this thesis, to Dogen, the future is created in the mind as a projection of memories and present experience. Patterns that have occurred in the past are expected to continue. Similar but non-identical events are expected to occur, familiar sights or sounds or smells in slightly new and sometimes surprising contexts. To actualize these notions in 有時音, past and present needed to be projected to create future, so musicians use the scores for past and present and nothing else to play future. In future, a pitch parameter from past can be matched with a rhythm from present or vice versa, although musicians will probably find that their rhythm melodic motifs match a rhythm and pitch parameter from the same score.

The future is a projection and I expect similar types of events to occur in different contexts, but in my memory I cannot recall ever seeing something happen exactly the same way twice. Thus, I felt that during future, familiar tonal and
rhythmic patterns should appear in different relationships to each other. As discussed in section 06: score & performance, the top of the cycle no longer binds the musicians during future. In this section, both seven- and eight-spoke cycles are played simultaneously, and the musicians are encouraged to mentally “spin the wheel” as often as they would like. Any rhythmelodic motifs that musicians have developed during the course of past and present should be sonically familiar to the attendees while simultaneously being disorienting because of their different relationships to other rhythmelodic motifs being played at the same time.

16: projections

This section is comprised primarily of musical notation on a Western five-line staff showing possible interpretations of the score of 有時音. The section as a whole will show multiple variations of the rhythms at different density levels and pulse rates coupled with different readings of the pitch parameters in an effort to highlight the interpretability of the score.

The section is given in the format of sets of past, present, and future. In each projection of past and present, the first beat of the five-line notation aligns with the top of the wheel. The first set of three projections is, I think, the simplest way to interpret the score. As the projections continue, they become more complex, introducing new pulse rates, “backwards” readings of the wheels and parameters, and interpretations of the pitch parameters that are not pitch scale through time. Each projection is written for four parts; a page explaining the rhythms and pitch parameters taken by each part will precede each projection of past and present.
describe the rhythms chosen with the words “first,” “second,” and so on. These are counted from the top of the wheel; the rhythm consisting of a single X is the fourth rhythm in *past* and the fifth rhythm in *present*. I will describe pitch parameters similarly. Again, these are counted from the top of the score as given in this essay; the oscillations parameter is the first pitch parameter in *past*. Each projection of *future* is comprised exclusively of parts from the previous two projections: projection three is thus made up of the parts written for projections one and two, and projection six is made up of projections four and five.

It is also worth noting that each projection is hundreds, if not thousands, of times shorter than a rendering of 音往 would typically be. It is just long enough to show several cycles, making it possible to extrapolate variations from the skeleton provided.

For convenience, the score is shown again on the next two pages.
past
Projection 1: past

Voice 1 Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise.
Voice 1 Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Voice 2 Rhythm: The third rhythm read clockwise.
Voice 2 Pitch Parameter: The drone part of the third pitch parameter.

Voice 3 Rhythm: The third rhythm read clockwise.
Voice 3 Pitch Parameter: The static part of the third pitch parameter, playing with the drone in the second voice.

Electric Bass Rhythm: One half cycle of the second rhythm, read clockwise, followed by the fourth rhythm (allowing exploration of the second pitch parameter), the very end of the third rhythm, and back into the second rhythm.
Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter followed by the second, returning to the first.
Projection 1: past

Tennessee Mowrey

Voice 1

Voice 2

Voice 3

Electric Bass

Slow slide up neck rapidly

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Projection 2: present

Voice 1 Rhythm: The third rhythm read clockwise.
Voice 1 Pitch Parameter: The third pitch parameter, interpreted loosely as pitch-scale through time.

Voice 2 Rhythm: The fifth rhythm, either read at an extremely fast pace or with all notes played in one breath.
Voice 2 Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Voice 3 Rhythm: The second rhythm read clockwise.
Voice 3 Pitch Parameter: The fourth pitch parameter, playing the diagonal lines connecting the circles as pitch through time.

Electric Bass Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise with no optional X.
Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The fifth pitch parameter, interpreting the stacked boxes as perfect fifths.
Projection 2: *present*

Tennessee Mowrey
Projection 3: future

Tennessee Mowrey
Projection 4: past

Soprano Rhythm: The third rhythm read counterclockwise, played relatively half as fast as the rhythms in Projection 1.¹⁷⁶

Soprano Pitch Parameter: The drone part of the third pitch parameter.

Alto Rhythm: The third rhythm read counterclockwise as above.

Alto Pitch Parameter: The static part of the third pitch parameter.

Electric Guitar Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise, played half as fast as Voice 1 in Projection 1.

Electric Guitar Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Electric Bass Rhythm: The third rhythm read clockwise, played twice as fast as Voice 2 in Projection 1.

Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

¹⁷⁶ This is the same rhythm as the second rhythm read clockwise with the optional X.
Projection 4: *past*
Projection 5: present

Soprano Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise.
Soprano Pitch Parameter: The fifth pitch parameter, trying to outline the boxes with
pitch through time and occasionally paying homage to the upper row of boxes.

Alto Rhythm: The second rhythm read clockwise.
Alto Pitch Parameter: The third pitch parameter, interpreted loosely as pitch-scale
through time. The triplets are the three jagged lines in the middle of the
parameter.

Electric Guitar Rhythm: The fourth rhythm read clockwise at an extremely slow rate.
Electric Guitar Pitch Parameter: The fourth pitch parameter, interpreted from top to
bottom as two notes starting soft and growing louder.

Electric Bass Rhythm: The fourth rhythm read clockwise, at the rate of three quarter
notes per spoke.
Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale
through time.
Projection 5: *present*

Tennessee Mowrey
Projection 6: future

Tennessee Mowrey
Projection 7: *past*

Soprano Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise, played with a pulse rate of 3.
Soprano Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, mostly interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Alto Saxophone Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise, played at half speed compared to Voice 1 in Projection 1.
Alto Saxophone Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Trombone Rhythm: The fourth rhythm, read so that each cycle is two bars long.
Trombone Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter for the first two bars and the second pitch parameter for the second two bars.

Electric Bass Rhythm: The first rhythm read counterclockwise: this is not the same as Voice 1 in Projection 1 read backwards. Note that the rest still appears at the beginning of the pattern because, no matter the direction in which one reads, the top spoke is still empty.
Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter, interpreted as pitch-scale through time.
Projection 7: *past*

Tennessee Mowrey
Projection 8: *present*

Soprano Rhythm: The fourth rhythm read clockwise, played with a pulse rate of 5.

Soprano Pitch Parameter: The fifth pitch parameter, moving back and forth between rows of teeth.

Alto Saxophone Rhythm: The fifth rhythm read clockwise, where each cycle lasts one sixteenth-note.

Alto Saxophone Pitch Parameter: The third pitch parameter, mostly interpreted as pitch-scale through time.

Trombone Rhythm: The third rhythm read clockwise, played with a pulse rate of 3.

The rhythmic density of this part is halved in part of Projection 9: *future*.

Trombone Pitch Parameter: The first pitch parameter interpreted very slowly as pitch-scale through time: the musician does not reach the eye at the center of the parameter.

Electric Bass Rhythm: The first rhythm read clockwise.

Electric Bass Pitch Parameter: The second pitch parameter, interpreted as fingerprints and extrapolated to mean placing fingers upon the physical instrument itself.
Projection 8: *present*

Tennessee Mowrey

Soprano

Alto Saxophone

Trombone

Electric Bass

Tapping fingers against the fretboard and on the pickups
Projection 9: future

Tennessee Mowrey

Soprano

Alto Saxophone

Trombone

Electric Bass

Tapping fingers against the fretboard and on the pickups
17: experience

The fourth and final section of 有時音, experience, represents experiencing *uji* and follows a sudden musical break into unpulsed time. At the very end of *future*, to cue the transition to *experience*, I say a few words into a microphone. The exact script for these words is not set; instead, as with the music, I have a general framework for what to say that comes out differently in every rehearsal. Essentially, I say that humans think about the past, the present, and the future, but to truly experience all we have to do is just stop. However, I try to enunciate my words such that many are subsumed into the general sonic texture of 有時音, and the words “past,” “present,” and “future,” stand out like percussive strikes. On the word “stop,” all musicians cease playing and the bed of tonality rings in the space.

This break is representative of the mental shift that occurs between experiencing in ordinary time and experiencing *uji*. The pulse is constant through *past*, *present*, and *future* – its disappearance cognitively shifts the attendees. *Experience* is in unpulsed time because, according to Marchaj (and he is one of the few people I’ve spoken to or read who I’m sure can experience *uji*), time ceases while experiencing *uji*. There is no pulse: no seconds, no minutes, no hours, days, weeks, months, or years. There is simply the moment. The musicians are no longer bound by a single pulse, and are free to express themselves whenever and with whatever pulse they desire.

Experiencing *uji* means living deeply and intimately in the now, acting without hiding behind an analytic buffer. Imagine the following: while walking down

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177 Marchaj 150.
the street, one notices a rose and decides to take a few seconds to look at it. In ordinary time, one might be rushing to get to work or thinking about dinner plans or the weekend getaway one has planned, even while trying to singlemindedly view the flower. While experiencing *uji*, if the flower is being examined, there is only the flower. The moment is the flower, not the simultaneous examination of the flower and one’s mental projection of one’s dinner plans.

To actualize this singleminded focus on the moment at hand, the score of *experience* reads, “Find a friend /// Don't let a flower be a flower among a bed of flowers / Let its color alone dazzle you both /// Repeat until finished.” This encourages musicians to have a moment with someone else, whether it is an attendee or another musician. While right in front of this person (and this is why the concert needs to be small and intimate), the musician makes eye contact with hir and explores one rhythm and pitch parameter. Instead of having each rhythm-melodic line subsumed into the textural space generally created by 有時音, as happens in *past, present, and future*, each attendee is able to focus deeply on the line being played specifically for hir. This is a multisensory experience of the intimate one-to-one connection between observer and flower – the attendee is able to see, hear, and feel the music being created for hir.

It is also meant to be similar to the Zen idea of direct transmission, the way that enlightenment is passed from teacher to student, because the enlightenment experience can be thought of in many ways as experiencing *uji* as opposed to ordinary time. Transmission is a deeply individual experience in which the student attains the

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178 The space between phrases on the score is represented in this quotation: each line break is translated as “/.” For the true score, see section 06: score & performance.
metaphorical skin, flesh, bones, and marrow of hir teacher. The student is not one student of many in a classroom. Rather, ze is the sole pupil (at least for that moment) of the teacher, and transmission is given directly to hir. Similarly, during experience, if the musicians do lose themselves to the music and begin experiencing *uji*, they will be urging the attendees through actions and connection, not words, to have a detachment from pulse and a deep connection to their own experience.

Whether or not one is experiencing ordinary time or *uji*, one is still experiencing the same physical reality. A flower that one passes by on the street on the way to work is the same flower that one would experience deeply in *uji*. Thus, the musicians in experience should try to use rhythm melodic motifs that they have played previously in the concert, sounds that will be sonically recognizable to the attendees. However, the musicians are encouraged to extend the life of each note they play – this is another reason for the lack of pulse.

This individualization of sound, the transmission from person to person, comes from the idea that experiencing *uji* is not being absolutely present in the present, because that is not possible, as discussed in section 11: present. It is rather being fully intimate with one’s own experience. A given individual’s experience, due to the subjectivity of perception, exists only for the person in question. The music in this section thus had to be focused on each individual attendee rather than the group of attendees as a whole. Each rhythm melodic line is made for one person and should take up the whole of hir individual experience while it is occurring, hopefully allowing hir a moment of unbuffered experience.

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179 Acknowledging that like all objects, a flower is inherently empty.
In a larger-scale way, the sonic texture of 音 in past, present, and future is similar to the constant chattering of the mind during the ordinary experience of time. This chattering of the mind is what meditation seeks to silence. With the break into experience, into the enlightened experience of 无, the constant creation of ideas by the mind stops. All that is left in one’s mindscape is the Buddha Nature, reflected sonically in the bed of tonality and the musicians’ ability to play their inner melodies without adhering to the framework given by the score in the previous three sections.

To finish experience, and thus the playing of 音 itself, the musicians walk offstage when they feel that they are finished playing. This happens slowly; after several minutes, the final musician leaves and the bed of tonality is the only part of 音 still ringing in the space.

18: conclusion

In the Shobogenzo, Dogen proposes a frame in which to view the “passage” of time that is quite different from the way in which many people conceive of time, a frame centered around the concept of 无. The word 无, even in its linguistics, represents the fundamental unity of time and existence in Dogen’s thought. To Dogen, time is not a tripartite nexus of past, present, and future. Rather, it is the eternal present, a change stage governed by laws of causality and actualized in a process that humans call time.

None of the parts of the nexus of ordinary time described above are accessible to humans within our experience. The past is created in each human’s mind in the form of memory, subjective interpretations of personal experience. It is not accessible
to humans outside of the realm of thought and remembrance. The future is created in
the mind as a projection of memory and current experience. Any ideas about what the
future may hold are simply ideas. Even the absolute present is inaccessible to humans.
The buffering time created by both physiological processes and ontological placement,
the movement of electrical currents from the sense organs to the brain and within the
brain itself, removes one’s perception from the present in which the sensation
occurred. Since one cannot experience the past, the present, or the future, all that one
really has is one’s own experience in the now. Deep intimacy with this experience
allows one to move beyond the mental creations of past, present, and future, and
experience uji.

I created a piece of music called 有時音 to represent these conceptions of
time, both the linear model and the model of the eternal present. It begins in past,
transitions seamlessly though present and future, and has a hard break into experience.
The first three sections adhere to periodic demarcations of time observed by all
musicians, just as the experience of ordinary time is pulsed by seconds, hours, days,
or more. Experience has no pulse binding all musicians because the sense of forward
movement to time does not exist while one is experiencing uji.

I felt that 有時音 had to be a highly indeterminate piece of music in order to
truly represent the school of thought in which it is based. In Soto Zen, the daily
activities of an enlightened person are enlightenment practice. Awareness of and
responsiveness to one’s experience of the world are intrinsically reflected in one’s
actions. Individual actions in the moment are expressions of the way in which one
perceives the world. These are highly personalized, and so I did not feel comfortable prescribing every choice the musicians made in concert.

This indeterminacy was actualized with the creation of graphic notational system designed to be highly interpretable, made up of rhythmic wheels, pitch parameters on Mobius strips, and written instructions. The rhythmic wheels and pitch parameters were deliberately created to not imply beginning or end points, rhythmic density level, relative pitch-scale, timbral quality, duration of each sonic event, and direction in which to read. The pitch parameters in *past* are visual representations of the ways that humans create the past in the mind; the rhythms are based in divisions of seven beats that I have come across in my past musical experiences. In *present*, the pitch parameters are visual abstractions of the five sensory processes and the rhythms are a conversation, standing for the interaction with the outside world that is an integral part of present experience.

In keeping with Zen ideas about non-duality, I hope with the playing of 有時音 to subvert common dichotomies of performer and audience member that may exist in many attendees’ minds. This is achieved in a number of ways explored in section 06: *score & performance* – most notably with soft lighting, the placement of chairs onstage for attendees, the musicians’ sitting in the aforementioned chairs, and the ability of the attendees to change seats throughout the course of the concert.

有時音 strives to be “useful” in the manner described by Cage and elaborated on in section 05: *indeterminacy*. Its playing is not supposed to be the rendering of a preconceived piece of music; it is rather the spontaneous creation of a mutable sonic area-space that helps one to experience *uji*. 有時音, while played, is a non-verbal
communication of the value of experiencing uji rather than experiencing ordinary time. In the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen seems to be saying that humans typically view time in a certain way – the linear model – but that way should be deconstructed and replaced with a view of time that is intrinsically bound up with physical reality in the form of an eternal present. Similarly, I hope that an attendee may prefer the tranquility of experience to the hectic chattering of the mind present in past, present, and future, and that this in turn may cause hir to want to quiet hir mind.

Additionally, the interpretability of the score allows musicians to lose themselves in music and nonverbally communicate uji. Marchaj says that every action that one takes is a part of the creative process that intrinsically presents one’s understanding of the world, losing oneself in music is an easy way for the layperson to have the intimacy with hir own experience that is uji, and while one is experiencing uji, one radiates it: Dogen simply putting down the pen and making a meal was an expression of uji because Dogen continually experienced uji.\(^\text{180}\) Thus, it is not only the structure and framework of 有時音 that non-verbally communicates ideas about uji. The musicians’ choices in the moment within the framework of the score are their expressions of self; when this self has been lost to the music and the musician is no longer thinking or choosing but is simply doing, hir actions are uji. While observing a musician that has lost hirself in the music, I hope that an attendee will want to lose hirself in a similar way, whether in music or another manifestation of the creative process.

\(^{180}\) Marchaj 160, 164.
Above all, I hope that attendees will walk out of a rendering of 有時音 with a deeper appreciation of their own experience in the now and a desire to become more intimate with that experience in the only time that exists, the eternal present.
Appendix A: Translations

Genjo Koan

“Once firewood is reduced to ashes, it cannot return to firewood; but we should not think of ashes as the potential state of firewood or vice-versa. Ash is completely ash and firewood is firewood. They have their own past, future, and independent existence.”\(^{181}\)

“A stick of firewood, once reduced to ashes, cannot once again revert to being a stick of firewood. Nevertheless, you should not hold onto the opinion that the ashes are the future of that which the stick was the past. What you need to understand is that, when firewood is persisting in the physical state of being firewood, there will be a before and there will be an after. Although there is a before and an after, there is a now which is cut off from ‘before’ and ‘after’. While ashes persist in the physical state of being ashes, they will have their ‘after’ and their ‘before’.

After a stick of firewood has turned to ashes, just as it does not once again become firewood, so after someone dies, he does not come back to life again.”\(^{182}\)

“Firewood becomes ashes and cannot become firewood again. However, you should not think of ashes as the subsequent and firewood as the prior [of the same thing]. You should understand that firewood abides in its own state as firewood, and has [its own] prior and subsequent. Although it has [its own] prior and subsequent, it is cut

\(^{181}\) Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 2.

\(^{182}\) Trans. Nearman 33.
off from prior and subsequent. Ashes are in their own state as ashes and have a prior and subsequent.”\textsuperscript{183}

“Kindling becomes ash, and cannot become kindling again. However, we should not see the ash as after and the kindling as before. Know that kindling abides in the normative state of kindling, and though it has a before and after, the realms of before and after are disconnected. Ash, in the normative state of ash, has before and after. Just as that kindling, after becoming ash, does not again become kindling, so after dying a person does not become alive again.”\textsuperscript{184}

“You must understand that a burning log – as a burning log – has before and after. But although it has past and future, it is cut off from past and future.”\textsuperscript{185}

“Once firewood turns to ash, the ash cannot turn back to being firewood. Still one should not take the view that is ash afterward and firewood before. You should realize that although firewood is at the dharma-situation of firewood, and that this is possessed of before and after, firewood is beyond before and after. Ashes are at the dharma-situation of ashes, and possess before and after. Just as firewood does not revert to firewood once it turns to ash, man does not return to life after his death.”\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{183} Trans. Cook 67.
\textsuperscript{184} Trans. Cleary 33.
\textsuperscript{185} Trans. Masunaga, “The Standpoint of Dogen…,” section 2.
“An ancient Buddha once said: ‘Being-time stands on the highest peak and lies on the bottom of the deepest ocean, being-time is the shape of demons and Buddhas, being-time is a monk’s staff, being-time is a hossu, being-time is a round pillar, being-time is a stone lantern, being-time is Taro, being-time is Jiro, being-time is earth, being-time is sky.’”\textsuperscript{187}

“An ancient Buddha said:

‘For the time being stand on top of the highest peak.
For the time being proceed along the bottom of the deepest ocean.
For the time being three heads and eight arms.
For the time being an eight- or sixteen-foot body.
For the time being a staff or whisk.
For the time being a pillar or lantern.
For the time being the sons of Zhang and Li.
For the time being the earth and sky.’”\textsuperscript{188}

“A former Buddha once said in verse:

‘Standing atop a soaring mountain peak is for the time being
And plunging down to the floor of the Ocean’s abyss is for the time being;

\textsuperscript{187} Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 68. Footnotes in Nishiyama and Steven’s work indicate that the ancient Buddha is Zen Master Yakusan Igen (d. 834), a hossu is a fly whisk, and Taro and Jiro are common Japanese names.

\textsuperscript{188} Trans. Welsh and Tanahashi.
Being triple-headed and eight-armed is for the time being
And being a figure of a Buddha standing sixteen feet tall or sitting eight feet high is for the time being;

Being a monk’s traveling staff or his ceremonial hossu is for the time being
And being a pillar supporting the temple or a stone lantern before the Meditation Hall is for the time being;

Being a next-door neighbor or a man in the street is for the time being
And being the whole of the great earth and boundless space is for the time being.”

“The Zen master (Yueh-shan) says: ‘Standing on the peak of a high mountain is uji. Diving to the bottom of the deep ocean is uji. The one with three heads and eight arms is uji. He who stands one jo and six or eight haku is uji. The staff and hossu are uji. The pillar and lamp are uji. You and your neighbor are uji. The great earth and vast sky are uji.’”

“Time-present is standing on the mountain heights.
Time-present is sinking to the depths of the ocean.
Time-present is an angry demon, time-present is a Buddha.
Time-present is a formal ceremony, time-present is the temple compound.
Time-present is an everyday person, time-present is pervading the whole Universe.”

\[189\] Trans. Nearman 108.
\[190\] Trans. Masunaga, “Uji: The Time-Being.”
The world of life and death and everything in between them is being-time; it continually exists, actualizing itself in your present experience. Everything exists in the present within yourself.\textsuperscript{192}

If [beings of all sorts] did not make every effort to flow on, not even a single thought or thing would ever manifest: nothing would continue on.\textsuperscript{193}

\textbf{“Being-time means that time is being; i.e. ‘Time is existence, existence is time.’\textsuperscript{194}}

\textbf{“The phrase ‘for the time being’ implies that time in its totality is what existence is, and that existence in all its occurrences is what time is.”}\textsuperscript{195}

\textbf{“[O]ne blade of grass, every single object, each living thing is inseparable from time. Time includes every being and all worlds.”}\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{192} Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 70.
\textsuperscript{193} Trans. Nearman 114.
\textsuperscript{194} Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 68.
\textsuperscript{195} Trans. Nearman 109.
\textsuperscript{196} Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 69.
“Since there is nothing but just this moment, the time-being is all there is… Each moment is all being, is the entire world. Reflect now whether any being or any world is left out of the present moment.”

“‘Passing’ is not what spring is, but refers to the passage of the springtime; hence, it is a transition that is now being actualized during the time of spring.”

“Spring… is the actualization of the wind and sunshine of spring.”

197 Trans. Welsh and Tanahashi.
199 Trans. Nishiyama and Stevens, vol. 1, 70.
Tennessee Mowrey: I was hoping to ask you a couple of questions and then maybe talk about coming up for a day or two in January. But we can do that in that order.

Konrad Ryushin Marchaj: OK

TM: First off, I wanted to ask how you think of time, how you conceive of the past, the present, and the future.

KRM: How I think about it is probably in exactly the same way that everybody else thinks about it. I think my appreciation of it has shifted, I would say radically, through the practice of meditation because through there it’s in training the mind or engaging the mind in a particular way that you can verify for yourself that the sense of time and the passage of time is truly an illusory process that has to do with this idea of an observer or sustaining or maintaining an idea of an observer that somehow sees other things move vis a vis something that seems to be constant, this referential mind. But in the moments when that gets released, meaning when we are able to let go, to stop investing in that solid reference point, and get intimate with the experience itself, time ceases. Really, time stops. Time becomes a non-entity. In the intimacy with whatever it is [that you (1:53)] may shift your mind to or become completely focused on, in that breakdown of the subject-subject duality, there is no experience of time. There is no sense of passage of time. There is kind of a solidification (2:10) that
happens, if you will, or not happens. A solidification is revealed where that reference of time being equal to being is actually what that experience is. And then when we leave that behind, when we shift that mind back to the conventional way of operating, then you see, you can track or see the passage of something vis a vis yourself as you’re maintaining this dualistic perspective of the particular observer then you being, moving against that. (2:51) So, it’s not the understanding because I understand it like everybody else – I mean, I understand I only have the moment, that everything is happening in the moment, and I understand that past is essentially a false process, that memory is nothing but a particular thought, and so it is with the future. So in terms of not a philosophical approach, but an observational approach, a phenomenological approach, I only always have the present moment, and the picture of the past or the future is only accessible to me through thought, through a memory or through an anticipation (3:32).

TM: Yes, certainly. Building on that, would you say… so all of us have our memories of things that have happened – or maybe that’s assuming too much, but I assume that you have these memories of your life as well.

KRM: Sure.
TM: Say that two different people have two different memories of the same event, or the same time-space-area that they were both a part of, but the two memories are different. Is there one that is more valid than the other (4:08)?

KRM: No, no, never. And you don’t even have to go to the past, Tennessee. I mean, if you sit in the same room with a person at this particular moment, there is no objective reality that you can point to. That definitely is not Buddhist. It’s just any deep… anybody who really looks at this nature of what is available to us will see that when I am looking at what you’re looking at, there is no objective thing that is a sum total from which we are seeing different facets. There can’t be an objective thing. There can’t be a thing independent of the observer (4:56). And so the gestalt of the particular thing in my observation of it is one universe and the gestalt of another person’s observation of – we can’t even say “the same thing” – is another. Meaning, outside of mind we can’t speak of reality because that reality is not observable, not accessible to us, and within our minds, that reality is purely subjective. It’s purely based on my position, my previous positions, my habitual way of seeing it, and that’s been proven these days over and over and over again (5:37). And then about the validity – is one better than the other? – it would become purely a political issue. The more valid one would be the one owned by the more powerful person, but in terms of a measurable validity, no. And that’s where I would say radically, that even if the person is utterly crazy, it’s not that that is less valid than my observation of it because that’s a purely subjective state that we’re dealing with (6:11). Meaning that if you collude and assume that out of a hundred people that are in the same room, ninety-
nine have some sort of average or similar perspective and somebody else has less so, does that make it more valid? No. It just becomes more conventional.

TM: Do you think that there is some sort of objective reality that is being colored through a lens or do you think it’s entirely lens (6:46)?

KRM: It’s impossible. I can’t know. If there is, it’s not for me to know and I will never know anything about it. If it is objective in some separate sense, then it is not part of my experience… I mean, there is no such thing because the moment you bring it up it becomes an idea and it already becomes part of my experience. So, by the very nature of the fact that I don’t have access to it, it literally is of no… it’s not even that it’s nonexistent, it’s of no relevance to my experience. But the moment it becomes relevant to my experience, it already has appeared within my mind (7:26). So for me to think about things that are outside of the dimensions of this time and space – yes, they are there as an idea, as anything other than that, no, I don’t have access to it.

TM: That makes sense.

KRM: You must remember that this is not even that Buddhist, that most of the conclusions that are coming out of quantum physics are punctuating exactly this same thing. And that’s what’s screwing everybody up, because it seems that to speak of something existent apart from the observer is not profitable (8:04). It doesn’t help anybody, in any way. And even maybe going further, the way physics is pushing
things right now, is that it seems that it is actually impossible for things to exist without an observer. Postulation of them is theoretically potentially inviable these days.

TM: Certainly. And I do appreciate you saying that this isn’t totally Buddhism speaking here, but I’m not asking for the Buddhist perspective, I’m asking for your perspective.

KRM: Yeah, exactly, so in my mind, no. I don’t have any… Up to this point, I have never had any validation of some sort of objective reality which I have come in contact with… *he laughs*. It wouldn’t be objective if I came in contact with it! So no, I’ve never witnessed an objective reality (9:00).

TM: Recently, I’ve been thinking about this question, or had been for a little while and came to a conclusion, I thought, the question of “when does change happen?” I’d be curious to hear your initial response to the question, and then maybe I’ll talk a little about what I thought as well.

KRM: Again, it can only happen in the now, but the problem is that even in the now if you start analyzing the moment clearly you will recognize that existence of change or non-existence of change become problematic (9:42). Because, literally, if you just imagine, you do a mind experiment in which you take literally an atom and then you imagine the atom – and you can even diagram it if you want – in one particular
moment, and then there is the next moment, as some sort of a unit of existence. Right?

TM: Right.

KRM: What is the point of change (10:10)? If in one moment this atom is a particular configuration, let’s say A, and is state B is in the next moment, you either have to start breaking down the moments into smaller particles, but that doesn’t give you an answer to “when does the actual shift happen from A to B?” Because if in one moment, in moment A, the atom is in a state A, and in moment B it is in state B, you still haven’t postulated [when change happens], unless you’re saying that there is some sort of a magical non-time between A and B in which the shift is occurring (10:51), but then you’re just basically going into the realm of magic, because in reality you recognize that it can’t happen. Basically, if you look at the nature of things analytically, change is impossible. And so that kind of creates a paradox unless, unless, what we are observing as change is completely illusory. And this is where Buddhism comes through in a very, very real way. And, to some degree, can I verify that for you (11:25)? Yes, I can, meaning that I understand that the only way all of this – meaning what I’m seeing in front of me right now as I’m looking in the window – the only way that can exist in the way it is is because there’s absolutely nothing there. There is no intrinsic reality to any single atom. It is purely relatedness that I’m looking at, and that relatedness is continuous, and that’s the constant. But in a very real way, that avoids or slips through the cracks of the fact that nothing’s
actually changing because there’s actually nothing there. And the only thing that’s changing is the illusion that is connected to my habitual way of seeing reality (12:12). And that I can logically touch – what I’m talking about is the basic principles or philosophy of the Middle Way of Nagarjuna, who blows the whole thing apart by doing that type of analysis, by pointing out that you can’t, if you look closely at the nature of change, if you look at it closely enough you recognize it’s impossible for it to happen, but in the other sense it’s impossible for it to be denied. So how do you resolve that? And the resolution happened by recognizing all things as empty, all things as devoid of any inherent characteristic, inherent existence (12:51). And when that gets realized, you realize that everything then becomes OK. You can experience reality in the way you’re experiencing, and at the same time you recognize that what you’re experiencing isn’t actually what is there. And back to the Buddhist statement that things are not what they seem, but neither are they otherwise.

TM: Yes, the unity of those things. When I was thinking about it, eventually, after scratching my head for a while, I came to the idea that the question itself, “When does change happen?”, was flawed. The act of change and of entropy and switching to other forms is an intrinsic part of reality and is actualized through time (13:55).

KRM: It’s not that the question is flawed, Tennessee. Questions are never flawed. Questions just need to be pursued. Question is doubt. Question is not knowing. Question is actually Buddhism. Question is a state of non-coherence. It’s a question of nothing localized, if you will. It’s an opening. So there never are any problems
with questions as long as you don’t assume, as long as you remain within their
domain, and not collapse them into a response, a concrete response. And that’s again
what happens with much of the Middle Way principles is that in a very real way it is
an endless question that never settles into an answer (14:45). And that’s why the
philosophy of the Middle Way is the philosophy which is really not a philosophy, it
undermines all of the other philosophies but it doesn’t present you with a concrete
response of what these questions are actually leading to. It leaves you without a
reference system. It leaves you completely free. It leaves you within what the nature
of reality actually is, with no ultimate reference point for any of this (15:20).

TM: Why don’t you talk a little more about the Middle Way, because I’m not quite as
familiar with it as I could be.

KRM: It’s a very basic teaching of the Buddha that he presented as this place between
eternalism and nihilism that was trying to accompany his practice but in about the
second or third century AD, it became a major philosophical analytical movement led
by Nagarjuna, where he just mercilessly did the analysis of anything: of form, of
change, of suffering, of the teachings of Buddhism (16:00), pointing to this reality of
emptiness, of the fact that there isn’t, no matter what, that there just isn’t any place
within the nature of human experience or any experience within the universe that can
have any intrinsic existence. All things are “empty,” empty of inherent reality, and the
only thing that is possible is (and, again, it’s a tricky thing to say) relatedness, but it’s
not a relatedness between things because that postulates some inherent process. No,
the only thing is change. The only thing is utter and complete impermanence and ever-evolving conditions and relatedness (16:48). And that’s that Middle Path, which somehow presents the fact that things are not what they seem, that what you’re looking at right now is not what reality is, but at the same time it’s no different from that. And that’s that Middle Way. There is an approach to this that is recognizing everything that we’re experiencing as illusory, as a manifestation of our habitual habits and attachments (17:18). Underlying that, there is nothing there, nothing solid. Because if there was something solid, then literally, if you’re under analysis and through experience, the whole thing would come to a fleeting stop. If there was truly an atom or a thought or a principle that was invaluably constant, the universe would jam against it. If there was a single atom that was unchanging from moment to moment, that it wouldn’t change itself, if that existed anywhere within the universe the universe would freak. Nothing could relate to that thing; no change could happen around that thing if it was unchanging from moment to moment. And that’s basically the Middle Way approach, that is, as I said, both meditative and also experientially viable through meditation (18:18).

TM: I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about the chapter Uji in the Shobogenzo, and how you interpret it and what you think about it.

KRM: Yes, not much. It’s not one of the chapters that we’ve done formally here [at Zen Mountain Monastery]. Each year we take one of the chapters of Shobogenzo, we go at it formally. We really piece it apart word by word, we spend like three months
on it. We’ve never done “Uji,” partially because it is a really challenging chapter, partially because it’s a little bit more philosophical than most of the other ones of Dogen’s (19:00). I’ve read it many times. I mean, it’s sitting here an arm’s distance away, in my reach. I’ve read a bit of Heidegger, “Being and Time,” and studied some of the other philosopher’s treatment of what, obviously, everybody recognizes, this challenge, the challenge of what is the experience of time and what happens when we really become intimate with our experience (19:32). But, again, Dogen does it in way where his language… he speaks of the fact that he’s not speaking philosophically, that his access is being deeply intimate with his life. Whereas for most people, me, let’s say, I’ve had experience in meditation or in practice outside of the formal meditation where I can enter the state of samadhi where my experience is not separate from what it is that I am doing, so there is just doing, there is just activity, there is just meditation (20:15). And in those moments, indeed, it’s true. Time ceases. And the only way you know that is when you reemerge and recognize there is a gap, a gap in the continuity of your experience. But you must ask yourself: what does it look like? What does that experience look like to a truly enlightened person, a person where that sense of the observer is removed form the picture, and yet the conditioning, or the unfolding of the conditions, as time itself, as being itself, is available to them: that’s what it will sound like. When you start speaking from that vantage point, you will hear what Dogen is saying (20:51). So [Dogen’s writing] will be language, that is, a language that is based in time-being, a language that, if you will, travels through time. It’s a language of time-being itself. Now, to you and me, it sounds very normal although slightly challenging and confusing, but for Dogen, from where he’s
emerging, that creation, that creative process, is the process of time-bring itself. And that’s why it can throw us, sometimes you jam against it (21:27). It doesn’t make sense because we’re trying to grasp it from the vantage point of our conventional perspective, while he, very likely (I can’t prove it) is indicating that, he is communicating that, he is really that state that he is actually describing.

TM: You just mentioned there the creative process as being-time, and I was wondering if you could speak a little bit more about that. My thesis is the actualization of these conceptions through musical performance, so it very pertinent to what we’re doing here (22:09).

KRM: Well, to me creativity is anything and everything you’re doing. You don’t have to sublimate into any particular art practice. The way you move, the way you talk on the phone right now, is the creative process itself. And again, it's the creative process that presents what your understanding of the world is, how clear you are about the nature of your experience and the nature of the world, and you, in a sense, can’t hide it. And so there’s something very special about it (22:42). What Dogen is basically doing is that for his state of mind, his understanding, his view of the world, is not apart from the creative process, which for him in that particular moment is writing “Uji” or putting the pen down and going to the kitchen and making a meal. As long as he’s living within the reality of that intimacy, where there is no separation between his being and time, anything and everything he is doing is an expression of that intimate contact with time-being (23:20). And so it comes out as words, it comes
out as him sitting *zazen*, it comes out as him being with his monks. And he doesn’t shift in and out, he is just continuously radiating, if you will, that reality of his intimacy with himself. For each one of us, we do it to the degree to which we are either distinct, separate, ego-centric, or to the degree to which we have been able to realize that selflessness and that intimacy with our lives (24:00). And so that’s not to be judged. That’s, as a matter of fact, no… if you look at a history of art in the West, we don’t have a clue about looking at things like that, but for somebody who has an eye for it, you can tell. You can tell an artist when they’re deeply intimate with the work they’re doing. Not necessarily a known piece, but it’s the piece where you can recognize a certain sense of selflessness that is coming through in a very profound way (24:30).

TM: There was something that you had just said, a few words that I really liked there. I think you were talking about living in *ujis* as being intimate with yourself and having some sort of buffer removed between experience and action, some conceptual buffer or analytic buffer that we all do, and I was wondering if you could speak about the easiest way to help that buffer to disappear (25:19).

KRM: Yes, to me it starts with the breath. I mean, the moments of grace, as I call them, can happen in all sorts of circumstances but that’s completely unpredictable. I think we do it, that moment of upending our conventional way of seeing reality, and what it feels like is we are suddenly released, released from the prison, if you will, of our referentiality or ego-centrism (25:56). And when that happens, it is tremendously
releasing although sometimes it can be terrifying because it feels like a complete loss of control. And so that happens to most of us, as a matter of fact it probably happens to all of us more frequently than we realize: we just very quickly incorporate that into our normal way of behaving and bring it under control. But with Buddhism, the unique contribution of Buddhism is that it takes it out of the hands of chance and basically says, “You can practice that. You can practice that intimacy (26:32).” And where does it start? It started with the breath, it started with disconnecting, radically extracting yourself from the conventional, collusive nature of our society and our being embedded in that, becoming completely still, placing all of our awareness on something as basic as the breath, and observing this chaotic grasping of the mind which is trying to continuously situate itself and create the passage of time (27:00). And you do that by observing, releasing, and coming back to the intimacy with the immediate breath. And at first, it all feels like “I’m here, I’m watching the breath, I’m here, I’m watching the breath, there’s the observing mind, there’s the experience of the breath.” But as you think that, something starts to happen, you start releasing that grasping, and there are moments, and stretches, and then long periods of time where you really are able to just release, release and be in the immediacy where that equation of what’s happening to me and what I am doing are exactly the same thing (27:39). There is not an iota of difference between them. And then once you gain that sense of intimacy within the breath, you can start observing it and find that it’s accessible everywhere. So you can’t, at a certain point, differentiate between this process of something happening to me and me doing the thing that is happening to me, or vice versa. They’re always an instantaneous moment of time and they’re always an
instantaneous moment of intimacy where the totality of my experience happening, creating, can’t be separated (28:15).

TM: I was wondering if you saw a forward motion to time or a motion to time or any sort of movement in that way.

KRM: Say it again, I’m not sure I caught the beginning of it.

TM: Is there a forward motion to time? Or a motion to time? I don’t mean to put the word forward on it.

KRM: Yeah, I’m not sure I can tune into what you’re asking (28:53). I don’t. I perceive motion, if that’s what you’re saying, but at the same time within any situation I can, these days, experience in complete stillness. Even the most chaotic circumstances, emotionally, physically, the degree to which my awareness is available and the degree to which I can rest within that awareness and remain at the centerpoint of the activity, there is complete stillness there. There is no sense of time passing, no sense of movement, there is no sense of a differentiation, while at the same time I can see things that are happening around me and discern the differences (29:48).

TM: Also, what you had been saying before about sitting and watching your breath and the process of meditation as traditionally defined as meditation. I was wondering
if there were other actions that people engage in more regularly than they might… a person who hasn’t acquired a meditative practice – what are the actions that they take in your eyes that help them to achieve that state (30:20)?

KRM: I think that that happens, again, by chance. Not by chance, but in the areas of any field of expertise. If you have somebody who is a musician, somebody who is a dancer, somebody who is an athlete, and they really become utterly at ease within their narrow field of expertise, and they become experts fluent within that, if you listen to how they talk about it, there is a distortion of time (20:50). You probably have witnessed it: if you’re watching somebody like Michael Jordan play ball, there are sometimes moments when you’re watching him vis a vis other people on the court and it almost feels like he is operating in a different time-dimension than everybody else, that gravity is working slower, that he moves through space in a way that he probably himself doesn’t know, but what it feels like to him very frequently is this complete sense of loss of observation, that he really is intimate: he is his body, he is the movement of the ball, he is the movement of that (31:30). So, I would say that any place of tremendous expertise, the sense of that complete ease that we find within ourselves, we probably will start experiencing time, movement, space, in a way that is not available to others or outside of that space of intimacy. And that’s in many ways the gift, the gift of an artist or the gift of an athlete or the gift of anybody who has pushed that limit or entered into the intimacy with that dimension of their life (32:10).
TM: Yes, I believe I know what you’re talking about. So I have devised an alternative system of musical notation in order to not have such a strict prescription of notes as might happen in Western notation. And it involves a wheel, especially for rhythms, because I find that rhythms go in cycles and time moves in cycles in a lot of ways. I have had this idea of spinning the wheel, which immediately draws to mind a lot of Buddhist imagery. It’s a phrase – “to spin the wheel” – it occurs in many sutras about a couple of different things. I was wondering if you could speak about it a little bit, what you think about that phrase and what it means to you (33:09).

KRM: Yes, I mean, it’s hard for me to say, Tennessee, because I’m not that musically oriented. When you started talking about specifically musical notation that’s different, John Cage came to mind because he very much developed his whole expression process based on actual appreciation of time, and might have been familiar with time-being if he was doing his work. I would point you there because he might have led or explored what it is that you’re speaking to (33:49). But short of that, I don’t have, as far as musical notation is concerned, I don’t think I could contribute anything.

TM: I don’t need you to talk about the musical notation. I was wondering if you could talk about the phrase “to spin a wheel,” or “to spin the wheel,” the Dharma wheel.

KRM: Well, there are many different associations to that. One is kind of negative, and that is that we are continuously cycling in the wheel of samsara, in the wheel of time and just continuously, habitually perpetuating our own volition. That’s, as a
matter of fact, what the definition of samsara is: it’s being stuck on a wheel and not being able to get off it, just repeating, repeating, repeating, endlessly, adding to our ignorance (34:37). But the other, turning the Dharma wheel, is in reference to the actual offering of the teachings, so when the Buddha began to teach, he turned the wheel of the Dharma, he turned the wheel of reality. And there are some expressions (that are somewhat esoteric and Zen) that when he did that, that wheel turned in both directions at the same time. So if you want to understand what is the nature of the teachings of the Buddha-Dharma, it’s that they are actually moving always in two directions simultaneously. Not one way for one moment and the other way for another moment, but at the same moment they are actually doing something which is paradoxical to our conventional way of thinking (35:30). But, again, saying something is paradoxical is like saying that an electron is a particle and wave at the same time. And that’s the turning in both directions, but we humans can’t possibly see that, that we can see one or the other but not both simultaneously. But that’s the turning of the Dharma wheel, the turning of the wheel of reality.

TM: This is my last question that I have here, is if you were going to be listening to a piece that is doing what I’m doing, i.e. if you were imagining my piece in your head right now, how would it sound (36:20)?

KRM: Well if you really do your job, I will not be able to hear it. Do you understand? Short of being able to write that piece from the perspective of intimacy with time-being, and in that case it will become the very expression of this conversation or
anything else. It will unfold itself into the space of reality. It will not be perceptible (36:58). Short of that, I’m not sure what that might look like, how it will look to you like, to push against these paradoxes. But I suspect that there will be paradoxes within it, that if you do your work well then things might be happening simultaneously, where the listening is uprooted or disturbed in their usual way of being able to hear something, where present might be moving simultaneously in different directions, where melodies might be moving in the opposite directions and demanding that a person releases their grasp on the conventional way of tracking something (37:46). So know that there probably would be an element of surprise but not shock, so the person doesn’t lose their capacity to be available to what’s actually happening, and yet within that, if everything goes well, they will lose control. They will lose control of being able to make sense or hold it from the reference, some particular reference point, where they can relate to this piece more linearly.

TM: Thank you so much. That’s wonderful. Wonderful answers and a lot to think about for me (38:22).
Appendix C: Photographs of the Sound Check

Figure C.1: Jack plays bass, Isaac plays trombone, Adam plays drum set, Tennessee plays guitar, Genna plays melodica, Sean plays piano, Nate plays bongos, and Faith plays djembe.

Figure C.2: Jack plays bass, Isaac plays trombone, Adam plays drum set, Tennessee plays guitar, Sean sits with his saxophone, Genna plays piano, Nate plays bongos, and Faith plays djembe.

All photographs in this appendix are Scott Zimmer, *Tennessee Mowrey’s Sound Check*, 2014, Middletown, CT.
Figure C.3: Genna sings, Jack plays bass, Faith plays a different djembe, Adam plays drum set, Tennessee plays guitar, Sean sits with his saxophone, Isaac plays piano, and Nate moves to pick up the melodica.

Figure C.4: Faith sings, Jack plays bass, Genna sits, Isaac plays guitar, Nate plays drum set, Sean plays saxophone, Tennessee plays piano, and Adam plays bongos.
Appendix D: Physiological Sensory Processes

Sight

The visual process begins outside the body, with light waves within a small band of the electromagnetic spectrum known as the visible spectrum reflecting off of the physical objects (*rupa*) in the environment. The light enters the eye “through the pupil and is focused by the cornea and lens to form sharp images on the retina, which contains the [neural] receptors for vision.”\(^{201}\) The cornea has about 80% of the eye’s focusing power and does the initial focusing of the light, but it cannot move so it cannot adjust its focus. Focus adjustment is done by the lens, which accounts for the remaining 20% of focusing power. The neural receptors in the retina at the back of the eye are called rods and cones; they contain light-sensitive chemicals known as visual pigments that trigger electrical signals when exposed to stimulus by way of a process known as isomerization.\(^{202}\) These electrical signals travel to the brain via the optic nerve, which extends from the back of each eye, and are organized by the lateral geniculate nucleus in each hemisphere of the brain. Each lateral geniculate nucleus takes input from not only the eye, but also the lateral geniculate nucleus in the other hemisphere of the brain, other parts of the thalamus, and the visual cortex, before sending its organized information via electrical impulses to the visual cortex.\(^{203}\)

\(^{201}\) Goldstein 44.
\(^{202}\) Goldstein 47 – 50.
\(^{203}\) Goldstein 74 – 77.
Hearing

The sensation of sound begins with variations in air pressure (or water pressure if one is underwater) in the environment that travel through the ear’s auditory canal and create vibrations in the tympanic membrane, commonly known as the eardrum. These vibrations cause a chain of three small bones, the ossicles, to vibrate in the same pattern. The three bones transmit the original vibrations of the eardrum to a much smaller membrane that covers the oval window, leading into the cochlea. Inside of the cochlea are thousands of cilia, small hairs growing out of a membrane that moves back and forth with the vibration of the membrane over the oval window. The hairs move back and forth with the membrane: “movement of hair cilia in one direction opens ion channels in the hair cell, which results in the release of a neurotransmitter onto an auditory nerve fiber,” and movement in the opposite direction closes the channel, stopping the flow of the neurotransmitter. These ions are the electrical signal sent to our brain. Our cilia are incredibly responsive – if we imagine a cilium as the size of the Eiffel Tower, its tip would only have to move one centimeter to generate a response. The electrical signal travels down the auditory nerve, which extends from beneath the cilia, and moves through and potentially is changed by the cochlear nucleus, superior olivary nuclei, inferior colliculus, and medial geniculate nucleus before reaching the primary audio cortex.

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204 Goldstein 261 – 262, 268 – 271.
205 Goldstein 272.
206 Goldstein 280 – 281.
Touch

The sense of feeling, of touch, is provided by the cutaneous system. To begin this process, an outside stimulus – heat or pressure, usually – comes into contact with the skin, causing a response in one or more of the four different types of mechanoreceptors that exist there. Some of these mechanoreceptors fire the entire time that the stimulus is present; others fire only when the stimulus first occurs and when it is done, like an on-off switch. The electrical signals created by these receptors travels through the nerve fibers to the spinal cord, and then up the spinal cord via one of two paths to the brain stem. One of these paths is for information relating to the positions of the limbs and perceiving touch. The other contains information related to temperature and pain. Most of the nerve fibers in these two paths end in the ventrolateral nucleus in the thalamus, although some send information to other parts of the thalamus. From the thalamus, the electrical signals travel to the somatosensory receiving area and perhaps the secondary somatosensory cortex, the parts of the brain most directly associated with feeling.\textsuperscript{207}

Smell

The final two senses can be distinguished from the others in that they interact much more intimately with the outside environment. Whereas the receptors for sight, hearing, and touch are protected behind the structures of the eye, inner ear, and skin, respectively, the olfactory and taste receptors deal directly with the outside world.

\textsuperscript{207} Goldstein 330 – 333.
Instead of responding to energy—heat, light, pressure variation—these receptors respond to actual molecules, determining whether or not the human body wants these molecules and perhaps many more of the same kind to be assimilated into it.\footnote{Goldstein 356.}

For olfaction, molecules enter the nose from the outside environment and stimulate the receptors in the olfactory mucosa, a “dime-sized region located high in the nasal cavity.”\footnote{Goldstein 359.} Olfactory receptor neurons cover the surface of the olfactory mucosa that faces inward towards the nasal cavity; each receptor neuron is dotted with olfactory receptors, molecules that are sensitive to chemical odorants. There are 350 different types of olfactory receptor neurons, each sensitive to only a narrow range of olfactory stimulation. When these neurons are activated, they send electrical signals to the glomeruli in the olfactory bulb: all olfactory receptor neurons of a particular type send their signals to only one or two glomeruli. From the olfactory bulb, the signal travels to the piriform cortex and the amygdala and finally to the secondary olfactory cortex.\footnote{Goldstein 359–364.}

**Taste**

Like olfaction, taste responds directly to molecules from the environment. The neural receptors that create the sense of taste, the taste buds, are located on the tongue. The taste buds are concentrated around the perimeter of the tongue. Each taste bud contains less than one hundred taste cells; when a molecule comes in contact with and stimulates the receptors at tips of these cells, reactions within the cell are triggered
that “lead to a movement of charged particles across the membrane,” resulting in an electrical signal.\textsuperscript{211} This signal is sent to the brain stem via nerve fibers extending from the tongue, mouth, and throat, and then travels through the thalamus before arriving in the insula and the frontal operculum cortex.\textsuperscript{212}

\textsuperscript{211} Goldstein 368.

\textsuperscript{212} Goldstein 367 – 369.
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**Images**


Stage Layout, Crowell Concert Hall, Middletown, CT. Personal photograph by author. 2014.
