



BRILL

Practising Diversity in Education: In Dialogue with Dōgen and bell hooks

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Abstract

This essay argues that diversity needs to be practised. Drawing insights from two thinkers who saw themselves as educators, Dōgen and bell hooks, I single out three steps towards practising diversity in a learning community. I make two concrete recommendations for each step. Step One involves trying to understand the other in their own terms, by becoming informed about the frameworks that play a role in their experience. Step Two guides us to listen to every unique other and receive their story, in such a way as to put them, instead of ourselves, in the centre of our attention. In Step Three, we engage in dialogues that do not consist in a series of monologues but of calls and responses, in which we practise to respond to each other in an attuned way, and to take responsibility for co-transforming each other and our shared world.

Keywords

diversity – practice – education – Dōgen – bell hooks

1 Introduction

In recent years, we are finally including more people from minority backgrounds in our classrooms, we are becoming more aware that diverse teams are better at finding creative approaches or solutions to complex problems than homogeneous ones;¹ and we are seeing more urgency to expand academic

1 Cf. e.g., the editorial “Diversity challenge” of the scientific journal *Nature* 513 (2014): 279: “diversity means an inclusive approach, both to the science itself and the make-up of the

curricula beyond the Western canon.² And yet academia still seems in need of help to “value diversity”³ and to “do diversity.”⁴ Diversity is the quality of a community where people with different backgrounds and experiences interact and value everyone’s presence and contributions.⁵ Valuing diversity means seeing that interactions across differences enhance the flourishing of all involved. Doing diversity involves the willingness to practise such interactions. The job is not done when people representing enough disciplines, nationalities, colours, genders, types of neurodiversity, social-classes and religions are present in a learning community. Minorities might remain outsiders, and “diversity-rich courses” might be regarded as optional.⁶ What is not mainstream might struggle to integrate; indifference, polarisation, and conflict might happen.⁷

groups of people who carry out the research ... a mixture of people (mixed across whatever divisions you care to mention) will be able to consider and to enable a wider range of possible solutions to a problem. If the problem is scientific, then the result of that diversity can be better science.”

- 2 Not only many introductions to cross-cultural philosophy books, such as Bryan W. Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), but also the wealth of results on a web-search such as “decolonising the curriculum” proves the point.
- 3 Cf. Peter D. Hershock, *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflection on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), and Chiara Robbiano, “Valuing diversity,” in *Key Concepts in World Philosophies: A Toolkit for Philosophers*, eds. Sarah Flavel and Chiara Robbiano (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).
- 4 Cf. Gloria Wekker, Marieke W. Sloodman, Rosalba Icaza Garza, Hans Jansen, and Rolando Vázquez, *Let’s do Diversity* (Report of the University of Amsterdam Diversity Commission, 2016).
- 5 For an insightful definition of diversity see Peter D. Hershock, “Valuing diversity: Buddhist reflections on equity and education,” *ASIA Network Exchange. A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts* 22, no. 1 (2015): 7: “... diversity is a qualitative index of the degree to which differences are activated as the basis of mutual contribution to sustainably shared flourishing – a function of complex and coordination-enriching interdependence. Diversity cannot be seen at a glance and cannot be imposed. It is an emergent relational achievement.”
- 6 Cf. Wekker et al, *Let’s do Diversity*, 9.
- 7 It is widely known that increasing diverse populations in organisations or communities is not enough and conflicts might happen. Cf. e.g., Peter Hershock, *Valuing Diversity*, for the distinction between what can be called “variety” (just a quantitative measure of inclusion) and “diversity” (referring to the quality of integration among differences). Brian C. Johnson, “When diversity training goes wrong: A case study analysis of the University of Delaware Residential Education program.” *Performance Improvement* 54, 6 (2015): 13–19, explores why educational programs focused on diversity went wrong at an American University. Cindy Lindsay, “Things that go wrong in diversity training: Conceptualization and change with ethnic identity models.” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 7, 6 (1994): 18–33, explores possible causes of conflicts during diversity trainings, which might drive apart different groups, and offers solutions as to what could help to manage conflicts and transform them into opportunities to practise difficult dialogues.

Practice is needed to learn to play our role in a diverse community – one in which academic and personal excellence are developed in collaborations across differences that would be impossible in homogeneous groups. I say *practice* – rather than assuming that welcoming different people is enough to achieve diversity, rather than limiting oneself to policies – because the transformation of oneself and of a community will not happen just by a decision of the mind. Practice means moving to a space where we can learn together, try, make mistakes, and try again. Practice needs to be embodied, embedded, shared, and repeated. How to achieve both social justice and scientific excellence through the practice of diversity in education?

I believe that philosophers – who study how different frameworks produce differences in what is recognised as real, knowable, or good, and how to put different thinkers in dialogue – might be able to advise academic communities that aspire to top-notch research and socially just education, by contributing to facilitate constructive dialogues across differences. I try to do so, by singling out three steps – (1) Learn other frameworks; (2) Listen to unique others, see from their eyes; (3) Co-create in dialogue with many “you” – and offering two concrete recommendations for each step, in the attempt to contribute to a toolkit for academic communities to excel because of their diversity. I also deal with the possible resistance with which these recommendations can be met and how to respond to it. My method is the constructive dimension of comparative or cross-cultural philosophy,⁸ done in “intercultural dialogue” with present and past thinkers.⁹ I will construct these steps by interpreting and appropriating passages of the Japanese Zen Buddhist philosopher Dōgen (1200–1253), which I will attempt to integrate with passages by the contemporary American thinker bell hooks (1952–2021).

Before introducing the steps and the recommendations I will explain why I chose Dōgen and bell hooks. Both the mediaeval Japanese monk and the American author were teachers. They both believed in the possibility of helping the learning community where they held a position of power, by developing openness, together with their students, to those who were different. They both assumed that we are fundamentally related to others and constituted by these relations. Dōgen and bell hooks agree that learning happens by opening up to others, practising to listen to them and to collaborate with them, and that one cannot contribute to the flourishing of others, if one is not ready to be

8 Tim Connolly, *Doing Philosophy Comparatively* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 40–44.

9 Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber, eds. *Comparative Philosophy Without Borders* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 5.

transformed by the process. One of the assumptions they share is that one cannot contribute to the flourishing and well-being of others if one sees oneself as *separate* from one's community. Teachers need to see themselves as learners, ready to be transformed; to acknowledge that they will change their students and be changed by them. Educators should recognise their grounding in the context of their teaching community or classroom, their impact on it, and the impact of the community on them. Educators need to overcome their wish to teach while staying outside of the space where learning happens. They need to overcome their fear of losing their identity, either as teachers or as persons. They should be willing to put themselves on the line, to be vulnerable, to be open to undergo change while encountering others. We need to look into the assumption of the constant co-transformation of teachers and students before we turn to the three steps towards the practice of diversity. Educators will try the three steps I suggest only if they accept that in a classroom, people transform each other.

Dōgen did not live in an ethnically diverse society, but in a time (Japan, Kamakura period, 1185–1333) of political, societal, religious and cultural change: think of the fading power of the emperor and the rise of the daimyos – the regional feudal lords appointed by the shogun –, and of their swordsmen, the samurai; of the formation of new Buddhist sects; and of cultural exchanges with China from where Neo-Confucian and Buddhist texts and practices were imported. Born in the Japanese capital, Kyoto, Dōgen travelled extensively to China, where he studied the language and culture, and looked for different ways of practising Buddhism. Back in Japan, he founded monastic communities and wrote lectures in Japanese vernacular. His philosophy is a source of pointers towards the continuous practice of openness to others, both human and non-human, of continuous transformation and co-creation of the world together with others. Together with his monks-students, he practised to understand, “receive” and respond harmoniously to all beings. Dōgen sees all different beings one is related with – teachers and students; mountains and rivers; even art material and cooking ingredients – as beings we need to respect, try to understand, learn to speak their language and see from their perspective, in order to harmoniously co-create our shared world.¹⁰

Gloria Jean Watkins, whose pen name was bell hooks, was born in the South of the United States to a working-class family; she went to segregated black schools as a child, where learning was exciting and teachers “were on

10 In this paper, I focus on encountering human others. Therefore, I approach Dōgen's references to encounters with non-human others, e.g., water and mountains, as metaphors for encountering diverse human others. However, Dōgen's references can be taken literally.

a mission":¹¹ to make sure that students developed themselves fully, to help create a less racist, more just and free world. She then attended mixed schools where no link was drawn between learning and life, and no importance was given to the different lived experiences of the students. Once she became a professor of English, she wanted to transform her classes into learning communities in which everyone's presence was valued, everybody's voice and experience was listened to, and everybody was genuinely open to and interested in the contributions of others.¹² Bell hooks was aware that when society or education brings different people together, it does not go without saying that they will "develop a world perspective" (Martin Luther King, Jr.): she witnessed people who were scared by new neighbours or students and longed for an idealised past where similar people lived together undisturbed.¹³ She saw how university teachers who at first welcomed cultural diversity, later panicked realising that they could not admit new groups and teach frontally as they used to do. They would need to "confront the limitations of their training and knowledge, as well as a possible loss of 'authority'",¹⁴ once the floor was open to diverse contributions, they would need to change their pedagogical practices. Teachers were not prepared for hosting a diverse group who looks for truths together; for accepting and managing inevitable conflicts, antagonisms, misunderstandings, and mistakes.¹⁵ Whereas her colleagues resisted being transformed and renewed by interactions with their students, bell hooks argued that that is the whole point of education.¹⁶

11 Bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

12 "... the professor must genuinely value everyone's presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community. ... Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community." *Ibid.*, 8; "... one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice." *Ibid.*, 40–41.

13 *Ibid.*, 28.

14 *Ibid.*, 30.

15 "In all cultural revolutions there are periods of chaos and confusion, times when grave mistakes are made. If we fear mistakes, doing things wrongly, constantly evaluating ourselves, we will never make the academy a culturally diverse place where scholars and the curricula address every dimension of that difference. ... To commit ourselves to the work of transforming the academy so that it will be a place where cultural diversity informs every aspect of our learning, we must embrace struggle and sacrifice. We cannot be easily discouraged. We cannot despair when there is conflict. Our solidarity must be affirmed by shared belief in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent, and rejoices in collective dedication to truth." *Ibid.*, 33.

16 *Ibid.*, 34.

Dōgen agrees: we should acknowledge and cherish our capacity to be transformed and renewed by interactions with others. He suggests we understand who we are before starting any endeavour that involves opening up to others, such as teaching or learning. In a famous passage, he suggests that our self is not some essential, immutable characteristic, but precisely our capacity to relate to others with the whole of our mind and body, after stopping seeing them as separate from us.

To study the buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away.¹⁷

The passage starts by signalling that “studying” is where we begin. What kind of studying is Dōgen pointing at? “Study” translates: ならふ (*narafu*, or ならう, *narau*, in contemporary Japanese), which is usually seen as referring to the Chinese character 習う: “study,” “learn.” The translator of this passage, Kazuaki Tanahashi, follows this convention. Thomas Kasulis, another translator, sees it as referring to 倣う: “imitate,” “follow,” – a different Chinese character, also pronounced “*nara(f)u*,” which he translates “model after.” The same passage becomes:

To model yourself after the ‘way’ of the buddhas is to model yourself after yourself. To model yourself after yourself is to forget yourself. To forget yourself is to be authenticated by the totality of phenomena. To be authenticated by the totality of phenomena is to completely drop away one’s own body-mind as well as the body-mind of others.¹⁸

“Modelling oneself after one self,” or “following oneself,” turns out to be possible only when one stops seeing one’s self as an object or a bundle of characteristics and values that must be protected. Following oneself, being true to oneself, only happens when we open up to the totality of phenomena with which we

17 Dōgen, “*Genjōkōan*, Actualizing the Fundamental Point,” trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop. Writings of Zen Master Dogen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), 70. The format of many of Dōgen’s writings are lectures (ranging from two to several pages) that he delivered to his monks. I refer to them with the Japanese names first, e.g., *Genjōkōan*, to make it possible for the reader to recognise them in the translation they have, since different translators translate the titles very differently.

18 Dōgen, “*Genjōkōan*, The Case of Presencing,” trans. Kasulis, in *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo, eds. (Mānoa valley: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 145.

are intertwined. This practice of opening up to (or “being actualised,” “being authenticated” by) other things and beings around us, is referred to as the way of the buddhas, which is the way from suffering to cessation of suffering.¹⁹ The quote continues, “To be authenticated by the totality of phenomena is to completely drop away one’s own body-mind as well as the body-mind of others.” Here Dōgen explains that this openness to others can be seen as the dropping away of the body-mind of others, which means learning not to see gaps and boundaries between “us” and “them”. Moreover, an open and free encounter with the other can only happen when our own mind and body have dropped away: this refers both to overcoming the habit of separating our mind and our body, and of overcoming other entrenched habits, perspectives, and values that we might be unaware of. We might think that we are completely impartial when meeting the other, however there is a whole package of responses to which we might be blind, that that we need to “drop off” before we can really meet them.²⁰

Bell hooks’ version of studying the self or modelling oneself after oneself, is that teachers should be “self-actualised individuals.”²¹ She refers to Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh who encourages teachers to take care of their own well-being before they can teach others. Bell hooks condemns the common assumption that book-knowledge is all it takes to make a good teacher, wrongly based on the idea of “a mind/body split.”²² As if echoing Dōgen’s call for openness to the whole of reality around one as the best way to understand who we are and being true to who we are, bell hooks recommends intellectuals to seek “to be whole – well-grounded in a context.”²³ We are not disembodied, non-localised minds, but embodied individuals who are functioning in a certain context, of which we must become aware. She sees professors who have not cultivated their own whole person – who have not practised what Dōgen calls the dropping off of mind and body – as people who think that they can

19 These are the first and the fourth of the four noble truths of Buddhism: “... The Noble Truth of suffering – of the origin of suffering – of the cessation of suffering – of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.” *Majjhima Nikāya*, in *A sourcebook in Indian philosophy*, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 275.

20 Rein Raud, “*Shinjin-datsuraku* (dropping the bodymind)”, in *Key Concepts in World Philosophies*, Flavel and Robbiano eds, explains dropping the body-mind in terms of letting go of our habitual way of understanding and relating to our environment, and allowing a new, freer way of experiencing. See also Bret Davis “*Shinjin Gakudō* (Studying the Way with Body and Mind)”, in the same volume.

21 Bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 16.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

leave their own frameworks and habits unexamined: that they can be present in class as mind-only, a mind that is capable of teaching objective notions. Bell hooks sees these teachers as not equipped to teach students who want to learn how to build a free and just society, because these teachers are blind to their own prejudices. They feel threatened if being asked to facilitate relevant education that frees mind and body from prejudices and paves the way for social justice. They cannot facilitate what Dōgen calls dropping away the body and mind of others: removing the habit of seeing separators between “us” and “them.”²⁴ In fact, this requires first to have become aware of their own ingrained assumptions and have worked at removing, dropping away, the prejudices that can hinder their relation to others, for instance, their students. If one does not acknowledge the situatedness of one’s own body-mind – e.g., in terms of habits, values, disciplinary assumptions, experiences – and believes to be able to see and think and view from nowhere,²⁵ how can they connect with the different embodied presence and situatedness from which their students approach the learning material and try to see its relevance to their lives? It seems that only teachers who are aware of their own assumptions can welcome the experiential and situated knowledge²⁶ brought to class from students from different backgrounds (e.g., disciplinary, religious, ethnic).

Bell hooks refers to the teachers’ openness to what Dōgen would call “being actualised” by their diverse students, as a practice in “vulnerability”: “But most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit.”²⁷ Openness, which is the route towards growing and learning together, involves putting oneself on the line. Bell hooks suggests “that one of the things blocking a lot of professors from interrogating their own pedagogical practices is that fear that ‘this is my identity and I can’t question that identity.’”²⁸ The resistance to open up, to change – even if that is the only way to teach and learn – is connected to the fear to put one’s identity at stake. Bell hooks did not share this fear: she appropriated the Buddhist concept of “no-self” – which she displayed, according to George Nancy, in the non-capitalisation of her name – as an expression of openness to fluid and

24 See also Shigenori Nagatomo, *Attunement through the Body* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), Chapter 6, e.g., 153; Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2001), 65–67.

25 Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

26 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016).

27 Hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 21.

28 *Ibid.*, 134–135.

multiple identities.²⁹ The Buddhist doctrine of no-self refers to one's continuous change and non-independence, and of one's participation in the vast network of dependent origination, which we will see shortly.

Dōgen, similarly to bell hooks, is aware that opening up to others and to the transformation that might follow, even if it provides the best kind of learning and cultivation, can be perceived as a kind of frightening and difficult "change." "The mind of a sentient being is difficult to change."³⁰ Dōgen is aware of our resistance. The change from the attempt to stay true to what one believes to be one's identity, to the attempt to forget the self by practising to receive others, dropping the mind-body, me-other separations – is difficult. Human beings are afraid of suffering and tend to resist recognising change around them and resist recognising the need for them to attune to changing circumstances; change might remind humans of the reality of ageing and dying. In the face of change, one might try to hold on to a belief in some kind of permanence and independence. However, being in denial about interconnectedness with others and environment, which brings about our continuous change and interdependence, inevitably leads to suffering. Dōgen suggests to let go of one's beliefs in independence and stability, and to accept the Buddhist framework of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda* in Sanskrit, and 因縁, *innen*, in Japanese,³¹ or 縁起, *engi*).³² According to this framework, every state of affairs arises in dependence of something else and is continuously conditioned and replaced by something new. Everything that we recognise as real, every situation that might look relatively stable, is the manifestation of a complex network of causes and conditions and is on its way towards becoming something else. No phenomena, person or even divine being exist in isolation: "You give

29 See Carolyn Medine Jones, "bell hooks, Black Feminist Thought, and Black Buddhism: A Tribute," *Journal of World Philosophies* 7, 1 (2022): 189: "Breaking the attachment to a unitary, fixed self opens us to process and to fluidity, opening Black people again, for hooks, to Black self-love, which should undergird any radical political agenda." Jones Medines refers (192) to Leah Kalmanson, "Buddhism and bell hooks: Liberatory Aesthetics and the Radical Subjectivity of No-Self" *Hypatia* 27, 4 (2012): 810–827, who interprets hook's take on the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, as referring to a subjective multiplicity that includes political, personal, and interpersonal aspects, that enables one to face change, to welcome radical openness, and open spaces for true communication. In the classroom, this means "being interested in one another, hearing each other's voices, and recognizing one another's presences [...], even as our dearly held epistemes, our sense of why we think the world has to be as it is, may be questioned and undone."

30 Dōgen, "Bodaisatta Shishō-hō, Bodhisattva's Four Methods of Guidance", trans. Tanahashi, 45.

31 Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a dewdrop*, 268.

32 For an excellent explanation of dependent origination, see Jay L. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 2.

yourself to yourself and others to others. The power of causal relations [因縁, *innen*, dependent origination] of giving reaches devas [divine beings], human beings, and even enlightened sages”.³³ Giving anything to anyone changes the whole context, including the mind of the giver and receiver: “in giving mind transforms the gift and the gift transforms the mind.”³⁴ This framework is both meant to explain change and to make it acceptable. The assumption is that suffering will be relieved when we let go of wrong beliefs in permanence and independence and when we contribute to the flourishing of the whole,³⁵ by our actions, e.g., by “giving” rather than trying to protect ourselves. In fact, we *are* continuously giving, or interacting and changing the world around us, whether we do something or refrain from doing it: “Whether it is of teaching or of material, each gift has its value and it’s worth giving ... Making a living and producing things can be nothing other than giving. To leave flowers to the wind, and to leave birds to the seasons, are also acts of giving.”³⁶

As seen above, Dōgen knows that “The mind of a sentient being is difficult to change”: when learning about a different framework, such as dependent origination, one might feel resistance to applying it to one’s situation. It might be difficult to accept to be intrinsically interrelated with others (not independent) – this is what Buddhists call “no-self.” One of Dōgen’s arguments in order to make this model acceptable and even appealing is understanding everything as *time*. In the context of his lecture about time, Dōgen says: “The way the self arrays itself is the form of the entire world. See each thing in this entire world as a moment of time.”³⁷ While everybody sees everything as occupying a definite place in a certain order that depends on one’s own frameworks and habits, Dōgen recommends that we should appreciate each thing as a moment of time. The framework of dependent origination explains that each momentary constellation of elements, which make up any being, leaves room for the next – continuous but different – constellation. At any time, we are momentary time-beings in the big network of dependent origination: we are connected and unique, and so is everybody and everything else.

33 *Bodaisatta Shishō-hō*, trans. Tanahashi, 44.

34 *Ibid.*, 45.

35 “Suffering” (*duḥkha*, Sanskrit) is a key Buddhist concept, regarded as the first Noble truth (see above, note 20). See Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, and Rupert Gettin, *The foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) for excellent introductions to this concept.

36 *Bodaisatta Shishō-hō*, trans. Tanahashi, 44–45.

37 Literally: “you should (すべし *subeshi*) see.” *Uji, The Time-being*, trans. Tanahashi, 77.

a pine tree is time, bamboo is time ... The main point is the following. All times in all worlds are connected and yet distinct. They are all being-time; I am being-time.³⁸

“Yet” translates *ながら* (*nagara*) that can function as an adversative conjunction or one signalling that two different actions are performed at the same time. I argue that Dōgen uses it to signal the dual character of time.³⁹ The whole of the fascicle *Uji* can be seen as formulating a dual-aspect theory of time: on the one hand, the past cannot come back, and, on the other, all times are present in the now.⁴⁰ Both aspects stress the importance of every moment: on the one hand, we cannot go back in time to fix anything, and, on the other, we can reach all times by taking responsibility in the present – e.g., we reach the future by teaching and learning, and the past by re-interpreting and re-framing. Dōgen encourages us to re-frame what we might regard as independent and permanent objects, such as a pine tree and a bamboo, as time-nodes in the network of multiple causes and effects. This is also true for humans: we are beings that consist of time. As educators, the impact of the class we are teaching on the life of the students should not be underestimated. As Dōgen said above: “Whether it is of teaching or of material, each gift has its value and it’s worth giving,” and “in giving mind transforms the gift and the gift transforms the mind.” On the one hand, the time when a person was loved or bullied, listened to or silenced in class, when the trees were tended to or cut down, can never come back. On the other hand, since all times are connected in the now, including past encouragement and bullying, and future expectations, by changing the now we can change a whole person/world.

38 Dōgen, *Uji*, my translation.

39 Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross also recognise the dual character of time in their translation: “To grasp the pivot and express it: all that exists throughout the whole Universe is lined up in a series and at the same time is individual moments of time.” *Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō*, eds. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross (USA: Book Surge. Vol. 1, 2006), 93. Tanahashi does not suggest the dual aspect: “In essence all things in the entire world are linked with one another as moments.” *Uji, The Time-being*, trans. Tanahashi, 78. Nor does Rein Raud, “The Existential Moment: Rereading Dōgen’s Theory of Time.” *Philosophy East and West* 62, 2 (2012), 164: “To sum it up: the entirety of existences in the entirety of the world are particular moments that follow each other.” Raud gives emphasis on the momentary aspect – but he refers to Rolf Elberfeld, with whom he agrees that past, future, and present are contained in every moment.

40 Cf. Chiara Robbiano, “Relating Freely: ‘Beingtime always has flowers and fruits’ (Dōgen, *Kūge*),” *Moralia. The Association of Ethical Studies Tohoku University, Japan* 26 (2019), 21–30.

In one of her essays, bell hooks re-creates a dialogue between herself and “Ron Scapp, a white male philosopher, comrade, and friend.”⁴¹ While some teachers hold on to “their own identity as something unchangeable and in need of protection,” bell hooks and Ron come to agree on the following, Dōgen-sounding, point: we can only “affirm who we are through the transaction of being with other people.”⁴² Bell hooks and Ron see the classroom as a place where interdependence and co-creation is manifested at its best when teachers and students are empowered by their transaction with each other, and they all grow together.⁴³

This introduction shows why I have chosen to write my recommendations towards practising diversity in education in dialogue with Dōgen and bell hooks. Teachers, according to Dōgen and bell hooks, should reflect on and tend to their “self,” and should rethink the reality of change and interdependence, as not to fear it, but embrace it: we are fundamentally related to others, and continuously constituted by our relations. According to Dōgen, we are time-beings: we are what happens (has happened, will happen) to us, we are how we relate and respond to people. We are transformed by each encounter – and so are our students. Our actions and practices change ourselves and others we are related to. Bell hooks argues that even if change might be frightening and even if we would think it is safe to hold on to one’s idea of what one’s identity as teacher is or should be, it is only by accepting the reality of change and interdependence in the classroom, that we are ready to facilitate learning in a diverse community. Denying the reality of change within a classroom will not prevent that from happening – whether we realise it or not, we change each other, for instance by normalising a certain behaviour, by encouraging, discouraging, fearing or welcoming a behaviour or way of interacting with each other.

Moreover, as teachers of a diverse classroom, we should realise that we are not speaking from a neutral space. Bell hooks stresses that we should avoid the naive belief that what we bring to a classroom is only our neutral teacher-identity and that we transmit neutral content from mind to mind, without impacting each other with the whole package of our values and dis-values. We need to become aware that we, students and teachers, bring our discipline, culture and gender, and much more, to class – our being born to someone, being loved and resented, being discriminated against, hindered and helped, taught and inspired. Since who we are is the result of the people with whom we interact, rather than protecting some identity we have in mind,

41 Bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 131.

42 Ibid., 135.

43 Ibid., *Teaching to transgress*, 152.

we should be vulnerable and ready to grow together with our students. If we accept Dōgen's point that who we are today is function of others to whom we have been related, and that who we will be at the end of the semester is also a function of the people in our classroom, and if we accept that our classroom is not full of disembodied minds, but of embodied people with frameworks (spanning from culture, neurology, class, gender, religion, (dis)ability, etc.) through which their experiences are made, shouldn't we want to know more about those frameworks? And if we don't want to, why are we resisting learning about them and how could we overcome this resistance?

2 Step One. Learn Other Frameworks

In a healthy, diverse community of learning, one needs to become acquainted with some of the frameworks and assumptions of those who have experiences, values, methodologies that are significantly different from one's. Without this knowledge, one might believe to be learning together or engaging in dialogue, whereas only a series of monologues happens, in which each party speaks their language and does not understand the other. Why would collaboration and flourishing in a diverse classroom (or other communities) require acquaintance with frameworks that are relevant to our diverse partners, students, and colleagues? There are various reasons for this.

To start with, knowledge of other frameworks might help achieve awareness of one's own frameworks, i.e. our intentional consciousness or intentional arc.⁴⁴ Dōgen, in the context of his lecture *Uji*, seen above, suggests that we always approach the world through selective frameworks and believe the world to be as it looks to us: "The way the self arrays itself is the form of the entire world."⁴⁵ Our frameworks and our own assumptions *result in* how the world appears to

44 Not only philosophers discuss intentional arc. There is also a wealth of literature on positioning and situatedness in anthropological, sociological and psychological literature. For instance, Sanne Akkerman, Wilfried Admiraal, and Robert Jan Simons, in "Unity and diversity in a collaborative research project," *Culture & Psychology*, 18, 2 (2012), 227–252, explore the importance of recognising the multiple voices that researchers of different disciplines bring to interdisciplinary research. They use the Bakhtinian concept of "voice" to refer to the "I-positions" of the researchers, which include, besides their disciplines, also their social, cultural, and historical environments, and other salient elements of their multiple and changing identity: "positions that are always in the making in the intra and interpersonal dynamics of selves" (231). For collaborations across "boundaries" to flourish, they argue that groups need to manifest both unity and diversity. This combination is premised on awareness of one's and other's multiple voices.

45 *Uji, The Time-being*, trans. Tanahashi, 77.

us.⁴⁶ We are like the proverbial hammer to which everything looks like a nail. Because of our categories and values, we see the world in a certain way and then we mistake the form we have imposed onto the world for the way the world really is.

A real dialogue across differences cannot happen if one believes that they see the world in a neutral way. Those who believe they have *the* rational, objective, and apolitical perspective on reality, might well welcome others in their communities and in their classes – but they might assume that others know and experience reality as they do, or that the other's views on and experiences of the world would be the same as theirs, if the allegedly distorting filtering effects caused by the others' religion, culture or disability were removed. Similar assumptions have been used by colonial powers who presented themselves as helping the colonised achieve a more modern, free, and objective way of knowing, relating, and living – and therefore as justified in destroying their ways of knowing, values, and systems of relations among humans and with the earth.⁴⁷

Bell hooks sees the diverse learning community as the place where justice can emerge once everybody realises that there is no neutral education, and that academic institutions often share values with colonialism, such as its privileging only one mode of knowledge and erasing other:

When everyone first began to speak about cultural diversity, it was exciting. For those of us on the margins (people of color, folks from working class backgrounds, gays, and lesbians, and so on) who had always felt ambivalent about our presence in institutions where knowledge was shared in ways that reinscribed colonialism and domination, it was thrilling to think that the vision of justice and democracy that was at the very heart of civil rights movement would be realized in the academy. At last, there was the possibility of a learning community, a place where difference could be acknowledged, where we would finally all understand, accept, and affirm that our ways of knowing are forged in history and relations of power. Finally, we were all going to break through collective academic denial and acknowledge that the education most of us had received and were giving was not and is never politically neutral.⁴⁸

46 The original Japanese is: “われを排列しおきて盡界とせり (*ware wo hairetsu shiokite jinkai to seri*).” おきて (*okite*) comes from 置く (*oku*) that after 排列する (*hairetsu suru*: to array oneself) stresses the following point: the form of the whole world is the *result* of how the self arrays itself.

47 See Rolando Vázquez, “Translation as erasure: thoughts on modernity's epistemic violence,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 24, 1 (2011): 30.

48 bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 30.

For bell hooks, one of the perks of becoming acquainted with different frameworks is the awareness that one's own frameworks and ways of knowing are not objective and neutral, and might well include unsavoury aspects, such as condoning some unjust power dynamics.

Once people traditionally positioned in the centre of academia or society realise the non-universality of their framework, they might fear that acknowledging the legitimacy of other frameworks would lead one of them to take the central, dominant place and replace theirs. Bell hooks points to the fear, on the part of some colleagues, of having the present dictatorship of knowing replaced with a different one:

the fear that any de-centering of Western civilizations, of the white male canon, is really an act of cultural genocide. Some folks think that everyone who supports cultural diversity wants to replace one dictatorship of knowing with another, changing one set way of thinking for another. This is perhaps the gravest misperception of cultural diversity.⁴⁹

Because of this fear, some might not include “the other” in an open dialogue about fundamental issues, since the “other” might want to introduce change into one's world, such as different, non-rational, non-scientific beliefs and values that are at odds with the allegedly rational, healthy ones. This might be the belief behind some incidents in the Netherlands, where Muslim politicians are more likely to be suspected of secret affiliations and threatening activities, than non-religious ones,⁵⁰ where a Muslim student has been asked not to move into their dorm room since their different habits might make other students uncomfortable.⁵¹ Such incidents might only be dependent on the individuals involved. However, they might also depend on the abovementioned fear that welcoming new ways of knowing results in worse ways of knowledge replacing the objective one. This fear seems to be rooted in the incapacity to imagine a community in which different frameworks are in dialogue, rather than in a war against each other in which the winner silences others.

49 Ibid., 30.

50 E.g., the accusations against progressive green politician Kauthar Bouchallikht: Malia Bouattia “Can the Netherlands accept a confident Muslim woman running for parliament?” *TRT World*, 25.11.2020 <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/can-the-netherlands-accept-a-confident-muslim-woman-running-for-parliament-41777>, accessed 29/03/2023. Malia Bouattia, “In solidarity with Kauthar Bouchallikht,” *Aljazeera*, 24-12.2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/12/24/in-solidarity-with-kauthar-bouchallikht>, accessed 29/03/2023.

51 Tayfun Balcik, “Moslimstudente (vU) ‘weggepest’ van campus: ‘Liever geen gelovige in huis,’” *The Kanttekening*, 01.09.2022 <https://dekanttekening.nl/samenleving/islamitische-vu-studente-weggepest-van-campuswoning-deur-medestudentenz/>, accessed 29/03/2023.

If those who believe that their view on reality is objective and that the “other” is a threat are the majority or are in power, they will cause suffering to others, by expecting them to hide their differences and to conform to existing rules, canons, “normal” beliefs and values. They will also cause suffering to themselves, being stuck in their own world, echo chambers or filter bubbles, incapable of admitting that there are valid perspectives different from theirs, let alone trying to see through other perspectives.⁵² Thus, lack of insight into different frameworks might result in an incapacity to listen, grounded in the belief that one’s perspective is the only candidate for Truth, thus conflicting with the other and leading to polarisation or indifference with both parties retreating into their bubble. Moreover, if one attempts a dialogue while believing to see things as they are, this might result in inflicting suffering and engendering mistrust.

So, if we want to enter in dialogue with each other, in class, about a possibly controversial issue, which allows all to learn together, we first need to problematise the belief that anyone can see the world in an objective, neutral, and apolitical way. How to achieve this?

2.1 *First Recommendation*

Educators and administrators promote the inclusion of classes dedicated to knowing different frameworks than the ones they are used to teach and that play a role, for instance, in different cultures, classes, religions, parts of the world, and types of neurodivergence, or in other disciplines or in other sub-fields of one’s discipline (especially if they are not present in the curriculum of the school at which one teaches). For example, some classes would signal that different answers can be given to questions such as “What is a human being?,” “What is real?,” “What is time?,” “What are our responsibilities towards whom?” in different disciplines, religions, cultures, philosophical schools; and then delve into one or more answers in depth. Other classes will premise that

52 Gerard Van der Ree, “Power and the fragile male ego” (unpublished manuscript, 2016) gives a very insightful treatment of “the fragile male ego.” Building on Hegel, Du Bois and Nietzsche, he points out that, for the person in the dominant position, “adding a new perspective is not a small matter. Before being able to accommodate a new one, you first have to acknowledge that you have a perspective to begin with. But you do not see this: you have come to understand that the world ‘is’ the way you see it. So existentially speaking, incorporating a new perspective is a world-shattering experience.” Therefore “[the dominant] will respond in such a way that it will not have to take any alternative worldview seriously. And these violent responses will shape the public debate on social power. Whether it is about gender, race, sexuality, or other social categories, the fragile male/white/heterosexual/Western ego will attempt to make any debate into a non-conversation. It simply cannot afford to take the other side seriously.” 3–4.

different answers can be given to what a certain war, conflict, or trade meant to different people in different parts of the world, before delving into one or more areas differently affected by a certain historical or economic event. Other classes would explain what genders, and sexualities are, and what various kinds of neurodivergence are, and their implication for differences in sensory perception and processing of information.

How to signal the existence of multiple frameworks in one's curriculum? One possibility would be to *tag* courses that involve multiple frameworks or non-central frameworks, for instance of using a recognisable tag, such as "valuing diversity course." While tagging the courses they offer, teachers and managers would develop an overview of the different frameworks dealt with in their community. If tagging a whole course sounds problematic – too much virtue signalling or other-shaming – one might consider asking teachers to tag or signal in other ways what classes within one course deal with "non-central" frameworks. This tagging exercise would remind teachers to stress the importance of learning about perspectives that had been traditionally left unknown or regarded as irrelevant either in Western academia or in the institution at stake. Even if a teacher decides to stick to the frameworks they are most comfortable with, they might be encouraged to signal the existence of other frameworks. By doing so, they would become more aware of their own default framework. A related kind of intervention in one's curriculum would be to pay attention to the *titles* of the courses on offer. The titles should not suggest that there is just one way of approaching a certain topic, or that a certain world region is "central" while others are peripheral. I would recommend making titles more transparent, such as "Introduction to Western philosophy" and "Introduction to World philosophies," rather than "Introduction to philosophy"; "The Global Cold War" or "The Cold War in Europe and North America," rather than "The Cold War."⁵³

Learning about different frameworks, experiences and paradigms, might help one to "decentre":⁵⁴ to realise that one's own experience or ways of

53 According to the powerful suggestion by Jay Garfield and Bryan Van Norden (2016) in their famous *New York Times* piece "If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is", 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/opinion/if-philosophy-wont-diversify-lets-call-it-what-it-really-is.html>, accessed 29/03/2023 classes and programs dealing only with frameworks from one part of the world should at least signal their choice in their titles. No course should just be called "Introduction to Philosophy," but, either introduce other frameworks or change the title to "Introduction to Western Philosophy."

54 Cf. Chiara Robbiano, "Continuous Decentering – Sextus and Dōgen," *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*, 4 (2022), 165–182 and Chiara Robbiano, "Decentering with Dōgen – in the

knowing, communicating, or attributing values are neither neutral nor universal; and to develop intellectual humility towards different conceptualisations and experiences of what is real or valuable.⁵⁵ Philosopher of education Gert Biesta recognises the importance of decentring in his appeal to a “World-centred education.” Biesta refers to Jean-Luc Marion who suggests that when we try not to be surprised by the world,⁵⁶ we place ourselves in the centre and see objects around us for us to control and categorise. Marion recommends a different attitude: we centre the aspect of the world that we encounter and make an effort to find the right point of view to understand it. Marion refers to the phenomenon of anamorphosis in art: an image in a painting becomes visible only if the spectator finds the right place and way to look at it. In an educational setting, the job of the teachers is to help students look at others, or aspects of the world that are new to them without objectifying them out of fear, but accepting to be vulnerable, not knowledgeable, and in need to make an effort to find out what is the best way to understand what is manifesting itself to them.⁵⁷ One way to facilitate this process is to learn and teach about frameworks that enable a better appreciation of some *specific* contributions of other students which are made from specific frameworks: not only of other disciplines, but also, e.g., of gender, neurodivergence, or migration background – that are now better known by them.

2.2 *Second Recommendation*

The educators, who developed the in-depth classes mentioned above, also develop shorter workshops, information sessions, knowledge clips or blog posts, where the information about different frameworks is summarised and made readily available to all: faculty, staff, and students.⁵⁸ And workshops are organised where educators meet and discuss their experiences of learning and teaching new frameworks.

context of a meeting of autistic and neurotypical persons”, Manuscript submitted for publication.

55 Cf. Chiara Robbiano and Karin Scager, “Cultivating Two Aspects of Intellectual Humility: Openness and Care,” *Teaching Philosophy*, 43, 1 (2020), 47–69.

56 Gert Biesta, *World-Centred Education: A View for the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 96.

57 *Ibid.*, 68–71.

58 University managers might be hesitant to *require* faculty to produce modules about different frameworks in their courses (or even to ask faculty to mention the existence of such frameworks), and knowledge clips or workshops for the whole community. What seems unproblematic is to *suggest, stimulate* or *reward* the addition of such modules to the curriculum and to such knowledge clips or workshops.

Could there be resistance to these suggestions in institutions that wish to be inclusive? I think that there can be resistance. Imagine fictional colleagues voicing these opinions: “Whereas our sense of justice leads us to welcome different students in our community, academic integrity requires us not to teach what we are not expert on”; “Knowing Aristotle well is better than knowing both Aristotle badly and Confucius badly”; “A pronoun rounds takes too much class time, and might even embarrass someone”; “If we start accommodating the requests of neurodivergents, won’t we have to lower the level/speed for all involved?”; “Isn’t asking a Kenyan student to enlighten the rest of us about African history enough to make up for not covering Africa in the course?”; “Wouldn’t explicit references to race, sex, and class as factors that impact the learning experiences of our students transform the classrooms into spaces where emotions rather than objective knowledge would get the centre place?”⁵⁹

Perhaps these fictional colleagues of ours are *not* like bell hooks’ colleagues who were happy to welcome anyone,⁶⁰ provided that they would not have to change their own teaching practices, or to learn about the newcomers. Perhaps these fictional colleagues simply had not had the opportunity yet to read Confucius, Mencius or Xunzi, or about societies built on Confucian values; or to gather information about being non-binary or neurodivergent; or about different ways to introduce pronouns or to evaluate class-participation. They might not be aware of the pedagogical reasons for not singling out anyone based on their ethnic background and asking them to represent a certain group to fill a gap in the knowledge of the majority. Perhaps they *are* willing to learn about such frameworks – they might just need some time and encouragement: for instance, to add one “valuing-diversity class” to their course and to learn from their colleagues’ workshops of knowledge-clips could be a first step. This might sound like a quite superficial intervention. However, I believe this to be in line with Biesta’s suggestion that the teacher should point the students towards the world,⁶¹ where there is much they still don’t know and that is important for them to encounter and let into their lives.⁶² I suggest that in

59 Bell hooks, in *Teaching to transgress*, 39, refers to this fear on the part of her colleagues: “The unwillingness to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear that classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained the need to examine critically the way we as teachers conceptualize what the space for learning should be like.” They were different from her own school teachers: “... my teachers made sure they ‘knew’ us. They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family.” *Ibid.*, 2–3.

60 *Ibid.*, 30.

61 Biesta, *World-centred education*, 68.

62 *Ibid.*, 70–71.

some situations, rather than talking “about” diversity, teachers could start by learning first-hand and teaching one thing or framework that they have never heard about or taught.

After experimenting in this way, teachers should be encouraged to share experiences of how they have tried to diversify their curriculum. This might be done as part of a more general reflection on what it means to be teachers or what it means to learn. Biesta suggests: “What teachers do is to try to keep students ‘turned’ towards the world and ‘open’ towards the world, so that it may become possible for students to attend to the world and, in one and the same move, attend to themselves, so to speak, by encountering the question what the world, this world, this reality right here and right now, is asking from me.”⁶³ The practice of adding one “valuing-diversity class” to their course might be a way to start turning oneself and one’s students towards the world. Workshops might be organised to reflect together on what different colleagues understand as “learning,” what others believe to be their roles and responsibilities and what those of our students. Bell hooks reminds us that education needs spaces where all involved are responsible for the learning of all. If teachers are to help students find their voice, teachers might need spaces to find out how to help their students.⁶⁴ After learning about specific frameworks that ground ways of knowing, experiencing and valuing not only across different cultures, religions, and parts of the world, but also social classes, and types of neurodivergence, we will take other people more seriously. Perhaps it was just a question of learning that economists tend to think of humans as rational, that people on the autism spectrum might experience light and sounds as painful, people with afro hair might experience a party hat as microaggression, non-binary people might experience a lecturer referring to all with “he or she” as excluding them, that interpersonal responsibilities are regarded as more important than individual rights in some societies, that farmers in certain areas might abhor the idea of selling their land as we would abhor the idea of selling our arms, since that is part of who they are, not something they own, and that, as Dōgen reminds us and as we will see shortly, fish are not ridiculous for seeing water as a house. Perhaps after becoming acquainted with specific frameworks we did not know before, and after appreciating that our own frameworks are neither

63 Ibid., 99.

64 Cf. bell hook’s suggestion, *Teaching to transgress*, 38: “One of our most useful meetings was one in which we asked professors from different disciplines (including math and science) to talk informally about how their teaching had been changed by a desire to be more inclusive. Hearing individuals describe concrete strategies was an approach that helped dispel fears. It was crucial that more traditional or conservative professors who had been willing to make changes talk about motivations and strategies.”

the only ones nor the only rational ones, it will be easier to consider introducing more classes on different frameworks in one's courses.

The need for the next step, Step Two, is becoming clear: in fact, it is not enough to get to know different frameworks that inform us about "them" in the third person. We also need to listen to individuals who think and live from such different frameworks and who are willing to speak to us in the first person. By looking through the eyes of a specific individual who says "I", might help to see these frameworks as possible experiences.

How to recognise the other as a holder of perspectives and experiences as complex and valid as ours? How to imagine how the world is experienced from this framework, rather than believing that we know a person after gathering information about a group they might be regarded as a member of? How to prepare yourself for a co-transformative encounter with the other as a subject? Step Two is needed.

3 Step Two. Listen to Unique Others, See from Their Eyes

The recommendation of Step One was to learn different frameworks. Here, in Step Two, we try to look through the eyes of a *unique* other. Putting ourselves in their shoes while listening to their first-person experiences, can be of great help towards "decentering": stepping out of our usual way of seeing things and removing ourselves from the alleged centre where one's view is neutral.⁶⁵

Dōgen recommends approaching anything around us through the lens of uniqueness: "Know that in this way there are myriads of forms and hundreds of grasses throughout the entire earth, and yet each grass and each form itself is the entire earth."⁶⁶ In the network of dependent origination, all beings are connected and yet each being is unique and different from the next one. Being related does neither mean that the two related beings are homogeneous, nor that they prevent each other from being what they are. "Things do not hinder one another, just as moments do not hinder one another."⁶⁷ As we have seen in Step One, according to Dōgen, beings are time and "All times in all worlds

65 Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, and Leah Kalmanson, in *A Practical Guide to World Philosophies: Selves, Worlds, and Ways of Knowing* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 42, speak of the need to "... cultivate relational humility in the act of knowing. This measure would seek to make space for the other person in this act ... Through such an 'epistemic decentering' of one's own self, one would be better able to center 'the epistemic agency of others' (Dalmya 2016: 119)."

66 Dōgen, "Uji, The Time-Being," trans. Tanahashi, 77.

67 Ibid., 77.

are connected and yet distinct.” Now we hear that their connection does not hinder them: one’s identity is both a function of others and of one’s unique place in the whole. Dōgen seems to refer quite explicitly to Huayan Buddhism,⁶⁸ according to which, everything is both unique and manifests the whole world to which it is interrelated, in its own unique way.⁶⁹

The uniqueness of every member of our diverse community is understandable if we take into account that each being results, at any given moment, from a unique constellation of factors. One cannot exhaustively know one person by applying knowledge gathered about someone else or a group.⁷⁰ Regarding members of a group as interchangeable might be acceptable for the purpose of

68 Cf. Jin Y. Park, “Living the inconceivable: Hua-Yen buddhism and postmodern différend,” *Asian Philosophy* 13, 2–3 (2003): 167. Huayan Buddhism sees reality as “a realm in which diverse entities existing freely without conflict and without foregrounding a centralising power which might give them orderliness.” “However small or trivial a phenomenon might be, its noumenal nature, that is ‘emptiness’ and conditionality, is the same as that of any other phenomena which appear to be bigger in size and more important in value. Hence, the Huayan dictum: ‘One particle of a dust contains the entire world’. No hierarchy among phenomena is allowed when each and every particularity is considered to contain the entire noumenon.” For an excellent explanation of the relation between interconnectedness and uniqueness in philosophies inspired by Huayan Buddhism, see Bret W. Davis, *Zen Pathways: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Practice of Zen Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 117–118: “Zen does not lose sight of the singularity and uniqueness of persons. ... We are interconnected, but we are not identical. We should not deny our differences, but rather be united in our plurality ... Not only is each person, each life-stream, unique, but each moment of each life-stream, and each being-event of interconnection between life-streams, is unique. Everything, every event of interconnection at every moment, is unique. And every being-event is a unique perspectival expression of the interrelated whole.”

69 Cf. also Denise Ferreira Da Silva, “On difference without separability,” *Catalogue of the 32a São Paulo Art Biennial, ‘Incerteza viva’ (Living Uncertainty)*, 2016. <https://www.are.na/block/7078431> accessed 27/05/2023. Ferreira Da Silva suggests imagining difference without separability. She does not refer to Huayan Buddhism but to particle physics and to Leibniz’s “World as a Plenum, an infinite composition in which each existant’s singularity is contingent upon its becoming one possible expression of all the other existants, with which it is entangled beyond space and time.” This world does not rely “on the principle of separability ... [that] considers the social as a whole constituted of formally separate parts”: a picture that still informs our contemporary fear of the refugee seen as the “other.”

70 The mode of knowledge that is suitable for so-called “middle-sized objects” has influenced our idea of knowing that relies on reduction in order to be efficient and replicable. However, if we switch our attention to knowing humans, we realise that no human is reducible to another one or to an abstract category. Kirloskar-Steinbach and Kalmanson make this point very clearly: “If the paradigmatic way of knowing is not the one that would work for middle-sized objects in a Newtonian space, but rather the way in which we know people, then universality must be substituted with attention to relational uniqueness.” Kirloskar-Steinbach and Kalmanson, *A Practical Guide to World Philosophies*, 40–41.

gathering knowledge more efficiently or creating scripts to streamline behaviour. However, one must realise that there are no two exactly identical tokens of the same kind, since no two beings emerge from and express the same constellation of factors. Gereon Kopf argues that each person who says “I” is a full human being,⁷¹ and a unique one, not despite of but because they occupy a specific place in a large network: “every human being expresses our common humanity fully but not completely.” The specific way in which one is connected to other beings makes them capable of expressing, in a unique way, the identities that they might share with others. No person or group of people will ever express humanity completely – every unique individual expresses humanity in a different way. Nobody is reducible to one group, let alone to the information we have about that group – and nobody should feel entitled to *use* someone to obtain information about a group. In class, we are not entitled to ask someone wearing a hijab for her Muslim perspective on our topic, or, to any student, for their Chinese, neurodivergent or female perspective. It is crucial that we respect everybody’s uniqueness and multiple identities and do not reduce anyone to a single identity.⁷²

In a classroom, Step Two involves realising that, every semester, a teacher is related to unique students who are not interchangeable with those of earlier classes. In order to do so we must realise that respecting the uniqueness of a human being does not mean observing them as a unique *object*: their own perspective – their own *subjectivity* – is unique. In Bret Davis’ words: “Each thing, as a singular event of interconnection, is a perspectival opening onto every other such thing in the universe.”⁷³ The other is a unique perspectival opening to reality and understanding the perspective of the other – even a family member, a close friend, or a member of a group we researched thoroughly – is not an easy task. It is difficult to take distance from one’s intentionality and idiosyncratic way of seeing the world, which often involves stereotypes and prejudices,⁷⁴ and to encounter the other, not as an object of our intentionality, but as a unique *subject*, as another “I.”

Bell hooks suggests that we can facilitate learning together in a diverse classroom, by allowing students to bring their own experience to class and to voice the point of view from which they approach the class content: “a simple

71 Gereon Kopf, “Dōtoku (Expression),” in *Key Concepts in World Philosophies*, Flavel and Robbiano eds., 369.

72 Cf. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Penguin Books India, 2003).

73 Davis, *Zen Pathways*, 119.

74 Ibid. 21. Davis refers to this filter or grid through which everything becomes an object of our intentionality, as to our “karmic editing”: “the way our habits of mind restrict and even distort our perception of the world.”

practice like including personal experience may be more constructively challenging than simply changing the curriculum ... sharing personal narratives yet linking that knowledge with academic information really enhances our capacity to know.”⁷⁵ Bell hooks acknowledges the importance of seeing students as subjects, whose “voice” should be respected. However, she knows teachers, especially at public institutions, who are frightened by the thought that students, when treated as subjects, will feel entitled to speak freely:

Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategically – to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects. What many professors are frightened of is precisely that. ... In the privileged liberal arts colleges, it is acceptable for professors to respect the “voice” of any student who wants to make a point. Many students in those institutions feel they are entitled – that their voices deserve to be heard. But students in public institutions, mostly from working-class backgrounds, come to college assuming that professors see them as having nothing of value to say, no valuable contribution to make to a dialectical exchange of ideas.⁷⁶

How to make sure that teachers and students in a diverse learning community recognise the other as a subject who is entitled to approach the content studied in class from their unique perspective, and that, by approaching it in a specific way, unique to them, enhance the learning experience for all involved? How do we learn to see from a perspective that is different and unique and to value the student’s voice that makes something available to us that we would not be able to access without them? Bell hooks suggests: “In regards to pedagogical practices we must intervene to alter the existing pedagogical structure and to teach students how to listen, how to hear one another.”⁷⁷ If we are lucky to have people from different backgrounds in our community, we need to practise our capacity to *listen*.

3.1 *First Recommendation*

Educators should find ways to introduce in their classes and their communities the *practice of listening to others*.⁷⁸ It is not enough to have students and

75 bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 148.

76 Ibid., 148–149.

77 Ibid., 150.

78 Cf. e.g., Wayne Veck, “Listening to include.” *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 13, 2 (2009): 141–155.

colleagues from different backgrounds, if we do not create conditions for their voice to be heard. Rather than only teaching students how make their arguments, we need to foster “public listening”:

The ability to speak clearly and convincingly with reason and rationality is cherished in Western societies. The primary locus of responsibility for the success of communication lies in the speaker. Hence, public speaking, not public listening, is required in Eurocentric communication education. ... From an Asiatic perspective, ... communication is a process in which we feel the joy and suffering of all sentient beings. Emotional, not conceptual, convergence plays a pivotal role in Asian communication, and this convergence is often possible when the listener, who is ego-decentered and other directed, attempts to sense and read the emotional dynamics of human interaction.⁷⁹

In other words, listening to someone else, respecting them as a subject, requires the ability to *converge* with the speaker *emotionally* so as to put ourselves in their shoes, not only to understand the meaning of their words. We need to train the ability to decentre and converge with the speaker, to understand their experience as much as possible. This ability can be trained, by introducing the practice of listening to different students’ interpretations of the topic under discussion, into our classes. And we need to present this practice as a valuable part of class-time and as one of the perks of participating in a mini-community of learning, in which everyone’s take is unique and valuable.

3.2 *Second Recommendation*

Educators should facilitate *travelling to a place that is significant to others*, where one tries to stand in the shoes of the other, rather than objectifying or stereotyping them, for instance as a victim. This is the philosophical practice of “pilgrimage” as described by Ching Yuen Cheung and Gereon Kopf.⁸⁰ They take their students from Hong Kong, the States and Iceland to Japan, for example to places connected to atomic bomb destruction (Hiroshima); tsunami

79 Yoshitaka Miike, “An Asiatic reflection on Eurocentric bias in communication theory.” *Communication Monographs* 74, 2 (2007): 274–275. I would like to thank Tatiana Bruni who brought this paper to my attention.

80 Cf. Ching-Yuen Cheung, “In the Wake of 3.11 Earthquake: Philosophy of Disaster and Pilgrimage.” *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Philosophy* (2017): 133–50; and Gereon Kopf, “Envisioning Multi-Cultural and Multi-Disciplinary Engagement: Lessons from the Twelve Wolf Encounter Pictures.” *Culture and Dialogue* 10, 1 (2022): 60–94.

and nuclear disaster (Fukushima); and to Shinto and Buddhist religious practices (mountain temples on Mount Takao and Mount Kōya). The conceptual similarities underlying the program Going Glocal by Rolando Vázquez, who takes international students from the Netherlands to an Indigenous Mexican community, are striking. Vázquez and Maria Lugones refer to this practice as “world-travelling.”^{81,82} This is not stereotypical tourist-travelling: world-travelling consists of undergoing epistemic shifts to other worlds of meanings, by humbly listening to the other and trying to understand their worlds.

Could these recommendations that are geared towards Step Two “Listen to unique others, see from their eyes” be met with resistance? They surely could. Someone might, for instance, ask whether by practising to see the other as they would see, we might lose ourselves. The answer comes from looking at Step Three.

4 Step Three. Co-create in Dialogue with Many “You”

The way not to lose oneself after learning about the different frameworks that play a role in our classroom and discovering as many subjective experiences as people in our learning community, is to take both one’s own frameworks and those of the others seriously and keep “moving” between them, until our response becomes attuned to different participants in our community.

I referred above to Dōgen’s study and forgetting of the self. Elsewhere he suggests how not to lose oneself, and one’s characteristic way to relate, while opening up to others. He refers to the process of listening to the other and trying to see from their eyes as “learning in practice of water seeing water.” The attitude we are learning is the capacity to look at water as if from the perspective of a drop of water (Step Two), and to switch between seeing and behaving as the other, to seeing and behaving as ourselves, until we create a new perspective and behaviour together (Step Three).

81 Rolando Vázquez, “Decolonial practices of learning,” in John Friedman, Vicki Haverkate, Barbara Oomen, Eri Park, and Marcin Sklad. *Going glocal in Higher Education: The Theory, Teaching and Measurement of Global Citizenship* (Amsterdam: De Drukkerij, 2015), 94.

82 Maria Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception,” *Hypatia* 2, 2 (1987): 3–19; and Maria Lugones, *Pilgrimages/peregrinajes: Theorizing coalition against multiple oppressions* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

This is not learning in practice⁸³ only of the time when human beings and gods see water; this is learning in practice⁸⁴ of water seeing water. Because water practices and experiences⁸⁵ water, there is the investigation in practice⁸⁶ of water speaking water.⁸⁷

We must bring to realization the road on which the self encounters the self; we must move back and forth along, and spring from, the vital path on which the other studies [in practice], and fully comprehends,⁸⁸ the other.⁸⁹

When water speaks “in the first person,” one should try to experience water as water experiences it, i.e. to encounter the other on their own terms. This quote is full of words that start with the Chinese character 修 (pronounced *shu* or *san* in Japanese), which suggests a practice, a discipline, a studying which is a training. This practice involves agility in switching perspectives: from the perspective of the other to our own and back. By mentioning moving back and forth, Dōgen stresses that encountering the other on their own terms does not mean to lose oneself and one’s own frameworks or to swap one’s framework for that of the other – this is the necessary preparation towards moving on: from studying to fully understanding each other and acting together.

Bell hooks refers to the resistance on the part of some teachers, who are afraid to lose themselves should they acknowledge the possibility of multiple, valid ways of approaching a certain subject:

Let’s face it: most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal ... many teachers are disturbed by the political implications of multicultural education

83 参學 *sangaku*: “studying,” trans. Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, 101; “a study,” trans. Bielefeldt, *Japanese Philosophy*, 153–154.

84 参學 *sangaku*.

85 修證する *shushō suru*: “has practice-realization of,” trans. Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, 101; “practices and verifies,” trans. Bielefeldt, *Japanese Philosophy*, 153–154.

86 参究 *sankyū*.

87 Dōgen, “*Sansui-kyō*, The Sutra of Mountains and Waters,” trans. Nishijima and Cross, 145–146. Cf. trans. Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, 101: “water speaks of water. This is a complete understanding”; Cf. trans. Bielefeldt, *Japanese Philosophy*, 153–154: “hence there is a study of water telling of water.”

88 参徹する *santetsu suru*: “fathom,” trans. Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, 101; “exhausts in practice,” trans. Nishijima and Cross, *Sansui-kyō*, 146.

89 Trans. Bielefeldt, *Japanese Philosophy*, 153–154.

because they fear losing control in a classroom where there is no one way to approach a subject – only multiple ways and multiple references.⁹⁰

We should train to develop agility in switching perspectives, to *move back and forth* – as Dōgen recommends – among different systems of thought, values and experiences: from my worlds which I don't lose, to the worlds of the other. We should learn to move across bell hooks' multiple ways and multiple references. If possible, one would need to navigate across as many worlds as unique students in one's class. Education becomes a creative endeavour, an "infinite game,"⁹¹ where the goal is to enhance the quality of play for all involved. Rather than leading to losing oneself, this enables harmonious collaborations or dialogues where, at some point, the conscious metaphorical back and forth movement between perspectives is suspended, and we respond to each other in an informed but spontaneous way.

Another way to describe a real dialogue is "call-and-response,"⁹² in which the partners are capable of listening and travelling to the world of the other. A real dialogue as "call-and-response" is not a series of monologues next to each other. Kopf quotes Iwao Kōyama: "'Calling' is a call that can respond to a call, it is not a call that cannot imagine responding; 'responding' is a reply to a call, it is not a response devoid of a call. ..."⁹³

Another characterisation of a real dialogue is Davis' "mutual exchange of host and guest,"⁹⁴ where the initial host understands when it is the time to speak and when to listen, when to lead the conversation and when to follow. "Mutual exchange of host and guest" also characterises situations in which the good teacher initiates a learning process, and then is attentive to when is the right moment to step back, leave the centre to a student who is ready to take it, and listen.⁹⁵ This mutual exchange is neither one in which one's values are

90 Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 35–36.

91 "Valuing diversity and equity compels us to play education as an infinite game ... Infinite endeavors – like marriages and parenting – are not played to win (or lose) but to sustain the interest and commitment of all involved while continually enhancing the quality of play or interaction." Hershock, "Valuing diversity," 10–11.

92 Gereon Kopf explains that the concept 呼応, *ko'ō* in Japanese, was developed by Iwao Kōyama in 1976 and translated as "antiphony" by Heisig. See Gereon Kopf, "Antiphony: A Model of Dialogue," *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture* 39 (2015).

93 *Ibid.*, 29.

94 Davis, *Zen pathways*, 121–122.

95 The metaphor of "hosting" to point at a practice that takes the other as a subject and not as an object of our intentionality or representation is also used by Rolando Vázquez who stresses the necessity of listening and of hosting other worlds, rather than representing them. The metaphor becomes attractively spatial, when he points at the need to acquire

replaced by those of the other,⁹⁶ nor an endpoint after which practice is no longer needed.

Who is proficient in this kind of skipping and navigating among multiple frameworks? *People from any minority might well be.* In fact, whereas people in dominant groups might believe that there is only one world – the one in which they live –, the rest need to navigate multiple frameworks. Latina feminist phenomenologists, after W.E.B. Du Bois' reinterpretation of G.W.F. Hegel's unhappy or double consciousness,⁹⁷ taught us that those who are forced to travel between worlds – for instance by being black or Latina in a world dominated by white, or queer in a heteronormative world – have an epistemological advantage on those “at ease in one world.”⁹⁸ Liminality or in-betweenness – which comes with living both in one's own world and in the one of the dominant other – makes one aware of the existence of multiple worlds; and it trains one to respond differently but attunedly, according to the specific world one finds themselves in at a specific time.

Members of our community that are not West-European, not white, not male, not heterosexual, not able-bodied, not cis-gender, not neurotypicals, neither middle nor upper class might have always lived their life in-between multiple frameworks – especially between the dominant one, and theirs. They

the “capacity of receiving difference, of becoming capacious. It's about the enlargement of experience ... engagement and responsibility towards others, the Earth and Earth-beings. It is about becoming open to the radical diversity of Earth-worlds. ... Instead of affirming the person as the I and the center, it is about becoming a host, a womb.” Rolando Vázquez, *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthetics and the End of the Contemporary* (Amsterdam: Mondriaan Fund, 2020), 157.

96 Davis refers to the Japanese philosopher Shizuteru Ueda: “On the ethical plane,’ writes Ueda, ‘the emphasis, obviously, falls on the moment of self-negation when the role of host or master is surrendered to the other. But this does not mean a one-sided sacrifice of self. At bottom it is a question of reciprocal exchange in ‘giving priority to the other.’ In other words, he is saying, in an ethical relation each person is called on to be other-centered. Only when people are willing to hold the door open for each other is an ethical community possible.” Davis, *Zen pathways*, 122.

97 William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford World's classics, 1903), 2, refers to African Americans as looking at themselves both through their own frameworks and through the gaze of the dominant white others: “this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others ...”

98 Cf. Lugones, “Playfulness,” 12: “I take this maximal way of being at ease to be somewhat dangerous because it tends to produce people who have no inclination to travel across ‘worlds’ or have no experience of ‘world’ travelling.” Mariana Ortega develops this point and connects it to Anzaldúa's character of the “new mestiza,” whose epistemological privilege is rooted in finding themselves always in-between, never at ease in one world. See Mariana Ortega, *In-between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (SUNY Press, 2016), 26–27.

know that defending the legitimacy of one's own way of seeing the world does not mean to present it as the best one, or the most relevant to all involved,⁹⁹ but rather as a valid one, among others. Practising diversity is impossible without awareness of multiple frameworks – but it is not premised on sacrificing or leaving behind one's own frameworks and worlds. The goal is neither to pretend that the other and I are the same (or should be), nor to replace my framework, perspective or experience with the one of the other. Members of dominant groups might need to work harder, but they also can develop the capacity of switching between perspectives, after recognising different perspectives as valid.¹⁰⁰

Dōgen recommends: “You should study the green mountains, using numerous worlds as your standards. You should clearly examine the green mountains’ walking and your own walking. ...”¹⁰¹ We should look at water and listen to water speak, as if we were water; and to recognise the mountain’s walking and take it seriously. Then switch to our own speaking and walking. Dōgen continues:¹⁰² neither those outside the mountains realise the walking of the mountain, nor those inside the mountains. While the outsiders see mountains as an object of their intentionality, which they categorise as an unmoving object, for the insiders there is blossoming of flowers. This means that the mountain-insiders are “at ease in one world”: even if they do not objectify the mountains, they don’t have sufficient distance to reflect on the world of the mountains as one in which walking is manifested differently from theirs.¹⁰³ The mountain-insiders live in one world only, fluently speak the language, and think that everybody is like them since they never met anybody else. Dōgen wants his audience to be neither inside nor outside the mountains: to be in-between them, and to navigate different worlds with grace and ease.

99 For instance, I often heard first generation students resent those who compliment them as having “made it,” since these people imply that they climbed out of an inferior world and finally entered the objectively, superior world of academia. However, working-class values and academic values are different and both valid.

100 Van der Ree, after exploring strategies commonly used by the dominant to defend their perspective as the only one, suggests an alternative strategy for the dominant to adopt. It consists in embracing one's own experiences of marginality: aspects that do not fit the dominant picture: “bringing the parts of ourselves that look awkward, that we are ashamed of, into the fullness of our lives ... [t]o experience, and tolerate, in a very small way, what it is to be marginal.” Van der Ree, “Power and the fragile male ego”, 6.

101 Dōgen, “*Sansui-kyō*,” trans. Tanahashi, 98.

102 “Although they walk more swiftly than the wind, someone in the mountains does not realize or understand it. ‘In the mountains’ means the blossoming of the entire world. People outside the mountains do not realize or understand the mountains walking.” Ibid.

103 For a different interpretation of this passage, see Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity*, 57.

Encountering the other on their own term and co-create the world with them seems to be premised upon shattering the mono-cultural ease, the certainty of the person in the dominant position that mountains cannot walk, water cannot be a palace, and that their stereotypical knowledge about a certain minority describes their experience exhaustively. This attitude might come easier to people with minority background, whose attuned response might resemble one that Dōgen recommends to his audience: it might look effortless, but it emerges from continuous training in switching frameworks, in “moving back and forth” from one’s perspective to the one of the other, in becoming proficient at call-and-response, in alternating between the role of host and guest.

Bell hooks, a woman of colour, shares her experience of finding it easier to engage in dialogue about feminism across races, with women, who, like her, came from marginalised groups:

I found that feminist white women from nonmaterially privileged backgrounds often felt their understanding of class difference made it easier for them to hear women of color talk about the impact of race, of domination, without feeling threatened. Personally, I find many of my deepest friendships and feminist bonds are formed with white women who come from working class backgrounds or who are working class and understand the impact of poverty and deprivation.¹⁰⁴

On the basis of these experiences and of the difficulties in carrying out a dialogue with white privileged women, bell hooks expresses the need to create *spaces* where dialogue can be practised, so that women from different groups can train to have a call-and-response kind of dialogue:

creating a context where we can engage in open critical dialogue with one another, where we can debate and discuss without fear of emotional collapse, where we can hear and know one another in the difference and complexities of our experience, is essential.¹⁰⁵

Much practice is needed to reach the kind of creative, and spontaneous-looking response where one leaves behind the study of perspectives and responds to others in an attuned way. An educational community, in which one studies the frameworks of other groups and sees from the perspective of unique others,

¹⁰⁴ bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

also needs to provide spaces and opportunities for this practice. Crucially, if we want to create opportunities for everyone in a learning community to practise real dialogues across frameworks, we cherish participants who have experience in navigating multiple worlds.

4.1 *First Recommendation*

Many colleges are now trying to attract students and professors from various minorities. However, people often feel that they are invited to a position, panel, or meeting for the purpose of tokenism – not because anybody or everyone is interested in listening to or entering in dialogue with them; this tendency must be countered. I therefore recommend that institutions make it explicit in their mission documents that *they value the expertise and experience of teachers who are capable of navigating across multiple worlds of meaning, experiencing and valuing*. In this way, we will have role-models in our community, and we will be better equipped to educate students who, by the time they graduate, will also have become capable of navigating across multiple worlds.

Ideally, at some point, we will have enough participants in our community who, either because of their background, or because they are involved in interdisciplinary research, or because of practice, perhaps thanks to Step One and Step Two, are good at switching among their perspectives and that of others, whom they see as subjects: as “you” to one’s “I.”¹⁰⁶ If that happens, there will be opportunities to display creativity in integrating various perspectives and transform our community together. Korean philosopher Kim Iryeop explains creativity as a state that can be reached through cultivation and transformation

¹⁰⁶ For an insightful treatment of our fundamentally relational or dialogical nature, through the lens of Feuerbach, Buber, Nishida, and Nishitani, see Michiko Yusa, “I-Thou Relation,” in Flavel and Robbiano, eds., *Key Concepts in World Philosophies*. Gereon Kopf suggests that it is crucial to introduce more than “one” other, in fact, “the third breaks the dichotomy introduced by alterity and, in the same way in which the face of the other symbolizes the moment of difference, the presence of the third introduces the moment of complexity ...” Gereon Kopf, “Self, Selflessness, and the Endless Search for Identity: A Meta-psychology of Human Folly,” in Dalferth, I.U. and Kimball, T.W., eds., *Self Or No-Self?: The Debate about Selflessness and the Sense of Self. Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Conference 2015* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 257–258. Recently Kopf introduced the 4th person approach: “While the demand-of-the-third forces the self to recognize and negotiate a multiplicity of selves as well as their commonalities, the presence-of-the-fourth focuses the attention of the self on its relationships to/among the many individuals ... As important as the insight into our underlying commonality is, it must be cultivated in particular and concrete instances.” Gereon Kopf, “Envisioning Multi-Cultural and Multi-Disciplinary Engagement: Lessons from the Twelve Wolf Encounter Pictures.” *Culture and Dialogue* 10, 1 (2022): 87–88. See also Kopf, “Dōtoku (Expression),” in *Key Concepts in World Philosophies*, Flavel and Robbiano eds.

that enables “the person of culture,” to freely engage with their environment.¹⁰⁷ Creativity is attained by letting go of one’s subjective projections on reality, and freeing oneself of the boundaries that limit one – especially the projected waterproof boundaries between self and other.¹⁰⁸ After learning to switch between different perspectives, creativity seems to be what allows one to take Dōgen’s leap and respond spontaneously to any unique situation, or any unique “you.” In this way we allow ourselves to be changed by those with whom we share our environment, and we take responsibility for transforming them in the process: this is to co-create in dialogue with many “you.”

4.2 *Second Recommendation*

Specific training should be offered to teachers to enable them to hold the space for constructive dialogues and interactions in class (e.g., training in practices such as Art of Hosting,¹⁰⁹ Principled Spaces,¹¹⁰ Holding Space¹¹¹): how to teach as hosts, rather than producing monologues. We cannot expect anyone to spontaneously know how to play this role – we need to learn the basics, so that we can help our classes and the whole community to practise call-and-response kinds of dialogues.

I agree with Kopf’s suggestion that practising call-and-response kinds of dialogue perfects our way of being, which is fundamentally relational: “this attitude not only is the only way to affirm diversity, it is also the only way to be true to oneself.”¹¹² We – self and other – can all be seen as the result, at any given moment, of all our interactions with many diverse unique others: as emerging from dialogues – interactions, integrations – between our father and mother (their genes, languages, ways of life), between our family values and

107 Jin Y. Park, *Women and Buddhist Philosophy* (Manoa Valley: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 124–125.

108 “The person of culture attains freedom by liberating herself from dualism. Dualism creates separation between the self and others, which, from Iryōp’s perspective, generates two fatal effects on individuals. The first is a false concept of identity. With the awareness of the separation between the self and others, the concept of individual identity appears, fostering the idea that the “I” is independent of “non-I,” and, further, a tendency of the “I” to be in charge of others ... the self is constantly at war to secure space for the “I” as against the others. ... For her, the “I” attains power ... by realizing the source of its existence, which is the unity of the self and others.” Ibid., 126.

109 Cf. <https://artofhosting.org/>, accessed 29/03/2023. Cf. e.g., Leah Lundquist, Jodi Sandfort, Cris Lopez, Marcela Sotela Odor, Karen Seashore, Jen Mein, and Myron Lowe, *Cultivating Change in the Academy: Practicing the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter within the University of Minnesota* (University of Minnesota, 2013).

110 Cf. <https://barcworkshop.org/resources/principled-space/>, accessed 29/03/2023.

111 Cf. <https://aminatacairo.com/>, accessed 29/03/2023.

112 Kopf, “Antiphony: A Model of Dialogue,” 31–34.

what school or society values, between the family and the country we were born into and the new family we have formed or the new country we have moved to, and among the different people, e.g., students and teachers, that we have encountered. Once we realise that we emerge from various kinds of encounters, it will be easier to take responsibility. Since we continuously participate in better or worse encounters or dialogues – we might want to continuously practise and perfect our ability to engage in call-and-responses, look together for common ground, integration and the creation of new perspectives that might be acceptable for all involved.¹¹³

Dōgen often insists that enlightenment or liberation is not an end goal but it is realised every time we practise together with multiple others.

I and the other engage in liberative practices and enter into a teacher-student dialogue; he and an other engage in liberative practices and enter into a teacher-student dialogue.¹¹⁴

By engaging in dialogue with our students, we become acquainted with multiple perspectives and worlds and we continuously train in receiving and responding to them.

Learning how to engage in dialogues should not be seen as the finishing line, when our efforts are crowned and we are finally done.¹¹⁵ Dialogues are in themselves one of the possible practices towards flourishing together, one that takes us “out of ourselves” and allows us to encounter different cultures, different academic disciplines, and different ways of being. It is a practice that needs to be continuous: one is never “done” encountering multiple others. Seeing dialogues as practices also takes off the pressure to have to do it perfectly the first time around. Step Three, “Co-create in dialogue with many ‘you,’” is not a final destination, but a “liberative practice,” consisting in collaborations across differences – with the awareness that it is always possible to become better at it, more attentive, respectful, humble, attuned, creative in collaborating to make our community and the world a better place for all involved.

113 Cf. the interdisciplinary method, see e.g., Allen F. Repko and Rick Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2020).

114 Dōgen, “Expression” (“Dōtoku” 道得, [DZZ (Complete Works of Zen Master Dōgen, 2 volumes, editor, Dōshū Ōkubo (Kokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969–1970), 1:304], in Kopf, “Envisioning Multi-Cultural and Multi-Disciplinary Engagement,” 83.

115 *Ibid.*, 93.

5 Conclusion

The practice of diversity might benefit from the three steps and six recommendations I have sketched above. The recommendations for Step one “Learn other frameworks” involve stimulating “valuing-diversity courses” for students, perhaps tagging them, or making sure that course titles are more transparent, and offering “valuing-diversity workshops” to faculty and staff. Those for Step Two “Listen to unique others and see from their eyes” involve the practice of listening; and facilitating travelling to places of significance for minorities. In Step Three “co-create in dialogue with many ‘you,’” I recommend to explicitly mention in their vision documents that institutions value the experience and expertise of those capable of navigating across multiple worlds; and to offer specific training to enable teachers to hold the space for dialogues. By following these steps, I hope that one will be at least less stuck in one’s own world view, feel less threatened by different others, prevent gaslighting or forcing others to conform to one’s views, and will stop the unconscious transformation of others and of the world for the worse. Dōgen and bell hooks show us that learning happens when we open up to each other, recognising the uniqueness and the value of the perspective of the other. They agree that we should not fear but cherish the possibility of being transformed by our interactions across differences in a learning community; we should be aware of the ongoing co-transformations and take responsibility for them. We should accept making mistakes and be ready to try again and continuously learn, listen and practise real dialogues and interactions. This paper based on their wisdom hopes to inspire the introduction of practices that contribute to the flourishing of a diverse community – one in which diversity is not only accepted, not only valued in theory, but practised every day.

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Biography

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