

Zazen or 'just sitting' practice: from Dogen to Shunryu Suzuki

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Zazen or 'just sitting' practice: from Dogen to Shunryu Suzuki

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Dr Antonello Palumbo

Essay Assignment 2

4,399 words

The Buddha in seated meditation posture is a central image of Buddhist iconography, and in the Western imagination, Zen meditation is the epitome of this sitting practice. In particular the Soto Zen school is known for emphasizing 'just sitting', following its founder Dogen; while the Rinzai school combines meditation with greater emphasis on koan training. (Dumoulin, 1979, p.5) Scholars have corrected any misunderstanding that *zazen* is central to all Soto practice, pointing to the primarily ritual functions of Soto Zen monks within Japanese society, and critiquing a dualism by which Soto claims to put *zazen* at the heart of its world view while not actively encouraging practice. (Reader, 1986) Meanwhile critical Buddhism has attacked Zen's emphasis on enlightenment as a non-conceptual experience, arguing that the core of the Buddha's teaching was conceptual understanding of the nature of reality, especially the doctrine of dependent co-arising. (Matsumoto, 1997) This essay will not argue with either of these perspectives, but takes as its starting point the fact that *zazen* is nevertheless at the heart of Zen for many practitioners today, particularly in the West where it has experienced a revival in the past half-century. What can we understand about the actual practice of *zazen*: what precisely are people doing when they practice, and what meaning do they ascribe it?

To investigate this question, I will look at two influential teachers in relation to the practice and understanding of *zazen* today: Dogen (1200-1253) and Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971). In some ways they are incomparable: Dogen was a 'towering figure' of Japanese Buddhism (Dumoulin, 1990, 105) - a great intellectual, prolific writer, and founder of a school which has endured 800 years as the leading sect of Japanese Zen. Suzuki in comparison was an

ordinary Soto monk: well educated within Dogen's tradition, but without pretensions to being a great scholar or innovator - a person 'of action and living'. (Chadwick, 1999, p. 414)

However, we can draw parallels in their roles. Dogen was instrumental in bringing Chan Buddhism from China to Japan and transplanting it to a new culture in the 12th century.

Likewise, 700 years later Suzuki was a key figure in bringing Zen from Japan to America and adapting it to this new environment.

I have chosen Shunryu Suzuki rather than his namesake D.T. Suzuki, whom many would credit as the key figure in bringing Zen to America. However while Daisetsu was a writer and polemicist, Shunryu was above all a practitioner, founding the influential San Francisco Zen centre, establishing the first Zen monastery outside Asia, and creating a lineage of American practitioners. His book *Zen Mind, Beginners Mind* is a simple, non-scholarly work, which by 1999 sold over a million copies in a dozen languages (Ibid, p. xii), and is found on lists of 'modern spiritual classics'. (Suzuki, 2011, p.136) We can see it partly as a meditation manual, for an audience new to *zazen*. Similarly, when Dogen returned to Japan after four years studying in China, his first work was also a meditation manual, the *Fukanzazengi* or 'Universal Promotion of the principles of seated meditation', providing advice for the Japanese practitioner. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.8) I will use these two works - the *Fukanzazengi* and *Zen Mind, Beginners Mind* - as my primary focus for investigating the nature and meaning of *zazen* or 'seated meditation' in Zen practice, and particularly Dogen's famous phrase *shikantaza*, or 'just sitting'.

Lineage

Let us look briefly at the spiritual heritage of these two figures. At thirteen Dogen entered the Tendai order- at that time the established Buddhist lineage in Japan - and at twenty-three he undertook his pilgrimage to China's Southern Sung in search of an authentic teacher. His travels brought him eventually to Rujing (Ju-ching), abbot of the Mount T'ien-t'ung monastery, and a master in the Caodong (Ts'ao-tung) lineage of Chan. (Bielefeldt, 1988,

pp.23-4) Caodong emphasized "silent illumination" - an inherently enlightened quality of mind as a natural, joyful state that is already fully present to the practitioner', and accessible through the practice of seated meditation. (McRae, 2003 p.137) A key figure was Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157), abbot of the T'ien-t'ung monastery 70 years before Dogen studied there; Dogen referred to him as an 'Ancient Buddha' and frequently quoted from his poetic writings. (Leighton, 2004, p.3) Dogen brought back to Japan this 'immanentist' approach with its emphasis *zazen* practice, which he described as the essence of Buddhism - 'the treasury of the eye of dharma'. (McRae, 2003, p.139; Bielefeldt, 1988, p.2)

Shunryu Suzuki started his own Buddhist training at the age of eleven, inheriting the 'family business' from his father, priest of a provincial temple, in a pattern typical of Soto Zen priesthood. (Reader, 1986, p.15) He was educated in classic Soto tradition, attending the Soto university Komazawa, and training in the strict, traditional Eiheiji monastery founded by

Missing ", " Dogen. However unlike many priests, who dropped *zazen* after their training (Ibid, p.14), Suzuki developed a lifelong commitment to the practice of seated meditation as expounded by Dogen. His professors at university were Dogen specialists, he wrote his graduate thesis on Dogen's *Shobogenzo*, and his main teacher at Eiheiji, Kishizawa, was a leading Dogen expert. (Chadwick, 199, pp.61,79) He refers throughout *Zen Mind, Beginners Mind* to 'Dogen zenji', and his approach is infused with Dogen's teachings. For him, as for Dogen, *zazen* is the 'pure form' of Buddhism and not through philosophy but only through 'practice, actual practice, can we understand what Buddhism is.' (Suzuki, 2011, pp.137,114, 90)

While Suzuki was steeped in Soto tradition, he was inspired to communicate Buddhism to people outside Japanese culture. In his 20s he worked as translator and assistant to his university English teacher. Through her discussions with Suzuki, the initially dismissive Miss Ransom became a convert to Buddhist practice. Suzuki later described this as a turning point: 'he had seen that Miss Ransom's total ignorance of Buddhism, her beginners mind, was not an obstacle but had made it possible for her to understand more clearly'. (Chadwick,

1999, p.58) This influenced his decision to come to America years later, in 1959, initially to serve a Japanese congregation at the Soto Zen temple in San Francisco. As Americans interested in Zen began to seek him out, he would invite them to join him in morning *zazen*, and a community began to develop around him - many artists, beatniks and students; also housewives and professionals. Suzuki again appreciated their 'beginners mind': they were 'not priests and yet not completely laymen' - they could approach the teachings with freshness that was 'like painting on white paper'. (Ibid, pp.172, 253,58.)

Meditation manuals

Dogen was also bringing the Chan approach to a new country, although one in which Tendai Buddhism was already established. Many of his early teachings seem addressed especially to the lower economic class of monks who lacked the luxury of devoting all their time to study.(Bodiford, 1993, p.25) Dogen's *Fukanzazengi* was the 'opening act' of his ministry' (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.8), allegedly written on his return to Japan in 1227. It has been taken into the litany of the Soto school, and is recited at the close of evening meditation in monasteries across Japan. Bielefeldt has reconstructed the development of different editions - from the first extant version of 1233, to the best-known 'vulgate' likely dating from the 1240s -- highlighting changes which reflect the evolution of Dogen's thought. (Ibid, pp.8,33,39)

The first *Fukanzazengi* was in fact very largely based upon an existing Chan meditation manual from the turn of the 12th century: the *Tso-ch'an i* by Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse. Nearly a third of Dogen's 1233 manual is lifted directly from this work - including all of its description of *zazen* - and much of the rest is derived from it. This little Chan manual was a pioneer of a new genre of popular meditation texts. Its techniques had most in common with a much earlier phase of the Chan school - particularly the 7th-century 'East Mountain' tradition, which emphasized the pure, radiant consciousness inherent in each mind, and reduced the plethora of Buddhist techniques and stages to a single, 'sudden' version of practice accessible to all (Ibid pp. 106,56,83-7) However, accessibility was limited by the need for

direct transmission from a master: Dogen writes in his *Zazenshin* that 'that which is carried from master to disciple is this essential point of zazen'; this is the 'dynamic element' passed from Buddha to Buddha. (Dogen, c.1240-43, pp.52,56) In all the manuals, from Tsung-tse to Dogen to Suzuki, there is a lack of detailed instruction: we must accept the limitations of the text, and glimpse, between the lines, the living tradition of practice.

Suzuki's *Zen Mind Beginners Mind* is itself largely a record of a living, oral tradition, transcribed and edited from audio tapes of his talks. Suzuki published only one book in his lifetime - while two collections of talks were published posthumously - and even this book was not 'written' by him. It was based on talks given to a relatively novice group of meditators at the weekly gathering of the Los Altos Zen group (Suzuki, 2011, p.xiv), and the editing was a collaboration of several students with Suzuki. When the book came out he remarked 'Good book. I didn't write it, but it looks like a good book'. Or on another occasion: 'I read *Zen Mind, Beginners Mind* to see what the understanding of my students is.' (Ibid, pp.135,147) In this way, the text can be likened to the words of Buddhist masters over the centuries which come to us filtered through students' notes. We might argue that audio technology provided a more faithful recording than written transcription, and that Suzuki's comments may reflect deliberate humility - nevertheless it would be a mistake to treat it as one considered treatise. Suzuki hated to be pinned down to a single interpretation of practice, arguing that 'for each case there should be a special remedy' and that 'you cannot eat a recipe'. (Ibid, pp.320, 302) The book is full of contradictory statements, suggesting fluid response to changing situations and students.

Within the limitations of a text, what can we discover about the practicalities of *zazen* practice? Dogen distinguishes between three aspects: sitting of the body, sitting of the mind, and sitting of 'body and mind sloughed off'. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.169). Let us explore each in turn.

Sitting of the body

Seated meditation means 'to study with the body', says Dogen, and the cross-legged posture is 'the king of samadhis and the entrance into enlightenment'. (Ibid, pp.170-1) Suzuki's book opens with the section on 'Posture', highlighting its significance practically and symbolically: 'even though we say mind and body they are actually two sides of one coin... So when we take this posture it symbolizes this truth.' (Suzuki, 2011, pp.7-8) We can trace the details of posture from Suzuki back through Dogen to Tsung-tse's manual (and some even to Chih-i in the 6th century): placement of the legs, the spine straight, and the repeated formula of the 'ears in line with the shoulders'. (Ibid, p.8; Bielefeldt, 1988, pp.111-113) These are not pedestrian technicalities: each has significance. To keep your body straight means 'not to rely on anything'; in this posture 'your mind and body have great power to accept things as they are'. As Suzuki says: 'These forms are not a means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture itself is the purpose of our practice. When you have this posture, you have the right state of mind so there is no need to try to attain some special state.' (Suzuki, 2011, pp.113, 24,9)

Both Dogen and Suzuki move next to another key physical aspect, the breath. In the 1233 *Fukanzazengi*, Dogen says only to 'regulate your breathing', but in later manuals he gives more clues: the breath should be neither rasping nor restricted, too weak or forced. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.113) In the *Eihei koroku* Dogen discusses different techniques such as the 'Hinayana' method of counting the breath, and the 'Mahayana' method of noticing if the breath is long or short. He then describes his master's method in which the breath enters and exits 'the field of cinnabar' - energy centre, likely referring to the lower abdomen - 'but it 'does not come from anywhere' and 'does not go anywhere; hence it is neither short nor long.' (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.114) This seems to imply awareness of breath without additional techniques of counting or evaluating. It seems the exact nature or type of breathing is not so important: the breath is a tool for maintaining awareness, rather than a goal in itself.

Suzuki's comments on the breath imply a similar understanding: 'forget all about yourself and just to sit and feel your breathing' rather than 'try too hard to be concentrated on your breathing', implying a subject-object duality. (Suzuki, 2011, p.103) His biographer reveals a flexible use of various techniques: 'Suzuki would offer a few words on zazen: just sit, follow your breath, count your breaths, or keep yourself centered on your *hara* (the lower abdomen)'. (Chadwick, 1999, p.176) This focus on the *hara* or *tanden* is a common approach in modern Zen, seen by James Austin as a helpful focus because it is far removed from the head where our 'pervasive sense of self-identity' is most active. (Austin, 1998, p.37; Coupey, 2006, p.40) However, nowhere in *Zen Mind* does Suzuki mention the abdomen, nor any specific foci for the breath. Instead, the breath is an opportunity for higher understanding. 'Our throat is like a swinging door': the air comes in and goes out from the 'limitless' inner world to the 'limitless' outer world. 'What we call "I" is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale'. (Suzuki, 2011, p.11) Here is the profound teaching of egolessness in this simple analogy. Rather than fixating on a particular technique, both Dogen and Suzuki show how the images and concepts we bring to the breathing process can frame our understanding of what we are doing, and help to shape the experience.

Sitting of the mind

From the body, both Dogen and Suzuki move to the question of the mind. Dogen's first version of the *Fukanzazengi* follows its Chinese model the *Tso-ch'an-i* without elaboration or comment: 'Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified.' (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.181) This passive observation of thoughts differs from *vipassana* styles such as in Chi'-i's *Hsiao chih-kuan*, where the meditator engages thoughts or 'objects' by contemplating their nature more actively. (Ibid, 81) Becoming 'forgetful of objects' could imply a quietistic meditation where thoughts are quelled into a state of unified concentration.

Whether or not this was Tsung-tse's intention, Dogen takes pains to distance himself from such a position in his writings as they develop. In his *Shobogenzo Zazenshin* (dated 1242: Bielefeldt, 1988, p.49), he writes 'In recent years foolish people say "The practice of zazen is to keep our minds free of thoughts; once that is accomplished we have attained the highest state."' (Dogen, c.1240-43, p.48) In Dogen's vulgate *Fukanzazengi*, also 1240s, he departs from Tsung-tse's original to rewrite the section on thoughts in a passage which has become one of his most famous: 'Sitting fixedly, think of not thinking. How do you think of not thinking? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of zazen'. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.181) The term non-thinking (*hi-shiryō*) is variously rendered as 'without thinking' or 'beyond thinking' in other translations. (Dumoulin, 1990, p.77; Coupey, 2006, p.51; Tanahashi, 1999, p.53). It seems to refer to a kind of meta-awareness which encompasses and goes beyond discursive thought - what Suzuki would describe as 'big mind' . (Suzuki, 2011, p.16) There is still a "who" in non-thinking'; there is 'self-awareness' in this mind, according to Dogen (c.1240-43, p.48) but an awareness in which 'no self centred thoughts interrupt the flow'.(Austin, 1988, p.38) Dogen's famous passage goes on to distinguish this state or activity of 'nonthinking' from either quietistic concentration, as in *dhyana*, or active contemplation, which would involve engaging thoughts within the 'baskets and cages' of rational analysis:

Zazen is not the practice of *dhyana*: it is just the dharma gate of ease and joy. It is the practice and verification of ultimate bodhi. The koan realized, baskets and cages cannot get to it. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.181)

Suzuki also brings this sense of 'ease' into his discussion of how to relate with thoughts. You should 'not be bothered by the various images you find in your mind. Let them come, and let them go.' He likens this to giving a sheep or cow 'a large, spacious meadow' as the way to have control 'in its wider sense'. In another metaphor he describes thoughts as 'the waves of your mind' which will become calmer if you are not bothered by them. Concentration is not

an end in itself: 'Zen practice is to open up our small mind. So concentrating is just an aid to help you realize "big mind", or the mind that is everything.' (Suzuki, 2011, pp.15-16)

Suzuki acknowledges the difficulty of letting thoughts come and go: 'It sounds easy, but it requires some special effort. How to make this kind of effort is the secret of practice'. (Ibid) He expressed this 'secret' to his students in different ways, often seeming to contradict himself: 'One week he says we have to put our entire effort into it...and the next week he says there's no use trying, give up and the answer will come'. (Chadwick, 1999, p.182) At one point he speaks of 'constancy' in which 'there is no particular effort involved - there is only the unchanging ability to accept things as they are'. (Suzuki, 2011, p.74) He goes on to present the analogy of the sky, in which clouds come, but the sky is not disturbed. It not so much 'effort' that is needed, in the sense of exertion, but a shift of perspective to identify with the sky of 'big mind' rather than the clouds of discursive thought.

Sitting of body and mind sloughed off

For both Dogen and Suzuki, this vast 'sky' of the mind is identical with the Buddha nature or *tathagatagarbha* - an underlying purity 'built into the very structure of consciousness'. (Bielefeldt, 1988, p.166) Dogen sits firmly within the 'sudden' school of Chan, which affirms the universal accessibility of Buddhahood in every moment. Yet while proponents of the 'sudden' approach often struggled to justify the role of meditation practice - which could be likened to the 'gradual' polishing of the mirror of the mind - Dogen overcame this by his radical identification of *zazen* and enlightenment as one and the same. (Dumoulin, 1979, p.93) Practice is not conceived as the means to a future enlightenment : 'the so-called Zen of expectation (*taigo-zen*) is explicitly rejected by Dogen'. (Dumoulin, 1990, p.79) 'The practice of a Buddha is not to make a Buddha', he writes in *Shobogenzo Zazenshi*; instead, in each moment 'we have the power to enter into Buddha'. As Bielefeldt explains, for Dogen 'the practice of *zazen* itself becomes the actualization of the ultimate truth, and the practitioner just as he is becomes the embodiment of perfect enlightenment.' (1988, p.140)

This is not to say that Dogen rejected the notion of sudden *satori* expected of a Zen master. He recounts his own experience of great awakening at the moment when he heard his master Ju-ching describe practice as 'the sloughing off of body and mind', which henceforth becomes Dogen's description of enlightenment. T.GriffithFoulk restates this as 'to break out of the web of sense data and conceptual thinking that ensnares the ordinary person'. (2012, p.104) Enlightenment for Dogen has a twofold meaning: as a 'sudden awakening here and now' that can take place in *zazen*, and as the enlightenment or Buddha nature 'that is present always and everywhere'.(Dumoulin, 1979, p.95)

Suzuki had even less to say than Dogen about the notion of *satori* as a one-off awakening experience: his wife joked 'It's because he hasn't had it' and Suzuki replied 'Shhhhh...!' (Suzuki, 2011, p.ix) Over and over again he emphasized enlightenment and practice as one: 'there is no 'Nirvana outside our practice'; 'the most important thing is this moment, not some day in the future'. Zen is not 'a kind of training to attain enlightenment', rather 'when you start *zazen* there is enlightenment even without any preparation.' (Ibid, pp.31,89,87)

This enlightenment is our true nature , also known as buddha-nature. (Ibid, pp. 130) Suzuki explains: 'In the Parinirvana Sutra, Buddha says "Everything has Buddha nature", but Dogen reads it in this way: "Everything *is* Buddha nature".'(Ibid, p.33) For Dogen the entire cosmos - including grass and trees - is buddha-nature, which is 'vast emptiness, open, clear and bright.' (Dumoulin, 1990, pp.80,82) Suzuki attempts his own formulation: 'I discovered that it is necessary, absolutely necessary, to believe in nothing. That is, we have to believe in something which has no form and no colour - something which exists before all forms and colours appear....This is called Buddha nature, or Buddha himself. (2011, pp.106-7) We

can hear echoes here of the ancient Tao Te King: 'There was something formed out of chaos, That was born before Heaven and Earth...' (Lao Tse, 25) This something, for Suzuki, is not 'voidness'; it is a something in which we believe. 'We need a strong confidence our teaching that originally we have Buddha nature. Our practice is based on this faith'. (2011,

pp. 87, 121) For Suzuki, this faith - more than any technique or philosophical understanding - is what shapes our experience of *zazen* practice.

The meaning of 'just sitting'

In the West today we are so familiar with seated meditation as the emblem of Zen, it is hard to see Dogen's innovation. There are several meanings we can ascribe to his famous emphasis on *shikantaza*, or 'just sitting', which come into play at different times. The first is in the sense of 'only' sitting: asserting the importance of seated meditation over other religious forms. T. Griffith Foulk argues that we should not take too literally Dogen's injunctions against burning incense, prostrations and sutra reading, as he did include these forms within his monastic practice. (2012 p.75) Nevertheless his strong emphasis on *zazen* above other practices can be understood within the context of the 'selective' Buddhism of the Kamakura period, which featured a drive to reduce Buddhist practice to 'a single uncomplicated exercise accessible to all', be it recitation of Amitabha's name (Pure Land), reciting the title of the Lotus Sutra (Nichirin) or *shikantaza* (Dogen). (Bielefeldt, 1988, pp.165-6)

A second meaning of *shikantaza*, as understood by many current Zen practitioners, is as a particular form of 'objectless meditation' which focuses on 'clear, non-judgmental, panoramic attention to all of the myriad arising phenomena in the present experience.' (Leighton, 2004, p.1) Dogen's 'just sitting' is often read to indicate this 'receptive' rather than 'concentrative' technique: open, unfocussed and inclusive. (Austin, 1998, p.30; Bielefeldt, 1988, p.159). However, in Bielefeldt's painstaking analysis of Dogen's meditation manuals, he concludes there is nothing to support the belief that Dogen recommended any particular form of meditation, and it makes more sense to think of a range of techniques within Dogen's religious vision. (Ibid, p.162)

It is this religious vision which provides us with the third, most profound meaning of 'just sitting': as an act of faith. Dogen stresses the historical basis for his selection of *zazen*, from Sakyamuni under the bodhi tree, to Bodhidharma facing his wall, through the lineage of Patriarchs in China. 'In the end the selection of *zazen* as the one true practice is an act of faith in a particular vision of sacred history'. (Ibid, p.169) As he writes in the *Shobogenzo Zazenshin*, 'zazen is the intention of becoming Buddha'. (c.1240-43, p.49) It is just not a utilitarian method but the expression of faith in the 'fundamental perfection inherent in all beings'. (Bielefeldt, 1999, p.221) - a concrete physical expression in which, in Dogen's words 'the entire body becomes faith'. (Dumoulin,1990, p.90)

Both Dogen and Suzuki presented this practice within a Buddhist lineage and a community of practitioners. Yet books like *Zen Mind* have travelled to reach a global audience often far removed from any master-student context, and perhaps also from this sense of faith. Even those trained in Zen forms have begun to create a 'post-Zen' which sees practice as an 'inner process' divorced from any institutional or historical context. (McMahan, 2002, p.228)

D.T. Suzuki was critical of Dogen's stress on meditation, finding in it 'the faint shadow of stagnation and inactivity'. For him, Dogen's description of 'body and mind dropping off' is negative, with 'no mention of anything emerging beyond this negation'. (Faure, 1993, p.56) This seems a gross misreading of a figure whose writing brims with faith in the vastness and luminosity of the Buddha nature, and who writes 'there is nothing but scriptures everywhere in time and space.' (Ibid, p.203)

Yet D.T. Suzuki's critique could be read as a cautionary note for practitioners of 'just sitting' in our own time. Can we 'just sit' without this element of faith in the essential buddha-nature which is emphasized by Dogen and Suzuki as the key to practice? Is it possible to take the leap from our 'baskets and cages' of our habitual thinking into the realm of 'non-thinking' without this trust in 'big mind' - in something that is more than a void? After his own experience with Zen, Jon Kabat-Zinn spawned a generation of 'mindfulness' practitioners

now practicing a secular form of meditation across the Western world. While the techniques are similar, the contextual framework can be very different, often taught within medicalized settings using the language of modern psychology. However Kabat-Zinn's own writings retain a poetic sense of the 'big mind' of Zen, drawing on imagery of mountains, lakes and sky much like that used by Dogen.

' We sit together, the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains' (Li Po in Kabat Zinn, 1994, p.140)

'The sky is vast straight into the heavens, A bird flies just like a bird' (Dogen in Bielefeldt, 1999, p. 233).

It will be a question for the next generations whether poetry and secular understanding offer enough context to give meaning to 'just sitting' as something more than just a technique for calming the mind.

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FINAL GRADE

80 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

First marker:

This is an outstanding essay. Its central idea is as simple and apparently obvious as it is in fact brilliantly fruitful once duly pursued. For comparing Dogen and Shunryu Suzuki in the way you did it offers so many insights into both figures. Gauged against Suzuki and its 20th-century Zen for Westerners, Dogen comes alive as a teacher who was likewise intent on distilling an essence of the meditative tradition to which he was privy, and using it to effect on new audiences. Suzuki's profile in turn is filtered and distanced from the morass of fashionable gurus of Zen in the West, and gains a place, in observation at least, in a lineup that extends back to spiritual ancestries as old as Zhiyi. The resulting argument is very convincing and thoroughly engaging. Here are all the makings for excellent academic writing: extensive reading, sophistication, rigorous analysis, originality, and an immaculate presentation. Very well done.

 Second marker:

I fully agree with the comments (and praises) of the first marker. This is an outstanding essay, original, critical and flawlessly presented. The way you engage with Dogen's and Suzuki's teachings on meditation is both stimulating and well informed. Excellent work!

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 1. emphasis + on

Missing ", " Missing comma:

Though it may not always be grammatically necessary, a comma can often help to prevent a misreading. When a sentence opens with an introductory element (a phrase, clause or word that is logically related to another phrase or clause in the same sentence), it is a great help to your reader to place a comma after that introductory element. Such phrases will often begin with words like "because," "while" or "although," as in the following example: "While everyone was fighting, the bear wandered away." As you can see, without the comma, the sentence would be confusing.

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 2. Italics

 3. Italics

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 4. > Nichiren

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