

Foreword¹

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“This collection reflects a contemporary moment,” the editors indicate.² Accordingly, Nicole Y. S. Lee, Lesley E. Wong, and Joanne M. Ursino structure this collection of remarkable essays by “layering” the texts of Ted Aoki³ “alongside his legacy then and now.”⁴ I’ll try something similar, although I’ll layer Aoki’s texts less “alongside” and more at the end(notes), an attempt to perforate the present, at least insofar as it is portrayed in a text by Byung-Chul Han.⁵ It is a temporal layering⁶ that I’ll also make spatial by highlighting Han in the main text. Aoki is audible in the endnotes. It is referencing that renders explicit the palimpsest the present moment can be. The erased past protrudes provided you interrupt your immersion in the present to read what the endnote numbers designate. There you can experience Aoki enacting his “living pedagogy,” one “midst curriculum-as-plan/curriculum-as-live(d),”⁷ a spatial and⁸ temporal concept that positions us not only suspended between Here and There, but also between Then and Now.

Ted Aoki was an “untimely”⁹ teacher, haunted¹⁰ by history. He did not flee it—the internment, his daughter’s death—but stayed suspended. Lingering he termed it, one of his key concepts and the title of this book that its essays enact. Lingering allows, as the editors point out, “one to go deeper into *that* paper, *that* idea, *that* tugging feeling that grips and haunts—the one that can only come from an individual because of their experiences, the one that was waiting to be articulated, and the one that matters.”¹¹ Supplementing the spatial (“digging deeper”) is the temporal (“their experiences”), as lingering allows the allegro of our lives to devolve into adagio, at least while we—alone and together—remain on that Aokian bridge¹² where he teaches us to dwell in-between what is, keeping the past¹³ close-by to temporalize the present.¹⁴ The editors know: “Lingering grants

an opening for pause, breath, an experience of duration, and a *deepening of time* so that wisdom can grace one's presence."¹⁵ In that lovely—and precise—series of images the spatial and temporal fuse.

An “acceleration of life,” Han warns, “robs” us of the capacity for “contemplation,” and it is “precisely” our incapacity to “linger in contemplation” which leads to a “general haste” and “dispersion.”¹⁶ Such grand (or meta-) narratives (the use of “we” without specification of place or time or culture) that Aoki helped deconstruct—destructive as they could be—can today provide meaning that went missing when we disappeared into our devices, dispersing both subjectivity and time so that any experience of “duration” is not possible.¹⁷ The “compression” of events, information and images makes it impossible to “*linger*,” Han rues.¹⁸

Impossible? Perhaps not: “The end of narration, the end of history, does not need to bring about a temporal emptiness,”¹⁹ Han advises, adding that in this pseudo-present²⁰—in which historical time is absent—we can live “without theology and teleology,” provided we live a “*vita contemplative*.”²¹ Han suspects that the current crisis could conclude “once the *vita activa*, in the midst of its crisis, again incorporates the *vita contemplative*.”²² The persisting problem of practice—not only what will I teach but how will I live?—could begin to be resolved once time and narrative restart, as the “right time,” or the “right moment, only arises out of the temporal tension within a time that has a direction.”²³ Remember where you’ve been and you’ll see where you are; maybe you’ll even glimpse where you’re going: a perspective that, in Aoki’s terms, allows as it reflects “dwelling aright”²⁴ in the situation.

Such “dwelling aright”—suspended on a bridge that is not a bridge, a “now” bookended by Then and Now and There and Here,²⁵ thereby hinting at what’s ahead—takes time. Adjustment, attunement, and atonement take time. Everyone is implicated in what has transpired before us, as each of us carries the past inside us, a haunting effaced by our fascination with the screens at which we stare. The consequence is an interrelated series of crises: a “temporal crisis” (presentism) a

cultural crisis (narcissism), an “identity crisis.”²⁶ Submerged in the temporally-empty present, disabled from discerning difference by enclosure inside an ever-receding withering self (what Lasch perceptively characterized as a minimal self²⁷), identity (as the interface between interiority and exteriority) disappears, replaced by online profiles (wherein self and identity are conflated) constantly curated on social media.²⁸

Decades ago Aoki worried about the “reductionism” that occurs “when people closet themselves into solitudes of ethnic identities.”²⁹ Referencing “the narcissistic ‘I’ of the ‘me’ generation,” Aoki wonders if “in like way, does not understanding multiculturalism as solitudes of identities promote *ethno-narcissism* by regarding others strictly as ‘them,’ outside?”³⁰ Self-enclosed inside identity the singular self dissolves into a collective one, often static—even stereotypic, if now valorized positively.

Stasis—arrested (development) as depicted in Kafka’s *The Trial*³¹—is not only identarian but temporal. Submergence in the pseudo-present erases singularity too, as time disappears into “empty duration,” a “non-articulated, directionless time without any meaningful before or after, remembrance or expectation.”³² The next screen shot substitutes for something actually happening—embodied,³³ often abrasive decidedly lived experience³⁴—as it presents the “new”, new ideas, new possibilities, a series of screen shots that then disappear.³⁵ “One begins ever anew,” Han knows, “one zaps through ‘life possibilities,’ precisely because of an inability to bring any single possibility to a conclusion,” adding that no longer is the “individual’s life” structured like a “story,” a “meaningful totality.”³⁶ Collective life occurs in the Cloud, no civic square but a series of websites where we can shop, politics replaced by consumption, including of ourselves.

“Historical time *can* rush ahead,” Han appreciates, “because it does not rest in itself, because its centre of gravity is not in the present.”³⁷ Han errs when he declares that history does not permit any “genuine lingering,” as that would only slow down “progressive progress.”³⁸ Yes, history can

encourage impatience, even frustration and rage, but it delays nothing. History is the narration of what's happening, and "out of nothing," Han admits, "narration makes a *world*."³⁹ But in our time "history gives way to *information*."⁴⁰ Information constitutes a "new paradigm," as an "altogether different temporality" is involved, what Han terms "atomized" or "point-time," between which "yawns an emptiness, an empty interval in which nothing happens, in which no *sensation* takes place."⁴¹ Aoki might welcome a momentary absence of sensation—utter stillness—if that allowed one to linger.

For Han "point-time" precludes "contemplative lingering," as it lacks "narrative tension."⁴² Aoki too found tension generative.⁴³ In the Age of Information the "senses" can be bombarded with—dispersed by—the onslaught of "new," sometimes "drastic perceptions."⁴⁴ In contrast, "lingering presupposes a gathering of the senses."⁴⁵ They disperse when we become submerged in images and information; the "internet" and "electronic mail" allow "geography, even the earth, disappear."⁴⁶ The person disappears as well,⁴⁷ as s/he exists only insofar as s/he makes sense, makes meaning, has a life: once fused with the screen, "freed" from "meaning," and "things begin to hover or whizz around without direction".⁴⁸ When meaning disappears, a "massification"⁴⁹ occurs as, Han cautions, "everything pushes into the present, leading to blockages."⁵⁰ Suddenly one is under arrest, going nowhere,⁵¹ as the "difference between Here and There ... disappears."⁵² In desperation "one rushes from one event to another."⁵³ When rushing one is without footing or "hold", and "life today finds it hard to get a grip. Temporal dissipation throws it off balance. *It whizzzes*".⁵⁴ Time feels "no longer fulfilling", as the fetishized "freedom" of the constantly and often compulsively "acting subject by itself does not produce any temporal gravitation".⁵⁵

Lingering, one can slow down, even stop, suspended on that bridge which is not a bridge but is nonetheless a (non)place from which one can contemplate what is happening to and inside us. We can notice what time it is,⁵⁶ regain our "orientation",⁵⁷ which is what whizzing withdraws from us.⁵⁸

Without being suspended on that bridge—when we are rushing, when our only thought is to get to the other side—we lose “any experience of duration,”⁵⁹ a loss Han attributes to “the fact that today we are unable to *linger*.”⁶⁰ Han asks to us to let go of the “weightiness” of the “earth” and specifically of “work,” and hover—a “hovering wandering with leisure” he puts it—and hovering we can detect the “*scent of hovering time*.”⁶¹ Such a scent, he suggests, can stop us in our tracks, as “hesitation”⁶² is (non)movement⁶³ at the threshold⁶⁴ of insight: a moment of immanence, when the in-between becomes not only an empty space but a portal to the past, where the future can be found.⁶⁵ In time you too can be found, as a “stretch of time allows the self to come back to itself.”⁶⁶ What Han terms “historical traction”⁶⁷—what follows from “becoming historical,”⁶⁸—“from the emphasis on the self”, as it is the self who dictates “direction”.⁶⁹ After reactivating the past—an idea that inspired Aoki too⁷⁰—one then has “time,” and time enables one to have a “*self*.”⁷¹ Without being-in-time—“without hold” is Han’s phrasing—one is “adrift” and “without protection.”⁷² “Wisdom” requires “continuity” and “duration” in order to contest the “compulsion” to hanker after the “new.”⁷³ Duration is what lingering initiates, what Aoki enacted when concluding several of his essays with “A Lingering Note,” a subheading that is also a sound: “Allow me now to close with a lingering note, which hopefully, like the ring of a temple bell, echoes and re-echoes as it fades into silence”.⁷⁴

Enter this collection and you will hear that bell, still.

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Endnotes

¹ Lee, Nicole Y.S., Wang, Lesley E., and Ursino, Joanne M. Eds. 2022. *Lingering with the Works of Ted T. Aoki*. Routledge.

² From the editors' introduction.

³ To learn about the life of Canada's pre-eminent curriculum theorist, see Liu Baergen, 2020.

⁴ From the editors' introduction.

⁵ 2017. The editors also quote this text.

⁶ Or juxtaposition: see Strong-Wilson, 2021, p. 21.

⁷ Aoki, 2003/2005, p. 426.

⁸ This conjunction Aoki emphasized to void either/or thinking, as the editors illustrate: "The following three examples—on the relationship between East and West, curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived, and leaders and followers—reveal some of the ways in which Aoki approaches the 'and'."

⁹ Aoki's teaching is untimely in the sense that "philosophy is essentially untimely because it is one of those few things that can never find an immediate echo in the present" (Heidegger, quoted in Rorty, 1991, p. 16). And "the return to things themselves or the return to the lived moment as a call or as a manifesto can by its very definition never be untimely" (Radhakrishnan, 2008, p. 12).

¹⁰ To hear that haunting, Aoki offers "short narratives—stories"—to "help us in breaking out of the seductive hold of an orientation to which we are beholden" (1992/2005, p. 191).

¹¹ From the editors' introduction.

¹² "The bridge is foundational to understanding his critique of bifurcation and binaries and what it means to dwell on the bridge", the editors explain. The metaphor is based on an actual bridge, as the editors also explain. In Aoki's (1979/2005, p. 345) words: "For 3 years, from 1975 to 1978, I served at UBC as a professor of curriculum studies. To seek momentary refuge from routinized activities ... I often wended my way to Nitobe's Garden." It was during his time at UBC that I met Ted. I remember still the table where we ate lunch at what was then the UBC Faculty Club:

<https://legacies.alumni.ubc.ca/the-ubc-faculty-club/>

¹³ When World War II ended, what Aoki (1991/2005a, p. 248) remembers—he was in Edmonton taking summer-session courses at the University of Alberta—is a "night of raucous celebration on Jasper Avenue. The bombs that landed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had done their jobs. I remembered, during the noise of celebration, the Hiroshima I had seen 11 years earlier while meeting friends of the family that lived there".

¹⁴ "Leap to 1986. I was again in Hiroshima, this time as program chair for the Hiroshima Conference of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI). While there, I visited alone, within walking distance of the Hiroshima railway station, a Japanese garden I had visited as a youngster in 1934. I lingered, facing one memorialized tree, no longer a tree—a stark, twisted, black remnant of a

tree, without foliage, with only a few twisted limbs. A memorial to what? Man's capacity for inhumanity?" (Aoki, 1991/2005a, p. 248).

¹⁵ From the editors' introduction. Italics added.

¹⁶ Han, 2017, p. 69. Acceleration substitutes activity for action, the latter term emphasizing intention and agency. "Such an approach," Aoki (1979/2005, p. 347) writes, "may reveal more fully within my lived human condition self-imposed or socially-imposed distortions that call for action—action that in the very acting will empower me to become a maker of my own history, a historical being engaged in his own personal and human becoming." The context is different but the point rings true here too, as Aoki is synthesizing (yes in the same sense that the fourth phase of the method of *currere* is synthesis) the active and contemplative life, personified in the person one is: "Here it is understood that to do something, one has to be somebody" (Aoki 1987/2005, p. 361). Again, the context is different but the point resounds the same.

¹⁷ Han, 2017, p. vi.

¹⁸ Han, 2017, p. 40. Later, Han (2017, p. 70) emphasizes that "contemplative lingering" requires "duration," as lingering is precluded by the speedy succession of "images" and "events." Without contemplative lingering we're without reflection, memory, or discernment, evident in the circulation of (mis)information over social media, evident in Aoki's era when magazines and newspapers printed (in our era "retweeted") whatever was said about public education: "Situated midst the texture of these media texts," Aoki (1993/2005b, p. 280) recalls, "I found myself both annoyed and delighted—delighted that education and miseducation are of public interest; annoyed by the way hypermedia tend to slither about a bit on the surface, suggesting a questionable premise that openness to people on talk shows assures surfacing of the truth". Today—with misinformation circulating throughout social media—"openness" almost ensures there will be no "surfacing of the truth."

¹⁹ Han, 2017, p. vii.

²⁰ Presentism, Han (2017, p. 38) appreciates, removes both "in-between spaces: and "in-between times," thereby "*removing presence*," leaving only two options: now—or nothing.

²¹ Han (2017, p. vii). We may do so without theology and teleology, he says, but not (I say) without history. That often but not always illusory linear path of progress is not absent in Aoki's work, as he takes note (for instance) of "bellwether signs in curriculum inquiry" (1978/2005, p. 90). Aoki knew that any academic field is a historical narration; he knew what chapter in curriculum theory he wanted written next and he intended to help write it. That he did.

²² Han, 2017, p. vii.

²³ Han, 2017, p. 3. That direction can be backward, as both Han and Aoki invoke Aristotle when contemplating the problematic of praxis. Aoki reminded that: "For Aristotle, praxis was a holistic activity of the whole person – head, heart, and lifestyle, all as one" (1983/2005, p. 116). "In this sense," Aoki writes later, "good teachers are more than they do; they are the teaching" (1992/2005, p. 196). From the past he attempted to repair the present, in this instance recasting our conception of "teachers" and "teaching." Aoki's conception of lingering seems a silent inspiration for Berg and Seeber (2016).

²⁴ Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 163. Aoki is here discussing Miss O inhabiting the space of "tensionality" between planned and lived curriculum. The editors quote another Aoki passage to make this crucial point: "But in order to be able to see what is right in a situation, one must have one's own rightness; that is, one must have a right orientation within oneself" (1987/2005, p. 155).

²⁵ Absolutizing the “Here removes the *There*,” Han (2017, p. 38) knows, adding that the overpowering proximity of the “Here” erases the “aura” of “distance.” What is true spatially is true temporally: mindless immersion in the present erases the past and, in doing so, prohibits the future.

²⁶ Han 2017, p. 43. While not addressing this point precisely, thirty years ago Aoki knew that alterity structured identity. “Increasingly,” he notes, “we are called upon to reconsider the privileging of ‘identity as presence’ and to displace it with the notion of ‘identity as effect.’ What is being said here? We are being asked to consider identity not so much as *something* already present, but rather as a production, in the throes of being constituted as we live in place of difference” (1993/2005a, p. 205). Earlier—in his phenomenological phase—Aoki (1979/2005, p. 333) emphasized the singularity and subjectivity of identity formation: “So much of what we see and read about ethnicity are object studies about ethnic people, and by being factual, they tend to conceal the experiences of life-as-lived earthly. Hence, my interest here is to disclose even to some extent that which we tend to conceal, by attempting to bring into fuller view reflection upon what, for me, experiencing ethnicity has been like. I regard experiencing ethnicity as experiencing subjectively one’s lived situation from one’s own ethnic perspective. From my personal standpoint, and this is the only standpoint I experientially know, experiencing ethnicity has been and is experiencing being a Japanese Canadian in the time-space coordinates of my own historical situation in which I was born, and within which I have lived and am not living.” While the post-structuralist and phenomenological traditions are often cast at odds with each other, on this issue we see their blurred boundaries: emphasizing identity “as effect” and as “lived experience” are hardly mutually exclusive. That is what is contaminated about identity: it is both what we make of ourselves and what others have made of us.
²⁷ 1984.

²⁸ The conflation is evident when Moeller and D’Ambrosio (2021, p. 52) characterize one’s social media profiles as “self-identity.” No identity-as-interface now: you are (only) what others make of you.

²⁹ 1991/2005b, p. 381.

³⁰ 1991/2005b, p. 381. Emphasis added.

³¹ I emphasize this metaphoric meaning of the novel: Pinar, 1994, pp. 38-40.

³² Han, 2017, p. 8.

³³ See Snowber 2004, 2016, 2017.

³⁴ “What seems to be concealed and hence unseen and unheard,” Aoki knew, “is an understanding of thinking that might be understood as thoughtfulness—thoughtfulness as an embodied doing and being—*thought and soul embodied in the oneness of the lived moment?*” (1992/2005), p. 196, italics added). All that dissolves when fused with the screen.

³⁵ “Prolific identity, on and off the web, is to a large extent constituted by information, not simply by meaning,” Moeller and D’Ambrosio (2021, p. 59, emphasis added) point out, adding: “It needs to be constantly updated... a *new* trip, a *new* activity, a *new* feeling are crucial to maintaining an active and presentable personal profile.”

³⁶ Han, 2017, p. 10.

³⁷ 2017, p. 16.

³⁸ 2017, p. 16.

³⁹ 2017, p. 12.

⁴⁰ 2017, p. 17. “Information immediately destructs itself,” Moeller and D’Ambrosio (2021, p. 58) observe, “and needs to be replaced by new information. And so many website are now feeds.”

⁴¹ Han, 2017, p. 17. In contrast to “knowledge,” Han (2017, p. 40-41) asserts, “information” produces “no lasting” or “deep effects.” Too simple and sharp a distinction, but I see his point. For me, it’s the craftsmanship of (especially) humanities scholarship—conveying (however indirectly) the

singularity of the person who crafted it—that encourages an “effect,” not unlike the dyadic effect wherein one’s own self-disclosure is said to stimulate others’ self-disclosure.

⁴² Han, 2017, p. 18.

⁴³ Aoki, 1996/2005, p. 318.

⁴⁴ Han, 2017, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Han, 2017, p. 87.

⁴⁶ Han, 2017, p. 20.

⁴⁷ No one disappears for Aoki; he keeps us in mind: “I can also picture you seated with the text of this writing before you as you are experiencing the reading of my paper. You are situated with yourself at the center, that central point of your being that allows you to say ‘I’” (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 143). For the non-Indigenous, contemplation—meditation (Kumar, 2013)—will do.

⁴⁸ Han, 2017, p. 22.

⁴⁹ Han, 2017, p. 23.

⁵⁰ Han, 2017, p. 24.

⁵¹ “Everything is Here”, Han (2017, p. 39) quips. Except “us” I’d add; we’re in the Cloud.

⁵² Han, 2017, p. 28. When “Here and Now” is all there is, Han (2017, p. 37) knows, “in-between spaces” have no “meaning”.

⁵³ Han, 2017, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Han, 2017, p. 31

⁵⁵ Han, 2017, p. 79.

⁵⁶ What time is it? Han (2017, p. 92) thinks it is a time when “work” is everything; non-work time is time to be “killed.”

⁵⁷ Han, 2017, p. 31. Focusing exclusively on a “goal,” Han (2017, pp. 37-38) appreciates, empties any “in-between space”, relegating it to the status of “corridor,” space without “value”. Ridding ourselves of objectives—even “lingering”—does not, however, mean wandering aimlessly; there remains ahead of you the path that is yours alone.

⁵⁸ “A major difference between the Aboriginal and Western worldviews”, Aoki (2000/2005), p. 326, italics added) ventured, “is the *emphasis* of Western ideology on physical presence or objective reality, what some authors call ‘outer space.’ Contrast this to Aboriginal ideology, which is much more metaphysical and places a premium on the spirit, self, and being, or ‘inner space.’ A result is that there is likely to be more emphasis on the isolated individual in Western culture, whereas Aboriginal cultures support inclusiveness and connectedness through the life force in all living things.” I italicized “emphasis” as it shows the shrewdness and subtlety of the man. The word salvages a generalization he knows in its absolute form is false: after all, phenomenology (to name just one tradition within “Western” culture, but the one that influenced him for decades) emphasized “lived”—in large part “inner”—experience.

⁵⁹ Han, 2017, p. 33.

⁶⁰ Han, 2017, p. 34.

⁶¹ Han, 2017, p. 34. I am reminded of Robert Musil who aspired, Peters (1978, p. 10) tells us, to be one of the “masters of the hovering life”, for (quoting Musil) “their domain lies *between* religion and knowledge, *between* example and doctrine, *between amor intellectualis* and poetry, they are saints with and without religion, and sometimes too they are simply men who have gone out on an adventure and lost their way” (quoted in Peters, 1978, p. 10, emphasis added). For more on Musil see Pinar 2015, p. 201-213.

⁶² 2017, p. 36. A “computer does not hesitate,” Han (2017, p. 70) quips. True, but it can crash.

⁶³ One can’t park oneself on that bridge forever; lingering is no absolute value. Even Aoki limited lingering to a note, as in A Lingering Note. “Profound lingering would only produce boredom,” Han cautions, as does “excessive activity” (2017, p. 84).

⁶⁴ Han, 2017, p. 36.

⁶⁵ Han (2017, p. 39) puts it this way: “Transitions” imply “direction”, and with it, “meaning.”

⁶⁶ Han, 2017, p. 46.

⁶⁷ Han, 2017, p. 64. Han is discussing Heidegger here. Han notes that later in his life Heidegger shifts from historical to natural—seasonal—time (see 2017, pp. 66, 83).

⁶⁸ “Becoming historical,” Toews (2008, p. 438) explains (discussing Kierkegaard and Marx), “involved a historical reconstruction of the current forms of self-identification—in this case, the reflective egoism of post-revolutionary bourgeois society—as a specific product of human practices in time. The goal was to experience the self that was simply given as a self that was historically particular and contingent. Implicit in this reconstructive activity was a conception of the self as not only product but also producer”. Given the determinism of “contingency”—in our era, technologization and the erasure of history—I promote making explicit the pivotal power of individual agency in subjective and social reconstruction. Ted Aoki is a testament to that power.

⁶⁹ Han, 2017, p. 64.

⁷⁰ Aristotle’s “sense of praxis,” Aoki wrote, “I feel we need to restore” (1983/2005, p. 116). My concept of reactivation denotes additional—especially emotional—elements that “restore” does not necessarily imply, but the idea of re-experiencing the past in the present—for the sake of repairing the present—is not dissimilar.

⁷¹ Han, 2017, p. 65.

⁷² Han, 2017, p. 72.

⁷³ Han, 2017, p. 73. Han is still discussing Heidegger here but these are my thoughts too. Concerning compulsion, Han (2017, p. 97) reminds that for Aristotle, the *vita contemplativa* is “divine”, free from “compulsion”. Recall that Aoki too invoked Aristotle, “reveal[ing] for us a tradition that has become concealed, disappearing from the recesses of our memory”, one that is “given to an ethical life” (1983/2005, p. 116). George Grant too went back (to Athens and Jerusalem) to find what could be reactivated in the present (e.g. “an ethical life”): see, for instance, Pinar, 2019, p. 39 n. 217.

⁷⁴ 1991/2005b, p. 376.