

Zen psychology

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In all that we learn, finding peace in all the hurt and happiness, tears and laughter, and ups and downs is not an easy thing. Finding the inspiration to accomplish the things that will make us feel like fulfilled human beings is not an simple task. Like a wise person once said “ Why is it that the deeper you go, the bigger it gets? ” What drives great men to do great things? What drives evil men to do evil things? How can I find the courage inside me to accomplish all that I want to do, much less, figure out what I want to do? Life is full of different choices, which inevitably lead to different questions.

Working, going to school, quitting your job, or moving to India all eventually lead to the question: What am I going to do with my life now? Zen, is not an answer to these problems. Zen is more of a psychological application rather than a philosophical school of thought. It doesn't try to touch on metaphysics, spirituality, or anything of the sort. It is more of a complex psychology of acceptance, which turns out to be extraordinarily simple. Humans are afflicted with all external forms of life: we are subject to life and death, pleasure and pain, love and fear, good and evil, beautiful and ugly.

We tend to sway, or strive towards one side, and reject its opposite. There is no real escape of one or the other, yet we somehow believe that sooner or later, we will be able to conquer the other side if we stay focused long enough. We often strive for good, hoping the evil in our lives will disappear. But the inevitable always arises, and we find ourselves in the same place that we started. Why is this? From a more Taoist point of view, life could not be without death. Pleasure could not exist without pain. Good could not exist without evil. Growth could not exist without stagnation.

If the opposites are dependent on one another, why do we feel inclined to strive for one and reject the other? Why are we so afraid of what's on the other side of the border? Zen is the psychology of accepting both sides. It is accepting that good and evil are both a part of your life, so there is no need to strive for one or fear the other. Pain is essential for pleasure, if pleasure is to be known as pleasure. Therefore, denial of one of these sides is like denying the existence of both ends. If we believe that evil cannot exist, then good cannot exist, because then there is nothing to compare it to.

However, if we accept that both good and evil exist in our lives, it can allow us to feel more at home in the world. We can feel that the world is already whole, and that our lives are already perfect because we are living it. Acceptance also opens up the freedom in our lives. By accepting that we could one day be a failure, we start removing the fear of failure from our want to succeed. Our striving to succeed is then a choice, and not a product of our fear. Through our acceptance of our own fears, we will conquer them. But what is truly accepting everything in life? How can we truly accept everything that happens to us?

Would making an effort to change be just another attempt to escape an aspect of ourselves? After all, to truly be accepting, you have to accept that you may not be truly accepting, right? Acceptance is not changing things at all, yet at the same time, a change takes place by accepting. This is the dilemma that the Zen philosophy faces. To be accepting, we can't be forceful with life. We must accept all as it is, and let everything go. How the heck can we do that? Zen teaches that the only way to be truly accepting, is to live in the now. We hear that all the time, "Live in the now. Live in the now.

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What does “ living in the now” actually mean? By losing the foresight of the future, or hindsight in the past, we open up that world of acceptance. Some people will steal because they see that they have something more in their future. Some people will do good deeds because they feel that later on, they will feel better about themselves. Living in the now, is discarding the past, not looking to the future, and just enjoying life as it is. Living in the now holds onto nothing, but accepts everything, because it’s a state of just awareness. Zen teaches that life is life, and nothing more, so we shouldn’t try to make it something that it isn’t.

It is like the concept of the time of now, the concept exists, yet we can never hold on to it. Living in the now lets us see that all aspects of life are strangely beautiful and complex. Life is almost one of the most outrageous concepts ever thought of. We go through life, and we search for the answers, but oftentimes the search becomes so strong that we forget to live, we forget to smile, we forget that “ it’s all good in the hood. ” Zen tries to take it one step further, taking that frame of mind to every single moment of one’s life. It doesn’t teach us to follow certain ideals, it just teaches us to let go, and enjoy life as it is.