

# The relevance of east asian martial arts in modern society essay sample

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## Introduction

A popular literature has grown up around Zen in the United States. *The Dharma Bums*, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, *The Secret Power Within* and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* are but a few examples of literature that investigates or incorporates Zen ideas. Zen ideas have also been presented and incorporated in television programs and films featuring characters versed in martial arts.

Whether or not such presentations are sincere or exploitive in their attempts to present Zen philosophy and action is a matter of interpretation. And clearly, in the context of literature and entertainment media, there may exist a wide and differing range of opinion as to what Zen actually is or means. But irrespective of the debate as to what Zen is, and as to what is sincere and what is exploitive, there is certainly an interest, maybe even a fascination, with Zen ideas and applications in the United States.

Zen has been operationalized in many different contexts, including poetry, painting, architecture, landscape gardening, the tea ceremony, and flower arranging (Watts). Certain applications of Zen are relevant to a discussion of Zen and the therapeutic relationship. Specifically, an examination of concrete products of Zen lays the foundation for an application of Zen concepts to the therapeutic relationship. These products are Zen meditation and the martial arts.

The presence and popularity of Zen in these areas supports the argument that Zen goes to experience, as opposed to the language of experience.

Experience is the essence of being. The communication of experience is the <https://assignbuster.com/the-relevance-of-east-asian-martial-arts-in-modern-society-essay-sample/>

essence of interpersonal relationship. A Zen perspective that embraces experience and the communication of experience in all of their domains—including written, verbal, conscious, and intentional as well as unwritten, nonverbal, unconscious and unintentional—is open to all people in all cultures.

As Ueshiba observes:

Behind the advances in scientific knowledge and technology, as well as the attendant economic prosperity, exists the hollowness of the human spirit. This seems to be the fate of modern man. We see in the midst of material abundance, artificial comforts and the massive bureaucratization of life, a growing dissatisfaction and frustration underscoring the malaise that is spreading throughout the world.

More than ever before in history we need to recover what it means to be truly human and to be truly caring. One of the consequences of this quest is the Western encounter with Asian philosophies and cultures, (p. 19) Strivings for inner harmony and peace are neither culturally limited nor culturally bound. The search for inner harmony and peace is universal. In the quest for harmony, peace and fulfillment, Zen is a perspective that is open and available to all people.

The practice of Zen mind is beginner's mind (Suzuki). A beginner's mind is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all possibilities. Shunryu Suzuki finds that Americans have a beginner's mind: They have few preconceptions about Zen, are open to Zen, and

confidently believe Zen can help their lives. The popularity of Zen in the United States indicates that the application of Zen to the therapeutic relationship is theoretically, culturally, and clinically appropriate.

### Theory of Zen

The founder of Zen was Bodhidharma, or Buddha, who came to China from India in the late 5th century A. D. Buddha taught the practice of meditation and espoused a doctrine of “consciousness-only” (Chernow and Vallasi 3038). The realization that a person’s true nature is “no-thing” and “no-body” was the crux of Buddha’s experience (Watts 44); this experience is the essential content of Zen. The verbal doctrine of Zen is secondary to the wordless transmission of the experience itself from generation to generation:

From the standpoint of Zen the Buddha “never said a word,” despite the volumes of scriptures attributed to him. For his real message remained always unspoken, and was such that, when words attempted to express it, they made it seem as if it were nothing at all. Yet it is the essential tradition of Zen that what cannot be conveyed by speech can nevertheless be passed on by “direct pointing,” by some nonverbal means of communication. (Watts 45)

Different schools of Zen evolved after Buddha’s death. A unique Zen style of teaching developed, stressing oral instruction and non-rational forms of dialogue. The use of the *koan* a question or riddle to which there is no rational response, developed from this tradition as one way of seeking *satori*

, or sudden enlightenment. Two main schools of Zen flourished, the Lin-chi, and the Ts'ao-tung. (Watts)

The meaning of the word *dhyana* is of central importance for an understanding of Zen (Watts). *Dhyana* suggests "meditation," but not in the common sense of "thinking things over" (Watts 54). *Dhyana* suggests the mental state of the liberated or awakened person, a state that is naturally free from the confusion of conventional entities with reality. Watts suggests that the best solution might be to leave *dhyana* untranslated and add it to the English language, as Nirvana and Tao have been added.

Goyeche also asserts that "insidious dualisms such as the 'mind-body' dichotomy" (65) are part of the Western cultural and psychological tradition. According to Goyeche, Western dualism is based on the concept of the rational soul in the material body because, in the Western tradition, "there has never been a systematic scientific mysticism which allowed for direct experience of the self" (68).

Goyeche concludes that the Western concept of soul may be understood as "a projected anthropomorphic fantasy based on the needs of the ego" (68). In this Western conceptualization, psychological properties are attributed to the self or soul.

In contrast, Goyeche argues that, in an Eastern perspective such as Zen, the self or soul has been realized through experience to be a completely different entity, independent of psychological functioning: "Self (as perceiver) is the only 'thing' which is permanent and unchanging" (67).

Here, the self is equated with an attributeless soul, which is devoid of psychological functions or attributes. The soul just is. The ego, and its psychological functions, are relegated to the physical dimension, defined by Goyeche as the “ bodybrain complex” (67).

The self is experienced through its de-identification with ego or psychological brain-based processes. Goyeche maintains that the oriental experience of an attributeless soul allows the unity of mind and body to be preserved. Mind and body are expressions of an unchanging whole. Mind and body are viewed and used as a functional identity. However, Goyeche does not explain or hypothesize about how the mind and body might acquire their functional identity, their psychological function, independently of the attributeless soul.

And paradoxically, a certain dualism may be present in Goyeche’s differentiation between the attributeless soul and the body-brain complex. But, from a Zen perspective, such a dualism may result from the language in which Goyeche attempts to describe experience, rather than from the experience itself. From a Zen perspective, the experience of religion cannot be separated from the experience of science, even when the languages of the two experiences are.

The part is always connected to the whole, even when it is seemingly detached from the whole. From a Zen perspective, opposites may at the same time be opposite and one. (Suzuki) In the Zen perspective, a view of the referential self is offered, and then expanded on as the referential self is absorbed into the larger perspective of the indexical self. The Zen

perspective of the indexical self ultimately reveals the referential self as an illusion. A Zen perspective offers a view of the referential self that expands on the referential perspective, as opposed to summarily negating it.

This distinction between an expanded referential perspective and a negated referential perspective may be subtle, but it is nevertheless important. A person may be able to define himself or herself as a separate referential entity, an individual, in the English language. But as Watts points out, Zen goes to the experience, not the language of experience. Zen allows for an expansion of a dualistic, referentially defined perspective when experience cannot be adequately defined or understood from a dualistic perspective.

The concept of *mushin* an integral aspect of Zen, represents the capacity for enacting the most efficient and immediate responses by reflexively letting the mind go from itself so that appropriate actions can occur intuitively and instantaneously (Fromm, 1992). Suzuki (1970) states that *mushin* means “no-mind” or “no-thought,” but points out the difficulty of finding an English word that corresponds to it:

*Mushin* is decidedly an Oriental idea. “To be free from mind-attachment” is somewhat circumlocutionary, but the idea is briefly to denote that state of consciousness in which there is no hankering, conscious or unconscious, after an ego-substance, or a soul-entity, or a mind as forming the structural unit of our mental life. (114)

Again, the notion of an indexical self as opposed to a referential self is indicated in the Zen perspective. And again, difficulties of both language and

cultural perspective complicate the understanding of a Zen concept in Western terms. DeMartino maintains that Zen is centrally-concerned with finding, or actualizing, the real or true self. DeMartino elaborates on the negation of the dualistic ego in Zen as “ the Self-actualization of a Self-less-Self that encompasses the ‘ other,’ or ‘ all others, ’” and is, therefore, the “ actualization of the non-dualistic-duality of Love” (271). Such attempted elaboration may indicate the difficulties of trying to articulate the essence of Zen.

Chung maintains that “ some Westerners have begun to realize their misunderstanding of ‘ negation of self,’ the Buddhist enlightenment, as a psychotic state or pathological regression to oceanic feeling” (28), and have understood that “ no-self” is not a denial of the self but more an extended state of awareness. The therapeutic relationship may be examined, and therapeutic interaction understood, as an interaction between the differing Zen perspectives of denial of self and extended state of awareness. Being and nothingness are the essential questions of existence and interaction in any perspective.

The Zen perspective—in the emphasis it gives to holding mental opposites yet simultaneously recognizing their wholeness—provides a unifying model that incorporates both the referential and the indexical self. The application of a Zen model to the Western psychotherapeutic relationship is, thus, relevant and appropriate.

From a Zen perspective, a person communicates not only consciously and verbally, but subconsciously and nonverbally: between and beyond the



words (Glassman). Zen training attempts to make the nonverbal process a more conscious process.

An application of Zen to the therapeutic relationship may elucidate verbal and nonverbal communication, thereby facilitating the therapeutic endeavor. A person's experience may transcend his or her ability to articulate that experience to himself or herself, or to others. A Zen perspective aims for the expression and communication of such experience. A Zen perspective, grounded in experience, as contrasted with the language of experience, is not alien to a Western person's experience.

Stern asserts that "there are recall memory 'systems' that are not language-based and that operate very early" (91). Motor memory—memory that resides in voluntary muscular patterns and their coordinations—is one of these recall memory systems. Such recall memory systems, whether classified as thought or not, may be accessed through applications of a Zen perspective. For example, in aikido training, which will be presented in this discourse further, a movement is practiced over and over, perhaps for thousands of times, until that movement can be enacted spontaneously in all circumstances.

If an application of Zen in one domain, aikido, develops or provides access to such recall memory systems, either verbally and consciously or nonverbally and unconsciously, then there are implications and potential applications for Zen in both the process and content of the therapeutic exchange. Kondo asserts that in a Zen perspective the ego vanishes and that wholeness is

achieved beyond the body-mind and self-other dichotomies. Such perspective support an application of Zen to the therapeutic relationship.

### Zen Meditation and Psychotherapy

Therapeutic utilizations of transcendental meditation provide concrete examples of effective applications of Zen practice to the therapeutic relationship. Chung advocates Zen meditation as an advanced course of training for psychotherapists, asserting that it promotes self-discovery, self-growth, and heightened spiritual awareness.

However, while the practice of Zen meditation might be helpful to a therapist or a client, the application of Zen concepts to the therapeutic relationship does not specifically require a therapist or client to engage in Zen meditation. A general model of Zen theory and application that does not specifically require Zen meditation is still relevant to client healing. Self-discovery, self-growth, and heightened spiritual awareness may occur in both the client and the therapist, even as a by-product, when such experiences are not the focus of therapy.

The application of a Zen model is relevant to issues of psychopathology as well as to issues of personal growth. As evidenced above, Zen meditation has been used effectively in a wide range of therapeutic application where self-discovery, self-growth, and heightened spiritual awareness were not the primary goals of therapy. And from a Zen perspective, personal growth may need to be considered an essential component of healing, even in the most severe psychopathology.

Zen meditation is a concrete application of Zen that is also an empirically validated treatment mode. Such an application of Zen lays the foundation for the application of a larger Zen model, a model that considers the situational context of behavior and issues of personal growth as important to the therapeutic relationship.

### Zen, the Martial Arts and Psychotherapy

There are many similarities between processes in the martial arts and processes in the therapeutic relationship. A Zen perspective allows for the application of martial arts theories and techniques to the therapeutic relationship. The martial arts provide a concrete example of how an Eastern philosophy and practice may be successfully and beneficially transposed to Western culture. Individual differences between specific martial arts are less important, in terms of their relationship to the therapeutic encounter, than the Zen principles that unite them.

Although there are many different martial arts that include many diverse forms, the ultimate objective of all of them is the same as that of aikido. (Ueshiba) Thus, although some authors discuss the martial arts in general, and others discuss the martial arts of aikido in particular, a discussion of any or all of these martial arts in regard to the therapeutic relationship is appropriate.

In this context, martial arts and the therapeutic relationship may be discussed with equal validity both in terms of relationships between an individual martial art and the therapeutic relationship, and the martial arts in

general and the therapeutic relationship. All such discussion serves to illuminate the relationship between Zen and the therapeutic relationship. Trulson's study is one indication that significant and long-lasting psychological change—the reduction of anti-social behaviors—may accrue from the practice of the martial arts.

The therapeutic relationship, when a Zen perspective is applied, may also be conceptualized as an avenue for self-discovery, self-growth, and heightened spiritual awareness. The metaphor of Zen in the martial arts may be likened to a metaphor of Zen in the therapeutic relationship. If a therapist strives to incorporate Zen practice and being into his or her personal life, or if a therapist applies a Zen conceptualization to the therapeutic exchange, then a Zen way of being and doing will inevitably surface in that therapist's therapeutic relationships.

Nardi maintains that the paradoxical nature of psychotherapy, from the therapist's perspective, is to master techniques without being bound by them. Nardi finds a "strikingly similar" (13) process in the martial arts. Nardi finds the application of two key Japanese concepts, taken from the Japanese samurai's code of Bushido (the Way of the warrior), to be crucial to success as a martial artist, and equally crucial to success as a psychotherapist. These two concepts are *mushin* and *rinkiohen*. Nardi defines *mushin* as absence of mind or no mind. He defines *rinkiohen* as adaptability to all circumstances.

Through the great mental and physical discipline involved in the practice of the martial arts, a practitioner develops the ability to access a state of

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*mushin* : Mind and body are freed to respond to any kind of threat or attack, even a potentially lethal one, without hatred, ego, anxiety, or fear.

*Rinkiohen* involves the ability to respond automatically and spontaneously to any attack in a manner that is congruent with the particular type of attack. Such a response is divorced from the practitioner's ego. *Mushin* , a relaxed state of no mind, makes possible *rinkiohen* –a response, divorced of ego, that may harmoniously join with the attack (Nardi).

Nardi maintains that the principles of *mushin* and *rinkiohen* can and should be applied to psychotherapeutic interaction. When a client presents his or her pain, problems, or aspirations, the therapist responds in some manner or other. *Nardi* asserts that an application of *mushin* and *rinkiohen* to the therapeutic encounter allows the therapist to have a spontaneous here-and-now reaction that is in harmony with the client's issues.

Martial arts such as aikido (Ueshiba) strive for the incorporation of *mushin* and *rinkiohen* into practice and technique. Ueshiba asserts that practice of the martial arts provides the practitioner with a metaphor that is, in turn, assimilated into the practitioner's entire way of being. *Mushin* and *rinkiohen* , thus, become ways of being, not just ways of practice or technique. *Mushin* and *rinkiohen* engage on all levels of being—in body, mind, and spirit.

### Aikido and Psychotherapy

Aikido philosophy, concepts, and techniques have been considered, and embraced, by such diverse approaches to therapy as Gestalt therapy, brief strategic therapy, Ericksonian hypnotherapy, physiological psychology

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medical psychology, family custody mediation, and parapsychology. (Windle and Samko)

Through the practice of aikido, as through the practice of other martial arts, the practitioner may arrive at personal and philosophical insights. Such insights are inevitably incorporated into other areas of the practitioner's life. The types of skills developed in aikido have great theoretical and practical applicability to the therapeutic relationship. Application of a Zen model to the therapeutic relationship allows a therapist to access and utilize similar skills in therapeutic relationships.

Two essential components of aikido are centering and blending (Windle and Samko). In aikido, a practitioner first centers, then blends with an opposing force or attack." To perform aikido effectively, one must enter a specific state of mind/body that is centered" (Windle and Samko 263). Centering includes: (a) physical relaxation, combined with a relaxed and balanced posture; (b) loose shoulders and an absence of excess muscle tension; (c) loss of startle reflex; (d) simultaneous use of focus and peripheral vision; (e) slow, diaphragmatic breathing; (f) increased awareness of energies flowing into and out of the body; (g) perception of self and others non-judgmentally and simultaneously; (h) increased ability to detect minimal psychophysiological cues from others; (i) slowing or absence of internal dialogue; and (j) spontaneously (subconsciously/intuitively) generated associations, ideas, or understandings about others.

Windle and Samko discuss the many positive implications of the use of the aikido concept of centering, particularly as a mediation device for therapist countertransference. Blending is described as the flowing together of the aikidoist's energy ( *ki* with that of the attacker (Windle and Samko). In aikido blending, the energy of an opponent's attack is never resisted or rejected. " Incomplete blending will result in flawed technique.... a therapeutic intervention may likewise be flawed if it does not involve the utilization of the patient's own inner abilities and needs" (Windle and Samko 267).

Aikido concepts and their underlying Zen principles have much to offer a conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship. They may help a therapist: (a) center in relation to the therapeutic relationship; (b) enter effortlessly into a relationship with a client or clients; (c) enter into the here-and-now moment of the therapist-client interaction, yet simultaneously observe the interaction from a distance; (d) use spatial relationships with a client, or between multiple clients;

(e) anticipate resistance in or challenges from clients, and then blend with these resistances or challenges; (f) be paradoxical, and do the unexpected, in order to bring about individual change in a client, or rearrange a family structure; (g) be able to enact change from a circular base of spherical movement, so as to influence a circular cycle of causality in an individual or in a family; and (h) model the immediate and harmonious resolution of challenge and conflict in session.

Windle and Samko discuss the similarities between aikido and Ericksonian hypnotherapy. They find parallels between Ericksonian utilization of patient

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response—a core of Ericksonian therapy which involves a sensitivity to, and cooperation with, a patient’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns—and aikido techniques. Windle and Samko find another important similarity in pattern interruption, the shifting of a patient’s predictable, automatic patterns of behavior or response. Windle and Samko maintain that aikido provides a visual and kinesthetic metaphor for utilization of resistance and pattern interruption: “ There is a very-close parallel between how an aikidoist deals with an attack and the most effective methods of utilizing resistance... in psychotherapy” (268).

Saposnek discusses his successful applications of aikido and brief strategic therapy techniques to his work as a custody mediator. Saposnek has been able to successfully deal with the multiple challengers model of interaction presented to him in custody mediation by incorporating into his therapeutic philosophy and technique the aikido philosophies and techniques of: (a) blending without clashing; (b) centering; (c) extending, whereby the aikidoist takes the challenger slightly beyond the ending point of the challenger’s movement; (d) preempting the attack; (e) presenting the unexpected; and (f) the use of paradox.

Saposnek makes the distinction between the less desirable process of “ manipulating” (acting in a way that is intended to benefit the manipulator at the expense of the person being manipulated), and the more desirable process of “ maneuvering” (acting in a way that is intended primarily to benefit the person being maneuvered). Saposnek concludes that “ the



flexibility and objectivity offered by an aikido approach can be helpful to the mediator both professionally and personally” (135).

Saposnek finds in aikido a model for brief strategic therapy. The context of aikido is one in which a person, or persons, approaches the aikidoist with an intended challenge (attack). Similarly, Saposnek asserts:

A client approaches a therapist with a comparable, often unconscious, challenge, as if to say “ I am challenging you to deal with me and to try to change me.... I’ll prove that you cannot and that I am more powerful than you.” (228)

Saposnek asserts that there are many similarities in the basic principles of aikido and brief strategic therapy. The aikidoist always views challenges from a systems perspective within a multi-level interactional context; the brief strategic therapist always views clients from a systems perspective. The aikidoist always occupies the center point of a “ dynamic sphere” (Saposnek 228), allowing interactions to occur around the periphery; the circular view of causality in brief strategic therapy closely parallels the circular movements and circular orientation to conflict resolution in aikido. The aikidoist blends with the energy of the challenger; the brief strategic therapist blends with the approach and style of the client, and does not directly confront him or her.

The aikidoist uses paradox in technique, by accepting a challenge or attack, then using the attacker’s own force against the attacker; the brief strategic therapist manifests many aspects of paradox by welcoming, blending with,

and giving paradoxical prescriptions to the client, even though the prescriptions may appear illogical and intended to make the situation worse.

The aikidoist, through centering, preempts a challenge or attack; the brief strategic therapist, through a technique described as “pre-empting” (Saposnek 231), anticipates resistance (a challenge) and makes a statement that preempts the resistance. The aikidoist spins in circular, fluid movements to utilize the challenger’s own energy; the brief strategic therapist makes just such interventions to a family system by pairing subsystems of the larger family system against each other to effect a major change in the family system that maintains symptomatic behavior.

“The brief strategic therapist has the goal of simply resolving the immediate conflict situation in as harmless and efficient a way as possible,” (Saposnek 234). Resistances are utilized rather than confronted. Both aikido and brief strategic therapy have as their goal the immediate and harmonious resolution of problems or challenges.

Fuller maintains that, although the martial arts have been neglected as a focus of psychological research and psychotherapeutic inspiration, they may be viewed as refined systems of human potential training which provide practical models and mechanisms of psychological intervention. He finds a psychotherapeutic richness in the martial arts, whose theoretical parallels with psychotherapy are diverse.

According to Fuller, aikido training gives primacy to an enactive mode of learning, and de-emphasizes verbal explanations as a route to

understanding. Aikido training is almost exclusively interactive, through dyadic and small group transactions. The experience of close physical contact in aikido strengthens tactile sensing of others' reactions and intentions, which extends social-perceptual skills. Aikido practitioners learn not to shy away from an onslaught, but to embrace it positively.

Schaler explains that an aikido practitioner teaches or instructs an attacker. By re-directing the attack, the aikidoist shows an attacker that he or she "was committed to nothing" (Schaler 75) in such a way that he or she could not cease being committed to it.

And according to Schaler, the aikidoist also shows the attacker that he or she "was confused" (75), because the attacker's fantasy of the future (the attack) does not fit with the reality of the present (the outcome). Seitz, Olson, Locke, and Quam maintain that the effective management of energy is a core interface of aikido and mental health principles. The effective management of energy may be viewed from several perspectives, including intrapsychic energy, interpersonal energy, and the energy of being and existing.

Seitz et al. maintain that the aikido practitioner studies his or her partner and the surrounding world through the physical principles of entering, turning, and securing the energy within himself or herself. They contend that aikido requires from the practitioner a direct examination of the energies involved in dealing with his or her own emotions, his or her perceptions of trust and fear, and his or her conceptions of reality. The importance of the physical space between people, and the implications of

this physical space in both aikido and psychotherapy, are pointed out. “ Physical distance often shapes the character of one’s personal/psychological response” (Seitz et al. 461). The extreme importance of timing in both aikido and therapeutic intervention is also underlined.

Tart approaches aikido in an attempt to define “ psychological energy” (332). He discusses the general philosophy and techniques of aikido, followed by an examination of the different meanings of *ki* energy. Tart points out that the word *ki* is used in several ways in aikido, and in Eastern thought in general. In its broadest sense, *ki* is a philosophical or metaphysical concept, an overall attitude toward and understanding of the universe as the harmonious flow of a something that is beyond verbal definition.

From this perspective, Tart maintains, translating *ki* as spirit or energy is crude and inadequate, because words, by their nature, can suggest only partial representations of a reality that is much larger. In this broadest sense, “ *ki* only points at something subtle yet fundamental about the universe, a something which can only be grasped through meditative and life experiences” (Tart 341).

In a more limited sense, *ki* is “ a functionally useful way of imaging or imagining” (Tart 341). Tart describes an aikido exercise in which a practitioner puts his or her wrist on another’s shoulder, and then tries to hold his or her arm straight at the same time that the other person tries to push down on the arm and bend it:

This is done under two conditions. In the first, the learner is told to actively resist having his arm bent by clenching his fist and using ordinary muscular strength. In the second, he is told to flow *ki* along his arm and out through his fingertips, keeping his hand open and fingers relaxed and outspread.

(Tart 341)

Tart explains that when this exercise is performed by new aikido students, they often discover that their arm can be bent when they use ordinary muscle power to resist. However, when these same students visualize *ki* power, as if their arms were fire hoses and great volumes of water were flowing out of them and into the far distance, their arms cannot be bent, and it feels effortless.

Tart (1987) asserts that the effectiveness of imaging the flowing of water through the arm as a method of actualizing *ki* brings to mind Jung's recognition of *ch'i* (*ki*) as an archetypal idea in Chinese alchemy. In this perspective, the careful cultivation of *ch'i* or *ki*, was necessary for the making of a whole person in the process of individuation. According to Tart, Jung's emphasis on and expansion of the concept of *ki* helps a person appreciate how every encounter and potential battle in daily life can become an occasion for self-development:

When we permit the threats and attacks of others to overwhelm our mind-body harmony, we lose access to our own *ki*. We are left in a vulnerable position which, in the extreme, can result in the loss of our physical life. On more subtle levels, the loss of *ki* can be recognized in the infinite variety of manifestations we describe as "being out of balance," or "without spirit."

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When the loss becomes chronic, we fall into the psychopathologies and psychosomatic disharmonies so characteristic of our time. (Tart 342)

Tart maintains that cultivation of *ki* energy leads to the types of integrations of the whole personality that Jung described as individuation. Tart then proposes that shared subjectivity, and shared *ki* energy, equals reality. This view of reality resonates with that of Seitz et al., that reality is the relationship between objects, and in the psychotherapeutic domain, with the intersubjective perspective articulated by Stolorow et al.

#### Theoretical and Practical Connections

Although Zen and Western psychology may spring from different cultural contexts, Zen metaphors are valid cross-culturally. Becker and Forman assert that, in sharing so many philosophical assumptions, both Zen Buddhism and Ericksonian psychotherapy transcend their cultural contexts, and reveal more similarities than differences. As Chang and Page contend, cross-cultural comparison of views on developing human potential may provide a broader perspective than an isolated consideration of either Western or Eastern disciplines.

Kondo maintains that it is human nature commonly shared across culture and time that people's values are attached to in the service of the ego, although from a Zen perspective the ego also vanishes in Zen experience. Rhee maintains that the goals of Zen, Western psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, and transpersonal psychology are the same with different names.

From a Zen perspective, the therapeutic relationship consists of the space between people, a space that simultaneously connects and separates. Inasmuch as the Western psychological relationship is ostensibly conducted with language, a Zen perspective of the therapeutic relationship includes both words and the space between the words.

The “ space between” exists inside of as well as outside of a human being. The space between apparently constitutes the essence of being: As far as can be determined, even on the sub-atomic level, all matter is separated by space (Chernow and Vallasi). The same matter, depending on the circumstances and the stance of the observer in the field being observed, may function as either particles or field; energy at the quantum level is not a constant. Two levels of contradictory, but equally truthful scientific reality may simultaneously co-exist: particle and field are one, yet separate. It is the space between that simultaneously separates and connects.

In some ways, Zen is a meditative process of “ doing nothing” (Rhee 24); in other ways, Zen is an active process of being and doing. These processes interact in a circular and continuous manner, not in dichotomous, either/or shifts. Furthermore, the practice of Zen meditation immediately reveals that “ doing nothing” (Rhee 24) is an impossibility for a living person. Without the activity of breathing, there can be neither life, nor Zen meditation. Suzuki explains:

When we inhale, the air comes into the inner world. When we exhale, the air goes out to the outer world. The inner world is limitless; and the outer world is also limitless. We say “ inner world” or “ outer world,” but actually there is

just one whole world ... When we practice *zazen* [meditation] all that exists is the movement of the breathing, (29)

As with matter, two levels of contradictory, but equally truthful intrapsychic reality may simultaneously co-exist. What is experienced in Zen meditation, the ebb and flow between actively “doing nothing” (Rhee 24) and actively being, comes to be experienced in all aspects of being, even during periods of non-meditation.

Zen offers a useful metaphor for the conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship. Although the therapist and client may spend only one hour out of an entire week together, the correct breathing—concretely, as well as figuratively—that is practiced in the therapy hour may come to be experienced in all aspects of the client’s life.

At times, a client or a therapist may sense a therapeutic impasse, and feel that nothing is happening in the therapy. At these moments, a Zen conceptualization allows the therapist to point out to the client that therapist and client nevertheless continue to breathe in and breathe out, both individually, and in relation to each other. Correct breathing is a useful metaphor for the therapeutic relationship, a metaphor that inevitably advances in the direction of healing.

Zen provides a metaphor of flexibility. Zen necessitates that the process of integration be experienced as a process that is simultaneously related to, yet independent of, the content of the opposites. Rhee discusses the circular process of Zen meditation that recognizes the contradictory nature of human



experience, which he calls a “ 360 degree transformation” (23). When a person tries to concentrate on “ nothing,” something inevitably intrudes into the mind; the person can try once again to return to “ nothing,” knowing that it is not possible to be in a true state of “ nothing.”

When a person returns to the “ zero point” (Rhee 23), but has traveled 360 degrees in getting there, the zero point is no longer a zero point: the zero point now encompasses nothing and something, inaction and action, negative and positive—and also the process as a whole. The understanding of the experience of the “ zero point” is totally changed after a 360 degree transformation. After such a transformation, Rhee asserts that “ subject-object congruence” is achieved. Simultaneous contemplation of opposites leads simultaneously to distance from the opposites contemplated and closeness to them.

In a Zen perspective, the “ doing nothing” (Rhee 24) of Zen may be seen as a way of experiencing, understanding, and becoming the “ space between” that simultaneously connects and separates in the therapeutic relationship. Such a perspective integrally connects Zen to the process of exchange in the therapeutic relationship.

Zen metaphor and non-rational dialogue have an important place in the therapeutic exchange. Zen teaching utilizes non-rational forms of dialogue (Watts). The use of metaphor is implicated in the *koan* that evolve from this teaching style. Suler suggests that the paradoxes inherent in the Zen psychology of the *koan* can serve as a model for the understanding of psychotherapy.

Zen and metaphor are also implicated in the creation of a psychotherapeutic narrative. According to Stern, “ the making of a narrative is not the same as any other kind of thinking or talking. It appears to involve a different mode of thought from problem solving or pure description” (174). The paradoxical self-contradictions of the koan and the dynamics of the self that turns back to reflect on itself, important Zen concepts discussed by Suler, have relevance in the creation of a therapeutic narrative.

Stern asserts that the making of narrative may be a universal human phenomenon that reflects the design of the human mind. Because the ultimate aim of Zen is the self-actualization of the true self (DeMartino), which Chang and Page assert is universally, cross-culturally achievable, a Zen perspective may also reflect the design of the human mind. Zen and the metaphors that Zen engages are implicated in the creation of narrative in the therapeutic relationship.

### Summary

Zen concepts have important theoretical relevance to and practical applications in the Western therapeutic relationship. A Zen perspective facilitates a therapist’s move toward a non-defensive and non-resistant stance, a stance that considered essential to an effective therapeutic relationship. A Zen model of the therapeutic relationship is an effective and beneficial model that facilitates client healing and growth.

Zen is difficult to define. Zen may be discussed in terms of theory. Zen may be discussed in terms of applications. Yet, it must be recognized that Zen is

neither theory nor application. Zen concerns an art of being that, simply, is. Zen is experience, as opposed to the language that describes experience. The theory of Zen is its application; the application of Zen is its theory. Zen necessitates a profoundly non-dualistic perspective, in which any separation of theory from application is arbitrary and false.

The martial arts share common ground with many therapeutic applications. A Zen perspective empowers the therapeutic relationship, just as Zen empowers those who practice martial arts. But the empowerment is not immediate, or automatic, or easily-obtained. Empowerment comes through sincere and dedicated training, as each trainee looks inside his or her own being. In beautiful Zen symmetry, the empowerment of the martial arts is seen as a lifelong process of becoming weak: “ One thing I often say to my young pupils they find confusing. “ You must,’ I tell them, ‘ become not strong, but weak'” (Funakoshi 114).

Aikido can be presented as a possible supplement to Western physical education. throughout intuitive and scientific paths to learning. Linden maintains that physical education could become one of the primary humanities disciplines if it approached movement from the perspective that body use manifests a person’s core philosophical beliefs and that changing people’s body use changes their philosophies as well. Thus, the martial arts are essentially avenues through which a person may achieve spiritual serenity, mental tranquility, and the deepest self-confidence.

Theoretical and practical similarities between the martial arts and psychotherapy allow for potential effective applications of martial arts theory

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in the therapeutic relationship. The relationship between the martial arts and psychotherapy is relevant and necessary to Zen and the therapeutic relationship. The Zen that is expressed in the non-resistance of aikido (Ueshiba) may be expressed with equivalent relevance in the context of the therapeutic relationship.

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