



JAPANESE HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

Vol.1 No.1

DECEMBER 1992

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— *Reflections and Reinspirations During a Twenty Year Return* —

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There are two reasons why I feel especially honored and grateful to have been invited to speak to you as a member of this symposium on "Eastern Techniques for Physical and Mental Health Around the World." The first is that it was twenty years ago when I first came to Japan as part of what was, for me, an existential/religious quest, what Ouspensky has called "In Search of the Miraculous." My study and practice of Zen Meditation, which I first learned in 1970 in Kyoto, has been and still is an important grounding point in my spiritual life.

The second reason involves speaking here at Komazawa University in particular. It was the pioneering work that was done by Japanese scholars, such as Kasamatsu and Hirai (1966); and Professor Akishige and his colleagues (1970) here at the Zen Institute at Komazawa University that helped inspire me to undertake a scientific study of the technique of meditation. So, I owe a major debt and thanks, both in my spiritual life and in my professional life as a psychologist to the rich and wonderful heritage of Zen which has blossomed, unfolded, and been nourished here in Japan.

I have been asked in this talk to discuss why there has been such an interest in Eastern techniques in America, and how these techniques have been studied. In this first part of this paper I would like to address the first issue in a personal way, reflecting on that part of my interest in Zen that grew out of a religious quest as it was understood twenty years ago, and as it is understood today. In the second part of the paper I will address the second question, exploring Western psychology's interest in Eastern techniques, some of the philosophical assumptions of Zen and

cognitive/behavior psychology; as well as the similarities and differences in the content of the techniques of each.

1. Personal Explanation as One Approach to Studying Meditation

What we scientists have only recently come to recognize, and what is important for us to remember as we begin this exploration of meditation, is that any and every method of investigation, any concept, hypothesis, or theory, only affords us a partial and elective picture of reality. From the vastness of "what is," our chosen technologies and concepts dissect nature along corresponding lines and provide a selective and limited perspective of the whole. Thus what we observe is ultimately a function not only of the reality we wish to know, but of the tools and concepts by which we seek to know it, and ultimately ourselves. Nowhere is this recognition more important than in the investigation of meditation which, as a discipline, traditionally aimed at the deepest and most fundamental types of knowing.

—Shapiro and Walsh, p. 696, 1984

Throughout the years that I have been involved in meditation research, as the above quote suggests, I have been a strong advocate of a personal/scientist model of investigation (cf. Shapiro, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1989a). Since our belief systems effect what we study (e.g. Kuhn 1970), those of us who are both trained in the behavioral sciences, and in meditative practice are in a unique position, and, at the same time have a major responsibility, to be aware of, articulate, assess, and evaluate our own beliefs as they interface with the study and practice of meditation. In so doing, we can examine, to the limits of our ability, the effects of meditation on our lives (and vice versa). I believe this type of investigation can be a rich source of information and insights, observations, and hypotheses about the nature of the meditative experience, and can complement the more traditional scientific models. Further, within the philosophy of science (e.g., Polanyi, 1958), I believe this approach to personal knowledge can represent the scientific tradition at its best.

Within the framework of the above comments, and based on the belief that the way I view the world effects the kind of research and writing I do about meditation, control, health, and therapy; I would like to make a few personal comments about my own religious background and quest, and how that led me to an interest in the

Eastern technique of Zen mediation.

1) Religious Quest

Since I was born Jewish, and my parents were both assimilationists, it felt important as part of my own search that I explore my own "Judeo-Christian" roots. I went to Israel, lived on a Kibbutz, studied Hebrew, the "old" and "new" Testaments, and traced Jesus' path through the Holy Land.

However, I was not able to accept the concept of an all powerful, all knowing, benevolent God, to which both Jew and Christian (and Muslim) ultimately prayed. Richard Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz* spoke eloquently to me, saying that we needed a new theology after the Holocaust; God was either dead, in hiding, never existed, or was a useless God of silence. These insights seemed true both in large human-caused catastrophes such as the Holocaust, as well as in small, individual non-human caused tragedies such as the death of a young child from cancer, or death of individuals from earthquakes or volcanoes.

Further, the existential movement was in full flower in American universities. Camus's image of Sisyphus forever doomed to push the rock up the mountain only to have it re-fall; our human aloneness and isolation symbolized by the *Plague*; and our need to search for identity, to "stand forth" and, in Andre Malraux's words, "to deny our nothingness" in the face of an indifferent universe seemed the most intellectually honest and accurate view of reality (cf. Barrett, 1958; Kaufmann, 1960; Bugental, 1976; Camus, 1955, 1956; May, 1961; Yalom, 1980).

I turned to the East, spending time in a Zen monastery in Japan, a Ch'an monastery in Taiwan, and learning yoga in Malaysia from a Tibetan master. These traditions spoke deeply to me on several levels. First, there was the non-materialistic, non-egocentric cooperative ethic, which they espoused. Secondly, in the face of an indifferent universe, with pain and suffering all around (and within) us, all we had was our ability to focus our attention, to use self-control to deepen our gentleness and compassion, and to taste the small joys that life presented us (Reps, 1958).

Zen's emphasis on doing, not thinking, was a helpful antidote for my over-grasping intellectual bent; its value system of discipline and self-control seemed a skillful way to address an indifferent universe; and its emphasis on rugged independence, with no reliance on teachers or masters, was important for the rebel and "rugged" pioneer image I had of myself. Teachers ultimately cannot teach you. You have to do it yourself (Cf. D.T. Suzuki, 1956; S. Suzuki, 1976; Conze, 1951; Warren, 1969; Watts, 1961).

A man was being chased by a tiger, and fell over the edge of a cliff. He grabbed a vine, which saved him from falling into the raging waters and sharp rocks below. Two mice, one black and one white, began to gnaw at the vine. The tiger was above. The rocks and water below. He saw a strawberry. "How sweet it tasted."

2) Religious Quest: Some Reflections Twenty Years Later

Gurdjieff (cited in Tart, 1986) says that adults at some point need to make peace with the religion of their childhood. I did not think that was an issue for me. I felt I was at peace with my religion as a youth; and that in my early twenties when I explored the Jewish tradition, I had made a conscious choice to seek elsewhere. However, both Jung (1939) from a psychological perspective regarding individuation, and the Kaballa (Jewish mystical tradition), from a spiritual perspective regarding mystical study, caution that a person is not ready to address these issues until they are 35 and 40 respectively. Having definitely passed those chronological markers, I would like to comment on my earlier views.

I started this section by saying I was born Jewish, and that although my parents were assimilationists, I went to Israel to study my "Judeo-Christian" heritage, which included tracing "Jesus' path through the Holy Land." Why did I use that language? On the one hand, the use of the hyphenated term was not accidental, and reflected my phenomenological reality that I was an assimilated Jew, in American culture, seeking to understand universal truths.

However, I was not born into a "Judeo-Christian" tradition, I was born Jewish. I believe there was some unwillingness on my part to face being a minority in the American culture. Judeo-Christian made me one of the majority, and allowed me to try to "transcend" the historical conflicts between those two traditions. I could be "both." Further, although I expressed my concern about the Holocaust in theological terms, I am not sure I was willing to acknowledge the personal terror and fear of "being" a target just because of religion.

Finally, perhaps part of the reason so many Jews (and Christians) turned to the "East" was not only to meet a spiritual hunger not being addressed within our dominant, mainstream, materialistic culture, but also to look for some way to transcend historical, particularistic problems. The East was safer, there was no historical memory of brutality and persecution, no anti-Semitism in Buddhist-Jewish or Hindu-Jewish relations. We would seek the "universal mind" and transcend particularistic differences and rigidities that have divided Jew and Christian, and sects within

each. We could also approach the Eastern techniques fresh and "context free", devoid of the dogma that we saw in our own traditions and ignoring the dogma that had been created in their traditions. We could take only what we wanted, what we perceived as their essence.

During that period of time, my daily formal meditation consisted primarily of Zen (counting, breath, Zazen, Shinkan-taza <nothing but sit> (cf. Kapleau, 1966; Weinpahl, 1964; Suzuki, 1956; Shapiro, 1978). I also attempted to practice "informal meditation" of watchfulness and observing throughout the day (cf. Rahula, 1959); and for an eight year period I also attended yearly Vipassana (insight meditation) retreats within the Theravadan Buddhist tradition (Cf. Goldstein, 1976).

During that time and within those traditions, I had several experiences of deep stillness, clarity, and the non-duality of the universe, in which "I" was no longer separate from that universe. Those experiences were quite profound, life affirming (and sometimes life-altering), and ineffable. These meditative efforts were complemented by efforts at self-change and self-transformation using behavioral self-control skills (e.g., Thoresen and Mahoney, 1974; Mahoney and Thoresen, 1974; Shapiro and Zifferblatt, 1976).

In the past seven years I have begun a return to my own religion of Judaism. The clarity and stillness of the Buddhist meditative traditions helped me recognize, when it was presented to me, the "heart" of the Jewish meditative, contemplative tradition (Kaplan, 1985; Blumenthal, 1978, 1982). The particular language, culture, community of Judaism has given me a sense of rootedness and identity, has involved a healing and peace with a childhood ambiguity that I was not even conscious of, and has provided me a faith community with which to transmit values and form to our children, and with which I could practice seeking and living a spiritual life (Shapiro, 1989b; 1990b). I believe I owe a profound and deep debt to Zen for helping me see the wisdom within my own tradition.

2. Zen and Western Psychology — *Philosophical Assumptions* —

From the standpoint of psychology and health care, there were many factors that contributed to the interest in Eastern techniques. First, there was an interest in finding non-pharmacological solutions for stress-related problems, and meditation was viewed as one potential technique. Second, there was a concerted search in psychology for developing an expanded vision of the human potential, a task which Eastern thought has been addressing and refining for more than two thousand years, through the seeking and attaining of Nirvana, Kensho, Samadhi, Satori, the wisdom of understanding one's true self. This is actually reflected in the language in the Chinese characters for the word "mind" or "self-nature." The top two characters mean "sun rising" or "sound" and the bottom character (kokoro in Japanese) means "heart." When we can hear the sound of our heart (the sun rising in our heart) we then know our "mind," our true self nature.



Fig.1 The Chinese Character
for Mind
(Self-Nature)

Third, although it might not at first seem apparent, there were a lot of similarities philosophically between Zen and Western Psychology. My own experiences with existentialism and Zen were subsequently reinforced by my work in behavioral and humanistic psychology. The "self-control" school of behavior therapy stressed that we are "controlled" by the environment, often without our knowing it, (e.g. Skinner, 1953), and therefore, need to develop ways for individuals to gain more control over their own lives (e.g., Homme, 1966; Kanfer, 1979; Mahoney and Thoresen, 1974; Bandura, 1985). And the "organismic view" of human nature of

the humanistic psychologists stated that while humans were basically good and self-actualizing, the environment was the culprit in the etiology of human pathology (cf. Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1968; Goldstein, 1939; Angyal, 1965).

All of these views have several aspects in common. The environment (and the universe) is viewed (initially) as indifferent or hostile, controlling the individual and/or causing the individual pain and suffering. Therefore, in order for the individual to try to protect him or herself from unnecessary pain and suffering, it is up to that person to exercise choice and responsibility to re-arrange the environment—both the external environment, and the internal one (e.g., the mind). Re-arranging the external environment can be done in order to have that environment facilitate the development of personal self-control (e.g., a clean room in which to meditate and therefore help remove distractions; a support group to encourage maintenance of an exercise program). Efforts to rearrange the environment can also be undertaken to help make the world a more compassionate, gentle, and humane place. In terms of the internal environment, a person may be taught to turn from the "shoulds and oughts" of society in order to listen more carefully to one's innate self-actualizing nature; and/or to learn self-regulation techniques to better learn to control the mind, thereby reducing pain and suffering.

3. Zen Meditation and Cognitive/Behavioral Techniques: — *Comparisons* —

Not only was it possible to examine the philosophical assumptions of Zen and Western psychology, but also, since both Zen and behavioral schools involve techniques, it was possible to compare these techniques to see their similarities and differences. Table 1 examines formal Zen meditation and compares it with behavioral self-management. Specific comparisons are made along dimensions of environmental planning, stimulus cues, nature of physical posture, preprogrammed punishments and reinforcers; cognitive variables, effects of observation, and what is observed.

Table I
A Comparison and Control of Zen Meditation and Behavioral Self-control

Topics	Formala Meditation	Behaviolral Self-management	Informal Meditation	Contingent Informal Meditation]
Environmenta Planning where intervention strategy occurs	specified setting (e.g., room or in nature); reduced external stimuli to initially help individual focus on object of meditation	<i>in natural environment where problem behavior occurs; or symbolically in neutral environment</i>	occurs in natural environment	<i>same as behavioral self-management</i>
if stimulus cues are used	stimulus cues (control): e.g., incense; or in case of concentrative meditation, the object of meditation as stimulus cue	<i>specified cuses in natural environment (programming antecedent or initiating stimuli)</i> <i>self-regulated stimulus exposure</i>	everything is a stimulus cue for "awareness"	<i>same as behavioral self-management</i>
nature of phlyysical posture	specified body posture: lotus or half-lotus, to reduce bodily distractions	<i>symbolic desensitization occurs in relaxed posture: e.g., reclining in thick armchair</i>	no specified posture	no specified posture
if preprogrammed punishments or reinforcers	"KWAT" as preprogrammed punishment for nonalert behavior	<i>preprogramming of certain punishments or reinforcements</i>	no preprogrammed punishments or reinforcers	sometimes preprogrammed punishment or reinforcement
Cognitive Variables effects of observation	in fomal Zen meditation, focusing on behavior of breathing alters the behavior: a stumbling reactive effect (step 1); soon mind wanders, i.e., habituation to task of observing (step 2)	<i>behavioral self-observation alters behavior observed (generalization one); then there is habituation to task; subject forgets to monitor; when subject stops monitoring, behavior returns to pre-self-observation phase (generalization two)</i>	goal is that observation have no interferences or interruption of daily activities	observation used as a discriminative stimulus to interrupt a maladaptive behavioral sequence (<i>see also behavioral-self-observation</i>)

Topics	Formala Meditation	Behaviolral Self-management	Informal Meditation	Contingent Informal Meditation]
what is observed	initially just breathing is focused on (steps 1, 2,3); eventually openness and receptivity to all stimuli, internal and external (steps 4, 5) occurs	<i>functional analysis: observation of problem behavior, antecedents, and consequences</i>	all behaviors, actions, and thoughts are observed: global awareness	only specified cues (e.g., anxiety, stress) in internal and external environment are observed
how behavior is observed self-evaluation and goal setting	thoughts, behavior, breathing, are observed without analysis; no charting, no evaluation, no goal-setting: i.e., "detached" self-observation	<i>parameters of behavior observed: frequency, latency, duration, intensity; behavior in counted, charted; systematic evaluation is made; and goals are sets</i>	observation without comment and without evaluation	<i>same as behavioral self-management; however, also try to maintain detached self-observation at same time</i>
desensitization paradigm; when occurs	relaxation (step 3) precedes feared images (step 4); in formal meditation, a "global desensitization with no specific curs	<i>relaxation precedes phobic scene (cf. Wolpe, 1958, 1969)²; involves subjective hierarchy of disturbing scenes; or, relaxation follows phobic scene (real or symbolically) and is contingent on discriminating certain cues (cf. Goldfried, 1973)³</i>	continuous discrimination of cues in daily environment	relaxation follows phobic scene or certain stress cues
cognitive statements and images; thought stopping	observation without comment (no self-statements); and without evaluation (no thinking); covert images are allowed to "flow down the river of consciousness" and are not dwelled on; focus on competing response of breathing helps remove thoughts (step 4)	<i>covert images and self-instruction used extensively; e.g., cover sensitization (images as punishment); covert rehearsal (images and self-instructions as successive approximation); self-modeling; covert self-reinforcement; covert behavior modification: either alter self-statements or emit relaxing instructional self-statements; to stop thoughts, covert yelling of word "stop"</i>	no cognitive statements or images involved in the performance of actions.	use of covert images, self-modeling; and self-instruction: e.g., "I am breath," "I am relaxed, in control, I can handle this"

Topics	Formal Meditation	Behavioral Self-management	Informal Meditation	Contingent Informal Meditation
focused attention	in formal Zen meditation, attention focused on breathing (steps 1-4); the KWAT (step 2) helps return the wandering mind to the object of focus; in Raj Yoga (cf. Anandi, 15 China, & Singh, 1961) note the use of internal focusing	Kanfer and Goldfoot (1966) ¹⁴ discuss the use of external focusing as a technique for self-management of pain	attention focused on the here-and-now action only	in contingent informal breath meditation, attention focused on breathing; in Transcendental Meditation attention focused on covert sacred syllable
Breathing effects of ; type used	breathing from the abdomen; goal is effortless, autonomic breathing plus awareness of that breathing; used as type of relaxation (step 3); and aid in unstressing (step 4) and in thought stopping (step 4)	"controlled" breathing; voluntary breathing from chest/thoracic area; used in deep muscle relaxation	relaxed, aware autonomic breathing from abdomen	controlled breathing in contingent informal breath meditation (cf. Shapiro, 1974a); nonfocus on breathing (but rather on sacred sound) in "contingent" Transcendental Meditation (cf. Boudreau, 1972) ¹⁶
Contribution of the Strategies to Each Other	acquisition and proper performance of formal meditation is facilitated by a wrist counter, a device used in behavioral self-observation; naturalistic observation methodology of social learning theory is useful in understanding meditation as a series of behaviors under explicit contingency arrangements	clear mind gained during step 5 of formal meditation helps facilitate a behavioral functional analysis of internal and external events throughout the rest of the day; practice of discriminating a stimulus (e.g., wandering mind) gained during formal meditation should help an individual interrupt a maladaptive behavioral chain earlier and more quickly; meditation involves a "detached observation" of concerns, thereby reducing the threat of the concerns and producing optimal conditions for behavior change	in terms of a clinical intervention strategy, informal meditation is made more powerful by making its performance contingent upon certain internal and external cues, and by coupling it with covert imagery, self-instructions, and focused breathing	This technique is a combination of informal meditation and behavioral self-management strategies; covert imagery, self-instructions, focused breathing, functional analysis all come from the behavioral self-management strategy; however, at the same time the technique involves the use of "detached self-observation derived from informal meditation"

4. Some Summary Comments

Zen is a "special transmission outside the scriptures, with no dependence on words or letters" (Suzuki, 1956, p. 9). Western psychology and science requires analysis, and linear understanding. I personally believe both are necessary for a complete understanding of reality. If we never use words and linear understanding, we open ourselves to excesses of enthusiasm and bias. For example, in a cartoon by Feiffer, a woman walks in and sees her husband meditating.

"Harold, what are you doing?"

"I'm meditating on my mantra."

"What's a mantra?"

"It is a secret. I cannot tell."

"Honey, tell me what the mantra is."

He is silent and continues to meditate.

"Honey, tell me what your mantra is or I am going to leave you and stay with my mother."

He continues to meditate in silence. She packs her bags and leaves. After she is gone, he looks at the audience and says "See, meditation works, no stress."

On the one hand, our task is to try to understand why meditation "works", what it works for, and when it is misused and has negative effects. These are critically important questions and require precise, linear understanding.

On the other hand, the study of meditation will never bring about a meditative experience. For that to happen, the strawberry must also be tasted!

We live in an exciting time when, for the first time in world history, all the different religious and psychological traditions are available for us to understand, learn about, and even experience. On the one hand, I do not personally believe that the goal should be a distillation of all these wisdoms to obtain one universal path to truth. I honor the differences and particularness of the various traditions. This symposium is an effort to examine the truth and wisdom within the particular path of Eastern techniques. I believe we can learn from each other. It is a special honor for me to try to help reinspire you to the beauty and richness of your own tradition of Zen. Especially because, as I have noted, it was your tradition of Zen which inspired me, both professionally and on my own religious quest.

However, I would like to leave you with a caveat also. Meditation, and religious traditions, at their deepest level, point, I believe, to a universal essence, whether that

is called unbroken harmony, the oneness, that which surpasseth understanding, the Tao, the Name. Experiences of meditation which are non-dualistic and transcendent, no matter how powerful, do not last. We return to duality and our particular path. I believe a critical next step for all of us is how to honor our individual particular paths, without becoming trapped by them as ends in themselves. In this, meditation and the contemplative disciplines—East and West, North and South—can be a potentially unique vehicle to provide us, within the framework of the particular, the experience of the non-dualistic universal.

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