THE JAPANESE ARTS AND MEDITATION-IN-ACTION

by Harris Wiseman

Abstract. The Japanese arts (*dō*) provide a rigorous, ritual-like set of structures which involve moral and aesthetic training, as well as providing techniques for body-mind synchronization (constituting as such: meditation-in-action). The article explores the links between the Japanese arts and Zen Buddhist ideals (particularly *Sōtō Zen*) of enlightenment being nothing other than the consistent practice of one's art. Japanese archery (*kyudō*) will be highlighted to illustrate this, as will the Japanese lifelong learning philosophy (*shugyō*). The article concludes by bringing into contrast two very different notions of what spiritual development consists in, one of which is highly conservative with respect to its traditions (per the Japanese arts), and the other which explicitly characterizes spiritual development as a process of renewing one's tradition as one practices it (per Margaret Masterman and Richard Sennett). It is suggested that, for better or worse, maintaining the extreme purity of one's practices is unrealistic in today's profoundly interconnected world.

Keywords: craft; dō; kyudō; mindfulness; shugyō; sōtō zen

Introduction

> In Japan, at least until just recently, a teacher in one of the arts (even the martial arts) could tell whether the disciple was proceeding from ego and muscle, or from the power of the Buddha Nature within. (MacInnes 2003, 71)

Harris Wiseman is a Fellow of the International Society for Science and Religion; e-mail: harriswiseman@protonmail.com.

© 2022 by the Joint Publication Board of Zygon. ISSN 0591-2385

This article explores a body-centered, culturally embedded notion of spiritual intelligence, a kind of development which unfolds through a mindful awareness, structured by ritual practice, habituated through time. One might say that such ritual practices are means through which certain ideals come to be literally incarnated in practitioners, gradually but increasingly, over the course of their lives. The article is also motivated to address some concerns with aspects of popular mindfulness literature which fall short by underrepresenting (or ignoring altogether) the temporal and structural scaffolding needed for this kind of spiritual development.

The practice of mindfulness, generally to do with aligning the attention with the body in a nonjudgmental manner, has enjoyed immense academic interest over the past two decades. Mindfulness is usually presented as a spiritual (or spiritually adjacent) practice producing a range of personally enriching benefits, spiritual and otherwise. The suggestion for this article is that any substantive spiritual benefits emerging from the practice of mindfulness arise, not so much out of the practice of mindfulness *per se*, but in the interaction between mindfulness, the structure through which that practice is activated, and the overall course of one's life.

Eleanor Rosch writes: "Mindfulness is often treated as a mechanism, a pill that should work in the same way regardless of context, but … context is important in how people interpret and proceed" (Rosch in Varela et al. 2016, xlv). Too much literature on mindfulness treats it as a practice in isolation from context, and worse, treats mindfulness as a kind of freeze-fractured moment, a *state of mind*, without reference to temporality, to development, or to the values, ideas and goals that structure the practice. While it may very well be true that mindfulness has some general calming effects and promises a whole host of other benefits, none of this necessarily contributes to spiritual development. To the contrary, being mindfully grounded makes one more efficient in achieving one's goals, *regardless of what they are*. Thus, mindfulness can be effective in supporting evil as much as good, foolishness as much as wisdom, depending on the cultural and conceptual framework in which one is embedded.[1] Without a specifically ethical structure, there is much temptation to fall prey to the naïve salvatory promises that mindfulness, in itself, restores some magical connection to the cosmos and others, that it magically produces a heart of compassion and goodness, independent of the explicit training of such virtues.

Thus, if it is to be a spiritually generative practice, mindfulness needs to be understood as needing to be rooted in a certain kind of structure. Moreover, this structure involves at least some measure of explicit moral effort. Such structure (unlike mindfulness practice itself, whose benefits can be enjoyed comparatively quickly), takes a great deal of time to master. In other words, in addition to mindfulness and structure, one also

needs time. To put things in a crude summative form, spiritually generative mindfulness is always:

MINDFULNESS + STRUCTURE + TIME.

The aim of this article is to unpack a broader sense of the necessary connections between mindfulness, structure and time, in cultivating what might be called a form of spiritual intelligence.

This article will look to the philosophy and practice of the Japanese arts, suggesting (perhaps controversially) that they offer paradigmatic examples of this confluence of mindfulness, structure, and time. This article offers reflections on a range of ways in which many Japanese arts, variably influenced by Zen Buddhism, offer such structure whilst being built around what is an essentially meditative practice. In these arts, one is provided with ritual (or ritual-like) structures containing cultural learning, ethics, aesthetics, and even metaphysics rolled into one package. It is the whole package, it will be asserted, that helps unfold whatever spiritually generative potential there is to be found in practicing these arts. These rituals get practitioners to *perform* a value-laden, metaphysically grounded set of socially normative behaviors. Such performance, involving mindful repetition, repeated over the long term, habituates a certain comportment, and physically incarnates that which is being practiced.

By some quirk, the word *ritual* is actually contained in the word *spiritual*—let us make something of this providential finding and suggest that there is something in spiritual intelligence that always requires some dimension of ritual, repetition and habituation for its gradual increase, development and unfolding across the lifespan. Indeed, as will be seen, the Japanese arts do in fact fashion themselves explicitly as arts of self-transformation, self-perfection. What is on offer therein, is a range of practices which over the long-term, generate *a different quality of embodiment*, a different sense of connection with the world, with others and with oneself, which has significant implications for one's spiritual sensitivity—though, at every stage, rooted strictly in the deepening of certain key ethical values.

Part 1—The Japanese Arts

Japan-liness: Stereotypes and Difficulties in Dialogue

When it comes to popular images of Japan, one finds a dense mess of stereotypes-in-collision, spanning Western romanticism of Japanese culture and suspicion in equal measure. These collide with Japan's own self-stereotyping, that is, with Japanese myth-making regarding its own "Japanese-ness" (*nihonjinron*).[2]

In presenting an account of the Japanese arts, and attempting to conduct an encounter with *Western thinking* (whatever that means), one is faced—on both sides of the dialogue—with a web of generalizations, misunderstandings, ignorance, and errors, which requires great care to negotiate, and which can probably never be satisfactorily disentangled. That being so, it has proven to be the case that in the very collision of errors, mistranslations, and misunderstandings, one finds the most creative forces that have come to define the objects in question. In other words, whilst one must very much be careful in bringing Japanese culture and Western ideas into dialogue, one may console oneself with a curious truth: that error, gross simplification, and complete misunderstanding have been at least as generative in advancing the process of self-understanding and self-definition as anything else, for both the Japanese and the West (see Nicholas Ostler (2016) on the translation of religions across cultures, and how difficulties in translation became creative aspects of religions as they passed from culture to culture).

The last century of Japanese-Western dialogue has created a particularly dense mess of misunderstandings on both sides. On Western misunderstanding, a mountain has been written. However, as James Heisig et al. (2011) note, Japan's concepts of its own Japanese-ness were created as a counter-image to perceived ideas of encroaching Western modernity, Europeanization and its purportedly nihilistic cultural values (especially within the Kyoto school of Japanese philosophy). That image was every bit as hit-and-miss as Western concepts of Japan, and involved every bit as much mistranslation, simplification and error. Yet, these errors were profoundly creative of so much of what one takes as being quintessentially Japanese today.

Even so, to avoid accusations of problematic generalizations in this article regarding *the* Japanese, if indeed such an entity exists, this article will limit claims being made to *specific* philosophies behind *specific* cultural practices—avoiding any kind of statements about some Japanese *essence*, or claims about how *the* Japanese think, or how language differences might imply something about *the* Japanese brain, reducing any East/West essentialism to the minimum possible.

One other important point to make is that, although the arts considered here are often taken to be paradigmatically Japanese—it would be very wrong to think that most Japanese persons practice them. The Japanese arts are not majority practices, and not even necessarily grounded in a spiritual intention. Indeed, one might say that Japanese cultural arts, with all the implicit cultural knowledge imprinted within them, are something of an endangered species. Ironically, it is exactly a Western romanticism for Japanese aesthetics that has supported (not least financially, for there is a basic economic reality with all the arts) and fed back to Japan its own traditions, along with a sustained impetus for their preservation. There

are Western eyes which pay lot of money to watch, admire, participate in, and project some profound inner yearning for that gentle, natural, simple elegance that these Japanese arts take as their fundamental aims.

Moreover, not only are the Japanese arts not so widely practiced (and thus not indicative of *the* Japanese people or *the* Japanese way of thinking), but it cannot be assumed that those who do practice these arts are doing so out of a strong connection to the deep spiritual and philosophical wellspring of the practices. It may just be that a person does Japanese calligraphy, or *sumi-e* (ink painting), because he or she finds it relaxing, or enjoyable to do, or admires the aesthetic and the satisfying artistic end products.

The reality is probably that these cultural forms are, in some ways, as alien to many Japanese people (and have always been, in a sense, because many such forms were elite cultural practices, requiring degrees of literacy and leisure not at all accessible to the majority of people). Such arts serve today as much for the Japanese as an escape from the mundane, routine, mechanized, acrid, spirit-destroying bureaucratically excessive orderliness that characterizes most people's everyday lives, as it is a like escape for the Westerners who so admire these Japanese cultural arts.

So, there is a tension to be kept in mind regarding the Japanese arts—they do have profound spiritual and philosophical underpinnings, and their practice is saturated with complex associations, implicit meaning, rich symbology, metaphysical ideas and views on the nature of the mind-body relationship. However, it cannot be assumed that is why people engage with them. Nevertheless, given that these deep roots do exist, and that many such arts explicitly present themselves as means for self-perfection having some spiritual significance, these practices do indeed merit close consideration for any rich investigation into spiritual practices, spiritual development or spiritual intelligence.

Dō (Way)

> Whether most engage in the practice of the arts or not, the influence of the arts on Japanese culture remains strong. *Nō* drama, flower arranging, the Tea ceremony, the many martial arts, poetry (especially haiku poetry), pottery, landscape gardening and design, *sumi-e* painting, paper making, the incense ceremony, calligraphy, and even traditional dance and music, among other forms, continue to exert strong influence. (Carter 2008, 2)

The Japanese arts are explicitly characterized as means of self-perfection. While one must be careful with this word *self*, one can see that many of these arts encode certain values, condition a certain comportment, and rely on highly rigorous and ritualistic ways of performing those activities (*kata*, trans: way of doing something). Whether it be calligraphy, mending broken pottery, or attacking one's opponent with bamboo sticks—the

Japanese arts are explicitly fashioned as vehicles for cultivating and perfecting oneself.

Significantly, because of a broadly Zen Buddhist influence, taking in ideas about nonduality and impermanence which undermine the self/not-self distinction, one uncovers a substructure of metaphysical and philosophical ideas undergirding these practices. Such ideas are ritualized and conditioned into the very bones of the practitioner through lifelong practice.

Once ingrained, these practices cultivate a certain way of being present in the world. To put it another way, these practices cultivate a certain kind of embodiment, a certain way of being situated in one's body, situated within one's environment, and with respect to others. Part of the practices is to blur the boundaries between things (a theme with Japanese aesthetics, generally), to offer some confusion between objects by reflecting one thing in another, by having boundaries in motion, by softening gradients between things. This all serves to create an experience of blurring between the self and not-self (see Kawai 2018 on how traditional Japanese architecture and spatial concepts are used to generate states of mindfulness and immersion within the environment).

Through practice of these arts, one comes to experience for oneself that the perceived separation between self and world is not so sharp as one had thought. One has the experience of that blurring between self and other in cultivating one's craft. Then, serving as vehicles for training traditional Japanese social norms, engaging in such practices teaches one a range of physical habits, a way of comporting oneself respectfully towards others, and in harmony with everything around one. As specifically self-perfective practices, the arts need to be understood as offering ways of doing as well as ways of being, habits which also have a larger individual and social significance. The arts are not self-contained practices, but provide life-lessons, confidence, and various qualities that apply in life more broadly. In particular, these arts teach one about respect, self-restraint, purity and discipline.[3]

In short: What one has with the Japanese arts is nothing less than a very real meditation-in-action, rigorously structured and guided by a range of cultural, metaphysical, and ethical ideals. Such practices locate one in a tradition, and are containers for a huge range of implicit cultural wisdom and knowledge. As social activities, interpersonally taught and practiced, they provide cultural training in which such ideals and traditions are modelled and passed on (teaching is usually grounded in a mimesis model, rather than by abstract teaching). The arts are full of symbology, multiple levels of significance are expressed through artisanal craft (e.g., self-healing by mending broken porcelain, *kintsugi*, or through the various Japanese purification practices, with purity having resonances on many levels). The practices are full of indirect and nonverbal communication, nonobvious

semantic resonances and the expression of emotions through codified systems of associative poetic meanings (overwhelmingly, through reference to the seasons and nature (Shirane 2012)).

With all the deeper meanings and self-perfective aspects embedded in the Japanese arts, it should not be forgotten such crafts often generate beautiful end-products of simple elegance (say, in calligraphy, or poetry, architecture, garden design, and so on). That is, on the simplest level, these arts are actually productive of beautiful artefacts, or, in the case of the more physical arts, provide physical training, body sensitivity, and mental mastery whose performance is designed to have aesthetically-pleasing qualities. It is not at all inconsequential that the arts produce goods of concrete worth. Even the products have a spiritual dimension. The concrete products of the Japanese arts are explicitly intended to be *extensions of the mind of the artist*. Artistic products are intended to be models by which one might enter into, and even participate in the state of mind of the artist or creator. This is particularly so with Zen-garden design—as Masuno Shunmyo, Zen monk and famed landscape garden designer, asserts: "Zazen, cannot be seen, but when one expresses Zen in a tangible form, a model of Zen is created … in the silence of the garden, people experience their selves" [2018)). Thus, even the concrete product of the arts is as much imbued with spiritual significance as the practice itself.[4]

This holistic character of meditation-in-action, the dissolution of the sense of separateness between person and world (in this case, a certain dissolution between the artist and the artistic creation, between the observer of the art and the art itself, thus between artist and observer) are all part of the larger spiritual work being performed by engaging in the practices.

D. T. Suzuki is one of many Zen scholars to have pointed to the powerful connection between Zen Buddhism and the Japanese arts, the metaphysics and the aesthetic values, which seem to have found a mutually supporting home with one another for many centuries. Suzuki points to the seemingly preternatural fit between the spiritual in Zen and Japanese aesthetics. While other forms of Buddhism more or less limited their sphere to the spiritual life of the Japanese people, Suzuki asserts, Zen entered into every phase of their cultural life (Suzuki 1972, 25). Though Suzuki overstates his case at times, his outline of the connection between Zen metaphysics and Japanese aesthetics is striking. Suzuki gives an example of the Kamakura-era importation of Song dynasty painting to Zen and Japanese culture:

> Among things which strongly characterise Japanese artistic talent we may mention the so-called "one corner style" … [this is] psychologically associated with the Japanese painters' so-called "thrifty" brush tradition of retaining the least possible number of lines or strokes which go to represent forms on silk or paper. … A simple fishing boat in the midst of the rippling waters is enough to awaken in the mind of the beholder a sense of

> the vastness of the sea, and at the same time of peace and contentment, the Zen sense of the alone. Apparently, the boat floats helplessly. … But, this very helplessness is the virtue of the fishing canoe. In contrast with which we feel the incomprehensibility of the absolute encompassing the boat and all the world. Again, a solitary bird on a dead branch, in which not a line, not a shade is wasted, is enough to show us the loneliness of autumn … It makes one feel somewhat pensive, but it gives one opportunity to withdraw the attention towards the inner life which, given attention enough, spreads out its rich treasures ungrudgingly before the eyes. Here we have an appreciation of transcendental aloofness in the midst of multiplicities. (Suzuki 1972, 26)

These points begin to touch on that untranslatable Japanese aesthetic *wabi sabi*, the deep sense of the perfection of imperfection, that appreciation for the rustic, simple, melancholic, solitary, passing, aged, semi-broken, asymmetrical and otherwise imperfect (though, perhaps, this appreciative sense is not too far from that romantic sense of the love of semi-decay which has drawn so many artists and poets to Venice).

Granted, values, aesthetics, and philosophy are embedded into the rituals making up the various arts, and are expressed through the physical enactment of the craft—but, in what ways can practicing these rituals genuinely change the way one is situated in the world? How is the change in embodiment brought into effect? Following Robert E Carter's (2008) work on the Japanese arts as modes of self-transformation, the overarching goal of the artistic ways—*dō* (way, or path)—is to produce a distinct kind of "bodymind integration" (Carter 2008, 13). It is here that the discussion most closely connects with mindfulness as a practice. All of the Japanese *dō*, one way or another, involve a kind of synchronization of the mind and body through a keen but soft attention. Here, one needs to be careful when using the word *mind*. As Carter asserts, the mind is not generally located in *the head* in *dō* culture. Rather, the mind is generally considered to be a whole-body faculty (in its original state, at least—though, if it is to be located anywhere, that is generally somewhere around the navel, where one's core life-energy (*ki*) is thought to be pooled).

One of the central functions of the *dō*, is to recover the original connectedness between mind and body by forming extended habits of rooting one's attention in one's body, and synchronizing one's attention with one's bodily movements. The increasing unification of mind and body is achieved, not least of all, through by synchronizing the breath with the movements of the body. Over time, this leads to the "experience of the unification of the individual with the greater whole" (Carter 2008, 13). Therein, bodymind has some all-inclusive sense: an experiential awareness of the oneness of self and other, and of self and universe (Carter 2008, 13) leading to the "sensitization of the practitioner, resulting in the capacity for heartfelt identification with the wonders of existence itself" in all its joy, banality and sorrow. As such, these *dō*, are meditation-in-action,

moving meditations. As with mindfulness, the connection (or reconnection) of body and mind, their synchronization through body awareness, promotes a genuinely different quality of embodiment to the everyday habitual state of mind, a different sense of connection with one's world, others and self.[5]

Carter introduces the term *bodymind* to mark out this integration of attention and the body which is gradually cultivated through ongoing practice of one's *dō*. A better term might be *body-mind-practice*. It is helpful to draw practice into the definition. The practice is not just a vehicle for achieving mind-body integration. The practice is not separate from the integration itself. Focusing discussion on attention any more than focusing on the structure seems to miss the point a little, which is precisely aiming towards the integration of attention *with* the body *through* action. Such integration might be achieved in pouring tea, mending pottery, drawing the bow, thrusting the staff forward, designing the garden or the building, mixing the ink and dipping the brush in the pot, composing the poem, throwing one's opponent onto the mat, or any of the particular disciplines through which this philosophy is expressed. There is no severing of the practice from the mind and the body at any point. Whether one is writing a poem, or taking a *katana* out from its sheath, the attention is gentle, it is calm, it is steady. The ritualized actions are extremely repetitive. It is the simplicity and the repetitiveness of the practices that facilitate the lifelong expansion of that state of embodiment into all aspects of one's life. One's whole life becomes a vehicle for expressing that kind of presence, that comportment, and is gradually interwoven with the values imbibed in the practice—ideally, at least.

In sum: these *dō* teach one how to be in the world, seeing and experiencing oneself in a grounded and integrated manner, emphasizing the experience of connectedness, rather than experiencing oneself as sharply disconnected from one's surroundings, as distant from others and oneself. Carter writes:

> By "philosophical understanding" I mean the proper attitudinal stances to be taken in the living of one's life and in the religious practices that are meant to lead to self-transformation, and ethical teachings concerning how one should relate to other people, to nature, and to the cosmos … … Each of the arts is a pathway, a road, which is what *dō* means … it also signifies a way of life … None of these is to be understood and undertaken merely as entertainment or distraction: they are all ways of self-development, leading to a transformation of who the person is. In short, each of these arts, if seriously engaged in, is itself enlightenment in some form. (Carter 2008, 2)

Of course, *enlightenment* is a highly problematic word. Enlightenment, in this sense, is nothing other than practicing one's ritual, day after day, over the course of one's life. Whatever fruits do arise, it is the

regularity of practice, one's consistent presence and awareness whilst practicing, that are central to the *self*-cultivation being brought about. Such fruits gradually emerge over the lifetime as the practice and structure seep into the bones. For those with the dedication to pursue a practice with such diligence and seriousness of purpose, enlightenment is to be found directly in the practicing itself. Indeed, Sōtō Zen, which is the primary Buddhist framework referred to in this article, is less concerned with enlightenment as an epiphany-type experience (*satori* or *kenshō*), or sudden awakening, and is more concerned with just carrying on with one's practice in all weathers. That is much closer to the idea of enlightenment expressed here as ritual in the Japanese arts.

Enlightenment, if one wishes to use the word, is nothing but the practicing itself.[6] Moreover, if some exotic spiritual experience is what one is really chasing after, some state of flow, some grand peak moment, some *unitive experience*, there is no real difference between such seeking after enlightenment and any of the various daily distractions one might engage in so as to *lose oneself*. Such distractions, when taken too far (as Kierkegaard observed), are more likely forms of spiritual despair, ways of actually blotting out a spiritual calling by overfilling one's time, than structured paths for a slowly unfolding spiritual awareness through ethical bodymind integration. It is exactly to counter the blotting effects of such excessive busyness and distraction that the Japanese arts emphasize the value of negative space, of emptiness, of blankness—it is as if such spaces expose the self in its nakedness, offering it no hiding place, forcing one to see exactly what is there. Certainly, this is one aim with *zazen* (sitting meditation) and the torturous monastic imperative to sit, facing a wall, quietly attending to what passes within oneself, unminding it for sometimes more than eight hours a day.[7]

Finally, it is important to highlight some problems with contemporary discourse on mindfulness which presents the practice as intrinsically generative of a sense of goodness and connection with others, of gentleness and care. It is easy to get swept up in such cosmic enthusiasm, and much mindfulness discourse effuses some profoundly world salvatory flavor. Yet, this salvatory edge, as if merely practicing mindfulness were sufficient to make one a gentle and compassionate individual, is a deeply problematic falsehood not at all borne out by the facts. Compassion (karuna) meditation is a separate and distinct meditation all of its own. As Hofmann et al. write:

> Whereas other types of mindfulness meditation encourage nonjudgmental awareness of experiences in the present moment by focusing on bodily or other sensorial experience, affective states, thoughts, or images, Compassion Meditation focuses awareness upon alleviation of the suffering of all sentient beings. (Hofmann et al. 2011, 1127)

While serious work in mindfulness continues, the more faddish aspects of interest in mindfulness on the part of Western psychology are now shifting to explore the benefits of compassion and loving kindness meditation, which are quickly becoming the new positive psychology self-improvement bandwagons of choice.

Indeed, mindfulness, structured or otherwise, offers no guarantees for moral behavior, goodness, care, or connection. Mindfulness has no intrinsic moral component whatsoever (other than what happens to spontaneously bubble up as part of the practice). Even with structure and moral teaching, per the meditative traditions one finds in genuine Buddhist traditions, there is still no guarantee of moral perfection. This is testified to by the many accounts of institutional Zen Buddhism's strong and consistent support for militarism and imperial domination of Asia throughout World War II. As Brian Victoria (a Zen Sōtō priest) observed: "Zen served as a powerful foundation for the fanatical and suicidal spirit displayed by the imperial Japanese military" (Victoria 2006, iii).[8] The intimate connection between samurai warrior *bushidō*, warfare (note: warfare is also a *dō*), and Zen was mentioned above. But the connection between Buddhism and violence is not just a Japanese phenomenon. An account of institutional Buddhist atrocity can be found in James Jones 2008 text *Blood That Cries Out from the Earth*. This is not a point about individual weaknesses, the failures of individual practitioners, or any particular individual mindfulness guru (as if such individual offenders are merely outliers, cynically betraying an otherwise universally efficacious Dharma). Rather, the point is that *even with a moral structure* (and sometimes because of it), the state of mindful, calm presence in the world can be turned into an instrument for callous and brutal harm enacted on some great scale. Mindfulness in itself cannot be considered morally productive in some magical or easy sense, and even with structure and time, a threat of distorted practice constantly looms.

Kyūdō (Japanese Archery) and "Effortless Effort"

> In modern Kyūdō, … although every movement and element of the shooting offered an opportunity for self-examination and relationship, it is however, the release [of the arrow] in which this is most evident … Any imbalance of power through gripping in either hand, or a collapsing of this tension will result in an unsatisfactory release that will affect the flight of the arrow. The moment before the release is the time to realise the balance of body, bow and spirit, and to allow negative feelings and disturbing thoughts to disperse. (O'Brien 2003, 4)

It will be helpful to contextualize the points made above in the light of a particular *dō*. Kyūdō is the art of Japanese archery. According to the main UK Kyūdō body, "'The Way of the Bow', is a traditional discipline that uses the art of shooting a Japanese bow *for cultivating body and mind*"

(https://northhertskyudo.com/, emphasis added). The cultivation of body and mind is an explicit part of the discipline, one of the primary reasons for taking up the art. Yet, the spiritual aspects of Kyūdō are a relatively recent development. When the bow became obsolete as a weapon in Japan, its use was retained for competitive displays, for ritual ceremony and performance, and also as a way of cultivating excellence of technique (O'Brien 2003). It was only in the early twentieth century that Kyūdō was developed by Awa Kenzō into a vehicle for moral and spiritual training explicitly aimed at attaining "transcendent experience" (O'Brien 2003).

Kyūdō has become notorious in its association with Zen practice through Eugen Herrigel's famous book Zen in the Art of Archery (1948), generally credited with introducing Zen Buddhism to the West. This notoriety has led to the impression that archery and Zen have been conjoined since time immemorial. The irony is that Herrigel's teacher, Awa, the radical innovator of Kyūdō, was not a Zen Buddhist at all, and if anything was rather suspicious of Zen Buddhism. Kyūdō had no history at that point of contemplative self-development nor any intrinsic connection with Zen. The connection between Zen and archery is one of those great pregnant errors which has been so creative and generative in advancing both disciplines. Because of Herrigel's poor Japanese language skills, mistranslation, and romantic projection (i.e., based on complete misunderstanding, Yamada 2001), archery has today become a paradigm Zen meditation-in-action art. The myth created the reality after itself.

For purposes of this article, Kyūdō helps one elaborate on the temporal element of the arts, the need for time, lengthy practice. The *dō* are ways of mastery. Cast in terms of mastery, one understands why the question of time cannot be separated from the question of spiritual unfolding. By looking at spiritual intelligence as requiring not just ritual, but mastery, one sees the need for a great deal of perseverance, discipline and consistency in one's practice. This lengthy temporal aspect of mastery is often obfuscated in popular literature through misunderstood concepts of *naturalness*, *nondoing*, *noncontrivance*, and *effortlessness*. Kyūdō helps clarify the relationship between mastery and effortlessness in the spiritual life. In Kyūdō, the highest ideal of mastery is a combination of technical excellence (hardwired through decades of practice), expressed through a mind-body attention which makes possible the compression of one's entire being into a single, perfectly executed shot. Liam O'Brien, founder of the London Kyūdō Society, writes:

> … the romantic mystical notion of Kyūdō sometimes gives the idea that you do not need to hit the target, or implies that it is hit by some mysterious process that happens without the struggle or effort of proper training … *Training* is the foundation of all of this. While the teacher pushes you when you are lazy, or avoiding yourself … the *practice* is the real teacher in which the truth of "*seisha seishu*" [one shot, one life] exists.[9] Without the

> daily repetition of giving in to the practice, and confronting ourselves, then nothing is realised. But no one can do this for us. Only our own effort and perseverance can make this possible. (O'Brien 2003, 4, emphases added)

The kind of mastery that is needed is systematically, even programmatically, set down as a path of mastery into a series of grades, or ranks, through which one must pass through slowly, and with ever increasing scrupulousness. There is no shortcut to mastery here, no easy way to the top of the mountain. One cannot skip purgatory, as it were, and jump straight to heaven. There is a process: old habits need to be brought to light, they need to be pruned away, new habits need to be formed, and then, after a great deal of habituation, one slowly ascends towards mastery. "Effortless action" (O'Brien 2003) is not some lazy spontaneity, but the culmination of all this stripping down and building back up.

The sort of mastery involved in the martial arts, much like the system of grades in learning a musical instrument, is explicitly designed to take at least a decade to complete. It is systematic, and purposefully designed to slow practitioners down in order that their progress be made thorough, ingrained. This purposeful forcing a practitioner to go slowly is part of the great wisdom of the *dō*. There is no quick way through. Slow unfolding is the only way. Kyūdō, in locating the moral and spiritual excellence of the practice in the achievement of excellence in the art, absolutely severs any possibility of spiritual gains on the cheap. O'Brien concludes:

> The shooting gradually becomes embodied and in the highest level of practice, the presence of an independent agent is not apparent. There is not a person performing the shooting, there is just the shooting itself. This "naturalness" … is the "effortless effort" mentioned by Herrigel in his book. Effort that has nothing added, which is not seeking for anything special. From the viewpoint of the person, this is complete effort with all your heart … Effort without definition – just effort itself. We should remind ourselves that although we seek the profound, it is also the ordinary. In the practice hall there is no philosophy, just training the body and spirit to find its true nature. (O'Brien 2003, 8)

One important insight with spiritual practices, then, is that it matters *how* one performs them. Practices can be performed superficially and with a poor mind-set, and likewise, very simple spiritual practices can be performed with heartfelt depth. That sort of engagement is transformative in a positive manner. Yet, it is possible to engage in a range of spiritual practices in ways that either create no substantive change, or worse, which actually serve to further entrench the worse parts of oneself, galvanized through focused attention. Spiritual practices will generally change a person over time, but whether that is for the better or for the worse depends on many things. Again, structure, and at least some moral effort, are at the heart of separating bad practice from good. Having systems of mastery

with values embedded in their structure (and, a teacher who can gently push the student against self-deception), are crucial parts of the spiritually transformative work that is being brought about.

What then, does this picture of *dō* suggest about spiritual intelligence? Carter asserts: "The arts are designed to lead an individual to realize Buddhahood, or to release one's *kami*-nature, the divine potential that is to be found in the depths of each and every individual who cares to discover it" (Carter 2008, 4). A similar idea is suggested by Sister Elaine MacInnes, one of the very few Catholic nuns to have become an authorized Zen teacher (and taught by the famed Zen master, Yamada Roshi). Viewed in the context of the Japanese arts, spiritual intelligence is nothing other than the work of diminishing the control of one's ego-self over one's life. There is a switch away from the usual surface mind ("small mind" [Suzuki 1970]), such that the underlying, and more expansive "big mind" (Suzuki 1970) becomes more prevalent, the primary grounding force of one's life. Being grounded and settled in this "big mind" facilitates the movement of some deeper force (one's "true nature" [Suzuki 1970, 129]), which begins to work through the practitioner.[10] MacInnes writes:

> A mystic is not an esoteric being beyond the clouds of delusion. A mystic can be a neighbor or even an inmate in prison who has experienced the powerful IT to some degree and has been able to faithfully allow IT to take over her or his whole life. Making connections with IT in all of creation. … In Christian terms my spirituality is contained in St. Paul's phrase … "I live now not I but Christ lives within me." … The inner fires are a source of Power. The well-known Japanese Ways are concerned with the using of this power, or better stated, allowing the power to act. When this is accomplished, the influence of the aggressive ego is cut down to size … no longer in the driver's seat. This process begins with breath-awareness [which] paves the way for the spiritual within to return to its original spontaneity … After a deep *kenshō* [*ken*: to see, *shō*: one's nature, essence], which temporarily obliterates the I, the I expands to IT. … I used to feel the word "communion" was apt in describing Zen prayer, but now I feel perhaps "participating" is closer to what is happening. One's whole being is unimpededly infused with the divine power which is constant and everlasting … (MacInnes 2003, 81, 85–86)

It is this gradual, very gradual work of learning to move, not by "ego and muscle," but by "IT," by "not-I" (MacInnes 2003, 81)—the unbounded reality of which we are a part—that best encapsulates the notion of spiritual intelligence that the Japanese arts foster. Spiritual intelligence is a gradual stripping away of the boundedness, allowing one's inborn spiritual fires, which are dynamic, to move. One is to cooperate with, to participate in, to *Be* this movement as it moves. Spiritual work is learning to let that reality gradually blossom throughout one's life. Spiritual intelligence, in this view, is already right here. Becoming spiritually intelligent is therefore a process of, as MacInnes puts it: "'giving over' to the Source of the power

that animates all of life" (MacInnes 2003, 8), or, finally, as she cites Meister Eckhart as saying: "in prayer we must do nothing and let God do everything. … That is Zen. Allowing the Prime Mover to work" (MacInnes 2003, 67). The Japanese *dō* are all vehicles for this, entry-points, ways of letting more of one's life be expressive of that "giving over." Some persons are drawn to archery, some are drawn to arranging flowers, some are drawn to calligraphy, and so on. The arts have been developed such that all different characters and natures can enter into, to participate in, this "giving over." Fundamentally, it is the participating that is the whole of it.

Part 2—Two Notions of Spiritual Development

Shugyō (Commitment, and Learning as Deepening)

> *Shugyō* … a term that applies to rigorous, dedicated, long-term or life-long practice. … (which) is always a sustained and spiritual undertaking stretching over a lifetime. (Carter 2008, 2)

In these final sections, the aim is to make explicit a profound clash between two fundamentally opposed concepts of spiritual development: first, as a process of ever-deepening into a given practice (purity); and second, spiritual development as being marked out by creative transformation and renewal (improvisation and innovation). It would not be right to call this a *Japan versus the West* clash of values (for both cultures have voices for conservatism and innovation), though it is easy to construct the arguments in such a way. In order to grasp the profundity of this clash, however, it is necessary to explain the Japanese term: *shugyō*.

Shugyō combines two words, *shu*, discipline or work, and *gyō*, journey. It is presented as style of learning which relies on dedicated life-long commitment to a very repetitive training regime. In Japan, this is often contrasted with a Western (so-called) style of learning: that which is to do with endless accumulation of skills and trivia; achieving targets and quotas; prizing efficiency, brutal competition, a way of learning which is concerned, above all, with winning and dominating one's opponent completely.[11] This purportedly "Western" approach to learning is conceived as being about learning an excessively wide range of things, which can only be done on a very superficial level, because one is never able to spend a sufficient amount of time with any one subject to go deeply into it.

In contrast, *shugyō* is a process of learning which is self-consciously repetitive (like a musician committing to spending hours every day playing the same scales, over and over and over). More importantly, *shugyō* is self-consciously *selective*. The idea with one's discipline is to pick a very narrow selection of practices and to endlessly deepen into them—to endlessly deepen *through* them, by means of them. Here one gets to the nub of a fundamental difference of ideals of what spiritual deepening consists in.

The point with *shugyō* is purity—it is about the repetition of a set routine, without deviation, leading to an ever-increasing deepening of the practice into one's bones. This highly selective and highly repetitive approach can be rather difficult for some to comprehend given how extraordinarily restrictive it is. If the aim of the *dō* is self-transformation, whose activities contain lessons with broader life-significance, the point with *shugyō* (as selectivity and repetition) is to drive those lessons in, and to commit one's life to centring one's entire being around them.

Einstein once quipped that education is what is left over when one has forgotten everything one learned at school. This touches the heart of the ideal of *shugyō*. Shunryu Suzuki, a Sōtō Zen teacher (not to be confused with D. T. Suzuki, the famed Zen scholar cited above), once likened the transformative aspect of ongoing practice to walking through a mist:

> Whatever progress you make is always little by little. It is not like going out in a shower in which you know when you get wet. In a fog, you do not know you are getting wet, but as you keep walking you get wet little by little. If your mind has ideas of progress, you may say, "Oh, this pace is terrible!" But actually it is not. (Suzuki 1970, 41–42)

One does not get wet all at once, but over time, without even noticing it, one becomes drenched in one's practice. This is the slow approach of Sōtō Zen—persistent practice is constitutive of enlightenment. Spiritual work is not an endpoint, there is not something to be obtained after successfully solving a riddle or a problem, there is not a *pay off* that one reaches at the end of a particular span, it is not like running a marathon where there is a finishing line to cross at the end. There is no end to the practice, for it is nothing other than a process of lifelong deepening. Spiritual development is an ongoing formative process, a slow deepening, marked out by the tracks and traces left over through commitment to ongoing practice.

So selective and repetitive is the commitment of *shugyō* that it is exceptionally hard for some to see the value of the approach. One might say that it is one of the aspects of the Japanese arts that genuinely stands out against a modern Western taste. With *shugyō* one comes up against the ideals of purity of practice: tradition, protocol, accepted ways of doing things, and an extreme conservatism towards one's practices. In the Japanese arts, it is the person that develops, *not the art*. To the contrary, the art is the backbone, the guarantor, the pathway, through which an individual deepens. Indeed, the static nature of the art is exactly what casts the individual's development into such clear relief.

Purity and Change

The issue of purity (or conservatism) versus innovation in practice raises profound questions about what spiritual deepening really consists in. Is spiritual deepening a matter of extreme commitment to a certain practice

and way of doing things (purity)? Or, is spiritual deepening about participating in a dynamic tradition, in which appropriate creative innovation of that tradition is an essential aspect of the spiritual path?

This is one of the core differences between *shugyō* and accounts of craft-based practices given by Richard Sennett. One of the greatest satisfactions of craftsmanship, according to Sennett (2008), is the constant pushing of oneself to see what the next step in the craft might be, how to enrich and extend one's craft, one's mastery. The master of the craft is always asking: *What next?* with regards the art. For the likes of Sennett, it is precisely the flexibility of the craftsman, this openness to learning new ways of achieving the aims of the craft, an openness to new steps of development that constitutes a great deal of personal enrichment involved in craft. The great confidence of the craftsman, according to Sennett, comes in the proven ability to improvise, to overcome difficulties, to see missing pieces, to develop new ways of enriching the practices, new ways of extending the art form.

Notions of purity of practice in *shugyō* could not be more divorced from this view. The tendency for traditions to develop and be enriched by expansion is seen as the *temptation* for those who prize purity of practice—a temptation to be avoided at all costs. In talking about Zen practice, Shunryu Suzuki writes as follows (and this is the very first statement of his book, as such the headline point to be understood):

> People say that practising Zen is difficult, but there is a misunderstanding as to why. It is not difficult because it is hard to sit in the cross-legged position, or to attain enlightenment. It is difficult because it is hard to keep our mind pure and practice pure in the fundamental sense. … Strictly speaking, for a human being, *there is no other practice than this practice; there is no other way of life than this way of life*. (Suzuki 1970, 1, emphasis added)

Likewise, Master Eihei Dōgen (thirteenth century founder of the Sōtō Zen sect), writes on sitting meditation (*zazen*) as follows:

> … the meditating of just one person at one time harmonizes with, and is at one with, all forms of being, as it tranquilly permeates all times. Thus, within the inexhaustible phenomenal world, across past, present, and future, the meditator does the unending work of instructing and guiding others in the Way of Buddhas. *It is the same practice, in no way different for all, just as it is the same realization and personal certifying by all.* (Dōgen 2007, 1253, Shōbōgenzō (on Zazen), 6 [emphasis added])

If one has a view that a certain practice is of universal and singular importance, regardless of time or place, that this certain practice unveils a universal mind, one and the same mind with all persons and at all times, then there is nowhere for the practice to go. If one thinks one already has the whole substance of right practice, perfect and complete, then purity of practice takes on a considerable weight. Once one has it straight that

there is a certain way of doing things, then innovation has little place to find root. With *zazen*, the understanding is that, while time and personal circumstances all do change, the fundamental comportment will always remain the same—being grounded in "big mind." With sitting meditation there is nothing to change regarding the practice, and every wish to change the practice is a fundamental temptation to be avoided. There is one mind, one experience, one awakening, now and forever.

This is not just a matter of Zen practice, purity is a central value in Japanese culture. O'Brien writes about the path of mastery in Kyūdō:

> The process of learning is often seen traditionally in three phases; *Shin*, *Gyo*, and *So*. *Shin* is the character for Truth which represents the fundamentals and the essence of the practice, and at the *Shin* level the student must *unreservedly copy the fundamentals of form without deviation or personal interpretation*. This is essential training of the heart to establish right attitude and remove resistance. We must practice repetitively trying to *keep to the established form and in so doing we meet our frustration and desire to do things in our own way*. What we are taught are the fundamentals which are also the absolute possibilities of the form, so *we continue to seek to make the correct stance, for example, to the end of our lives*. Once the practice has become more accepting and more embodied, then the practitioner is as the *gyo* level, where the form is carried out with some level of naturalness. Following on from this, the ultimate condition of *So* is the state where the practitioner and form are one. (O'Brien 2003, 8 emphases added)

One cannot just do what one wants in one's practice, one cannot just make it up as one goes along, one cannot improvise, or free-form, or move in whatever ways the mood takes one. There is a way of doing things that needs to be ingrained without deviation or questioning. One cannot pick and choose the way forward. The wish to do things one's own way is exactly the temptation to be overcome.

Today, bookstores are stacked with shelves of self-help books on how to master any task in a day or less. YouTube channels promise to help one attain any skill from the comfort of one's bedroom. The wholly social-interactive nature of the arts is lost thereby. The Japanese arts are social practices, learnt with others, and taught, in person, by someone who has mastered the art. The rigor of the art is lost without a teacher to spot where one is lacking and to push one to excel. The rituals become lax, imprecise. The temptation is always there to take and leave whichever portions one happens to not feel like practicing, or to leave one practice altogether for another when one gets bored.

With spiritual practices, one might observe something akin to the hedonic treadmill (i.e., the idea that one can approach happiness by constantly shifting one's activity, jumping from one pleasurable thing to another the moment one starts getting bored or losing the sense of satisfaction). Likewise, it would be fair to say that modern society offers a spiritual

treadmill wherein seekers switch from one spiritual practice to another in a similar manner. One week there is mindfulness, another week is with the Rosary, another week is spent in Ignatian retreat, another week is spent on a shamanic voyage. This sort of impatient restlessness is what *shugyō* is so helpful for defusing. The insight at the heart of *shugyō* is that—to some extent—it matters less which particular practice one uses than the level of consistency that is given to the practice. The core insight, again, is time. The benefits of spiritual practices unfold over the course of years. Thus, it is perseverance that means most of all in spiritual practice. On this point, *shugyō* has things exactly correct with its emphasis on purity.[12]

We return now, as a point of contrast, to Sennett's (2008) meditations of the artisan in his masterwork *The Craftsman*. Sennett and the *dō* converge on many points—they are both absolutely concerned with craft, with time, with mastery, with producing excellent works, with the larger social qualities that craft develops. However, regarding the attitude towards purity, the divide between these two ideals is stark, absolute. *Once mastery has been reached*, the artist is presented as creatively expansive, as always being open to surprises, open to the pregnant error, open to play, to trying things out, open to new possibilities, open to experimentation, open to getting things wrong, having an attitude which sees that mistakes can be genuinely more instructive than getting things right, that there is endless possibility in a craft for innovation. One might say that repetitive and selective exactitude of *shugyō* purity is as unthinkable to the advocate of creative transformation, as the reverse is true of the conservative.

These two approaches open up two exactly contrary notions of what spiritual deepening consists in. For one, development comes out of a monogamous commitment to a set path, without deviation, around which one unfolds (again: the person changes, not the art). Here it is precisely the stability of the art that allows the person to change and grow around it, like beans growing up a cane according to their own natural path. Here, one can naturally unfold because the structure one grows around is static, stable, reliable. The path is just a facilitator for that unfolding. For the other ideal, development is expressed in a spirit-filled creative power of innovation of both art and person. The craft approach can respect tradition, and seeks to find a balance with tradition (there must be aspects of tradition in the crafts—mastery is required, and tradition is exactly that which needs to be mastered). Yet, even where there is a respect for tradition, development involves unfolding beyond the limitations of that tradition. In Sennett's vision of craft, tradition is a moving target to be creatively deepened through time. This is critical to the wellbeing that craft produces in the craftsperson. While there is surprising overlap in the descriptions of wellbeing presented in the Japanese arts and Sennett's account of the craftsperson's wellbeing—both are spoken of as embodying self-confidence and some preternatural serenity in the practice of their work—for Sennett

an essential part of the craftperson's wellbeing arises out of the flexibility, the curiosity, the playfulness and the urge to creatively expand the boundaries of the art being practiced.

Part of the motivation for having a clear, unchanging ritual is that one knows exactly where one stands. One does not need to think about (or worry about) where one is going to be tomorrow, or what to do with the system, or what happens next. All anxiety is removed by having a rigorously patterned system to follow, which, if the attention is in the right place, facilitates the mind's settling down into a state of great calm in its practice. In the Western medieval monastic traditions (and perhaps even into the present), this rigorous order, not unlike a military order, is explicitly purposed to remove the need to think about everyday practicalities. It is difficult, perhaps, for some today to take without great suspicion the idea that one should absolutely surrender one's own opinion and action to one's guru, or master, or spiritual director, rather than relying on some dialogue or inner conviction. Yet, this is exactly the idea that undergirds much of the practices in view here. In having a strict, unyielding order, everyone knows exactly where one is, there is no need to think, no need for anxiety, one simply follows the path, the same path as those before one, and the same path as those to follow. One does so unto death. Part of the value of such repetition is that one has felt sense that one is participating in the very same practice, *com'era*, as it was, as the respected elders or originators of the tradition. It is a similar inclination that leads pilgrims to holy sites, for example. There is something visceral in being present in a place touched by a venerated person, to step where a holy person stepped, where that person sat and spoke and taught. Likewise, there is something visceral in keeping as close to the original purity of a practice as possible. To practice the Tea ceremony today is to perform in the manner Sen Rikyu did. One is performing the ritual following the steps he laid out.

Yet, this lack of anxiety is what removes so much surprise too—and, surprise can be at the heart of the spiritual life. Repetition and routine may remove the worry of wondering what comes next but, for the likes of Sennett, it is the as-yet-unknown creative next moves that matter so much. In Sennett's account, part of the supreme value of craft resides in the surprise. To use Rowan William's terms: practice involves a "non-identical repetition" (Williams 2014, 84) wherein each and every run-through of one's practice is ever so slightly different, and always informed by what passed, by what is perceived to be coming, by what is going on in the life of the person practicing. By being rooted in the tradition and practicing it faithfully, the tradition gradually expands, there emerges a gradual elaboration of practice out from itself as each next step in the progression emerges in the practice of the craft. Creativity, in this view, never exists outside a tradition, neither does originality. Creativity is a case of working faithfully

within a tradition and allowing something to emerge, seeing the next step, seeing what is implicit in that practice, and moving the conversation along.

While Sennett is not necessarily spiritual in his outlook, much the same propositions—spiritually expressed—can be found in Margaret Masterman's *Religious Explorations* (1989) which really helps highlight the striking, even tectonic, conflict between notions of spiritual deepening at play in this article. Masterman expresses a savage and absolutely critical horror of the monastic life as an expression of a dead contemplative existence. Masterman is vehement that contemplative existence should always involve some self-critical analysis, should always be a process of rebirthing, re-self-chrysalising, moving rhythmically forward (Masterman writes: "the genius of Catholic Christianity is in the level at which it trains its own critics." (Masterman 1989, v)). Masterman expresses an extreme contempt for the static life of the monastic contemplative, which she describes as "vegetative quietism disguised as contemplation" (Masterman 1989, 5). For Masterman, the Church is supposed to be a "passionistic society" (Masterman 1989, 60, 81), training its members for a mysticism of active risk and redemptive suffering. This is a mysticism that manifests a commitment to risk and to the reconstruction of authority, away from "the piety of the in-group and the incestuous empty prattle of theologians chatting to each other" (Masterman 1989, Emmett and Williams introduction, v, vi-vii).

For Masterman, contemplation and creative transformation are two aspects of the same infused tendency (ibid 23). The idea of a spiritual practice that merely repeats the same thing over and over again would be, in her view, a completely dead form of contemplation, a perversion of the contemplative life which exactly characterized monastic practice as she saw it. Masterman recognized ritual, but emphasized the need to see contemplation, live and infused contemplation, "as the creating force behind this ritual, giving it life and change, as similarly behind art or science or anything else" (Masterman 1989, 5). Ritual flexibility, adaptivity and innovation (not "stereotypy and fixedness" [Masterman 1989, 5]) are the values here. As Masterman put it: Christian monasticism "can't breathe because it can't change its skin" (Masterman 1989, 5). This is Masterman's emblem for spiritual development, *changing one's skin*. In this, Masterman regarded scientists as the true inheritors of the contemplative tradition, and exhorted scientists to take what they could from the monastic routine, but only insofar as it allowed them to get in touch with a creative rhythm for potent, life-giving innovation in their fields.

It is striking that Masterman has not seemed to grasp that monastic rules were never really intended to generate hotbeds of creativity, to be productive of torrents of innovative genius. Because of her commitment to spiritual unfolding as a process of creative transformation and renewal, something she conceived as a revolutionary activity, how could Masterman have grasped the value of the purity in the ritual, cultus and repetition of

the monastic life? Of course, she is not wrong—that kind of repetition is not outwardly creative. But does it need to be? The question all depends on what one thinks spiritual deepening is all about—is it a pathway of deepening into a monogamous commitment to a certain routine that one regards as sacred (much like the monastic vow of stability)? Or, is spiritual development shown in the dynamic and creative aspect that it yields? Both are life-giving in their own way.

One might sum up Masterman's view with the assertion that to improve is to change, to be perfect is changing often. But the issue all hangs on what exactly one means by *change*—continually deepening in one's faith through singular unchanging practice *is* change indeed, a change in depth, but it is not necessarily the sort of gilded, obvious change that is particularly noticeable or liable to bring one notice, praise, money or esteem for creative genius. This deepening is not always visible, nor is it intended to produce colorful fruit. The fruits of this tree of simple repetition are a certain kind of intense depth which can only arise through being incredibly selective and perseveringly monogamous. Because of her commitment to revolutionary spirituality, that is the point that Masterman did not really grasp. Again, she is not wrong with her analysis of dead contemplation, but at the same time she did misapprehend and misjudge the value of monastic contemplative deepening. Indeed, in following the simplicity of repetition one might actually be practicing more of that which one preaches, coming a little closer to embodying the heart of one's faith. Perhaps that is an insight even more revolutionary than the urge for constant innovation.

It is one of the great ironies that Japanese culture, which so prizes *mono no aware* (the poignant sense of the transiency of all things),[13] should be so static in the purity of its rituals. The irony is that Masterman inherits a metaphysic of universality and timelessness, which she opposes through a praxis of process, dynamism and development; instead, the Japanese arts have a metaphysic of impermanence, transience, and change, but then try to impose a praxis of the static, a remorselessly strict set of protocols from which no deviation is accepted.

Needless to say, one is talking about *ideals* here. In reality, the Japanese arts are not static, no matter what the ideal is. In reality, these arts are in the process of cultural dialogue all the time (whether it is admitted or not). The point is really about a choice between which ideal of spiritual progress one seeks to cleave to. In effect, what we have here is a basic existential choice in one's craft.

One final question: is that kind of purity workable, even acceptable, in a multicultural world, a world in collision, a world of pluralism, a world of technological advances in communication, cyberspace, one in which dialogue and juxtaposition is always going on? Is purity even possible in the current world of dialogue—is not the very nature of dialogue disruptive, creative? Extreme purity may not even be a choice in a realistic picture

of the contemporary *agora* (Traboulsi [2016] raises similar points with respect to the Eastern Orthodox church and its conservative rejection of modern technologies, like digital icons). One is in a digital era, a pluralistic age, a world of communication. It may simply be impossible to keep to any ideal of purity in the conservative sense without erecting a fortress around oneself. The suggestion has to be that such conservatism is not only unworkable, but in a way impossible—the *zeitgeist* is against it. Even if purity did offer a superior model of spiritual deepening, ever-deepening into a monogamous commitment to a revered routine, such monolithic purity is no longer sustainable.

Traditions change—and with them there is a loss of the implicit cultural information packed into those traditions. That is unfortunate, but, as Traboulsi (2016) remarks, one no longer uses horse and cart for transportation, one no longer writes on scrolls. If one cleaves to purity and conservatism above all, then it is impossible to meet the needs and spirit of the world in which we live. What this means for monastic stability and repetition is an open question.[14]

Conclusion

Each of the arts embodies values, attitudes, means of attending and being, and ways of generally comporting oneself that extend out from the practice into the whole of one's life. Thus, as rituals, practicing these arts is a kind of microcosm for proper living across all of life's domains. Characterized as a kind of slow unfolding, the dimension of spiritual intelligence expressed here refers to nothing less than the psychophysical integration, very slowly, of attention, embodied practice, ethics, and philosophy, into the very bodymind of the practitioner. Spiritual intelligence, in this context, is something which emerges out of long-term changes to the way one is situated in one's body and world.

In conclusion, there is much to be gained by looking at the Japanese arts for helping provide a deeper account of spiritual aspects of mindfulness than one generally finds in the popular literature. Questions of temporality and development need to be taken on board in thinking about mindfulness—the mindfulness of a child cannot be the same as that of the old man, there is just too much life-experience pressing in, too many differences in the daily life, differences in priorities, too much background seeping into the mindful experience. One cannot say that such mindfulness experiences are the same, or to try to capture them in some static cognitive manner, some one-size-fits-all account of *the* mindful state of awareness.

Likewise, so often lacking from mindfulness discourse is the broader ethical structure, the tradition in which the practices are couched, the intention, the background of mindfulness. Thus, mindfulness cannot

be viewed as a universal panacea, having the same sort of magical ego-dissolving effect in all times and places regardless of the practitioner's age, maturity, commitment or circumstances. Mindfulness cannot be freeze-fractured into a state of mind. There is just too much going on in the practice, which is informed by too many contextual variables. As Suzuki remarks of *zazen*—one has never really practiced *zazen* until one has practiced it through all of life's traumas and joys and annoyingly mundane matters. Everything needs to be brought into the practice, everything informs the practice. In short: there is no state of mindfulness in the abstract, as it were.

Instead, the Japanese arts help characterize a kind of meditation-in-action. A slow, arduous set of paths which are anything but an enlightenment on the cheap, anything but a pleasing way to lose oneself, or get out of one's head, or get into the zone, or distract oneself, or have a spiritual experience, or kill a few hours. The bodymind integration, the connection that is generated over the course of one's life and commitment to the discipline is a hard won, slowly blossoming emergent phenomenon. It arises only from endless repetition, emphasizing a bodily-grounded knowing, one in which there is a genuine transformation in the body and mind of the person engaging in the art.

This article could easily be extended by looking at the specific values, aesthetics, and metaphysics that underlie many of these practices (there is much more to be said about the broad Zen Buddhist influence on the arts, metaphysical notions of impermanence and nonduality; aesthetic notions of *wabi sabi;* all tied into ethical principles, such as *wa kei sei jaku*). These give the Japanese arts their peculiar flavor and build into the practitioner a specific kind of spiritual intelligence, a culturally channeled expression. One sees such factors typified in traditional Japanese gardening and architecture (which provides dramatic teachings about the relationship between bodymind and the space one inhabits), as well as being typified in that most paradigmatic of Japanese rituals, the Tea ceremony. Examining these would help see how the specific structure of the practices helps condition a specific kind of spiritual awareness—an attitude towards imperfection, transiency, decay (i.e., that all three have their value and beauty, and are to be treasured); above all, an attraction to that which is flickering, somewhat obscure, the twilight as hiding the *fushigi* (the mysterious and uncanny [Figal 2007]), a focus on degrees of shadows (versus the Western neo-Platonically inspired focus on grades of light), and so many things that resonate so well with the Western notion of *the sublime*, the awesome, the uncontrollable. From this viewpoint, any kind of metaphysic of the static, the timeless, the unchanging, and any attempt to cast truth in a singular light, in total transparency, any focus on truth as a direct correspondence with reality, as literalism, is completely anathema to the kind of spiritual sensitivity developed here.

Spiritually speaking, this all represents the extreme opposite of any kind of literalist, cataphatic, fully illuminated kind of religiosity. Spirituality here relies in a subtle blending of aspects of the whole, motion set against stillness, fluidity moving around structure, blurring without confusion, gradients, and shadows (above all: shadows). Whatever truth exists can only be seen by means of the flickering illumination offered in a poorly lit room (not absolute and universal propositions of truth—but contextual, shifting plays of light reflected along the fluid contours of particular places and people at particular times).

At the same time, many of the central features of the embodiment of spiritual intelligence elaborated here are more universal. Dimensions of practice that focus on habit, repetition, deepening, strengthening, posture, synchronizing mind and body through motion, being grounded and centered, being quiet and gentle, finding some state of harmony with the world, some sense of connection, understanding that persons are not as separate from one another as one's senses seem to suggest—all of these factors are more universal facets of spiritual practices. These factors ground the power of ritual across all religious traditions precisely because they are rooted in something more universal: the human body and its biology. The human being, given what it is, responds to ritual practice when grounded in certain types of practice. The next article will seek to explore the bodily bases for ritual in light of current literature on embodied cognition.

Notes

1. The dogma that meditative awareness, in and of itself, somehow makes manifest one's intrinsic compassion and sense of connection to the other is of dubious standing. Just as such meditative practices helped samurai write beautiful poetry, it helped them remain imperturbably calm whilst slaughtering others on the battlefield, without regard for their own lives (or those of others). As D. T. Suzuki observes, it is no coincidence that Zen Buddhism and *bushidō*, the moral code of the Japanese samurai warrior, should find such close allies in one another (Suzuki 1972). Not dissimilar breathing exercises are employed by Navy Seals to support calm focus during battlefield engagements, and by professional sportspersons to enhance their capacities. The point is that mindful calm and meditative breathing have no intrinsic moral or spiritual benefit outside their embedded structure.
2. *Nihonjinron* is a term describing "Japanese explanations of themselves to themselves" (Befu 2001, 6)—*Nihonjin* meaning "Japanese person." According to Harumi Befu, these are "theories of distinctive Japanese national identity or cultural nationalism" whose purpose is "to demonstrate unique qualities of Japanese culture, Japanese society, and the Japanese people" (Befu in Slater 2003, 4). These attempts to "legitimate a distinctive Japanliness" have created assumptions, stereotypes, essences, and ideals, which have worked their way into all levels of Japanese discourse relating to Japanese kinship, ecology, linguistics, aesthetics, and politics, and more (Slater 2003).
3. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient space to explore as thoroughly as one would like the specific values involved in these practices. In brief, the values that are trained through such arts usually involve reference to harmony, respect, purity and tranquility (embodied as *wa kei sei jaku* in the practice of the Tea ceremony)—these values are ritually embedded in various actions, comportment, silence, mise-en-scene, and ways of performing aspects of the rituals, for example, in the care shown to one's tools, one's guests, one's clothes, and so on. Habitual ritual practice serves as a steady reminder to express these values in all domains of one's life.

4. This article highlights *dō*. The same principles are applicable across one's various daily business, for example in the act of cleaning and tidying up. Buddhist monk, Shoukei Matsumoto, writes: "A monk's day begins with cleaning. … We don't do this because it's dirty or messy. We do it to eliminate the gloom in our hearts … We sweep dust to remove our worldly desires. … [it's] linked to 'cultivating the mind'" (Matsumoto 2018 1, 3).

5. A word of caution when considering the Japanese arts as forms of mindfulness practice: to no small degree, it is anachronistic to call meditative practices before the twenty-first-century *mindfulness*. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is loved by some and loathed by others, did a remarkable job in shaping what contemporary audiences now call *mindfulness*—which as his Buddhist critics sometimes argue, has nothing to do with original mindfulness practice, and in many ways is opposed to that, functioning more as a vehicle for strengthening one's ego, simply making it more efficient and effective at getting what it wants, rather than being a tool for helping one move past the ego (as noted by cognitive psychologist, and Buddhist, Eleanor Rosch, 2008). As such, one should be careful in calling anything before the twenty-first-century *mindfulness* because the term has been essentially coopted, for better or worse, and significantly redefined in the complete Jon Kabat-Zinn-ification of the term. Thus, while this article intends to contribute to the mindfulness literature, there is no proposition that these practices constitute *mindfulness* in the recent sense—though, ironically, through cultural exchange, the Japanese arts are in the process of being Jon Kabat-Zinn-ified too, being reconstructed as *traditional Japanese* arts of mindfulness. Readers should be aware of the anachronism involved in the popular reconstruction and re-presentation of *traditional* Japanese artforms as mindfulness defined in the more recent sense. This recent sense of the term is scarcely decades old. As for this article, rather than conflating the Japanese arts and mindfulness, the idea is to *restore* a deeper sense to the practice, a broader Zen Buddhist and ethical structure.

6. This is the famous *shushō ittō* doctrine of Dōgen, founder of Sōtō Zen (more below): the unity of practice and enlightenment.

7. One sees why the *sudden* Rinzai approach has more fully captured the popular image of Zen, with its snappy dialogues, obtuse questioning, its face-slapping, plate throwing, shouting and other slapstick antics. Instead, the Sōtō (slow) Zen school emphasizes *zazen* and the *just sitting* approach. The sheer, brutal nakedness of the Sōtō approach (where enlightenment is nothing but the practicing itself) offers an unassailable way to strip the self-bare before itself, by offering it no hiding place, by refusing all busy-ness, all distractions, all tricks, all the frippery that clutters the spiritual space. With *zazen*, there is nothing to do, nowhere to go—it is the ultimate confrontation with oneself.

8. At the same time, Victoria "recounts the dramatic and tragic stories of the handful of Buddhist organizations and individuals that dared to oppose Japan's march to war" (Victoria 2006).

9. A more common slogan affirming this ideal is *issha zetsumei*—one shot, extinction.

10. Carter continues: "The arts are designed to lead an individual to realize Buddhahood, or to release one's *kami*-nature, the divine potential that is to be found in the depths of each and every individual who cares to discover it. Religion, philosophy, aesthetics, culture, and ethics are all interconnected here. The practice of a Japanese art is in all respects transformative. Each art is designed to make one a different person, a better person … and one is able to practice what has come to be understood" (Carter 2008, 4).

11. In both the Western (oriental-romantic) and Japanese discourse, the word *Western* is used as a euphemism for domination, competition, strife, misunderstanding everything, doing everything *the wrong way*, foolishness, war, and having everything upside down, being completely misguided, blundering around the world with guns, destroying nature, and generally making a mess of everything. This seems to ignore the manner in which such qualities are not exactly privately owned by *the West*, and are to be found in other places (including Japan!). This view also obscures the fact that Westerners have been mounting their own protest against mechanization and the soulless bureaucratization of all aspects of human existence since the beginning of the industrial revolution—hence the widespread Western romantic attachment to its idealized myths of Japanese-ness.

12. It is worth noting that, depending on the register of one's voice, the word *purity* can also have extremely sinister undertones (as the twentieth century showed in abundance, East and West).

13. This sense of impermanence is also captured in the slogan *hana ga chiru* (the blossom falls). In Japanese, one finds the concept of *Mujō* (literally: *not-always*) in words and characters borrowed from Chinese. By contrast, *mono no aware*, in pure classical Japanese, is an aesthetic concept more than an ethical or philosophical one, the poignancy of things (*a-wa-re* is a Japanese interjection, rather like a sigh), and is, on the whole, more like Virgil's heart-felt cry: *sunt lacrimae rerum*. In any case, the connection between the Buddhist acknowledgement of intransience, and the more aesthetic appreciation of beautiful decay, remain profoundly interwoven.

14. Traboulsi (2016) makes all these points with reference to a similar conservatism within the Eastern Orthodox church, and pointed to an earlier debate, when electricity was discovered, about whether the monasteries should be allowed to have electricity. At that point, there was a powerful theology of the candlelight, and it was felt that having electric lights would ruin some crucial spiritual aspect of the lighting in the religious practice. Nevertheless, electricity came to the monasteries.

References

Befu, Harumi. 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron"*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.

Carter, Robert E. 2008. *The Japanese Arts and Self-Cultivation*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Dōgen, Eihei [1253] 2007. *Shōbōgenzō: The Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching*. Translated by Rev. Hubert Nearman, OBC. Mt Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press.

Figal, Gerald. 2007. *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Heisig, James W., Kasulis, Thomas P., and John C. Maraldo (eds.). 2011. *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Herrigel Eugen. 1948. *Zen in the Art of Archery*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Hofmann Stefan G., Grossman Paul, and Devon E. Hinton. 2011. "Loving-Kindness and Compassion Meditation: Potential for Psychological Interventions." *Clinical Psychology Review* 31 (7): 1126–32.

Jones, James. 2008. *Blood That Cries Out from the Earth: The Psychology of Religious Terrorism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kawai, Yoko. 2018. "Designing Mindfulness: Spatial Concepts in Traditional Japanese Architecture." Talk Delivered to The New York Japan Society May 31st 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcGH6rqssfs (last accessed 13th October 2021).

MacInnes, Elaine. 2003. *Zen Contemplation for Christians*. Oxford: Sheed & Ward.

Masterman, Margaret. 1989. *Religious Explorations*. Edited by Dorothy Emmet and Rowan Williams. Private Publication accessible on Epiphany Philosophers Website http://epiphanyphilosophers.org/major-documents/margaret-masterman-braithwaite/

Masuno, Shunmyo. 2018. "The Art and Philosophy of Zen Garden Design." Talk delivered at Brown University, Tuesday, June 26, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vikIWEnLK04 (last accessed 13th October 2021).

Matsumoto, Shoukei. 2018. *A Monk's Guide to a Clean House and Mind*. London: Penguin.

O'Brien, Liam. 2003. "Kyūdō and Zen in the Art of Archery" (available: https://lks.Ky/d/org.uk/page/videos-images-amp-articles).

Ostler, Nicholas. 2016. *Passwords to Paradise: How Languages Have Re-Invented World Religions*. London: Bloomsbury.

Rosch, Eleanor. 2008. "Beginner's Mind: Paths to the Wisdom that is Not Learned." In *Teaching for Wisdom*, edited by Michel Ferrari and George Potworowski, 135–62. Dordrecht: Springer.

Sennett, Richard. 2008. *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin.

Shirane, Haruo. 2012. *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Slater, David. 2003. Review of *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron"*. By Harumi Befu. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001. xiii, 181 pp. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62 (1): 276–78.

Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. 1972. *What is Zen? Two Unpublished Essays and a Reprint of the 1st ed. of The Essence of Buddhism (Perennial Library).* New York: Harper & Row.
Suzuki, Shuryu (ed. Dixon Trudy). 1970. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Press.
Traboulsi, Berge. 2016. "Emotions and Orthodox Spirituality during Turbulent Times: Analysis of Facebook Expressions over the Abduction of Metropolitan Paul (Yazigi) of Aleppo." In *Studies in Science and Theology, 15, Do Emotions Shape the World?*, edited by Dirk Evers, Michale Fuller, Anne Runehov, and Knut-Willy Sæther, 167–81. Bamberg, Germany: ESSSAT.
Varela, Francisco J., Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. 2016. *The Embodied Mind Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Victoria, Brian Daizen. 2006. *Zen at War*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
Williams, Rowan. 2014. *The Edge of Words*. London: Bloomsbury.
Yamada, Shoji. 2001. "The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 28 (1–2): 1–30.