

Zen Buddhism, Freud, and Jung

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IN THIS PAPER we will compare the Zen view of the person with three central aspects of the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jung. The Western psychoanalytic understanding of the person has been chosen as a basis for comparison with Zen Buddhism for four reasons. First, unlike the Christian view, for example, that of psychoanalysis is a product of the twentieth century and it therefore reflects a distinctively modern Western approach to the issue. Secondly, unlike many other contemporary perspectives such as that of the personalists or existentialists, psychoanalysis has developed an extensive system of therapeutic techniques based on its understanding of the nature of the person. The affinity between technique and theory is also central to Zen Buddhism and the dyadic relationships of analyst/analysand and of Zen Master/disciple, for example, provide ready points of comparison. Thirdly, although there have been previous comparisons between Zen and Western psychoanalysis,¹ these projects have often been quite general in scope and few detailed comparisons on specific points have been attempted. It is hoped that the three specific comparisons outlined here will shed further light on the distinctive way in which the person is understood within the Zen Buddhist framework. Lastly, in the case of Jung, we have a Western psychoanalyst who, in fact, was quite cognizant of many basic Zen

¹ See, for example, Fromm, Suzuki and DeMartino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). On p. 78 of that volume, Fromm notes some previous writings in the area.

Buddhist ideas² and a comparison between Zen and Jung, therefore, assumes a particular appropriateness.

1 *Zen and Freud's Mechanisms of Defense*

It is not difficult to note obvious ways in which Freud's psychoanalytic theories are not in accord with the basic viewpoint of Zen Buddhism. Most important of all, the primary distinction in psychoanalysis—the split between the conscious and unconscious mind—has no correlate in Zen.³ At those rare points when Zen Buddhists do make distinctions concerning the nature of mind, it is usually more along the lines of the “thinking/not-thinking/non-thinking” characterization used by Dōgen, a characterization that he in fact inherited from Yueh-shan.⁴ The distinctions among these three modes of consciousness constitute a complex issue in Dōgen's thought, but even a brief set of definitions will reveal the contrast with psychoanalytic categories. “Thinking” is basically any category-affirming attitude within consciousness while “not-thinking” is the negation of that attitude. That is to say, “not-thinking” is the name

² See, for example, Jung's Foreword to D. T. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

³ In deference to an audience of psychoanalysts, D. T. Suzuki once lectured on the nature of the “unconscious” in Zen Buddhism, but his usage of the term is patently not Freudian. Not only does Suzuki call this unconscious “ante-scientific” and “Cosmic,” but it is also clearly a state of awareness rather than unawareness. See Fromm, *ZB and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 10–24.

⁴ The translation of *shiryō* (思量), *fushiryō* (不思議) and *hisiryō* (非思量) as “thinking,” “not-thinking” and “non-thinking” follows the rendering of Waddell and Abe in their translation of Dōgen's *Fukanzazengi* (*The Eastern Buddhist*, VI: 2, October 1973, p. 129). In some contexts, it might be helpful to translate the third term, *hisiryō*, as “without thinking.” An English discussion of Dōgen's distinction can be found in Hee-Jin Kim's excellent book, *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 76–78. The only serious criticism I have of Kim's account is that he tends to introduce too many metaphysical and mystical nuances by translating the second term, *fushiryō*, as “the unthinkable.” An excellent, dialectically oriented discussion of the three terms can be found in Akiyama Hanji's Japanese work, *Dōgen no kenkyū* [*A Study of Dōgen*] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1935; republished by Reimei shobō in 1965), pp. 258–66.

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for the outright rejection of all conceptualization. "Non-thinking", on the other hand, takes neither an affirming nor a negating attitude for its intentionality. Since it does not objectify ideas, there is no object for it to either affirm or deny. For Dōgen, this pre-reflective or pre-conceptual state of mind is more fundamental than the other two and it is the proper attitude to assume in seated meditation. Although we will make some further references to Dōgen's triadic distinction later in this paper, for now we only wish to point out that in the Zen Buddhist distinction we find no equivalent to the Freudian or Jungian conception of the unconscious. A similar point could be made about Zen Buddhism's attitude toward the remainder of Freud's system, e.g., his analyses of ego, id, and superego. These notions would not be so much rejected as neglected by Zen. Considered to be reflective, reconstructive conceptualizations of experience, these ideas would have no place within Zen's practical emphasis on pre-reflective experience. Furthermore, even in terms of therapeutic theory, the situation of the monastery and that of the analyst's office are so strikingly different that there would seem to be little ground for fruitful comparison. In particular, Zen's path of personal development goes beyond returning neurotic and psychotic patients to functional normality. Indeed, it is meant to be the basis of a whole way of living quite separate from that of "normal" people.

Despite the ease with which we can list such evident incompatibilities between Zen and Freud's psychoanalysis, if we look below the surface, we can see certain significant affinities. We can, of course, find several general themes held in common by the two such as the belief that personal freedom is essentially based on overcoming dominance by the passions, or the conviction that "liberation" follows from self-knowledge rather than from devotion to something transcendent.¹ In this brief discussion, however, I have in mind a much more specific point of comparison, viz., their common realization that conceptualization or rationality may actually function as a *hindrance* to man's liberation from his unconscious

¹ For a consideration of some of the humanistic ideals shared by Freud and Zen, see Fromm's essay, "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism," in Fromm, *ZB and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 77-141.

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compulsions. In Freud, this realization is expressed in his concern for removing the negative effects of particular "mechanisms of defense" in the ego; in Zen, it is visible in the Master's insistence that the disciple overcome his dependence on concepts.

In order to understand the importance of Freud's conception of mechanisms of defense, a few remarks about his overall project will give this theory a framework. In his later writings, Freud recognizes three interrelated agencies that must be given due consideration: the id, the superego, and the ego. In most general terms, the id is the repository of the instinctual, libidinal drives. As such, the id forms the foundation of the pleasure principle, the tendency toward direct, immediate self-gratification. On the other hand, there is an opposing reality principle that checks this first tendency. Not only is direct gratification often impossible because of physical conditions, but also, it is often forbidden by various rules imposed by culture and society. These rules of acceptable behavior are considered to be embodied in the dictates of the superego, one of its major enterprises being the development of conscience. Because of the potential conflict between the pleasure and reality principles, there is the need for a third, negotiating agency that can mediate the demands of these other two. This third agency is, of course, the ego. Besides being the center of differentiating consciousness (thought), it also establishes (conscious and unconscious) structural mechanisms through which the individual adapts his behavior to the external world. To function adequately, the conscious part of the ego obviously must have access to the material from the id and superego *in an undistorted form*. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For example, material that has been repressed (painful memories of specific traumatic events, libidinal desires that the superego considers sinful or improper, etc.) can often make itself available to consciousness only in an altered fashion. Undoing this distortion is a primary aim of Freud's therapeutic analysis: the more the patient understands the nature of his conflicting needs and the more he understands how the distorted manifestations of repressed psychic data have affected his behavior, the more freely the ego can develop adequate courses of action. In other words, Freud's basic project is to bring repressed, unconscious material to the level of consciousness.

Let us consider now the role of mechanisms of defense within this general framework.

For the ego has to try from the very outset to fulfil its task of mediating between its id and the external world in the service of the pleasure principle, and to protect the id from the dangers of the external world. If, in the course of these efforts, the ego learns to adopt a defensive attitude towards its own id as well and to treat the latter's instinctual demands as external dangers, this happens, at any rate in part, because it understands that a satisfaction of instinct would lead to conflicts with the external world. Thereafter, under the influence of education, the ego grows accustomed to removing the scene of the fight from outside to within and to mastering the *internal* danger before it has become an *external* one; and probably it is most often right in doing so. During this fight on two fronts—later there will be a third front as well [with the superego]—the ego makes use of various procedures for fulfilling the task, which, to put it in general terms, is to avoid danger, anxiety and unpleasure. We call these procedures 'mechanisms of defense.'⁶

In other words, Freud discovered that the ego consciously and unconsciously utilizes various procedures for preventing direct confrontation with psychic material that might prove threatening or disturbing. Threatening to what? *To the maintenance of the status quo of the ego itself.*⁷ Through the organizing structures of the ego, a state of equilibrium is achieved, a state that allows some of the instinctual drives of the id to be expressed (either directly or indirectly) within the limitations posed by the prohibitions of the superego and the demands of external reality. Through the utilization of the mechanisms of defense, the ego fends off

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1958), xxiii: 235. Henceforth, *Standard Edition* is abbreviated *SE* with volume and page numbers.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

psychic contents that pose a threat to this equilibrium. Some of these mechanisms include repression, regression, projection, sublimation and "undoing."⁸ Although Freud felt that some of this defensive apparatus is probably necessary in order to keep at bay the overwhelming urges of the id, the mechanisms of defense can nonetheless become "fixated" in such a way that they may do more harm than good.⁹ In such instances, they become automatic, stylized responses to certain types of situations, responses that might have been appropriate at an earlier stage of psychic development, but which are no longer suitable. In effect, such fixated defenses become blinders that limit the person's perception of the actual situation and they may "bring about ever more extensive alienation from the external world."¹⁰ Because these mechanisms are utilized both by and for the ego, Freud notes that the analyst's effort in therapy is "constantly swinging backwards and forward like a pendulum between a piece of id-analysis and a piece of ego-analysis."¹¹

The implications of this Freudian discovery are relevant to our particular discussion of Zen in two ways. First, we can see that even for Freud, the ego is by no means infallible or fully objective in its structuring processes and, in fact, the ego is always designing compromising constructions that reflect only as much of "reality" as can be handled at any given time. Yet, this is the *ideal* functioning of the ego and, in most cases, it blocks out even more of reality than is appropriate. For this very reason, the analyst must set out to disassemble many of the ego's mechanisms of defense. As in Zen, mere thinking or mental structuring

⁸ For a comprehensive examination of the varieties of defense mechanisms, see Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, trans. Cecil Baines (New York: International Universities Press, 1946).

⁹ "It sometimes turns out that the ego has paid too high a price for the services they [the mechanisms of defense] render it. The dynamic expenditure necessary for maintaining them, and the restrictions of the ego which they almost invariably entail, prove a heavy burden on the psychical economy. . . . They become regular modes of reaction in his character, which are repeated throughout his life whenever a situation occurs that is similar to the original one." Freud, "Terminable," *SE*, XIII: 237.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

is itself no guarantee of objectivity. In fact, dependence on defense mechanisms is an example of being so determined by past conditioning that one is unable to respond freely in the present—precisely one of the situations Zen endeavors to avoid. Zen disagrees with Freud only as to the *extensiveness* of defensive mechanisms in that it considers *all* intellectual constructions to be defense mechanisms insofar as they become patterns of response whose appropriateness is not evaluated in each new situation. In other words, any conceptual framework, even Freud's id/superego/ego, can become the basis for automatic, stylized modes of response and Zen consequently regards them all with suspicion.

Another comparative point about Freud's view of the ego's mechanisms of defense is that it endeavors to explain why they develop whereas Zen is indefinite on precisely this point: it attacks complete dependence on thinking/not-thinking, but it gives no detailed etiology of the dependence. Extending the Freudian thesis (beyond Freud's own intent), we may ask if Zen would also assert that rationalistic thinking is essentially a defense mechanism that arises out of the need to exclude unpleasant aspects of reality. The answer is that it would, but the nature of what is excluded is different from Freud's conception (as we might expect, insofar as Freud is primarily concerned only with the psychoanalytic dimensions relevant to psychotherapy). Within the traditional Zen viewpoint, the repressed object is neither the id's forbidden impulses nor painfully traumatic memories, but rather, the *experience of impermanence*. As a withdrawal from this perception of change, conceptual frameworks reify experience into substantial entities that may undergo change, but remain self-identical. The epitome of this process, according to Zen, is the objectification of the self. Freud, too, recognizes that the ego becomes an object for itself, though for him, this is an inevitable and often very positive development in the personality. For Zen, though, this is a flight from the reality of pre-reflective experience into the stasis of intellectually restructured memories.

In summary, we have seen that both Freud and Zen endeavor to prevent the person's behavior from being strictly determined by defensive reactions inherited from past experience; both seek an opening up of the person's options so that he can realize his capacity to understand and

act freely within present situations. Beyond this basic similarity, however, we have also noted a distinctive divergence between the two systems. Specifically, although both Freud and Zen maintain that conceptualizations may become restrictions on human freedom, Freud maintains that dependence on at least *some* mechanisms of defense is inevitable. Because of its emphasis on pre-reflective experience, Zen maintains that all such dependence must be overcome. In other words, Freud seeks to replace inadequate, fixated ego structures with ones that better correspond to the patient's present situation, but Zen seeks to open the present to the disciple by helping him to become independent of all such structures. As we shall now see, this same distinction also underlies the difference between the analyst/analysand relationship in Freud and that of the Master/student in Zen.

II *Freud and Zen on "Transference"*

The interaction between Zen Master and disciple is an integral part of Zen training and we will here investigate this association further by comparing it to a contemporary Western one, namely, that between the Freudian analyst and his patient. In both cases the dyadic nature of the relationship is essential: although one may have more than one teacher or even more than one confessor at a time, a client has only one analyst, a disciple only one Zen Master. One consequence of the gradual disappearance of apprenticeship in our modern Western society is that the dyadic relationship of learning has become quite rare. The psychoanalytic situation is a significant exception to this general rule and it serves as an illuminating point of comparison with the interpersonal dynamics between Zen Master and disciple. We will begin our discussion with an explication of Freud's conception of transference.

Whatever his original ideal of the analyst's objective distance might have been, Freud came to realize early in his career that "any analysis without transference is an impossibility."¹² Although the term "transference" has become a general one referring to the entire relationship

¹² Freud, *An Autobiographical Study* (1925), in *SE*, xx: 42.

between analyst and patient, in Freud's own usage it is more specific.¹³ At first, transference was considered to be a type of "displacement," i.e., the process of raising to consciousness the affect from a repressed (unconscious) memory by means of changing the affect's original object.¹⁴ For example, having repressed the memory of a traumatic incident concerning his father, a patient can release some of the suppressed emotion by "transferring" it onto someone else with whom he has direct contact. In this manner the emotion has an outlet even though the repressed memory itself has not become conscious. What Freud gradually discovered is that the new object of the transferred affect is most often the analyst himself. In this more specialized sense then, "transference" indicates that the patient, without apparent justification, projects various emotions onto the analyst and the analyst inevitably finds himself involved in the patient's emotional life.¹⁵ Depending on the circumstances, the analyst may be the object (by transference) of either the patient's love or his hostility (or both).

Although the appearance of a "transference-neurosis" may seem to present an inescapable obstacle to the further progress of analysis, Freud discovered that it could also present the opportunity for the patient to have a significant insight into his own unconscious. By raising the repressed affect to consciousness, even though it may be in a seriously transferred or displaced form, the very act of repression becomes manifest to the patient. Through the analyst's careful guidance, the analysand may be brought to the point of recognizing that there is no rational

¹³ For an excellent summary of Freud's use of the term "transference" throughout his career, see J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), pp. 455-64.

¹⁴ Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), in *SE*, v: 562-63.

¹⁵ Of course, the interrelationship between patient and analyst is also functional in the opposite direction as well. Although Freud himself only touched on this topic, later analysts have taken up the study of "countertransference." That is to say, repressed material may also arise from the analyst's unconscious and he may become irrationally attached or hostile to a particular patient. For a comprehensive treatment, see Heinrich Racker's *Transference and Counter-transference* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1968).

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justification for his emotional projections and this insight may itself constitute a crucial turning point in the patient's self-understanding. The implication is that the transference-neurosis may itself become a concrete phenomenon by which both the analyst and the analysand can gain entry into the material within the latter's unconscious. Freud summarizes the centrality of transference very clearly in the following passage:

Thus our therapeutic work falls into two phases. In the first, all the libido is forced from the symptoms into the transference and concentrated there; in the second, the struggle is waged around this new object and the libido is liberated from it. The change which is decisive for a favorable outcome is the elimination of repression in the renewed conflict, so that the libido cannot withdraw once more from the ego by flight into the unconscious. This is made possible by the alteration of the doctor's suggestion. By means of the work of interpretation, which transforms what is unconscious into what is conscious, the ego is enlarged at the cost of this unconscious.¹⁶

The centrality of this phenomenon within the psychoanalytic setting leads us to wonder if a similar occurrence takes place in the relationship between Zen Master and disciple.

Certainly, something at least resembling transference does occur in this relationship and in fact, in certain respects, the transference is even more intense within the Zen framework than it is in the psychoanalytic situation. For instance, the Zen disciple regards the Master as an example of that which he wishes to become. This identification is stronger than that achieved in psychoanalysis in at least two ways. First, the analysand does not typically consider his training to be completed only if he himself becomes an analyst, but the Zen monk ultimately seeks the Master's certification that allows him to become a Master himself. Secondly, both the Zen Master and the student believe that the Master has achieved something ("realization" or "enlightenment") that the student also desires to achieve. This underscores the basis of the Master's authority.

¹⁶ Freud, "Analytic Therapy," in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* in *SE*, XVI: 455.

The analyst, on the other hand, is primarily distinguishable from the analysand in that he has command of a special methodology for uncovering repressed material and mitigating its effects.¹⁷ Although the patient may feel he lacks the ability to cope with certain situations, that ability is not solely possessed by psychoanalysts; in fact, it is precisely something that all "normal" people are expected to have. In other words, the analyst is a person who has *special knowledge* of certain techniques, but the Zen Master is himself considered to be a *special person*, one who has achieved a special state of spiritual insight and self-realization. Again, this difference would seem to imply that the transference-neurosis is probably more likely to arise in Zen than in psychoanalysis.

Even in the actual interaction between Master and disciple the possibility of transference is clearly present. For example, in the *sanzen* interview, the disciple makes an effort to respond in the same mode (non-thinking) as the Master. To the extent he tries to imitate the Master, it is easy for the student to fall into filial affection and dependence. On the other hand, since the Master's demands on the student can often be the cause of great frustration, hostility may also arise. To experience the Great Doubt is by no means a pleasant experience and the student may hold his Master responsible for his suffering. In this regard, the Zen Master may encounter "resistance" on the part of the student in much the same way as an analyst might encounter it within the analysand. Even though the cause of the resistance is somewhat different in the two cases (in the former, it is a resistance to giving up dependence on conceptualization; in the latter a resistance to unearthing repressed memories and desires), to the extent the process of self-understanding is painful, it is natural that the person undergoing that process will sometimes doubt its ultimate value.

Despite these similarities with the psychoanalytic phenomena of transference and resistance, the Zen situation is also very different in some fundamental ways. First, and most importantly, the Zen student's reactions to the Master *are* justifiable within the terms of their actual inter-

¹⁷ "Analysts are people who have learned to practice a particular art; alongside of this, they may be allowed to be human beings like everyone else." Freud, "Terminable," *SE*, xxiii: 247.

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relationship. No affect need be transferred from a previously repressed traumatic experience: the Master indeed behaves in a manner deserving of both affection and hostility. That the Master is sometimes a kindly, caring, supportive figure and at other times a stern, unfeeling task master is not a mere matter of projection, but is quite objectively the case.¹⁸ Secondly, although it is very likely that *some* genuine Freudian transference will arise, Zen differs from psychoanalysis in its treatment of this phenomenon. In particular, the Zen Master does not try to convince the student that his feelings are ungrounded, i.e., he does not use the transference phenomenon as an entry into the analysis of repressed, traumatic memories. In comparison with Freud, Zen is markedly unconcerned with the student's past; abreaction¹⁹ has no formal place within the monastery. The student is constantly challenged to be a full participant in the present, rather than to return to the past in order to free the present. Thirdly, within the Zen situation, there is ideally no possibility of countertransference. While it is assumed that the psychoanalyst can never be completely free of the affects of his repressed unconscious, the Zen Master is judged to be no longer determined by the past. Not bound to any particular set of conceptualizations, the Master is free of unconscious compulsions. Because of the far more active role taken by the Zen Master in comparison with the analyst, the purity of his own self-understanding is proportionally more significant. In accord with the enormous influence that a Master exerts over his students, the credentials to be a Master are cautiously guarded and only given to selected students after many years of careful supervision. Even though the training of an analyst also requires several years of specialization, the final authorization is not as com-

¹⁸ The same ambivalence is formalized in the roles of the five officers of the monastery. For example, the *jikijitsu* is the stern disciplinarian and the *shoji* is the supportive guardian of the monks' welfare. Importantly, the five officers periodically rotate their roles so that the stern *jikijitsu*, for example, may suddenly become the kindly *shoji*. For further details about the roles of the officers, see Joshu Sasaki, *Buddha is the Center of Gravity* (San Cristobal, New Mexico: The Lama Foundation, 1974), pp. 64-65.

¹⁹ abreaction—the psychic re-enactment of a previously repressed traumatic experience so as to relieve the psychic tension accrued from the original incident and the repression of its memory.

prehensive as that of a Zen Master: for a Rinzai Master to confer his authorization upon a student, he must testify to the fact that the student's realization is *as deep as his own*, a declaration that he is not likely to take lightly.

Therefore, although we might wish to speak of a transference relationship within Zen training, the nature of this transference and the way in which it is treated are quite distinct from those of the psychoanalytic situation. To further elaborate on this difference, we can now briefly consider one aspect of technique shared by Zen Masters and psychoanalysts, viz., the emphasis on spontaneity. By examining how this common emphasis has a distinctively different rationale in the two systems, we will better see in what way Freudian psychotherapy and Zen training are fundamentally divergent in their goals.

Much of the development of psychoanalytic technique has been concerned with ways of gaining access to unconscious material by circumventing the censoring processes of the ego. The theory is that if the patient is required to respond spontaneously, the mechanisms of defense will be caught off guard and important data from the unconscious will become available (even though it may still appear in somewhat distorted form). Some of the better known techniques developed by psychoanalysts include Freud's free association and dream interpretation, Jung's word association test and active imagination, and Rorschach's inkblot test. As an example of one of Freud's earliest techniques, we can consider the following practice described in *Studies in Hysteria*:

I inform the patient that, a moment later, I shall apply pressure to his forehead, and I assure him that, all the time the pressure lasts, he will see before him a recollection in the form of a picture or will have it in his thoughts in the form of an idea occurring to him, and I pledge him to communicate this picture or idea to me, whatever it may be.²⁰

Here we see Freud calling upon the patient to react *without thinking about the significance of what is happening*. This is strikingly like the Zen Master's

²⁰ Freud, *Studies in Hysteria* (1895), in *SE*, II: 270.

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provoking his student into making an immediate, unpremeditated response to a koan, a gesture or a challenge. As we have seen, in such cases the Zen Master will not accept even a moment's hesitation. Freud, too, realized that hesitancy is a sign of conscious (or "preconscious") restructuring of the experience.

The longer the pause between my hand pressure and the patient's beginning to speak, the more suspicious I become and the more it is to be feared that the patient is re-arranging what has occurred to him and is mutilating it in his reproduction of it.²¹

Despite the similarities, however, the Freudian emphasis on spontaneity has a distinctively different emphasis from that of Zen. In particular, Freud is looking for a link with a repressed memory of a traumatic experience. Therefore, the psychoanalyst is primarily concerned with following up the response with a series of questions that will enable the analysand to recall the original experience and to express the affect verbally.²² On the other hand, the Zen Master seeks to encourage spontaneity on the part of the student because he wishes the student to show that he is *independent* of past conditioning and no longer dependent on concepts or words. Hence, the spontaneous reaction of the analysand fits into a larger pattern of determinism; the spontaneous response of the Zen disciple reveals the freedom from being determined by such a pattern. From the other side of the relationship, the Zen student accepts the Master's action and responds to it directly, but the psychoanalytic patient ultimately responds not to the pressure of the hand but to something else entirely, viz., the repressed memory and its accompanying affect. Therefore, although both the Zen Master and the analyst try to provoke spontaneous responses in their subjects, the nature of the spontaneity and the direction of the response are distinctively different in the two situations.

To sum up these points about the comparison between Freudian

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²² For Freud's emphasis on the importance of putting the affect into words, see *Studies in Hysteria*, SE, II: 255.

analysis and Zen, we can say that while many aspects of the general structure have much in common, there is nonetheless a basic difference in perspective. Freudian analysis is primarily aimed at revealing aspects of the unconscious to the conscious; Zen is concerned with the different modes of consciousness, viz., thinking, not-thinking, and non-thinking. Equally significant is the fact that Freudian analysis is primarily directed to the patient's *past* experience since therein lie the roots of the patient's problems in the present, but when Zen endeavors to break down the disciple's dependence on previous conditioning, it does so by concentrating its attention on the *directly experienced present*. Stated differently, Freud frees the patient's present by disassembling unfortunate patterns of conditioning acquired in the past and he guides the patient so that he can re-experience and verbalize the past traumatic incident *as-it-was*. In contrast, Zen maintains that pre-reflective non-thinking is a form of experience that has not yet been restructured either by conscious or unconscious forces and if the Zen disciple manages to ground himself in that mode of relating, there is no need to be concerned with the specific nature of past experiences in that he already has a grasp on present experience *as-it-is*. Both Freud's psychoanalysis and Zen endeavor to relieve people of their being compelled by unknowingly contrived and unspontaneous modes of behavior, but the processes by which they seek to achieve results and the rationales behind those processes are radically different.

A further contrast is that the relationship between analyst and analysand is primarily one between doctor and patient, but in Zen, the tie between Master and disciple is much stronger than this. In psychoanalysis, the patient goes to the analyst because he has special knowledge which will help him cure the patient's disease and return him to "normalcy"; in Zen, the disciple ultimately wants to become like the Master himself—he wants to be more than "normal" and indeed, to a certain extent, desires to be extraordinary. To concentrate our attention on this goal of going beyond mere normalcy, we will turn now to another major figure in psychoanalysis, C. G. Jung. In particular, we will investigate his model of "individuation" to see if it can shed further light on the Zen ideal of the person.

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III *Zen and Jung's Individuation*

As we have seen, although Freud and Zen share several points in their interpretations of the person, Zen also differs radically from Freud in that (1) it denies the ultimate value of replacing unsatisfactory mechanisms of defense with new ego structures and (2) it rejects Freud's basic project of freeing the present by resolving the repressed problems of the past. For those familiar with other traditions of psychoanalysis, the question might arise of whether Jung's system would offer a more fruitful comparison especially insofar as he emphasizes (1) the cooperation of the conscious and the unconscious (with no tension between ego and id) and (2) a prospective rather than retrospective therapy. In this brief section we will focus our comments by considering in particular Jung's theory of individuation or self-realization as it compares with the developmental image of the person in Zen.

In order to frame the remarks to follow, we will first consider Jung's general outlook, particularly insofar as it deviates from the tradition established by Freud. Freud primarily saw himself as formulating a new science which would harken a new era for mankind—an era in which what he called the "dictator of reason" would push back the forces of the unconscious and reclaim fresh territory for the forces of the ego. In accord with this sense of giving mankind a fresh start, Freud postdated his *Interpretation of Dreams* from 1899 to 1900 so that this work would usher in the new century. As we saw in the two previous sections of this chapter, Freud tends toward a mechanistic view of the psyche and his therapeutic process is primarily one of repair: he seeks to release the repressed cathexes that misdirect psychic energies and trap them within the unconscious. To remove the impediments to the ego's control of the individual, the person must return to the memory of the original trauma and release its cathexis through abreaction or catharsis.

Jung, on the other hand, does not see himself as a technologist assisting the imperial forces of the ego, but rather, as a rediscoverer, an archeologist of the psyche who digs into man's unconscious, unearthing the psychical roots that link the individual with the rest of humanity, even with those in cultures and times other than our own. Consequently,

rather than opposing one aspect of the psyche to another, Jung sets his goal as the integrating of the various forces into a whole, a process he labels "individuation." In line with this difference in emphasis from Freud, Jung's image of the psychological functions is organic rather than mechanical: unlike a machine, the psyche has no purpose that we can empirically determine and, like other organisms, the psyche possesses the potential to cure itself through its inherent compensating forces of self-adjustment. Therefore, rather than trying to repair a machine by removing obstructions in its energy flow, Jung merely seeks to act in harmony with the psyche's own process of healing. Rather than correcting the malfunctions inherited from the past, Jung tries to let the present develop of its own accord toward the equilibrium and integration of the self—the process he calls "individuation."

What is this process and how does it arise of its own accord? Although clearly a central idea in Jung's system, individuation lacks a single classic definition. While Freud strives for the definitional clarity of a science, Jung implies that clearcut definitions deprive psychoanalytic concepts of their web-like interconnections and disguise the underlying ambiguity characteristic of living processes. Unfortunately, this often leads to disorganization and obscurity, and in our considerations here we will outline a description of individuation that is more implicit than explicit in Jung's own writings. It is only one of several possible accounts that we might present, but for our comparative purposes, it is particularly useful. We shall attempt to develop our interpretation with the help of two basic features in Jung's thought: his theory of types and his conception of the transcendent function.

As is well known, Jung developed a comprehensive system for determining and classifying each individual's "psychological type."²¹ Indeed, his classification of the two "attitude types" of extravert and introvert has found its way into our everyday language. Our concern here, however, is primarily with the other types, the "function types" of thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. Jung's theory is that just as each individual has a

²¹ See Carl G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (1921), in *The Collected Works of Carl G. Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), vi.

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natural propensity to be either an extravert or an introvert (depending on whether he primarily directs his psychical energy outward or inward), individuals also develop a typical pattern of apprehension that is operative in primarily one of two ways: either through sensation or through intuition. Furthermore, Jung discovered that each individual also typically favors one of two ways of structuring experience: either by thinking or by feeling. We should bear in mind that these categories are only to be considered as *general* tendencies within a given individual. Also, although Jung himself describes the types and their combinations in great detail, for the purposes of our present project, such a venture into the intricate distinctions and interrelations is unnecessary; our goal here is merely to have a general understanding of the rationale behind the typologies.

Given these basic typologies, we can theoretically locate a person's psychological type on a three-dimensional graph with the parameters being extraversion—introversion, thinking—feeling, sensation—intuition. However, since the attitude types are generally considered to be innate rather than developed, our primary interest is in the four function types and we can represent the graph two-dimensionally as follows:



If we look at this graph and think of where we might locate the personalities of various people we know, it should be clear that although individuals tend to be more of one type than another, very few persons indeed can be considered to be totally limited to one point or even one quadrant. This realization was critical in the development of Jung's theory in that it implied that the four quadrants represent types of functioning *potentially open to all of us*. Yet, we typically do not realize this potential and the personality tends to adopt one particular quadrant as its "own" to the neglect of the others. In this sense, we have a Jungian parallel to Freud's fixation of the mechanisms of defense: the personality becomes fixed within certain modes of responding and the potential openness to a variety of experiences and possible responses is not realized. For Jung,

however, this situation does not call for the abreaction of a repressed memory. Rather, he claims that within the personality itself a compensating function will arise of its own accord. This compensating process is called the "transcendent function."²⁴ Let us consider an example of its operation.

For instance, in a person who is overly limited to the thinking-sensation quadrant, Jung would claim that a compensating urge toward feeling-intuition will necessarily emerge and problems arise only to the extent the individual resists this compensatory tendency. Just as an individual cannot persist in ignoring *physiological* compensatory signals (warnings about needs for sleep, proper nutrition, relaxation), he cannot successfully resist these *psychological* signals either. If he persists in his refusal to see that "other side of himself" which yearns for more attention, that unknown aspect (the "shadow") becomes detached from the self, achieving its own independent functioning. In mild cases this alter ego may make persistent appearances in dreams (as the archetype of the Shadow or perhaps of the Anima, the symbol of intuition and feeling). In more severe cases of conscious resistance, the compensatory aspect of the personality will unexpectedly intrude into everyday activities, i.e., for no patently explicable reason, the individual may suddenly act "not like himself." In even more severe cases, the counter image will begin to dominate large parts of the person's personality and there is a danger of schizophrenia. The Jungian analyst's task, therefore, is to help the patient to understand what is being expressed by these images or archetypes. Although Freud considers symbols to be the distorted residues of repressed memories, Jung understands them to be warnings about what must be accomplished if psychic equilibrium is to be re-established. Freud's analysis is fundamentally retrospective; Jung's is prospective.

Within this framework, individuation is the continuous responding to this compensatory tendency called the "transcendent function." This function is "transcendent" because it urges the person to transcend his limited standpoint and to open himself to other ways of perceiving and structuring his experience. Consequently, the more the person is able to

²⁴ See Jung, "The Transcendent Function" (written in 1916; rev. and pub. 1958), in *Collected Works*, VIII: 67-91.

respond to the transcendent function, the more mobile he becomes among the various typological quadrants and the more his psyche becomes centered and balanced. No longer a caricature of his full potential to experience in a variety of ways, the individuated person responds to phenomena as is appropriate in each situation, not blocking out possibilities of responding merely because they are antipodal to his former self-image. Bound neither by conceptual thinking nor by sheer feeling, neither by the piecemeal objectivity of sensation nor by the integrative monism of intuition, the ideally individuated person is of no *fixed* psychological type—he changes his mode of functioning to suit the circumstances. Without conscious direction, he responds to the balancing forces in his psyche that bring him to equilibrium. Although Jung understands individuation to be a limiting ideal that can only be very crudely approximated, there is much in this conception that has an affinity with the Zen view of the person and we will now consider four of the most significant of these points.

First, there is in this model of individuation, as in Zen, the ambiguity between the determinancy and indeterminacy of the person. The less the person is characterizable as a fixed psychological type, the more open he is to the possibility of experiencing the newness of each situation. Within Zen this idea is expressed in terms of there being no objectified “self” or “agent.” Both the individuated person and the Zen person is determinate only within a given situation, only at a given time: there is no abiding self or agent that filters or reconstructs the experience before it is made fully conscious. Secondly, the Zen ideal and the individuated man are both free from being totally directed by the unconscious forces of compulsion. This point is a corollary of the first in that the transcendence of a fixed sense of self eliminates the resistance that gives rise to compulsive outbreaks (when the person is suddenly “not himself”). Thirdly, both the individuated and Zen persons deal with the present in the present: there is no Freudian project of recapturing the past in order to free new possibilities of responding in the present. Lastly, in both Jung's and Zen's ideal, the personality functions as a psychic whole without conflict between conscious and unconscious or ego and id. In Freud, on the other hand, these subdivisions of the personality are always antagonistic to each other's aims.

Once again, though, we must not let the similarities between Zen and Jung on this single point collapse into the position that their projects are equivalent. First of all, Jung's psychoanalytic enterprise is still primarily *interpretive*. In other words, the analyst's main duty is to help the analysand to interpret the messages from the unconscious as they are communicated through archetypal images. Although Jung believes that the full interpretation of these images requires imagination and intuition as well as scientific objectivity, the Zen Master would still consider them counter-productive in that they reify experience. For Zen, to be attached to interpretations of archetypes is as dangerous as to be dependent on interpretations of words: both are flights from the pre-reflective character of non-thinking. Second of all, Zen would find Jung's theory to be too self-oriented. The very term "individuation" seems egotistical and it appears to refer to the process of self-knowledge that does not recognize Dōgen's admonition that "to know the self is to forget the self." Stated differently, within Jung's system each person is pursuing "his own" path to self-discovery and this assumes a self-consciousness quite foreign to Zen. There is no place in Jung's theory for the emptiness of Zen's "original face," or "the Person of his original part," i.e., there is no sense of a return to something more basic than the differentiated self. Lastly, in Zen there is a strong sense of there being something specific to be "realized"—in both senses of the term—something to be recognized and something to be accomplished. Each Master's realization is handed down to his disciples and a tradition is thereby established, whereas Jung himself offers little practical guidance—each person must find his own way. There is no "tradition" of individuation and there never can be—for Jung, each person's process is unique.

Now let us generalize the points we have made concerning Zen and psychoanalysis.

iv Conclusion: Zen and Psychoanalysis

In Japan I heard a story about a discussion between a Zen Master and an American who was formerly a psychotherapist but who had been practicing Zen in a monastery for six months. During their conversation,

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the American noted that he had sensed a continuity between his two experiences in that both Zen and psychotherapy were directed at helping people—what we have been calling here the common goal of freeing the person to respond more creatively to his present situation. Speaking slowly, the Master replied, “Yes, but Zen and psychotherapy are not really the same. In psychotherapy the doctor is still a patient.” Then, with a smile beginning to sweep across his face, he added, “Furthermore, although psychotherapy might be able to help somewhat, can it help a rock? Can it set a pair of shoes in order?”

Using these statements as a point of departure, we can generalize the major conclusions reached in the three comparisons discussed in this paper.

“In psychotherapy the doctor is still a patient.”

For better or worse, the analyst lacks the authority of the Zen Master. Being a psychoanalyst is an occupation; being a Zen Master is a way of life. The analysand improves his situation by working through the techniques and interpretations suggested by the analyst, but the Zen disciple becomes more aware of himself simply through his direct interaction with the Master’s personal authenticity. Fromm makes a similar point:

Accordingly, the [Zen] teacher is not a teacher in the Western sense. He is a master, inasmuch as he has mastered his own mind, and hence is capable of conveying to the student the only thing that can be conveyed: his existence.²⁵

The corollary of this idea is that the Master’s authority does not go unchallenged. In the *sanzen* interview the Master as well as the student are under pressure to display the “original face.” The authenticity of the Master’s state of non-thinking is not merely assumed: it must be *manifest*. Unlike the analyst who seeks a doctor’s objectivity toward his patient’s condition (a doctor with a heart condition, for example, may treat a patient with a similar condition), the Zen Master teaches solely by *exemplifying* that which the disciple seeks. The Chinese Zen Master

²⁵ Fromm, *ZB and Psychoanalysis*, p. 120.

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Rinzai (Ch: Lin-chi) was known to his followers as the "crouching lion" because of the dynamic spontaneity he displayed in *sanzen*. Through his non-thinking responsiveness, he was capable of almost any action: he might strike, roar, pounce or sit back and purr. Again, the Zen Master is not a person with special knowledge or special techniques; he is a special person.

Furthermore, although psychotherapy might be able to help people somewhat, can it help a rock? Can it set a pair of shoes in order?

This koan-like comment was perhaps directed specifically to the state of mind of the American Zen student and its full implications are undoubtedly closed to us. Nevertheless, it will be discussed here insofar as it is suggestive of two observations we have already made in this paper:

(1) Zen would maintain that one of the problems in psychoanalysis is that the person is often confused with his parts: the conscious/unconscious, ego/id/superego, conscious psychological type/unconscious shadow, etc. For the Zen Master, the person is what is manifested here at this very moment. No conceptual mediation or questions about past experiences are necessary; he responds to the student just-as-he-is. When the Master places a rock in a rock garden, he does not characterize the parts of the rock nor does he inquire into its past. Given the rock and the garden, he intuitively responds to the appropriateness of the situation, putting the rock where it "should be." This ideal applies to the Master's treatment of his disciples. The Zen system of training is based on the assumption that if the teacher establishes a responsive, non-thinking relationship with his student, there is no need for explicit concern about technique or about the problem of transference. To have a previously planned strategy of teaching only limits the teacher's capacity to fully respond to the student's existence as he presents it.

(2) The other point, an extension of the first, is the *everyday nature* of the Zen Master's non-thinking relationship. Non-thinking is not a mode of consciousness reserved for *sanzen* interviews. In psychoanalysis, as we have seen, there is much consideration given to the special relationship between analyst and analysand. For the Zen Master, his relationship to

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his student is only one example of non-thinking. The Master is also in a relationship of non-thinking when he drinks tea or sweeps the garden. Of course, his response to the student is different from his response to a teacup or a broom, but this is because the student manifests himself in a different way. The Master merely goes through the day setting shoes in order, sweeping leaves in the garden, moving his bowels, helping his students. Unaware of his individuation, he feels no need to interpret dreams nor to distinguish his conscious from his unconscious. Since non-thinking is a *mode of relating* and not a technique nor a special understanding, it continues throughout the day in whatever the Master does. It is in this respect that the Zen Buddhist view of the person goes beyond the more restricted psychoanalytic categories of Freud and Jung.