

ZEN AND KARATEDO: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
THE PRACTICES, ATTITUDES AND EFFECTS ON THE PRACTITIONERS

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by
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This Thesis entitled "ZEN AND KARATE-DO: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICES, ATTITUDES, AND EFFECTS ON THE PRACTITIONERS" prepared and submitted by ANTONIO PADIN DILUVIO in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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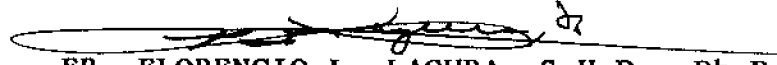

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I humbly bow To HIM, the Ultimate Reality, the Source of everything, for without HIM I can do nothing. 

THESIS ABSTRACT

The study aimed to present the close relationship between Zen and Karate-do by analyzing and comparing their individual practices, attitudes, and their effects on the practitioners. The study attempted to answer the following sub-problems on: (1) the brief historical development of Zen and Karate-do; (2) the comparison between the practices and attitudes of Zen and Karate-do; and, (3) the benefits of Zen and Karate-do to their individual practitioners.

To find the answers to the above-stated problem, the researcher used analytical and comparative interpretation of the individual practices, attitudes, and the effects to their practitioners of Zen and Karate-do. The above interpretation was made possible through analyzing the principles of Zen training hermeneutically, i.e. as perceived and understood by the researcher hermeneutically, as what the text presented itself to him. This, in turn, was compared with principles of Karate-do training as again perceived and understood through actual practice by this researcher.

The findings showed that there are more similarities than dissimilarities between Zen and Karate-do. The similarities were noted in their individual practices, attitudes, and benefits they offered to their individual practitioners. The findings further showed that Zen and Karate-do are essentially and in principle the same in their practices of posture, breathing, control and bowing. They only differ in the emphasis of training. Karate training, whose ultimate goal is also spiritual development (Jinkaku kansei ni tsutomoru koto), achieves its goal through physical development.

The similarity in the attitudes lies in the fact that both have the same Buddhist philosophy and adhere to the same Buddhist principles of training: novice's mind, naturalness/spontaneity, single-mindedness, repetition and constancy, concentration, and attachment/nonattachment.

Their benefits are similar in content: both offer spiritual as well as physical benefits.

The findings have shown that the relationship between Zen and Karate-do lies in the similarities in their individual historical development in Japan, in their practices, attitudes and benefits they offer their practitioners.

The findings showed that there were four historical features in the development of Zen and Karate-do in Japan.

The findings definitely showed that there are ample similarities in their individual practices of posture, breathing, control, and bowing.

The findings further pointed out that the practice of

both Zen and Karate-do cannot be effective and fruitful unless the correct attitudes toward such practice are followed and internalized. These attitudes are the following: novice's mind, naturalness/spontaneity, single-mindedness, repetition and constancy, concentration, and attachment/nonattachment.

The findings have also proved that Zen Buddhism is the philosophy behind the training of both Zen and Karate-do. Its principles on meditation permeated the practice of Zen and Karate-do. Its principles on attitudes became the necessary guidelines for practice.

The findings also disclosed the close similarities of the spiritual and physical benefits which Zen and Karate-do offer to their respective practitioners.

Zen and Karate-do cannot be learned effectively by self-study, through books and other materials. What one can learn through them are just general information on Zen and Karate-do but not the essence and experience of Zen and Karate-do.

Finally, the heart and soul of right practice for Zen and Karate-do is meditation. This practice helps the person attain enlightenment and perfection of character respectively.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

How can Buddhism, which holds life and peace very sacred, be a guide for Karate-do, a martial art that seems to be violent "by nature"? How can Zen Buddhism be the philosophy for Zen and Karate-do when there is a seeming controversy on its being a philosophy?¹

These questions had led the researcher to undertake the study of Zen and Karate-do in the light of a philosophy which is peculiarly Japanese in character: Zen Buddhism. The researcher, being a practicing karate-ka (a student of Karate-do), was further challenged to undertake the study because of the various biases and misconceptions regarding Karate-do that are prevalent in the Philippines.

Karate has become very popular in the past two decades throughout the world. Students, teachers, professionals, artists, and businessmen alike have taken up karate as a form of exercise for physical fitness as well as for self-defense training. In several universities in Japan, Karate-do (the way of karate) is now a compulsory subject. The number of karate enthusiasts is increasing yearly.

¹Several authors of almost all English language commentaries on Zen Buddhism are in agreement that Zen Buddhism is not a philosophy. In this study, Zen Buddhism is considered as a philosophy.

This same phenomenon is also occurring here in the Philippines. The rapid growth, however, brought about some positive and negative consequences. Positively, karate-do is introduced to the Filipino scene as a new sport and physical fitness activity. Negatively, its increasing popularity has generated certain mistaken and regrettable notions and impressions that run counter to the real meaning and philosophy of Karate-do. They have impaired the proper understanding of what Karate-do is.

The number one misconception is that Karate-do is a violent sport. People observe the actions and conclude that karate is violent. Another misconception is that karate has been confused with several other Asian martial arts. For example, it has been identified with the Chinese style of boxing kung-fu, or with the Korean martial art taekwondo, or with any other martial art that uses kicking and punching. Because of this, the fact that karate is a Japanese martial art in par with aikido, kendo, judo, and kyudo has resulted into its being lost along the way.

Misconceptions and misunderstanding regarding Karate-do also abound in the local scenario. In fact, when the Japan Karate Association Orient, Inc., Philippine Chapter gave a karate demonstration in one of the State Colleges in Cebu City, some of the esteemed educators did not comprehend the true meaning and philosophy of Karate-do. One claimed that he once saw a movie that depicted some karate students as

unruly and disrespectful toward their academic teachers. Another educator certainly showed her own xenophobic bias when she categorically branded karate as a foreign art and thus should be shunned, as if anything foreign is bad. Another educator charged that karate does not inculcate any educational value, whatsoever

Several persons favored the introduction of karate-do into the school system; but others opposed such move. In one of the private universities here in Cebu, one physical education head maintained that there is no physical education value in the teaching of karate-do to the students, unless the karate instructor is a physical education graduate. According to her this is the requirement of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Those in favor, however, did not grasp the meaning of Karate-do any better either. They were just infatuated by this "strange" art of Karate-do. They thought that karate is some kind of mysterious, esoteric art which enables the practitioner to gain mastery over other people through physical prowess, or to be able to break boards, bricks, bones and other physical things. Some thought karate is just a mere show, in which two men attack each other savagely, or contestants battle each other as though it were a form of boxing which uses the hands and feet. If karate were practiced solely as a fighting technique, this is a cause for regret. The fundamental techniques have been developed and perfected