

**SUBJECT FORMATION WITHIN
THE ZEN MONASTERY**

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Dedicated to the bodhisattvas in my life:

my parents,

my teachers,

my friends,

my sangha,

my colleagues,

and everyone in between.

All of you have my sincere gratitude.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PREFACE

“I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. What I do, for good or for evil, to that I will fall heir.” *Anguttara Nikaya 5.57*

Sitting in the sweltering summer heat at the foothills of the Zhongnan Mountains an hour outside the city of Xi’an, I am in the midst of trying to hold a single question in my mind for seven days: “Who is it that recites the name of the Buddha?”¹ My mind begins to drift, my spine slumps forward, my concentration wanes; suddenly a strong ‘THWACK’ comes down on my right shoulder, encouraging me to re-straighten my spine, and draw the mind back to this question, again and again: “Who is it that recites the name of the Buddha?” Each evening, the Chan master² had been sitting in full lotus position, telling us to raise this question in our mind without it being anything more than the question itself — much as one might ask any other question. He tells us to stay in the “place-of-not-understanding.”³ I begin again. At the end of the 80-minute sitting period, a loud wooden clapper marks the end of the practice; a second clap soon follows as everyone hurriedly puts on their shoes, followed by a third clap where we simultaneously stand and begin ten minutes of circumambulation around the altar. While walking, we are to keep the same question in our mind: “Who is it that recites the name of the

¹ *Nianfo shi shei* 念佛是誰; a common *huatou* within the Chan tradition. *Huatou* (話頭), a Chinese term that translates directly to ‘word-head’, but is commonly referred to as ‘crux of the phrase’ or ‘the critical phrase’, is a meditation exercise in which the practitioner focuses on a question which brings them to the limits of conceptualization. See section 3.4.1 on Meditation.

² Chan master Wuxuan 悟宣師父, the abbot at the Ancient Guanyin Zen Temple (*Gu guanyin chansi* 故觀音禪寺).

³ *Bu mingbai chu* 不明白處; this was a phrase frequently used by the Chan Master to describe the quality of mind to be maintained when practicing meditation on the ‘word-head’ (*huatou* 話頭).

Buddha?” At the end of walking, our walking turns into a crouched run, the stick coming down hard on the backs of those who are lagging, and we begin to yell, “Rise!”⁴ After three rounds of yelling, we stop, return to our seats, and once more begin seated practice, keeping the question vividly in our minds.

What is happening to one’s subjectivity in the stillness, the questioning, the violence, the synchronized movement of such a retreat? By engaging in these exercises, in this lifestyle, what kind of person does one become? During a 1978 trip to Japan, similar thoughts moved through the mind of Michel Foucault:

I am very interested in Buddhist philosophy. But, this time, I didn’t come [to Japan] for this. What interests me most, is life itself in a Zen temple, that is to say the practice of Zen, its exercises and its rules. For I believe that a totally different mentality to our own is formed through the practice and exercises of a Zen temple.⁵

Foucault mentions making visits to several Zen temples during this trip.⁶ What could he have seen, with eyes so acutely attuned to the mechanisms of power and its productive capacity, when viewing the regiments, such as those mentioned above, of Zen life? What went through his mind when viewing the Zen traditions of hitting, shouting, prostrating, chanting, sitting? What were the “exercises and rules” which caught Foucault’s attention? What is the “totally different mentality” which Foucault saw Zen practice producing? In essence, what kind of subjectivity does Zen produce and how? And in what ways does such a way of life create a “totally different mentality to our own”?

⁴ The practice of “Yelling ‘rise’” (*Hanqi* 喊起).

⁵ Michel Foucault, and Jeremy R. Carrette, *Religion and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

1.2 FIELD OVERVIEW

To understand the productive capacity of Zen monastic life, it is necessary to examine in detail the content of Zen training in the monastery. While there is vast amounts of doctrinal and historical academic analyses of Buddhism, Western scholarship concerning the modern lived Zen monastic experience is somewhat limited, not least because Western academics having limited access to monastic settings.⁷ Even when there is access to monastic settings, the reclusiveness and reticence of monastics can yield sparse ethnographic material.⁸ However, since “Buddhism weaves doctrine, praxis and life way together into an intricate tapestry,”⁹ a complete understanding of Buddhism cannot exist without also understanding its communities and their lived daily realities.

Of the several Western academic works that have sought to portray the Zen monastic life, D.T. Suzuki’s seminal, though idealized, portrayal of Zen life in *The Training of a Zen Monk* was the earliest, and was one of the first major scholarly works to provide the West with a glimpse behind the monastery’s walls.¹⁰ Using a visual medium, the photographic essay *The Zen Life*, shot by Sosei Kuzunishi and supplemented by text by Koji Sato, documents Zen monastic life in Japan through the beauty of black and white photographic images.¹¹ Bardwell Smith and

⁷ Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 6.

⁸ Robert Buswell notes encountering the scholar Lewis Lancaster while living as a Korean monastic where the “monks often simply refused to answer question they deemed inappropriate, or would respond in ways they presumed were expected of someone living a cloistered life.” *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk*. 1st ed. (Kyoto: The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1934). While Suzuki played a significant role in spurring and inspiring Zen research in the modern West, he has also been subject to pointed criticism. Bernard Faure’s analysis of Suzuki’s work characterizes it as “an Orientalism ‘by excess’, a ‘secondary’ Orientalism that offers an idealized, ‘nativist’ image of a Japanese culture deeply influenced by Zen.” Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 53. Other scholars offer an array of critiques on Suzuki’s writings regarding their “logical inconsistencies, ideological flaws, sectarian bias, epistemological problems...their ambiguity regarding social issues, their rhetorical aspect, the lack of literary and imaginative quality, and the pedestrian character of the work of a reputedly enlightened figure”. *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹ Sōsei Kuzunishi, Satō Kōji, and Ryojun Victoria, *The Zen Life* (New York: Weatherhill Co., 1977).

Eishin Nishimura worked with the artistic renderings of Giei Satō to create the thoughtful and playful work *Unsui*, which captures monasticism through 97 illustrations and accompanying descriptions.¹² Robert Buswell's work *The Zen Monastic Experience* also elaborates in rich detail and accessible prose the rhythm and contents of life for Korean Sōn monks based on the five years Buswell spent living as a Korean monk. Buswell's work draws from the various customs, individuals and routines he encountered during that time, as well as historical documents pertaining to Korean Sōn.

While these texts each describe life within the walls of East Asian¹³ Zen¹⁴ monasteries, what remains vague is the kind of person such a life creates. Given Buddhism's soteriology, the most obvious and immediate answer would be that monastic life operates in such a way as to form an 'enlightened' person. But what do we mean by 'enlightenment'? Doctrinally, stages of enlightenment have been accounted for in several traditional sequential models within Buddhism, from Theravada's ten fetters, to Mahayana's description of the ten *bhumis*, to Zen's own ox-herding pictures. While these descriptions provide certain ideal religious models for a person's spiritual journey, they remain abstracted from the minutiae of lived experience. Within contemporary Western epistemological models, Buddhist enlightenment has recently been viewed through psychological and neurophysiological lenses, such as David Loy's intersectional

¹² Eshin Nishimura, and Satō Giei, *Unsui: A Diary of Zen Monastic Life*. Edited by Bardwell L Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

¹³ Although notably lacking within these accounts of East Asian Buddhism is an account of life inside contemporary Chinese Chan monasteries. This is partly owing to the effects of the Cultural Revolution, which primarily affected monasteries and nunneries rather than individual practitioners. Bill Porter, *Zen Baggage* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2010), 4. However, this thesis will later on draw from a description of Chan training provided by the Taiwanese Chan Master Shengyan, who provides thorough descriptions of classical Chan training, though not details concerning the contents of daily monastic life.

¹⁴ 'Zen' will generally be used to refer to all East Asian branches of Chan/Sōn/Zen (禪) in modern East Asia, though the terms Sōn and Chan will be used if specifically indicating Korean or Chinese lineages, respectively. While Zen is a Japanese word, its pervasive use in the English language makes it an accessible and useful term for portraying these shared modalities of Buddhist practice as a whole.

work between psychoanalysis and Buddhist doctrine¹⁵ and recent brain-imaging and neurophysiological depictions of the brain in states of non-duality.¹⁶ Similar to doctrinal models, this scientific research offers one possible perspective in understanding the nature of enlightenment, but does not account for the conditions and mechanisms by which enlightenment comes to be realized.¹⁷ Further, such neurophysiological understandings of enlightenment omit the cultural and soteriological context in which the notion of Buddhist ‘enlightenment’ exists, creating a limited, neurocentric, and misleadingly culturally-neutral conceptualization of enlightenment.¹⁸ The scientific depiction of enlightenment remains focused on external material markers of enlightenment as a definable and objectifiable state, as opposed to perceiving enlightenment as a dynamic interaction of particular, mutually reinforcing, constitutive traits conditioned through a social environment. Creating a map between practitioner, the traits cultivated within Buddhist practice, and the environment within which it takes place will be the concern of Section III of this thesis.

Two works of scholarship which account for the mapping of lived experience of Zen monastics with their spiritual development are Victor Hori’s article “Teaching and Learning in

¹⁵ David Loy contrasts a Buddhist understanding of the mind with preceding psychoanalytic traditions, illustrating how Freudian psychology traces the root of our neuroses to repression of sexual and aggressive urges, and how Existential psychology traces our neuroses to the repression of the knowledge of our own mortality. Loy proposes an alternative model in which our neuroses are the product of a repression of the inherent emptiness of self and our endless attempts to substantiate the validity of the self’s existence. David Loy, “Buddhism and Money: The Repression of Emptiness Today”, *Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society —An International Symposium* (1991): 297–312.

¹⁶ A partial sampling of the literature on neural correlates to enlightenment includes: Richard P. Boyle, “Cracking the Buddhist Code: A Contemporary Theory of First-Stage Awakening,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 24, no. 9-10 (2017): 156–80. Zoran Josipovic, “Duality and Nonduality in Meditation Research,” *Consciousness and Cognition* 19, no. 4 (2010): 1119–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2010.03.016>. Jake H. Davis, and David R. Vago, “Can Enlightenment Be Traced to Specific Neural Correlates, Cognition, or Behavior? No, and (a Qualified) Yes,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00870>

¹⁷ The exception being Richard Boyle’s work, which combines neuroscientific explanations with the personal accounts and narratives of eleven highly trained meditators - most of whom are Western laity. See Richard P. Boyle, *Realizing Awakened Consciousness: Interviews with Buddhist Teachers and a New Perspective on the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Evan Thompson, *Why I Am Not a Buddhist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 12-13.

the Rinzai Zen Monastery” on pedagogy within the Zen monastery¹⁹ and Paula Kane Robinson Arai’s ethnographic work *Women Living Zen*.²⁰ Hori’s work focuses on the connection between the pedagogical models of ‘ritual formalism’ and ‘mystical insight’, and how life within a Rinzaï monastery utilizes ritual formalism to foster mystical insight. This pedagogical model will be returned to in the fourth section of this thesis. Arai’s work is the result of years spent living with and studying Sōtō nuns at the Aichi Sermon Nisōdō monastery in Nagoya, Japan, and how their daily life functions as medium for spiritual development. These works deftly illustrate the effects on the subject from the interaction between religious ideals and actual monastic experience. Both of these works, in combination with the aforementioned ethnographic accounts from Buswell, Suzuki, Nishimura, and Kuzunishi, will be drawn on for content in the following analysis.

1.3 SUBJECT FORMATION

Outside of Buddhist studies, the question of how we become who we are was central to the philosophical questions concerning Michel Foucault. The span of Foucault’s career examined the question of subject formation on both individual and institutional levels. Foucault’s methodology used analysis of the minutiae and genealogy of institutions and personal practices to understand and account for modalities of being. Foucault’s earlier works, such as *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Civilization*, were concerned with society’s institutional regimes, their historical development, and their effects on shaping the modern subject. His later research, such as volumes two and three of *History of Sexuality* and his lecture series in *Hermeneutics of*

¹⁹ Victor Sōgen Hori, “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzaï Zen Monastery.” In *Teaching and Learning in Japan*, 1996, 20–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139174480.003>.

²⁰ Paula Kane Robinson Arai, *Women Living Zen: Japanese Sōtō Buddhist Nuns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

the Subject, looked at historical practices of self-cultivation: how and why have individuals historically sought to sculpt themselves into particular modes of existence?

In *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault describes the spiritual pursuit as an epistemology wherein access to the truth only becomes possible through alteration in one's subjectivity. Foucault notes that at the time of Descartes, the conditions for access to truth included concern for the object of study, the methodology of study, one's education, and community consensus; these epistemological conditions "do not concern the subject in his being; they only concern the individual in his concrete existence, and not the structure of the subject as such".²¹ This is to say that there were certain material and cultural conditions which made knowledge of truth possible, but none which necessitated a fundamental change in one's own subjectivity. Truth could be accessed 'objectively', as an object, such as the apprehension that $2+2=4$. This truth does not carry the prerequisite of the knower becoming someone different in order to understand its validity. This is in contrast to the spiritual project, which stipulates that "truth is never given to the subject by right...for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself".²² If we accept Foucault's claim, what changes and transformations does Zen demand of its monastic adherents for access to its truth?

1.4 OBJECTIVES & CAVEATS

The inquiries of this paper pertain to Foucault's dual points of interest in the Zen temple: the type of mentality that it fosters, and how such a mentality is distinct from that of the Western

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982*. Edited by Gros Frédéric. Translated by Ewald François and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2006), 18.

²² *Ibid.*, 15.

subject. These questions will be answered in order, with Section III of this paper focusing on the processes of subject formation through the lived experience of Zen monasteries that will address Foucault's concern with Zen practice itself. That section will apply a phenomenological analysis to Zen monastic life, connecting the disciplinary methods within the Zen monastery to their effect in shaping an enlightened subjectivity, tracing how elements of daily monasticism impress upon the practitioner's mode of being certain subjective characteristics which are interpretable as being enlightened. In particular, this thesis will examine the categories of time, space, social relations and spiritual cultivation within Zen monasticism, highlighting how a subject is affected within these spheres of Zen monastic life to form an 'enlightened subjectivity'. The effects on subjectivity found within these parts of Zen monasticism will be organized according to the internal characteristics of de-individuation, equanimity, and awareness, and the external effect of contextualization. To reiterate, the regiments of Zen monastic life will first be divided into the four categories of time, space, social relations, and spiritual cultivation; within each of these categories, analysis of subject formation will be linked to the internal effects of de-individuation, equanimity, and awareness, and the external effect of contextualization. It will be argued that the overall effect upon the Zen practitioner of cultivating a subjectivity marked by the attributes of de-individuation, equanimity, and awareness is the *subjectivization of emptiness*. Following this analysis, Foucault's interest in the way such a mentality is "totally different than our own" will be addressed through an assessment of how certain aspects of modern Western subjectivity are contrasted to the subjectivity produced through Zen monasticism, concluding with an argument for the continued relevance of monastic forms as Buddhism extends its influence further into the West and the modern world.

Before this analysis begins, I would like to lay bare my own commitments. My view of Zen training has undoubtedly been shaped by my status as a long-time Buddhist practitioner, and as a person who has spent extended periods of time living amongst monastic Zen communities and within lay practitioner communities. There are critical avenues that could be taken in the analysis of Zen monastic life, such as recent research on possible negative effects and experiences of meditation,²³ which will not be explored in this work. Further, as a requirement for the completion of my divinity degree, this paper has the ministerial purpose of better understanding Buddhism's potential for transformation, and how its spiritual technologies can particularly address contemporary forms of suffering. This ministerial concern provided further impetus for the generally positively-valenced representation of Zen monasticism found within this work. I write this paper understanding that my affiliation with Zen communities and ministerial interests have conditioned the content and methodology of this analysis. Nevertheless, I hope that, having made explicit these commitments, this work can still help contribute to broader understanding surrounding Zen monastic life and its place amongst the modern world.

2. HISTORY OF ZEN MONASTICISM

Although this thesis is not a work of historiography, it is useful to understand the history of monasticism within Zen as to account for the significant parallels in Zen monasteries across East Asia, especially since this thesis will draw from Zen monastic life in Chinese, Japanese and

²³ Jared R Lindahl, Nathan E Fisher, David J Cooper, Rochelle K Rosen, and Willoughby B Britton, "The Varieties of Contemplative Experience: A Mixed-methods Study of Meditation-related Challenges in Western Buddhists" *PLoS ONE* 12, no. 5 (2017): E0176239.

Korean traditions.²⁴ Beginning at the time of the historical Buddha, the role of devoted, celibate spiritual communities has been a prominent feature of Buddhist practice. The *Vinaya*, or code of monastic discipline, was originally developed amongst the Buddha's community of disciples in response to various actions that caused disharmony within the sangha. It is thought that disagreements around these rules are what led to the earliest fragmentations within the Buddhist sangha in the centuries following the Buddha's *paranirvana*.²⁵

While a full history of the transmission of the Indian Buddhism's *Vinaya* to China is beyond the scope of this section, I would like to emphasize certain developments in the Zen monastic code that have created a degree of unity across its different expressions in China, Korea and Japan. Crucial to creating broad similarities within East Asian Zen monastic practices was the text *Rules of Purity for the Chan Garden* (*Chanyuan qinggui* 禪院清規), composed in 1103 by Changlu Zongze (長蘆宗頤, ?-1107), the abbot of a monastery in the Zhending Prefecture of Song China.²⁶ This text standardized monastic practices across China, and “was the first indigenous set of monastic rules to attain a status roughly equivalent to that of the *Vinaya*.”²⁷ The success of this text is partly owing to it fulfilling the textual lacuna left by Baizhang Huaihai (百丈懷海, 749-814), who purportedly established the first set of uniquely Chan monastic regulations at his monastery on Mount Baizhang.²⁸ While Baizhang's monastic regulations are

²⁴ The focus on Korean and Japanese Zen monasticism and exclusion of contemporary Chinese Chan monasticism is owing to the limited scope of contemporary ethnographic work on Chinese Chan communities. However, the historical portion of this thesis will be concerned with Chinese Chan, as China was the point of genesis for the Zen forms that would find their way across East Asia.

²⁵ This the term for when the Buddha passed away, thereby entering the final state of nirvana. See Charles S. Prebish, *A Survey of Vinaya Literature* (Taipei: Jin Luen Pub. House, 1994), 44-45.

²⁶ T. Griffith Foulk, “Chanyuan Qinggui and Other 'Rules of Purity' in Chinese Buddhism.” In *The Zen Canon*, 275–312, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 275.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 93.

summarized in the *Rules and Regulations for the Gate of Chan* (*Chanmen guishi* 禪門規試),²⁹ no historical document on monastic regulation by Baizhang has been found; whether such a text ever existed is still a matter of scholarly debate. Given that there was “no single text, no collection of monastic rules, that bore Baizhang’s name as author,” Zongze’s composition was able to codify Baizhang’s mythology while at the same time doing “everything in his power to legitimize [the text] by minimizing his own input and associating the compilation with Baizhang.”³⁰ The content of Zongze’s work drew heavily from the original Indian *Vinaya*, while also weaving in “elements incorporated from Chinese governmental policies and traditional Chinese etiquette.”³¹ T. Griffith Foulk offers the insight that the establishment of an indigenous Chinese monastic code contributed to the success of the Chan lineage within China, as Chan was able to indigenize Buddhism’s triple gem of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha: Bodhidharma came to embody China’s Buddha, his unique mind-to-mind teachings provided a Chinese Dharma, and Baizhang’s monastic guidelines, as expanded upon by Zongze, articulated a precise form for an indigenous Chinese Sangha.³²

The *Rules of Purity of the Chan Garden*, and subsequent Chinese monastic codes, heavily influenced Japanese monks during the Kamakura period who came to Song China to train. One such monk was Eisai, the founder of the Rinzai school in Japan, who upon returning to Japan “suggest[ed] that the *Rules of Purity of the Chan Garden* be adopted as the standard” for Japanese monastic practice.³³ Another prominent monk was Dōgen, the founder of the Sōtō School of Zen in Japan, who drew extensively from the *Rules of Purity of the Chan Garden* in

²⁹ Ibid., 177.

³⁰ Foulk, *Chanyuan qinggui*, 298.

³¹ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 98.

³² Foulk, *Rules*, 283.

³³ Yifa, *Origins*. 38.

his discourses and the development of his own monastic code, *Eihei shingi*.³⁴ The profound impact of the *Rules of Purity of the Chan Garden* on the monastic codes imported into Japan at this time can be demonstrated by its influence on monasteries beyond even Zen lineages. For example, a comparison between the Vinaya lineage³⁵ master Shunjō's monastery Sennyūji rules and that of contemporaneous Zen masters' monasteries, such as Dōgen and Eisai, "leaves no doubt that the monasteries founded by all of them were nearly identical in organization and operation."³⁶ *Rules of Purity of the Chan Garden* continues to this day to be held as a classic within Japan, having been "the subject of numerous reprintings, commentaries, and citations" for nearly a millennium.³⁷

English academic literature regarding the development of the Korean monastic codes is not as plentiful as that of its Japanese and Chinese counterparts. T. Griffith Foulk mentions that an edition of the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Garden* was first published in Korea in 1254.³⁸ Korean Buddhism faced significant persecutions during the stringently Confucian Chōson Dynasty; despite these political and societal obstacles, Kim Yong-T'ae has argued that Buddhism continued to flourish and evolve within this period.³⁹ Yong-T'ae cites the *Preface to the Sōngmun sangūich'o* (HPC 8:237) from the early 17th century which states: "We supplement the contents of the *Chanyuan qinggui* with the secular decorum of the *Zhuxi jiali* (*Family Rituals of Zhu Xi*), thereby summarizing their import."⁴⁰ This fragment demonstrates that the relevance

³⁴ Ibid., 40-43.

³⁵ *Nanshan lü zong* 南山律宗 A sect of Chinese Buddhism that based its teachings upon exegesis of the Dharmaguptaka's Four-Part Vinaya (*sifen lü* 四分律). See Buswell and Lopez, *Dictionary*, 572.

³⁶ T. Griffith Foulk, "Rules of Purity' in Japanese Zen." In *Zen Classics*, March 2005, 137-64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195175255.003.0006>. 144.

³⁷ Foulk, *Chanyuan qinggui*, 276.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Kim Yong-T'ae, "Changes in Seventeenth-Century Korean Buddhism and the Establishment of the Buddhist Tradition in the Late Chosōn Dynasty," *Acta Koreana* 16, no. 2 (December 2013): 537-63. https://search-proquest-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/1503083456?accountid=11311&rfr_id=info:xri/sid:primo.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 551.

of the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Garden* continued to be implemented five centuries after being imported into Korea, and that even the Confucian norms imposed upon the Buddhist sangha at that time were ‘supplementary’ to the more foundational guidelines set out within Zongze’s text.

The centrality of the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Garden* in determining the form of Zen life across East Asia partially accounts for the comparability between East Asian Zen monasticisms. Other contributing factors include the centuries of inter-cultural dialogue between East Asian countries, and shared sources of cultural wisdom. For example, Victor Hori mentions multiple phrases from the Chinese Confucian *Analects* often used in the Japanese Rinzai monastery where he trained.⁴¹ Although broad similarities exist, it should be mentioned that each monastery is situated in its own cultural context, has its own lineage of teachers, and is comprised of particular individual monastics that make every monastic setting unique. With this in mind, particular details discussed in this paper may not be applicable across all monasteries. However, for the purposes of the phenomenological analysis employed in the following section, a comparative examination between the different Zen traditions will be passed in favor of focusing on the minutiae of Zen life itself, and how such practices impress themselves upon the subjectivity of Zen practitioners.

3. THE ZEN MONASTERY

生死事大 無常迅速 各宜醒覺 慎勿放逸

⁴¹ Hori, “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzai Zen Monastery,” 15-16.

“The matter of life and death is great. Impermanence is quick; all should rouse their awareness;
do not abandon vigilance!”⁴²

3.1 TIME

Time is an essential regulatory mechanism within any institutional structure, as it coordinates the activities of the community and creates an orderly synchronization of the institution’s component parts. Given time’s centrality to the life within an institution, a subject’s relationship to time will come to significantly shape their conditioning. The unique treatment of time within the Zen monastery effects the monastic in three ways: it links time to natural processes; it cultivates the monastic subject cultivates an attentive awareness; and it integrates Buddhist notions of interdependence into the subject’s relationship with time. Further, the understanding of ‘quality time’ is re-constructed, as the notion of time ‘well-spent’ is supplanted by an internal emphasis on an attitude of non-discrimination, or the absence of applying value judgements onto one’s experience.

3.1.1 TEMPORAL VARIABILITY

Within the monastery, as depicted with Nishimura’s *Unsui*, each tier of temporal precision (annual, daily, momentary) is wed to natural phenomena and processes, resulting in the dual effects of an elevated awareness and a direct perception of interdependence. The yearly patterns of movement as monks move between retreat and pilgrimage — what are known as *koe*, or the changing of robes⁴³ — are determined by the seasons, linking the activities of the monastics with the weather and environment. Each day the morning bell is struck once the lines

⁴² Inscription on the wooden plank struck (*ban* 板) for time-keeping in Zen temples.

⁴³ Nishimura, *Unsui*, 72.

on the palm of the hand become visible, and the evening bell is similarly struck once the last light fades and the lines of the palm recede into darkness.⁴⁴ The length of time for tea ceremonies and sitting practice is determined by the rate at which incense burns,⁴⁵ and the monastic's contemplative practices determine their pacing according to the body's autonomic functioning, such as counting breaths during seated practice to calm the mind or timing one's walking meditation so that one takes a certain number of steps per breath.⁴⁶ These examples of how natural phenomena come to regulate the rhythm of monastic life demonstrate the distinct role of physical and biological markers in monastic time-keeping.

Within the momentary experience of time-keeping in relation to natural phenomena, such as observation of breath, the burning of incense, or watching the light reveal lines on the palms of the hands, there is a variability as to the exact moment when these events occur. This variability has two effects on monastic subject formation. Firstly, there is a high degree of attentiveness required to simply notice when events happen — the monastic must pay attention to the event as it unfolds in order to see and respond to it. As a marker of time, physical and biological processes require the monastic's attention, creating a heightened awareness within the monastic's subjectivity. In this way, the variable-timing of the natural world qua time-keeper sharpens the awareness of Zen practitioners.

Secondly, by integrating the activity of the monastery with the activity of the world, environment and body, time-keeping becomes an enactment of interdependence.⁴⁷ The seasons,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁶ Nishimura's text prescribes three steps per breath Ibid., 59. Another instance of breath as a form of temporal regulation includes the *Zazen yojinki*, which prescribes taking half a step per breath for a hundred breaths in order to dispel torpor during meditation practice. Keizan Jokin, "Zazen Yojinki." In *The Art of Just Sitting*, edited by John Daido Looi (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 49.

⁴⁷ Interdependence is a Buddhist concept which was a central concept to Mahayana Buddhism. In particular, interdependence figured heavily in the philosophy of the Chinese Huayan School, which used as its doctrinal basis

weather, sunrise and sunset, combustion of incense, rate of breath: all exert their influence on the monastics and the monastery, binding the phenomena of the natural world to the flow of life.

Through time, monastics experience directly the notion of ‘perfect interfusion’ (*Yuanrong* 圓融), bringing this Buddhist doctrine alive within the world of the monastic. In this way, synchronizing life to natural phenomena contributes to the process of de-individuation. Time does not proceed separate from the context within which it is experienced, such that the monastic’s actions are not fully their own, but rather one part of a causal chain that connects outward to the world’s broader rhythm of being.

3.1.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION AS QUALITY TIME

The idea of ‘quality time’ takes on a distinct definition when placed in the context of Zen discipline. While the measure of the quality of time within classical institutions is evaluated based on its usefulness (such as the amount of commodities that a factory is capable of producing or the amount of content that a class can be taught⁴⁸), within Zen, the ‘goal-oriented’ nature of time’s value being measured by usefulness runs counter to a soteriology based in non-attachment. The idea of relinquishing attachment for all activity raises a set of paradoxes, since it

the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Sanskrit: *Mahāvaiṣṭya Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* Chinese: *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經), and whose philosophical emphasis was placed on the notion that all phenomena “exist in a state of mutual dependence, intrusion and balance without any contradiction or conflict”, a philosophical concept which was termed ‘perfect interfusion’ (*Yuanrong* 圓融) Daoru Wie, “A Fundamental Feature of the Huayan Philosophy,” In *Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism* Edited by Imre Hamar (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 189. This concept was eventually subsumed into the Chinese Chan school as part of a broader pattern of syncretism that lasted from Buddhism’s first introduction into Chinese culture until the 13th century. The syncretism between Huayan and Chan was especially pronounced in the Korean Buddhist lineages, which were even more prone to syncretism than the Chinese given the later date at which Buddhist teachings were received, the relative smallness of the country, and its need for unity in the face of rival kingdoms. Robert Buswell, Jr., *Korean Approach to Zen: the Collected Works of Chinul* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1983), 37-38.

⁴⁸ This understanding of ‘quality-time’ is given by Michel Foucault in describing time-tables as a means of control in classical institutions, which are employed to enforce a “totally useful time”, the quality of which is defined through “precision and application.” Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 150-1.

could be argued that relinquishing attachment instead expresses an attachment to non-attachment; or, possibly, the idea of ‘doing nothing’ could be seen as a cloak for indolence.

Moreover, if everything is already exactly as it must be, what use is there in doing anything at all? Dōgen’s famous treatise on meditation, *Fukanzazengi*, succinctly captures this paradox in its opening verse:

The Way is basically perfect and all-pervading. How could it be contingent upon practice and realization? The Dharma-vehicle is free and untrammled. What need is there for concentrated effort? Indeed, the whole body is far beyond the world's dust. Who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from one, right where one is. What is the use of going off here and there to practice?⁴⁹

Dōgen’s second verse answers in response by beginning:

And yet, if there is the slightest discrepancy, the Way is as distant as heaven from earth. If the least like or dislike arises, the Mind is lost in confusion.

Here Dōgen shows the evaluative measure for ‘quality time’ within Zen practice: the lack of evaluation itself. Action that is free from “the slightest discrepancy”, activity that is apart from “the least like or dislike”, is the way in which time is ‘well-spent’. In this context, ‘quality time’ is not determined by a quantifiable, tangible, external result, but rather is found based on the degree of non-discrimination experienced internally by the practitioner.

This cultivation of non-discriminative perception, however, must manifest in daily life, in the activity of the monastery, in *time*; otherwise such inner development remains “merely ideational, it bears no fruits, and therefore it dies out before long”.⁵⁰ One means of testing the practitioner’s persistence of non-discriminatory perception is through demanding work; thus at

⁴⁹ Eihei Dōgen, “Fukanzazengi by Eihei Dōgen - Unabridged English Translation,” Zen Deshimaru. Zen Deshimaru Buddhist Association. Accessed January 6, 2020. <http://www.zen-deshimaru.com/en/zen/fukanzazengi-eihei-dogen-unabridged-english-translation>.

⁵⁰ Suzuki, *Training*, 24.

the monastery “[i]nstead of labour-saving machinery, what may appear as labor-wasting is encouraged;”⁵¹ this arduous manual labor is its own training grounds, and even the Zen master works together collectively with the monks.⁵² Labor in the monastery, while productive, is more importantly a means by which the cultivation of mind can be known through the body, a way that non-discriminative thinking can be actualized within the world.

The integration of equanimity with the practical concerns of the monastery determines where and how the lens of non-discrimination is applied. Paula Arai provides several examples of non-discrimination in action when recounting various episodes of the *tenzo*⁵³ in the Sōtō nunnery where she was conducting research. In one instance, the kitchen was given thirty minutes to prepare for fifteen unexpected guests. In describing the reactions of the nuns in the kitchen to this unexpected task, Aria noted the gradations of reactivity that each nun displayed depending on the length of time they had spent in training. The head cook, who with five years of training had the most experience in the kitchen, rather than bristle or complain with the news, “stopped for about a minute and quietly started running various calculations in her head.”⁵⁴ Her mind was not labeling the experience as anything other than what it is, but rather functioning with a sense of collected pragmatism. Aria’s emphasis in this story on various temporal layers — the time frame within which the meal had to be cooked, the length of time the headcook had been in the monastery, the brevity of calculations in the monastic’s mind — all illuminates the fact that non-discrimination is a temporal act, a way of being in time. In another story, Aria describes the nunnery receiving a large donation of yams; while the other nuns bubbled with

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

⁵² Ibid., 24

⁵³ This is the Japanese term for the role of cook within a monastery.

⁵⁴ Arai, *Living*, 96.

excitement, the cook wore “a serious expression...[while] quietly at work calculating the most respectful way to treat each and every one of [the] plump tubers.”⁵⁵

In both these examples, the cook, regardless of the perceived valence of the experience at hand, took in the situation in a manner of easeful and unswayed pragmatism. ‘Non-discrimination’ in this sense does not mean ‘unthinking’, as clearly both situations required mental effort in comprehending what the circumstances necessitated. Rather, it entails not dwelling on external circumstances as being favorable or unfavorable — simply seeing them as they are and in practical terms. This non-discriminatory attitude amidst work fosters within the monastic an active equanimity, a non-reactivity that encourage the simple completion of tasks as they arise, without becoming distracted by elation or despondency. This attitude of non-discrimination becomes the guiding principle in and amongst the daily rhythm of the monastery’s tasks, in each moment offering the monastic training in the cultivation of equanimity.

3.2 SPACE

The arrangement of space within the monastery is a further means by which subject formation occurs. This section will begin by investigating the ritualized process of entering the monastery, and how the difficulty in being admitted into the monastery fosters resilience, anticipation for spiritual training, and non-discrimination. Next, the sacredness of the meditation hall will be examined, suggesting that the distinct and revered position of this site of practice leads to an association which pre-empts spiritual experience.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 100.

3.2.1 NIWA-ZUME

Within Japanese Zen, it is exceedingly difficult to enter the *zendo*; the new monk is thrown out of the gate at first, then forced to bow continuously for days in a ritualized entry known in Japanese as *niwa-zume*.⁵⁶ The quintessential canonical instance of *niwa-zume* is from Chan's account of when the disciple Huike 慧可 (487-593) cut-off his own arm as an expression of his commitment to the practice when requesting teachings from Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (?-532), the first patriarch of Chan who brought the practice to China in the 6th century.⁵⁷ While present day *niwa-zume* does not necessitate any amputation or bodily disfigurement, the days of prostration are painful and demanding on the novice. While this practice might at first appear as a way of demeaning or abusing the novice, it is in fact a means by which the novice's inner will begins to be strengthened. "Zen Buddhism believes that a journey to the truth must begin with one's own decision and that it is achieved through one's own efforts;"⁵⁸ therefore, this ritualized rejection begins to instill in the novice the strength of determination necessary for the rigors of monastic life. Given that the path of Zen is willfully undertaken by the spiritual querent, this initial barrier in beginning their practice both tests and solidifies their commitment to the practice. D.T. Suzuki notes on this practice that "when mountain climbing is made too easy, the spiritual effect the mountain exercises vanishes into the air."⁵⁹ This is to say that the arduousness of the practice is proportional to its reward. *Niwa-zume* then has two concomitant effects on the novice: the act of rejection fosters perseverance, while simultaneously the arduousness of the ritual augments the perceived reward on the other end.

⁵⁶ Nishimura, *Unsui*, 4. The Chinese for *niwa-zume* is *tingjie* 庭詰, a term which translates to 'room [of] scrutiny'

⁵⁷ Buswell and Lopez, *Dictionary*, 364.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵⁹ Suzuki, *Training*, 7.

Similar to the non-discriminatory use of time mentioned above, *niwa-zume* also demands a relinquishing of the discriminating mind. The ritualized entrance from a practical standpoint is irrational, sustained by the authority of tradition. While it might be justified through its resultant nourishing of willpower and contribution to the expected spiritual rewards of the practice, these qualities could be and are developed in myriad ways throughout the monastic experience. The ruminating mind, in reflecting on the purposelessness of painfully waiting for days on end in a process with a foregone conclusion, potentially begins to generate internal resistance to the experience of *niwa-zume*. This possible resentment is an opportunity of once more attuning to non-discriminatory awareness: regardless of the rationalization, or lack thereof, for *niwa-zume*, the experience of waiting is what is happening. Superfluous inner commentary on the experience as being either a perfunctory step in a highly ritualized environment, or a relic of an aging tradition, or an initiatory crucible into a demanding regimen of spiritual training, all exist separate from the experience as it is. The demanding nature of the ritual may lead to mental proliferation, providing the novice with the opportunity to find equanimity in the face of hardship, continuously returning to the perspective of an equanimous, non-discriminatory awareness.

3.2.2 MEDITATION HALL

The meditation hall is “the quintessential example in Buddhism of an institution devoted to...personal spiritual experience”⁶⁰ wherein the inner journey of spiritual development has been demarcated to take place. According to Buswell’s account of his time spent as Korean monastic, the meditation hall and its residential monks occupy a place of marked reverence and respect

⁶⁰ Buswell, *Experience*, 161.

within the monastic community. Buswell's description of the isolation and privilege of meditating monks is as follows:

During the three-month-long retreat seasons, meditators are forbidden from fraternizing with monks living in other compounds of the monastery. They are excused from the morning and evening services incumbent on the rest of the monastic residents and are freed from most of the work required to keep the monastery running. The meditator's sense of detachment from the monastic community is enhanced through the unique daily regimen of the meditation hall, unwavering for months on end. All these measures intensify the separation that the monk feels from his earlier status as a support monk or seminary student and increases his identification with the community of meditators - and ultimately, it is hoped, with the sanctified sangha of enlightened monks.⁶¹

The separation of the meditators from the rest of the monastic community is a spatial expression of the sacredness of the task they are undertaking.⁶² The privileged status of the meditation hall and its resident meditators demonstrates a nested sacrality: the monastery itself is already a sacred space, removed from the lay community and designated as a place of religious significance. The meditation hall sits at the center of this sacredness, demarcated as the heart of the monastery's religious activity. This resonates with Chan lineage's historical establishment in medieval China as the lineage which emphasized practice over doctrine. Within Korea, such privileged status is further emphasized by the prolonged period it takes for a novice to begin formal meditation training, where initiates (Korean: *Haengja* 行者) first serve a six month period of postulancy before official ordination; after being ordained, the novice monks serve in

⁶¹ Ibid., 162.

⁶² This assigning of sacrality to the meditation hall aligns with Durkheim's definition of religious phenomena as being all things within a culture that are sectioned off from the 'profane' of everyday life. In defining religious phenomena, Durkheim writes "Whether simple or complex, all known religious phenomena display a common feature: They presuppose a classification of the real or ideal things that men conceive of into two classes — two opposite genera — that are widely designated by two distinct terms, which the words *profane* and *sacred* translate fairly well. The division of the world into two domains, one containing all that is sacred and the other all that is profane—such is the distinctive trait of religious thought." Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Karen Elise Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 34.

supporting roles for several years before having the opportunity to begin formal meditation practice.⁶³

The association of the meditation hall with such sacrality provides context for the monks' spiritual experience. Given its distinct religious status, an association between spiritual insight and the physical space of the meditation hall is formed. This connection pre-empts spiritual insight, since years of expectation have instilled in the trainee an understanding of the sanctity of the meditation hall, and the profundity of experience that takes place within its walls. This is not to say that such spiritual experiences are *entirely* the result of seeded expectations — indeed, as argued elsewhere in this thesis and emphasized within both modern and historical Zen discourses, daily life outside of the meditation hall is fertile ground for religious practice — but such associations between the meditation hall and depth of spiritual insight contribute to creating the associations internally within the trainee for a spiritual experience to occur.

3.3 SOCIAL RELATIONS

Communal spirit pervades the monastery. This collectivity strongly resonates within the Mahayana soteriological model of the bodhisattva ideal, wherein practitioners are not working for their own spiritual liberation but for the liberation of all beings. The doctrine of universal liberation is exemplified by the Diamond Sutra, which contains the following refrain:

This is how the bodhisattva *mahasattvas* master their thinking. However many species of living beings there are...we must lead all these beings to the ultimate nirvana so that they can be liberated. And when this innumerable, immeasurable, infinite number of beings has become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated. Why is this so? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds on to the idea that a self, a person, a living being, or a life span exists, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva.⁶⁴

⁶³ Buswell, *Experience*, 95.

⁶⁴ Thich Nhất Hạnh, Annabel Laity, and Anh Huong Nguyen. *The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajñāparamita Diamond Sutra* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2010), 4. The original passage

This passage demonstrates one of the striking paradoxes within Mahayana thought: all sentient beings are to be liberated, but simultaneously no separate being exists; if no separate being exists, what is it that's to be liberated? While this paradox may best be left open as an invitation for the reader's own spiritual inquiry, if it were to be rationally analyzed, one of many potential ways of interpreting this paradox is that it is only through the recognition and embrace of the inherent connectedness between all things that liberation is possible; once this inherent connectedness is realized, there is no longer a separate self in which the recognition occurs. Liberation entails seeing the ways in which the self is comprised of all else, and in seeing this, there is no longer other 'selves' to be saved, only the illusion of selves to be dispelled. Communal monastic life enacts this ethos of collective salvation through its practice of gathering alms and its culture of 'mutual polishing'.

3.3.1 ALMS

One way of manifesting this collective soteriology is through alms rounds. Alms rounds consist of the monastics begging in the streets and receiving donations from lay devotees. Being in contact with the broader community reminds the monastics of their purpose in saving all sentient beings, such that the efforts of the monastics are not merely towards the ideal of all sentient beings, but towards those whom the monastics see, know, and from whom they receive material support. By receiving alms, 'sentient beings' become manifest in the form of laity, in the people that line the streets, in the hands that feed the monks. In this way, the alms rounds

reads: 諸菩薩摩訶薩應如是降伏其心。所有一切眾生之類。若卵生若胎生若濕生若化生。若有色若無色。若有想若無想。若非有想非無想。我皆令入無餘涅槃而滅度之。如是滅度無量無數無邊眾生。實無眾生得滅度者。何以故。須菩提。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相壽者相。即非菩薩 T08.0235

bring the bodhisattva vow from the ideal to the tangible. When receiving alms from laity, the monk does not thank the donor directly but rather recites a short sutra “expressing his desire that all sentient beings may achieve Buddhahood;”⁶⁵ in this way, the donation is interpreted not on the personal level between two individuals, but as an act that works towards universal liberation. Each lay person elicits a bow of gratitude from the receiving monastic, a practice which is “good discipline for breaking down one’s ego,”⁶⁶ and which expresses care and respect for all others, regardless of age or social status. Once back at the monastery, anything gathered during alms rounds “becomes the property of the whole community of monks, to be used for their common benefit,”⁶⁷ thereby further relinquishing the self’s sense of possessiveness. In connecting with the greater community, viewing the exchange of alms in universal terms, accepting alms from all people and societal strata, and sharing communally all the alms that are gathered, monastics diminish the boundaries between self and other, helping form a subjectivity marked by de-individuation.

While the ideal of diminishing the barrier between self and other lives within the form of alms-giving, this is not necessarily how the practice manifests itself within the lived reality of monasticism. During time I have spent at monasteries in China, Taiwan and Korea, the material relationship between the monastic and lay community took on many different forms. For example, at a monastery in northern Taiwan, there were large ‘Dharma gatherings’ (*Fahui* 法會), which were widely attended by patrons of the monastery, who contributed generously during the ceremony. Further, the monastery had other means of attracting the support of the lay community, including a museum, frequent meditation retreats, and a liberal arts university.

⁶⁵ Kuzunishi, *Life*, 70.

⁶⁶ Nishimura, *Unsui*, 25.

⁶⁷ Kuzunishi, *Life*, 71.

While staying at the pilgrimage site Mount Wutai (*Wutaishan*, 五台山) in China's Shandong Province, there were frequent stories amongst pilgrims of fake monks asking for alms, and I was at times approached by monks who brashly rejected my donations of food, instead insisting that I give them cash. However, I also met other monastics who were gracious, patient and humble in the act of alms-gathering. Within both of these examples, while they may differ from the traditional or the ideal, they still demonstrate the persistent interdependence between lay and monastic community. This reliance on others, even in non-traditional or non-idealized forms, serves as a continual means of shaping subjectivity according to de-individuation. Ideally, of course, the internal orientation of selflessness is engendered through this constant reliance on the goodwill and participation of the lay community. However, if a monastic deviates from these prescribed forms, the community of renunciants in the monastery can be a powerful force to reprimand them and bring them back into the fold — a practice which is known as 'mutual polishing.'

3.3.2 MUTUAL POLISHING

Monasticism negates nearly every external markers of an individual's preceding identity: their clothes are exchanged for uniform robes, their heads are shaved, they receive a new name which identifies them with their new monastic family.⁶⁸ Regardless of a monastic's age or achievements outside of the monastery, their place within the monastery's hierarchy is solely determined by the amount of time that they have ordained.⁶⁹ On the level of activity, there is little room for individual expression, as every hour is dictated by a shared stringent schedule.

⁶⁸ The Chinese term for ordaining, *Chujia* 出家, translates literally to "leaving [one's] family."

⁶⁹ Nishimura, *Unsui*, 9.

Further, individual actions are put under the constant scrutiny of the other monastics to accord with enlightened behavior.

While conducting ethnographic research at the Sōtō nunnery Aichi Senmon Nisōdō, Paula Arai notes that “[e]very nun [she] spoke with mentioned that the hardest but most effective aspect of training was the difficulty in human relations.”⁷⁰ The close quarters, lack of privacy, toilsome group labor, and stringency of rules create a high-pressure social environment which has profound effects on the Zen trainee. Arai likened the close-contact, high-intensity of social relations within the monastery as rocks being smoothed in a tumbler, or boiled yams bumping into one another.⁷¹ Victor Hori notes this ‘mutual polishing’ as being a crucial element in monastic pedagogy:

Long after initiation is over, monks continue to constantly admonish, warn, reprimand and lecture each other... Whether or not he has experienced awakening, every Zen monk is expected to lead the life of enlightened action in all his daily behavior... Through the constant abrasive action of their criticism upon each other, all monks learn though no single teacher teaches. Through mutual polishing, each attains an individual uniqueness.⁷²

The text *Daily Life in the Assembly* (*ruzhongriyong* 如眾日用), a text from 13th century China which still bears significant semblance to modern Zen living owing to a revival of Song Buddhist forms during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) and its parallels with writings from Dōgen,⁷³

⁷⁰ Arai, *Women*, 88.

⁷¹ Ibid., 82-3. Victor Hori traces this phrase to the Confucian Analects passage no. 15 from *Xue Er* 學而 (Hori, “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzaï Zen Monastery,” 18), which in turn quotes the Book of Poems (*shijing* 詩經): 子貢曰: 「貧而無諂, 富而無驕, 何如? 」子曰: 「可也。未若貧而樂¹, 富而好禮者也。」子貢曰: 「《詩》云: 『如切如磋, 如琢如磨。』其斯之謂與? 」子曰: 「賜也, 始可與言詩已矣! 告諸往而知來者。」 A similar metaphor was often employed by Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn. In a letter to a student, Seung Sahn writes: “...together action is very important, which means potatoes being scrubbed together in a large pot, then cooking the potatoes, then mashing the potatoes, making very good food. That is each person’s karma disappearing and making Bodhi potatoes.” Seung Sahn. “Letter #834” In *The Teaching Letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn* (Kwan Um School of Zen, <https://kwanumzen.org/resources-collection/2017/9/15/teaching-letters-of-zen-master-seung-sahn>), 1783.

⁷² Hori, “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzaï Zen Monastery,” 17-18.

⁷³ Foulk, *Daily Life*, 461

shows the degree of refinement amongst the minutiae of daily living. The text delineates every movement of a monk from waking to sleeping, and the verses which are to be recited mentally to their corresponding action. Embedded within these rules is a constant consideration for others.

The text begins with these instructions for rising in the morning:

Do not go to sleep before others, or rise later than others. You should quietly get up before the bell of the fifth watch, take your pillow and place it between your legs, but without folding it, lest the noise startle [the people at] the neighboring places [on the platform in the sangha hall]. Rouse your spirit, draw the blanket around your body and sit up straight, without fanning up a breeze that would cause peoples' thoughts to stir.⁷⁴

The thoroughness of the rules, and their constant reference back to consideration for others, reveals the breadth of opportunity for novices to be chastised, as every action has the potential of disturbing fellow monastics in some way. The less refined and aware one is of how they conduct themselves, the more frequently they expose themselves to the berating and scolding of their seniors; the 'edges' that get polished away are all aspects of action that could infringe or disturb others.

The effect of this polishing is two-fold: there is a persistent vigilance created within the spiritual querent, such that each action is considered and executed in a way that is harmonious to their surroundings. One must remain constantly attentive to their actions, its effects on others, and its grace; in this way, awareness is fostered. Further, mutual polishing facilitates a letting-go of the self: one's old habits, one's sense of righteousness if others have been offended, a humbling as one is continuously reminded of the distance they have yet to go on the spiritual path. In place of the grasping of self, the bonds between monastics become further solidified, as

⁷⁴ Translation from Foulk, *Daily Life*, 462. The original reads: 睡不在人前。起不落人後。須是五更鐘未鳴。輕輕擡身先起。將枕头安脚下。未用摺。恐響驚鄰單。抖擻精神將被裹身端坐。不得扇風令人動念。
X63n1246

each reproach is also an affirmation of the community's shared spiritual project, the reprimanding acting as a means of encouragement on the path.

Arai describes her own chastisement when setting out meditation cushions on a tarp in the sun. On her first trip, she carried one too many cushions, and as she began to set them down, one cushion toppled off. Reflexively, Arai used her foot from saving the cushion from hitting the ground, and instead gently kicked it onto the tarp, at which point a “sharp ‘Ouch!’ cut through the sun-drenched air.”⁷⁵ The nun supervising her work was speaking on behalf of the cushion, offering both a gentle reproach of Arai's negligence, as well as echoing the Zen sentiment of Universal Buddhanature — even a cushion is seen as being a Buddha.⁷⁶

3.4 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Spiritual practices, such as meditative techniques and ascetic exercises, are perhaps where the process of subject formation is expressed in its most conspicuous forms, as these ritualized ways of being in the world explicitly prescribe specific physical forms and particular mental movements for the project of self-transformation. Given the interior nature and soteriological orientation of these practices, they are also quite elusive in trying to understand from a third-person, scholarly perspective. Approaches to understanding these practices in the context of religious cultures has been a long-standing discussion within religious studies, dividing primarily into two camps of ‘perennialists’ and ‘constructivists’. Perennialists adhere to the notion that experience precedes culture, such that, in the case of Buddhism, meditative insights come to define its doctrine and forms. For constructivists, culture shapes and informs

⁷⁵ Paula Arai, “The Zen of Rags.” *Oxford Scholarship Online*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190469290.003.0008>. 234.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

experience, so that the kinds of experience one has in meditation are determined by pre-given, learned Buddhist ideas and expectations.⁷⁷ Robert Sharf offers a third ‘performative’ alternative to this debate, which questions the primacy Western scholarship has placed on interior experience within an Eastern tradition, and instead seeks to understand meditation as an enactment or embodiment of religious ideals, with the notion of ‘experience’ coming to occupy a significant part of Buddhist discourse only during the modern era as a means of interiorizing metaphysical claims, and thus maintaining legitimacy within a world that places increasing importance on rationality, secularity and the material sciences.⁷⁸

While this paper’s focus on the phenomenology of Zen monasticism within a particular social environment that is productive of an ‘enlightened subjectivity’ may appear to be constructivist, it should be noted that this paper does not make conclusions regarding the broader metaphysical consequences of one’s actions or subjectivity. This paper seeks to map how the Zen monastery forms a particular subjectivity; it does not seek to account for the karmic results or soteriological significance of such a subjectivity. In short, this investigation of monastic subject formation does not hope to explain or account for Buddhism’s transcendental truth claims, and as such, does not infringe upon nor seek to discredit a traditional understanding of the Buddhist salvific framework. This paper is concerned with the granular experience of monastic life rather than a singular or defining moment of realization, positing instead that these granular experiences accrue and impress themselves upon the practitioner as to form what is interpretable as an enlightened subjectivity. There very well may be moments which are

⁷⁷ For a more thorough summary of this academic discussion as it relates to Buddhist meditation, see Eric M. Greene, “Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism”. PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2012.

⁷⁸ Robert Sharf, “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience.” *Numen* 42, no. 3 (1995): 228–83. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568527952598549>.

‘enlightening’, where changes in one’s subjectivity are crystallized or catalyzed in the midst of intensive spiritual practice, but questions concerning the broader metaphysical significance of this transformation of subjectivity will remain beyond the scope of this paper.

3.4.1 HUATOU MEDITATION

This section will focus on the specific Zen practice of the ‘critical phrase’ (話頭 *huatou*) meditation, as this form of meditation is practiced in Korean, Japanese and Chinese forms of Zen. In Robert Buswell’s essay “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of K’an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism,” the origins of this meditative technique are traced to a long development of a Sinicized, subitist reformulation of Buddhist doctrine within China, and more specifically, as result of the theoretical and practical innovations of the Hongzhou school of Chan.⁷⁹ The Hongzhou school’s⁸⁰ soteriological, theoretical and practical reformulation of traditional Buddhist doctrine, as traced by Buswell, began with Mazu’s teachings on ‘spontaneity’, progressed to Linji’s teachings on ‘faith’, and finally culminated in Dahui’s instructions on generating ‘doubt’ within formalized *huatou*, and its related *gong’an*, practices. As mentioned by T. Griffith Foulk in accounting for the history of the Zen monastic code in Section II, part of the success of Chan within China was its indigenization of the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The adoption of the collected sayings of Chan masters, and development of the distinct *huatou* and *gong’an* practices to accompany this Sinitic addition

⁷⁹ Robert E. Buswell, Jr., “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism.” In *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*. Ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1987), 321-377. Miriam Levering has further demonstrated how Dahui Zonggao, who is attributed with the innovation of this meditation method, was responding to the needs of his lay followers as well as trying to compete with rival Pureland Schools for patronage. Miriam L. Levering. “The Huatou Revolution, Pure Land Practices, and Dahui’s Chan Discourse on the Moment of Death.” *Frontiers of History in China* 8, no. 3 (2013): 342-65.

⁸⁰ This school would come to be known as the Linji (臨濟) school in China, or *Rinzai* school in Japan.

to the Buddhist canon, allowed Chan communities to develop a distinctively Chinese ‘Dharma’ (法 *fa*), or teachings, which were tailored to their own culture’s sensibilities and needs. A soteriological model did not exact the same stringent monastic rules necessary for salvation as found within the Indian Buddhist tradition, thereby accommodating the “this-worldly orientation of Chinese culture” wherein practitioners were still expected to fulfill “social roles and filial duties.”⁸¹ In this way, Chan’s reformulation of Buddhist doctrine to a ‘sudden’ salvific model was a means to create compatibility between the societal and worldly commitments of Chinese laity and the soteriology of Buddhist metaphysics.

A note on the differences between *huatou* and *gong’an* practice: *gong’an* (Ch: 公案, Japanese: *kōan*) is related to *huatou* practice in that both are language-based meditative methods for spiritual cultivation. The *gong’an* are of longer, more involved situations, which tend involve multiple exchanges within a dialogue between a Zen master and a disciple; on the other hand, a *huatou* often takes a single word or phrase from a *gong’an* to get to the heart of spiritual inquiry. Buswell provides the example of the *gong’an* of Zhaozhou 趙州 (778-879) as an example of the distinction between *gong’an* and *huatou* :

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does a dog have buddha-nature?”
Zhaozhou said, “No.”⁸²

The *gong’an* would be the above case in its entirety, while the *huatou* would merely be the last word, “No” (無 *wu*). It is this ‘No’ which “throws a gauntlet down before a student’s conventional understanding,”⁸³ since it directly denies traditional Mahayana Buddhist doctrine that all sentient beings possess buddhanature. How then to understand what Zhaozhou meant

⁸¹ Ibid., 324.

⁸² 趙州和尚因僧問。狗子還有佛性。也無。州云無。T48n2005.

⁸³ Buswell, *Experience*, 152.

when it stands in direct contradiction of Buddhist doctrine? What is Zhaozhou's *wu*? An academic explanation would note that the Chinese character for 'No' (無 *wu*, Japanese: *mu*) in this passage has a much broader connotation of lacking, without, or absence within Chinese. It also can be understood as 'emptiness', and in this sense, can be seen as the affirmation of buddhanature's ontology of emptiness, a "pointing to the undifferentiated source of all things."⁸⁴ Alternatively, it can be seen as a response not to the question, but to the act of questioning itself, since to ask a question assumes a categorical and conceptual way of perceiving the world. However, *huatou* practice is trying to persist in phenomenological state of questioning, to immerse one's self in uncertainty, confusion and doubt, to avoid settling into the conclusive state of knowing. A mind saturated with genuine and continuous questioning is the very mind to be cultivated through the use of *huatou*.

The meditative technique of *huatou* meditation has traditionally drawn from a variety of unanswerable questions, such as "Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?", "What is this?,"⁸⁵ or contemplating the meaning of Zhaozhou's "Wu". The purpose of the *huatou* question is to generate 'Great Doubt.' Chan Master Shengyan (釋聖嚴 *Shishengyan*, 1931-2009) defines this Great Doubt as "a state of all-consuming questioning that, at its deepest, is irresistible and relentless, admitting no solution other than one that totally gets to the bottom of the matter. Ultimately, the issue to be solved is the 'great matter of birth and death.'"⁸⁶ 'Great Doubt' is

⁸⁴ Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action: Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), 12-13.

⁸⁵ Within the Korean Sôn tradition, Buswell traces the *huatou* (Kr. *huadu*) of "What is this?" used by his master Kûsan to *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (六祖大師法寶壇經 T2008, *Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing*), where Huineng asks the Huairang (懷讓): "What thing is this? By what means did it come [to me]?", to which Huairang responds "If I were to say it was a thing, it wouldn't hit the mark." (師曰: 「什麼物? 恁麼來? 」曰: 「說似一物即不中。」). Buswell, *Experience*, 155.

⁸⁶ Shengyan (with Daniel B. Stevenson), *Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128. The 'great matter of life and death' quoted here comes from the inscription on the wooden plank struck for time-keeping in Zen monasteries: 生死事大

complete immersion in existential crisis; to foster Great Doubt, the weight and import of the *huatou* is continually nourished, until the question becomes inescapable, omnipresent, overwhelming.

The degree of importance placed on staying with doubt, rather than being pulled towards an answer, an excuse, a distraction, a memory, or any of the other myriad ways the mind can become distanced from such doubt, requires an alert awareness, as to discern whether the mind is truly in doubt. The *huatou* must be engaged with dynamically, as “live words,”⁸⁷ where the critical phrase becomes an active tool for pushing the practitioner deeper into existential questioning. The *huatou* will reflect back to the practitioner the conditioned qualities of their mind, and as such, the practitioner must maintain vigilance to stay with the state of doubt, and not be drawn into habitual movements of mind. Master Shengyan describes this dynamic in elucidating how the experience of the *huatou* varies across different practitioners:

Although thirty people may be told to practice with the same *huatou*, inevitably, because of differences in character and ability, there will be thirty different methods being practiced. One person may spend all his time reciting the *huatou* to himself like a child singing; another will use it in a fashion similar to the counting of the breath. Someone may hold his breath when reciting the *huatou*. Another might just give herself up to waiting for an answer, saying to herself, ‘Well, I don’t know the answer to the *huatou*, anyway.’ While she repeats the *huatou*, she remains in a state of blankness. Another kind of participant may be quite confident that he knows the answer to the *huatou*. Every time he asks it, he feels sure he knows the answer. Thus, with each repetition, he thinks that he has attained enlightenment. But then doubt arises. So he asks the *huatou* again, and a new possibility suggests itself. Then, of course, some might just spend their time dozing off or trying to think up rational solutions.

In all these instances, the practitioners are bound to their particular deluded thoughts and habits, and it is necessary for the master to know them intimately so that he or she may guide them to the proper condition.⁸⁸

Shengsishida. This language is also echoed within Dahui’s teachings, where in speaking of the *huatou* of Zhaozhou’s ‘No’ states: “This one word ‘no’ is a knife to sunder the doubting mind of birth and death” Jonathan C. Cleary, *Swampland Flowers: the Letters and Lectures of Zen Master Ta Hui* (Boston: Shambhala, 2006), 25.

⁸⁷ Buswell, *Short-cut*, 348.

⁸⁸ Shengyan, *Hoofprint*, 138.

By ceaselessly staying with the feeling of doubt, the mind becomes “infused with a preverbal sense of wonder.”⁸⁹ When the doubt permeates the practitioner completely, it takes on a “palpable presence throughout one’s body,” no longer existing merely as words but as a physical yearning for truth. Buswell states that Sōn Master Kusan termed this stage of *huatou* practice ‘falling into emptiness.’⁹⁰ Chan Master Shengyan, in describing instructions for this totalizing absorption into *huatou* practice during intensive meditation retreats, says:

Forget whether you are healthy or sick. Do not even be afraid of death. In fact, look upon yourself as one who is dead already, completely alone. Regardless of whether you have prepared for this retreat or not, from this moment on simply put your whole being into the practice. Walking, sitting, standing, lying down—at every moment immerse yourself completely in the *huatou*. If you use the *huatou*, ‘Who am I?’, ask it over and over again to yourself with such passion and intensity that you *become* the *huatou*. Don’t allow even an instant of thought of anything else.⁹¹

As the practitioner learns to foster doubt, letting it grow until it fills up every ounce of their being, the mind becomes absorbed within the question, such that “[o]ne is no longer aware of one’s body, the world, or anything in the entire universe.”⁹² While the intensity and single-pointedness of *huatou* practice resembles deep states of concentration, the practice is itself based on a state of irresolution, thereby circumventing equanimous states of meditative absorption; rather, “the concentrated power of doubt leads headlong into the explosion of wisdom.”⁹³ This is one of the true innovations of *huatou* practice: the experience of doubt, frustration, anger, and obsession are transmuted from being perceived as hindrances to meditation to the very medium of spiritual revelation. In the context of *huatou*, obstacles are re-framed as the very site of

⁸⁹ Buswell, *Experience*, 157.

⁹⁰ Ibid. This phrase of ‘falling into emptiness’ used by Kusan originally appears in the letters of Dahui: “Once you hold [the mind] there [on the *huatou*], then the mind that fears birth and death, the mind that’s confused and unhappy, the mind which thinks and discriminates, the that acts intelligent, will naturally no longer operate. When you become aware that it’s not operating, don’t be afraid of falling into emptiness” Cleary, *Swampland*, 56.

⁹¹ Shengyan, *Hoofprint*, 137.

⁹² Ibid., 133.

⁹³ Ibid.

meditative inquiry. Dahui states, “Right where you stand, investigate the one in you who covets wealth and rank: where does he come from, and, in the future, where will he go? Since you don’t know where he comes from or where he goes, your mind will feel confused and unhappy. Right when you’re confused and unhappy, it’s not someone else’s affair — right here is where to contemplate a saying.”⁹⁴ Here the hindrances of coveting, of confusion, of unhappiness, each becomes the object for doubt, the very site of contemplation. The practice of *huatou* confronts the mind with the existential quandary at the core of any experience, no matter how unpleasant or impure, such that all experience becomes fuel for practice. *Huatou* doubt operates from a universalizing questioning, which can appropriate any new sensory or mental input as the very source for questioning.

This universalizing questioning extends even to the sense of self. Master Shengyan’s disciple Guoru describes *huatou* practice as “questioning until all answers are exhausted and sense of our body and mind vanish.”⁹⁵ In doubt’s continual rejection of everything which appears in consciousness, the practitioner pushes through even the sense of there being a questioner, the sense that there is an ‘I’ who is doing the questioning. Guoru continues, “If we still have the feeling of that ‘I’m practicing the method,’ ‘I’m in the sense of doubt,’ ‘I’m keeping the sense of doubt,’ and the like, it is the mind’s manipulation”.⁹⁶ The doubt must eclipse all sense of self, leaving only the *huatou*. Doubt’s persistent rejection negates everything it comes in contact with; “[e]verything is to be eliminated, to be denied over and over again...[e]ven the thought of denial should be given up. With no dependence, all forms of mental cognition suddenly perish. Then we really become one with the sense of doubt and the doubt mass.”⁹⁷ In this way, the *huatou*

⁹⁴ Dahui, *Swampland*, 55.

⁹⁵ Guoru. *Knocking Gently on the Door of Chan on the Practice of Huatou* (Taipei: Chan Grove, 2014), 56.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Guoru, *Knocking*, 32.

becomes a mechanism for de-individuation, as any personalized interpretation of the experience is repeatedly met with negation through focusing on the experience of doubt. Doubt is applied to the notion of a ‘self’ experiencing the doubt, repeatedly undermining any possible sense of self in which the mind can settle.

Turning towards the connection between the subjective qualities of awareness, equanimity and de-individuation which this paper proposes Zen monastic life fosters, there is a clear relationship between *huatou* and awareness as well as de-individuation: the inner vigilance to maintain doubt contributes to the development of awareness, while the use of doubt to undermine the notion of self fosters a sense of de-individuation. Whether *huatou* results in a more equanimous subjectivity is debatable, since, as previously mentioned, by its definition doubt is a non-equanimous state, “mak[ing] it impossible to settle deeply into a quiescent state of samadhi.”⁹⁸ Doubt eats away at the practitioner as they “cannot ignore it or get rid of it, swallow it or spit it out.”⁹⁹ However, for Sōn Master Kusan, *huatou* is a means by which “the calmness of samādhi *and* the perspicuity of prajña are maintained,”¹⁰⁰ thereby creating resonance between traditional early Buddhist meditative models, in which equanimity is fostered through concentration practices, and Zen practice. However, it should be noted that equating immersion within doubt and early Buddhist meditative models may be part of the syncretic spirit of the Korean Sōn of Chinul, the Sōn tradition which Kusan has inherited. Since Korea had received its Buddhist teachings from China in “a highly developed and prolix form,”¹⁰¹ it developed a robust scholarly tradition which sought to reconcile different Chinese Mahayana philosophical schools. Chinul’s teachings sought to integrate both sudden and gradual cultivation practices, as well as

⁹⁸ Shengyan, *Hoofprint*, 133.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁰⁰ Buswell, *Experience*, 159.

¹⁰¹ Buswell, *Chinul*, 38.

Huayan philosophy within *Chan* practice.¹⁰² Kusan's own inclination to draw parallels with early Buddhist meditation could be partly informed by the ecumenical predisposition at the root of his particular Sōn school.

Another consequence of the constancy and universal-applicability of *huatou*'s doubt is that it is to be engaged with during all waking moments. Given that the sense of doubt can be applied to any experience, all situations become ripe training grounds for nourishing doubt. Guoru describes practitioners becoming lost, or forgetting to put on their pants, because they are so deeply immersed in their *huatou* during their daily lives.¹⁰³ Master Shengyan describes how the practice of *huatou* is like unraveling a yarn made of elastic string, such that if one eases their efforts for a moment, the string will snap back into place.¹⁰⁴ For Zen monastics working with the practice of *huatou*, doubt permeates every corner of their life.

Various schema have been developed for tracing the development of doubt within *huatou* practice. Guoru describe a tripartite sequence from unified-mind, to no-mind, to true-mind.¹⁰⁵ Shengayn similarly describes a process from scattered mind, to one-pointed mind, to no-mind.¹⁰⁶ Master Kusan describes a more involved schema, in which the generation of doubt gives way to Great Doubt and the concomitant arising of Great Anger and Great Courage, which then lead to the experience of 'falling into emptiness'; such emptiness is followed by awakening, then the refinement of one's awakened insight, culminating in compassionate action for others.¹⁰⁷ A comparative look at different modern schema for *huatou* practice, and how these graduated

¹⁰² Ibid., 53-61.

¹⁰³ Guoru, *Knocking*, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Shengyan, *Hoofprint*, 132.

¹⁰⁵ Guoru, *Knocking*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Shengyan, *Hoofprint*, 131.

¹⁰⁷ Buswell, *Experience*, 153-160.

descriptions both align and depart from the assumptions of subitism, could make for a fruitful future study.

In summary, the practice of *huatou* is centered on the development of doubt, which is applicable to any experience, and thus continuously supplants any other activity of the mind, including unfavorable thought patterns, such as confusion or covetousness, as well as reification of self, thereby repeatedly undermining the notion that there is a self who is doing the doubting. The required inward vigilance of *huatou* practice and its resultant eclipsing of self resonates with the development of the subjective qualities of awareness and de-individuation which this paper is tracing. Given that *huatou* is based on the markedly non-equanimous state of doubt, there seems to be a departure from equanimity as a defining feature of the formation of an enlightened subjectivity, though it's ambiguous whether the complete absorption within doubt could be seen as a form of equanimity given its identity with *samadhi* in the Korean Sōn tradition. For the meditator working with *huatou* practice, the quality of doubt permeates all aspects of daily life. Different schools offer varying models for stages of doubt; a comparative look at these models could be grounds for future study.

3.4.2 ASCETICISM

Zen monasticism is replete with ascetic practices of varying degrees of intensity, from the brief blows of the *keisaku*,¹⁰⁸ to long periods of dietary restriction, isolation, sleep deprivation, and other physically rigorous exercises; while each of these practices have a particular effect on the subject, this section will analyze the broad effects of asceticism as a whole on Zen monastic subject formation, drawing as needed from examples of certain ascetic exercises. Ascetic

¹⁰⁸ Chinese: *jingce* 警策; also pronounced *kyōsaku* within the Sōtō tradition; translates to 'admonition' Buswell and Lopez, *Dictionary*, 461.

practices within Zen monasticism have three generalizable effects upon the subject: first, the ambivalent role of asceticism within Buddhism requires the subject to maintain a continued inward-awareness as to be honest with the role asceticism plays within their spiritual practice; asceticism instills the subject with equanimity by complicating the practitioner's somatic feedback loops; in addition, asceticism allows the practitioner to subjectivize non-self by weakening the bond between the body and self-identification.

The ambivalent role of asceticism within Buddhism at large requires of the ascetic practitioner an inward-vigilance as to ensure that the ascetic practice is serving liberatory ends. Buddhism emerged as a 'middle way' alternative to the harsh asceticism of North Indian spiritual seekers during the historical Buddha's time, and as such, ascetic practices are viewed within the religion with a degree of wariness.¹⁰⁹ On one hand, there is a value to practices which "help the monk overcome his attachments and weaken his desires", but a rejection of more intense practices which are seen as "simply glorified forms of self-mortification, which ultimately would only strengthen the fetter of pride."¹¹⁰ This recognition of both controlling desire and of checking pride act as two internal measures for undertaking ascetic practice: there is the clear intention to gain greater self-control over desires, but when this self-control of desires itself becomes an object of desire, attachment and pride, the ascetic practice is no longer liberatory. In this way, ascetic practices, though based in form and the tangible world, are ultimately instruments for the monks to "tra[n] their mind, not just tortur[e] their bodies,"¹¹¹ thereby finding freedom in both non-attachment towards the world of external objects (desires) as well as non-attachment to the spiritual fruits, which could generate self-conceit (pride). Assessment of whether asceticism is

¹⁰⁹ Buswell and Lopez, *Dictionary*, 70.

¹¹⁰ Buswell, *Experience*, 190.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

oriented towards liberation from desires and pride requires the monastic to sustain an inner awareness of the way their mind is experiencing the ascetic practices they have undertaken.

The means by which pride is tapered can be found in the rhetoric used by two monks who participated in the ascetic practice of ‘finger burning’¹¹² in which one or more fingers are burned off the hands as an offering. Robert Buswell reports that Ilt’a Sunim, the Vinaya master at the Korean monastery Haein-sa, burned off his fingers as to “ensure that he could never again entertain the thought of returning to lay life, where he would need the use of his hands to support himself.”¹¹³ A disciple of Ilt’a said he burned off his fingers “to avoid military service, since without his trigger finger he would be unable to fire a rifle.”¹¹⁴ Such lines of reasoning show how monks who’ve accomplished significant ascetic feats rhetorically evade self-adulation, as each monk indicates that the practice was done not from a place of courage or spiritual devotion, though undeniably these must be motivating factors for such a gesture, but rather out of a fear of weakness (leaving the monastery) or a shirking of responsibility (avoiding the draft). In contrast, Buswell notes that other monks partake in this brutal ascetic exercise since it “is a quick, if painful, way of winning esteem”; these monks can often be found gesturing by “wav[ing] the injured hand before his audience.”¹¹⁵ The contrast between the humble remarks of Ilt’a and his disciple, and the behavior of more prideful monks, demonstrates the centrality of internal experience with regards to Buddhist asceticism, as the practices themselves are ambiguous in significance, and can either be an expression of devotion, or a mere vehicle for one’s ego. In this way, the mental quality of internal vigilance and awareness in order to understand one’s

¹¹² Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 324-25.

¹¹³ Buswell, *Experience*, 197.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

motivations for ascetic practices is one of the potential effects of asceticism on a monastic's subjectivity.

Ascetic practices invert the relationship between mental and somatic valences: the unpleasant is associated with a positive valence and the pleasant with a negative valence, which works to subdue ordinary cues for conditioning. The internally held prohibition towards certain pleasures, creates a negative mental association with somatically pleasurable events, resulting in a tapering of the monk's desires towards sensual experience; simultaneously, the positive mental association with somatically displeasurable events, such as pain or hunger, reduces the monk's aversion towards such experience. This reduction of both desire for the pleasurable and aversion towards the displeasurable imbues the monastic with an internal equipoise, a state of persistent equanimity, as the two extremes of pleasure and displeasure become drawn closer towards an unmoving center.

One example of this inversion of mental and physical association is the use of the *keisaku*. The *keisaku* is a long stick used to either correct the posture of practitioners, or to relieve the practitioners of soreness in the back during meditation. This practice functions differently from monastery to monastery: for instance, the stick is only used when requested within the Korean tradition, while my own experience at a Chan retreat in China was that the stick was used whenever the meditator displayed one or more of the eight signs of distraction, such as smiling or leaning to one side. Whether requested or not, the stick, while somewhat painful, is used in the spirit of encouragement, a way of showing shared support for the community's efforts towards spiritual liberation. Thus, what appears on the surface punitive helps facilitate within the meditation hall "a certain kind of group mysticism, a sense of helping

one another attain awareness.”¹¹⁶ Scholar and Rinzai practitioner T. Griffith Foulk recounts how the positive association of the striking of the *keisaku* created “an unspoken etiquette [wherein] monks who were sitting earnestly and well were shown respect by being hit vigorously and often; those known as laggards were ignored by the hall monitor or given little taps if they requested to be hit.”¹¹⁷ While this example is less extreme in its asceticism than the previous example of finger-burning, it clearly demonstrates how a negative physical sensation (being struck) is associated with a positive understanding (encouragement towards attaining awareness), thereby assisting the meditator in maintaining equanimity even in the face of unpleasant experience (in this case, the pain of being hit). The resultant equanimity which is generated through non-reactivity towards both the physical pain of the stick and its potentially positive mental association, is exemplified when Foulk states that “Nobody asked about the ‘meaning’ of the stick, nobody explained, and nobody ever complained about its use.”¹¹⁸

Another result of ascetic practices is the subjectivization of non-self by redefining the monastic’s relationship to their body. The ability to withstand the intensity of certain ascetic practices, such as finger burning, never lying down, and extended fasts, allows one to experience directly how the body can be understood as not self. In the midst of these physically taxing and unpleasant experiences, the body is framed through experiential models not which dis-identify one’s physical experience with a sense of self, such as the body being an object in awareness, sensation being seen as inherently empty phenomena which is subject to impermanence, or the arising and passing of the five aggregates. As the monastic’s body is starved, deeply fatigued, and undergoing profound changes, the monastic directly, starkly perceives the ephemeral,

¹¹⁶ Nishimura, *Unsui*, 55.

¹¹⁷ T. Griffith Foulk, “The Encouragement Stick: 7 Views.” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, 1998. <https://tricycle.org/magazine/encouragement-stick-7-views/>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

changing quality; this nature of change is interpreted in the context of Buddhist doctrine of non-self, which states that what is impermanent cannot be self.¹¹⁹

Further, the liminal mental spaces a monk dwells within during ascetic practices also reveal through direct experience the doctrine of non-self by revealing the malleability of perceived reality. Jisu Sunim described the different visions he had during three-months of not sleeping:

At one time I saw all kinds of demons crawling across the floor. At another, I had the feeling that my right arm had disappeared. And other occasions, I have felt as though I was full of emptiness, or that the whole room had become golden in color, bright and dazzling. All kinds of things happen when doing this kind of meditation and people often attach to the experiences. But that is a hindrance. You should never attach even to marvelous experiences. If you do so, you will get caught up, and then you will have a problem.¹²⁰

By pushing the body and mind towards these liminal states, ascetic practices make manifest to the spiritual querent the insubstantiality of physical and mental forms; this insubstantiality confirms through subjective experience the emptiness of self described within Buddhist doctrine, thereby contributing to the process of subject formation marked by de-individuation.

3.5 AN ENLIGHTENED SUBJECTIVITY

While the practices and effects described by this paper are not comprehensive of the entirety of the Zen monastic experience, they touch upon crucial ways that life within the monastery impacts one's subjectivity. The practices examined in this paper were linked to three general cultivated subjective qualities: equanimity, de-individuation, and awareness. These three aspects are all concerned with inner transformation, and are the qualities necessary for one to

¹¹⁹ *Samyutta Nikaya* 22.59

¹²⁰ Jisu Sunim, "Life in a Korean Monastery." *Buddhism Now*. *Buddhism Now*, September 10, 2016. <https://buddhismnow.com/2013/02/15/life-in-a-korean-monastery-jisu-sunim/>.

have access to Zen's 'spiritual truth.' In addition, as this paper has elaborated upon, certain external factors help pre-empt this inner transformation: the placement of the meditation hall as the site of spiritual revelation, and how the degree of difficulty in the ritual of *niwa-zume* augments expectations of spiritual reward. These two aspects of Zen monastic life contextualize the transformation of self, not by directly contributing to subject formation but by providing environmental catalysts for such processes to occur. While bearing in mind that any practice's effect on one's subjectivity is not a discrete nor uniformly consistent procedure, Figure 1 offers a visual arrangement of the general relationship between these internal and external factors, their resultant effects, and the categories of monastic life in which they occur.

3.5.1 EMPTINESS AND FORM

A certain unity emerges in the qualitative assessment of the three internal aspects of equanimity, de-individuation and awareness: each is a particular expression of 'emptiness', in that they are subjective attributes that are void of their own content, receptive, and which serve as a space in which other phenomena arise. Equanimity is the container of reaction, de-individuation is the container of individuality, awareness is the container of mental content. Each of these qualities are defined by their capaciousness, their absence, their allowing.

ELEMENTS OF MONASTIC LIFE		EQUANIMITY (internal)	DE-INDIVIDUATION (internal)	AWARENESS (internal)	CONTEXT (external)
TIME	Temporal variability		X [connection to nature]	X [paying attention]	
	Quality time	X [non-discriminatory perception]			
SPACE	<i>Niwa-zume</i>	X [resilience / non-discrimination]			X [augmentation of perceived reward]
	Meditation hall				X [expectation of the sacred]
SOCIAL RELATIONS	Alms round		X [enactment of interdependence]		
	Mutual polishing		X [diminishing of ego / bonding within the community]	X [attentive of actions]	
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES	<i>Huatou</i> meditation	[ambiguous]	X [rejection of self through meditative doubt]	X [inward awareness]	
	Asceticism	X [complication of feedback]	X [weakening of somatic self-identification]	X [inward awareness]	

Figure 1 – an overview of elements of monastic life and their respective effect on subject formation.

The quality of openness within these subjective characteristics aligns with Buddhist doctrinal descriptions of enlightenment. Early Buddhist scripture portrayed the state of nibbana¹²¹ in apophatic terms, such as the sutta *Thirty-Three Synonyms for Nibbana*, which describes enlightenment primarily as the “unconditioned”, but also as the “taintless...the unmanifest...the unproliferated...the unafflicted...the unailing.”¹²² Apophatic language as a rhetorical strategy is able to capture this shared trait of openness by circling within its void, revealing nibbana’s emptiness through a “disontological discourse”¹²³ that negates nibbana’s ‘thingness’. Mahayana scripture developed these apophatic strategies even further by asserting the emptiness of all aspects of existence, including even Buddhist doctrine and Buddhism’s

¹²¹ ‘Nibbana’ is the Pali term for the more commonly known Sanskrit word ‘nirvana’.

¹²² Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddhas Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2015), 364-365.

¹²³ Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 6.

purported spiritual attainments. The quintessential Mahayana text that conveys this apophatic language is the *Heart Sutra* (波若波羅蜜多心經 *boluobomiduo xinjing*), in which Avalokitesvara,¹²⁴ while “practicing deeply the *Prajnaparamita*,”¹²⁵ shares with Shariputra¹²⁶ her insights into emptiness. Avalokitesvara equates emptiness and form, and extends this essence of emptiness to all major classifications of phenomena within Buddhist doctrine, including the five aggregates, the six sense doors, objects and consciousnesses, dependent origination, and the Four Noble Truths.¹²⁷

The language of emptiness and the logical contradictions within the *Heart Sutra* can be confusing, and perhaps the confusion is part of the point, as to demand of the aspirant the spiritual labor necessary to wrest meaning from the text. One hermeneutic strategy for deciphering the seemingly cryptic meaning of emptiness within the *Heart Sutra* is to relate it to the very things it discusses within one’s immediate experience. For example, the identity between emptiness and form perhaps can best be illustrated through our experience of space, which seems to express exactly the notion that “emptiness is no different from form.”¹²⁸ Space has the quality of complete inclusivity: the existence of everything is contained within space. The absence of space is just more space. This universe is defined by space, and as such, objects and forms do not displace space, but rather sit within space, express space, *are* space.¹²⁹ From

¹²⁴ The bodhisattva of compassion; the name of which translates to ‘Perceiver of the World’s Sounds’. Ch: *Guanshiyin pusa* 觀世音菩薩.

¹²⁵ *Prajnaparamita* is the Sanskrit term for ‘perfection of wisdom’, one of the six paramitas which are cultivated on the bodhisattva path. Buswell and Lopez, *Dictionary*, 656.

¹²⁶ Shariputra was the Buddha’s most learned disciple within the Pali Canon, and a revered figure in early Buddhism. In Mahayana texts, Shariputra often serves as an embodiment of the teachings of the Hinayana, to whom the greater wisdom of the Mahayana is being preached.

¹²⁷ T08n0251.

¹²⁸ “Heart Sutra in English,” Kwan Um School of Zen. Kwan Um School of Zen, September 6, 2017. <https://kwanumzen.org/resources-collection/2017/9/6/heart-sutra-in-english>.

¹²⁹ Brook Ziporyn, *Emptiness and Omnipresence: An Essential Introduction to Tiantai Buddhism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 54-67.

the ways in which space manifests Mahayana notions of emptiness, it has been a frequent scriptural metaphor used to describe the mind, enlightenment, and nirvana.¹³⁰ In this way, the relationship between equanimity, de-individuation, and awareness and the phenomena which they both permeate and contain, parallels that of space and objects, or, in the language of the *Heart Sutra*, emptiness and form. Emptiness, as the perfection of wisdom and the vehicle by which one “is saved from all suffering and distress,”¹³¹ becomes enacted within one’s modality of being through equanimity, de-individuation and awareness: these characteristics of consciousness are the subjective expressions of *emptiness*, which, for the Zen monastic, are realized in and through the *forms* of daily life.

4. RELEVANCE TO THE MODERN SUBJECT

As Buddhism spreads to the West, many feel there is little applicability of an ancient Asian monastic lifestyle to their contemporary lives and struggles. In *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*, Stephen Batchelor describes the monastic tradition as “stagnating”, where “practitioners seem primarily intent on preserving time-honored doctrines and practices by endlessly repeating past teachings and instructions”.¹³² In Batchelor’s push for a shift of focus to Buddhist laity concerned with the struggles of the modern age, he presents the reader with the startling and worthy insight that “the notion that the ideal to which Buddhists

¹³⁰ One scriptural example of space as a metaphor for enlightenment can be found in Bodhidharma’s *Bloodstream Sutra*, which states “Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment is like trying to grab space. Space has a name but no form.” Bodhidharma. *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*. Translated by Red Pine (New York: North Point Press, 1987), 9. Later, Bodhidharma engages in a long apophatic description of the mind as Buddha: “It has never lived or died, appeared or disappeared, increased or decreased. It’s not pure or impure, good or evil, past or future. It’s not true or false. It’s not male or female. It doesn’t appear as a monk or a layman, an elder or a novice, a sage or a fool, a Buddha or a mortal. It strives for no realization and suffers no karma. It has no strength or form. It’s like space. You can’t possess it and you can’t lose it.” Ibid., 21.

¹³¹ Kwan Um School, *Heart Sutra*.

¹³² Stephen Batchelor, *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 14.

aspire should be that of a celibate monk who embodies the values of fifth century BCE Indian asceticism and adheres to a set of rules determined by the circumstances of that distant place and time is questionable.”¹³³ What is it that makes ancient monastic practices relevant to the modern world and subject?

As Buddhism spreads in the West, there is a growing cognizance surrounding the need to address suffering on structural as well as individual scales.¹³⁴ A criticism that has been leveraged toward traditional Buddhist doctrine is that it speaks of suffering on an individual basis, but does not directly address larger societal and structural factors that contribute to the detriment of well-being. In today’s current political discourse, forms of structural suffering are often presented along racial or economic lines, but an alternative way of parsing suffering on a societal scale is by analyzing the structure of institutions themselves, whereby the component aspects of the organizations which form the core mechanisms of society are analyzed regarding their effects on subject formation.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault pursued such an analysis of institutional structure and its resultant effects on subjectivity. In this work, Foucault describes an institutional regiment of domination in which an uninterrupted coercion of bodily movements oriented towards efficiency came to be implemented within the military, hospitals and educational system during the classical age in Europe in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Modern institutions are the inheritors of these regiments. Foucault notes three broad defining qualities of this style of control: treating the parts of body individually, or ‘infinitesimally’; controlling the economy and

¹³³ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁴ David R. Loy, “Why Buddhism and the Modern World Need Each Other: A Buddhist Perspective,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2014): 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2014.0027>. Also, David Forbes, “Modes of Mindfulness: Prophetic Critique and Integral Emergence,” *Mindfulness* 7, no. 6 (2016): 1256–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0552-6>.

physicality of movements rather than the signifying aspect of movements; and a modality of ‘constant coercion’ in which exercises are imposed on the subject ceaselessly.¹³⁵ These qualities are expressed in four general categorical methods of discipline: distribution, control of activity, organization of geneses and composition of forces.¹³⁶ This means of control linked docility with utility, such that the body of the subject could be subdued in order for its efficiency within society to be maximized.

Foucault distinguishes this new style of domination from monasticism in that religious discipline had as its “principal aim an increase of the mastery of each individual over his own body”¹³⁷ rather than extraction of energy and maximization of efficiency. In this sense, religious practice, as the cultivation of individual mastery, is diametrically opposed to the coercive discipline of automation and efficiency described by Foucault: the disciplinary regiments of classical institutions supplant the individual’s autonomy by the demands necessitated by the institution, while religious disciplinary regiments lead towards the discovery of the individual’s autonomy *through* the demands of the institution.

The analysis of the previous section demonstrated the particular characteristics of a subjectivity shaped by a Zen monastery, yet how is such a subjectivity considered ‘autonomous’ and why is it that an ancient Asian asceticism is conducive to this autonomy? Victor Hori’s article “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzai Monastery” presents two crucial insights which can respond to these questions. Hori succinctly summarizes the autonomy granted through monasticism when he contrasts Western notions of freedom with freedom as conceived of in a Buddhistic framework:

¹³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline*, 137.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-169.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

Zen monastic practice is essentially directed at spiritual freedom or liberation. In our ordinary understanding of freedom, to be free is to be able to do whatever one wants or desires; to be forced to do otherwise is compulsion or bondage. But in Buddhism, one finds a different conception of freedom. It contains the notion that our wants and desires themselves are not freely chosen nor maintained, and that our wants and desires are various masks for attachment to self. The constant need to protect and enhance the self is what makes one unfree. Freedom is not conceived of as being able to follow one's wants and desires without hindrance. Instead it is conceived of as freedom from attachment to one's wants and desires.¹³⁸

Spiritual autonomy is freedom *from* desires, rather than the freedom *to* desire. The spiritual path moves in the opposite direction of worldly gain; it is defined through loss and renunciation rather than the classical institutional prerogative of production. In the words of Ajahn Brahm, “the biggest loser was the Buddha. He had nothing left, but emptiness and freedom”.¹³⁹

Why is it necessary to use the forms of an antiquated spiritual order to learn to be a loser and find freedom? Hori's article describes three possible learning modalities: ritual formalism, rational teaching and learning, and mystical insight,¹⁴⁰ and his analysis of the relationship between ritual formalism and mystical insight within Zen training helps illuminate why a monastic form is advantageous for finding freedom. While traditional Western pedagogy focuses on individual rationality and the power of reason, the monastery's system of learning induces mystical insight by means of ritual formalism. Hori describes the functioning of the pedagogical model in that the ritual formalism demands certain results, which the monastic, bereft of guidance or instructions, can only achieve through personal ingenuity. In this way, “each monk develops his own untraditional solution to maintaining the traditional, his own original way of

¹³⁸ Hori, *Learning*, 22.

¹³⁹ Ajahn Brahm and Anne Wiseman, “Happiness, Expectations, and Learning to Be Losers: An Interview with Ajahn Brahm.” *Buddhist Door*, June 2, 2017. <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/happiness-expectations-and-learning-to-be-losers-an-interview-with-ajahn-brahm>.

¹⁴⁰ Hori, *Learning*, 5.

continuing the established convention.”¹⁴¹ Hori argues that by adhering to ritual, but doing so without guidance, a demand is made on the monk’s own resourcefulness such as to create spontaneous moments of insight necessitated by the conditions in which they find themselves.

In addition to Hori’s argument of the connection between ritual formalism and mystical insight, I believe it is crucial to emphasize the basic wisdom that what we do changes who we are — this is true even if we do not know what it is we do, or why it is we do it. The ritual formalism of the monastery has a subjective flavor: the actions contained within monastic life, regardless of the era from which they emerge, act upon the subject in particular ways, as outlined in the preceding section of this thesis. Much as the curative properties of ancient medicine continue to be relevant to illness today, modalities of being continue to have particular effects on the modern subject. Ritual formalism leads to mystical insight in that embodying a ritualized comportment and mentality which nourishes equanimity, de-individuation and awareness will, over time, make one equanimous, egoless, and aware. Ritual formalism repeatedly conditions one to have these particular subjective characteristics, while moments of ‘mystical insight’ may be said to be definitive points where these subjective qualities become integrated and deeply absorbed into the fabric of the practitioner’s psyche.

The subjective characteristics of equanimity, de-individuation and awareness stand in sharp contrast to the subject Foucault describes as being produced through classical institutions. Foucault looks at how power acts on the body itself to make it “more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely” more obedient as it becomes more useful.¹⁴² It manages this feat by “increas[ing] the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminish[ing] the forces of

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴² Foucault, *Discipline*, 138.

the body (in political terms of obedience)”¹⁴³. Here Foucault provides us with the dual axes upon which the gears of power operate: utility and obedience, two mutually entangled poles of the political subject which feedback into each other: the more useful a subject, the more docile; and the more docile the subject, the more useful. Phrased otherwise, docility refers to a submission to the organizational forms of power acting upon the subject, and utility refers to the subject’s usefulness in perpetuating these same forms of power. For example, in the context of factories, the worker submits to the factory’s regimentation (docility), and in doing so, makes the factory more productive (utility); as the factory becomes more productive, it is able to increasingly refine its means of inducing docility. Or in regard to education, a student submits to the structure of pedagogy and class organization (docility), and in doing so, makes the classroom more efficient in disseminating knowledge (utility), thereby reinforcing the legitimization of submission to the prescribed pedagogical forms. As these two poles of docility and utility grow in potency, the space for new possibilities and revolutionary horizons begins to narrow. The system closes in on itself in a dynamic of totalization. On the broadest scale, such totalization operates as the undergirding mechanism for modern society at large, such that the high-quality of life afforded by industrialization induces docility; this docility then makes one more willing to participate as a productive subject in society, and this participation allows for ever greater luxury and thus docility. As stated by Herbert Marcuse, “under the conditions of a rising standard of living, non-conformity with the system itself appears to be socially useless;”¹⁴⁴ placed between a luxurious docility and its concomitant, reinforcing pole of material productivity, ulterior possibilities collapse into the category of impracticality.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge, 2002), 4.

The totalizing effect of modern docility and productivity reveals another advantage to the antiquated nature of the monastic life: its disconnect from modernity gives it the special capacity to break free from the deleterious effects of modernity's feedback cycle between obedience and docility. If the alienation, neuroses, dependencies, and dissatisfaction engendered from modern living are products of a totalizing modernity, then drawing from the lifestyle of times radically different from our own presents itself as one solution for re-imagining how to live, and thus potentially escaping the particular suffering of contemporary society. In contradistinction to Batchelor's thesis that Buddhist monasticism's antiquity makes it irrelevant, it is this very antiquity that presents Buddhist monasticism as a viable, and wholly relevant, solution to modernity. It is the very disjunction between life as we presently know it and the traditional ways of existing preserved through monasticism that make it an effective means of escaping the totalizing institutional systems from which modern life is composed.

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to expand upon Foucault's observation while in Japan that a "totally different mentality to our own is formed through the practice and exercises of a Zen temple" by investigating how the categories of time, space, social relations and spiritual practices within Zen monasteries impart on the spiritual aspirant the subjective characteristics of equanimity, awareness and de-individuation. These three subjective characteristics were shown to be unified in their phenomenological sense of 'emptiness,' which parallels apophatic scriptural descriptions of enlightenment, demonstrating how enlightenment, outside of its metaphysical or transcendental claims, can be interpreted as a particular process of subject formation. This enlightened subjectivity, and its resultant freedom, were contrasted with the 'docile' and

‘productive’ subjectivity necessitated by modern institutions according to Foucault’s analysis in *Discipline and Punish*. Monasticism was presented as a viable alternative to modern institutions, not in spite of its antiquity, but *because* of its antiquity: both in how its prescribed forms of ritual formalism lead to mystical insight, and in the distance between the ancient world from which monasticism emerged and the closed totalization of modernity. It is my hope that the aspects of monasticism explored within this paper contribute to the continued relevancy of the monastic tradition for modern Buddhism, and that these powerful tools of self-transformation are not overlooked or discarded in pursuit of expediency as the Dharma continues its acclimation to the modern world.

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