

The Mystique of Martial Arts —A Reply to Professor Keenan's Response—

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I am grateful to John Keenan for his considered response to my critique of his paper (KEENAN 1989, MCFARLANE 1990, KEENAN 1990). I shall keep my points as concise as possible, as I have no wish to bore readers with unnecessary repetition. I appreciate his reflections on these issues, which clearly are of concern beyond the academic community. I feel there are still issues of fundamental disagreement between us, and I am concerned at what I feel to be the misrepresentation of some of my points, and I accept that Keenan feels that I too misrepresented his position in my initial discussion.

I am genuinely puzzled at Keenan's description of his original paper as "... in large part a descriptive piece about popular culture in the West and how it attempts to embrace the traditional martial arts of the East" (1990, p. 421). This does not seem to match the content of his paper, which contains little material evidence concerning the nature of martial arts practice in the West, and only a brief sample of some products of Western popular culture, as represented in the movies, and in references to an extremely dated Bruce Lee story (Lee died in 1973). In fact, most of his arguments in both papers are concerned with Buddhological and textual questions. While he polemically rejects the claims of some Western martial artists who are said to be claiming Buddhist insights and spiritual achievements, he fails to produce concrete evidence of who is claiming what.

In both his initial paper and his later response, there seems to be a mismatch between supposed elements of Western popular culture on the one hand, and the higher levels of Buddhist theory and practice as articulated in Yogācāra texts on the other. Not surprisingly, Keenan finds no common ground between them.

Part of my worry with his line of approach is that he is bringing together two quite different spheres of discourse and experience and then rhetorically insisting on their difference. I would suggest that a more

fruitful and rewarding line of inquiry might be to acknowledge the social and cultural contexts where much of Eastern martial arts are actually located, that is, in the popular cultures of the East; then consider them in relation to the nature of martial practices in the contemporary West. This would include a serious consideration of the cultural contexts where these practices are pursued in the West, as well as the values, behaviors, and assumptions of the practitioners. Some research of this nature has been undertaken and I cite some of it in my critique. Richard Schmidt has also very helpfully summarized many of the findings of social psychology research in this area, in his excellent paper in *Japanese Martial Arts and American Sports*, in which John Keenan's paper also appears (SCHMIDT in KIYOTA & KINOSHITA eds. 1990). Unfortunately, Keenan makes no use of this kind of evidence.

To his credit Keenan does now admit that he overstated his case, and rephrases one claim to say that, ". . . martial arts in the West are almost always divorced from this Mahāyāna context." Despite this retraction, I am still concerned with his assumptions about the Mahāyānist nature of the ethos of martial arts in their Eastern context, and his claims about the confused and obscurantist nature of martial arts theory and practice in the West. Keenan contends in his response that the failure to properly contextualize the ethos of traditional Eastern martial arts practice has left a vacuum that has been filled by the development of a grand mystique that seeks to invest the martial arts with a spiritual vigor and a purported inner wisdom. He continues, "This mystique, I argue, results from the difficulty of translating Eastern spiritual traditions, resulting often in an incomplete and confusing selection of parts and pieces of that tradition." (KEENAN 1990, p. 422). My question is quite simple: to **what tradition is he referring?** My suggestion is that he has greatly simplified the nature of that ethos, and that he has exaggerated the differences between East and West on the issue of the fondness of their popular cultures for the "mystical" and the magical.

I shall repeat my earlier criticism of his position. **It is that he has simplified and idealized the relationship between Buddhism and the martial arts in the Eastern context, and he fails to take account of the plurality and diversity of ways in which martial arts are practiced, both East and West.** It is misleading to suggest, as Keenan does, that a spiritual ethos and/or moral values were always associated with martial arts in an Eastern context. It is also incorrect to suggest that such an ethos and values were necessarily determinative or normative for Eastern martial arts in general. The use of martial techniques purely for combat effectiveness and battlefield success was clearly the initial application of the Japanese warrior *bu-jutsu* 武術 methods. In this respect they are similar in purpose to the sometimes Eastern martial-influenced per-

sonal combat training of many military forces, including Keenan's example of the U.S. marines.

In Japan, as I explained, the use of martial methods and their transformation into *budō* 武道 (martial ways) or disciplines for personal and spiritual transformation, really developed in the seventeenth century. In general terms, both East and West have their functional equivalents of *bu-jutsu* (martial methods, for combat) and *bu-dō* (martial ways, for spiritual and moral development). On the issue of mystification of martial arts, and the confusion or misappropriation of spiritual concepts, it is misleading of Keenan to polarize East and West and suggest that this is a purely Western malaise. He refuses to acknowledge, or is unaware of, the mystification, confusion (intended and otherwise), and hybridization of much of traditional Eastern martial theory, practice, and lore. This is largely a reflection of the origins and development of Eastern martial practices in the environment of the popular culture. They were usually developed by people who were not highly educated and certainly not members of scholarly, administrative, or religious elites.

The conflation of Buddhist, Taoist, and other fundamental Chinese images and concepts with martial arts traditions and practices took place largely in an unsystematic manner. The adoption of Buddhist and Taoist symbols and images in Chinese and Japanese popular culture, literature, and entertainment and their conflation with martial arts theory, lore, and motifs is a long-established practice, in some respects similar to the process of mystification and "obfuscation" Keenan so deplors in the West. He describes this process in the West as the "half-boiled, warmed-over appropriation of themes from the history of Mahāyāna and Taoism" (KEENAN 1990, p. 428). Within such a context he may be correct in saying that martial arts practice has no *necessary* connection with the Mahāyāna path. If that path is defined in narrow terms as the systematic pursuit of the bodhisattva career and the attaining of Supreme Awakening, then he has a point. But how much of "Buddhist" life and engagement in East Asian history and culture has been focussed on such elevated concerns? From such a narrow viewpoint, many of the dimensions of traditional "Buddhist" East Asian cultures have no *necessary* connection to the Buddhist or Mahāyāna path. But students of East Asian religion and culture cannot ignore these dimensions.

From a cultural and historical viewpoint, the borrowing of concepts and motifs from Buddhist, Taoist, and other traditions and their conflation and confusion into "mystical" syntheses and new social and religious movements is fascinating, important, and not to be dismissed. It is clearly an ongoing process, both East and West, and cannot be ignored. It was evident in medieval China in the development of sectarian movements such as the White Lotus, and in many other local protection groups, ritual associations, and secret societies that emerged in Ming

and Ch'ing times. It is unfortunate that textually orientated Buddhist scholarship in the West has tended to ignore the more "apotropaic" dimensions of Buddhist belief and engagement (SPIRO 1971).

The use of Buddhist rites, chants, artifacts, and personnel for magical empowerment and medical/supernatural protection, accounts for the major part of Buddhist belief and practice in traditional "Buddhist" countries and communities. It seems that a large part of the appeal of Buddhism, both in China and Japan, was the ability of the monks to offer greater magical power and protection to individuals and the state than the indigenous methods. The reputations of many of the early Dharma teachers in these countries lay in their abilities as healers, rain-makers and exorcists (*Kao seng chuan* 高僧伝, T 50.383–395; CH'EN 1973, pp. 271–76). The monk Fo Tu Teng's influence with the barbarian "emperors" of North China in the early fourth century is well documented, and seems to have depended as much on his magical powers, and his ability to predict drought or rainfall and prevent epidemics, as on his skill in expounding Dharma (WRIGHT 1948, pp. 339–44). The demonstration of the efficacy and power of Dharma, through the mastery of magic, is a discernible feature of Buddhism in India and China, and is even more evident in Japan. The famous statement attributed to the Buddha in the Divyādāna represents an early expression of the fusing of expediency with magic: "A magical feat quickly wins over the minds of worldlings" (Divyādāna, quoted in CH'EN 1973, p. 272). Note also Kumārajīva's reputed ability to swallow needles (CH'EN 1973, p. 273). Apart from providing popular entertainment and material for magical tales and hagiographies, such powers, or the belief in them, also has a serious role in protection and healing rites. The ritual/magical power of key sūtras was employed by the rulers of China and Japan to ensure the protection of the state. The chanting of the *Fan wang ching* 梵網經 (Jpn. *Bonmō-kyō*) and other sūtras was an officially sanctioned use of Buddhist Dharmic or magical power.

In addition, over the centuries, Chinese and Japanese military forces, including the infamous *sōhei* (monk-soldiers) of Mount Hiei, have employed Buddhist symbols, banners, mudrās, and mantras to support their military exploits and intimidate their opponents. Documented cases of such uses can be found in excellent studies by DEMIÉVILLE (1973, pp. 261–99), and by TURNBULL (1977, pp. 27–35; 1991, pp. 114–20). Scholars such as SUZUKI Chūsei (1974, pp. 68–78, 196–206) and Daniel OVERMYER (1981, pp. 167–69) and Susan NAQUIN (1981, pp. 37–61, 166–67; 1985, pp. 255–91) have discussed the more militant sectarian movements in Ming and Ch'ing China, which incorporated Buddhist and Taoist images, concepts, and practices with martial training and a "mystique" of martial prowess and ritual empowerment.

From an elitist or "ultimatist" perspective no doubt such conflations

of Buddhist and Taoist concepts and such violent results are illegitimate and “un-Buddhist,” but they are culturally and historically significant. They reflect much of the ethos of traditional martial arts and popular culture in the East. As to the mystification of martial arts in the popular culture and entertainment of East and West, the feats of the heroic Buddhist and Taoist magicians and swordsmen of Chinese stories, opera, drama, and puppet shows are not very different from the harmless antics of the Ninja Turtles.¹ As Turnbull points out, kabuki and puppet plays from the eighteenth century contain ninja-like figures who are skilled in martial arts and magic. This includes the skill, with the appropriate mudra, of turning themselves into animals, usually rats or toads (TURNBULL 1991, Plates 3 & 7, pp. 130–35). So even the bizarre rat transmutation of Master Splinter (“Sensei” to the Ninja Turtles) has a Japanese antecedent. I would suggest in opposition to Keenan that, if anything, a greater degree of obfuscation and misappropriation has surrounded the martial arts in the East than in the West.

The military forces or rebel sectarian movements or martial arts brotherhoods claiming “Buddhist” and “Taoist” magical and mystical powers, had no interest in what Asaṅga or Hsüan-tsang would have had to say about their claims. The people who perpetuated and sustained the traditions of Shao Lin Ch’uan Fa were equally unaware of the deeper meanings of Buddhist theory. Even if some of the stories of individual Chinese martial-art styles originating with Buddhist and Taoist monks/priests are true, then the individuals involved were unlikely to have been members of the scholarly or ecclesiastical elites. To imply that there was a known and comprehended spiritual ethos and accepted tradition in which martial arts and religious and spiritual teachings were associated in the East, and to contrast this with a degenerate and confused understanding in the West, is misleading. To use a term employed by Keenan himself, it seems to me that it is his treatment of the subject that is too “wooden.”

As to my own understanding of Chinese traditions being “wooden,” naturally I reject the charge, and note that here Keenan is guilty of inattentive reading. I fail to see how the use of terms such as “process,” “web,” and “interaction,” along with my warning of the danger of polar-

¹ For examples see SEAMAN 1987, LIU 1967, ch 4. William DOLBY’s excellent study of Chinese drama is of particular interest. It includes his translation of part of a late twelfth-century dramatic ballad, “The West Wing” by Dong Jie-yuan. In this passage a warrior monk named “Dharma Acuity” urges the community to resist the outlaws who have surrounded the monastery. His rousing speech ironically conflates Buddhist moral terms and images with a blood-thirsty call to arms (1976, pp. 36–38). The story is a form of popular entertainment, but the language used suggests some familiarity with the Buddhist textual precedents that condone violence in exceptional circumstances (MCFARLANE 1990, pp. 409–11).

izing idealized constructs and isolating them from their cultural and social context, can possibly be interpreted as reflecting a “wooden” understanding, or a belief that these concepts represent discrete entities. I would also underline my comment, “No significant development in Chinese culture is ever the product of a simple homogeneous tradition or set of concepts” (MCFARLANE 1990, pp. 401–402).

Turning now to the more substantive Buddhological issues in our discussion: Keenan’s economical elaboration of the range of meanings and interpretations of no-mind and Buddha-nature concepts is helpful, but it in no way contradicts both his and my statement that such language was to be understood metaphorically rather than literally. It is Keenan himself who states, “Yet in its indigenous context, both Indian and Chinese, the teaching of Buddha nature and no-mind is not meant to be taken literally. . . .” (KEENAN 1989, p. 293). This, of course, is not the end of the story, because as I indicated in my paper, metaphorical usage is capable of extensive and diverse interpretation. My own comments were confined to Chinese Ch’an texts, having already acknowledged that centrist and absolutist implications were present in Tathāgata-garbha texts. Keenan’s references to the *Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda-sūtra*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (1990, p. 425) are largely irrelevant to my point, which was made with reference to Ch’an texts. We certainly differ on our reading of Takuan’s notion of “original mind” and “no-mind,” but my real concern is with Keenan’s assumption that Takuan is: 1) a martial artist, and 2) a Taoist, at least where he interprets Buddhological concepts in a way Keenan disapproves.

If one has accepted, as Keenan has, that Taoist concepts influenced the formation and development of Ch’an and Zen, and if one accepts that infusion as a historical reality, then to isolate subsequent developments in Zen teaching and label them as Taoist, and suggest that they are illegitimate or un-Mahāyānist, seems to me to be a particularly wooden way of dealing with historical traditions and patterns of thought. Institutionally and emically, Takuan was a Zen monk and *rōshi*. In some of his writings he used the practice of swordsmanship and some of the disciplines and demands of the life of the samurai as an extended analogy for Zen practice. He was not actually advocating swordsmanship as a spiritual path for all, but addressing a specific group who were already swordsmen and who were committed by birth to the warrior life. Keenan claims he nowhere criticizes Zen practice, but he does criticize a supposed “head-chopping” interpretation of emptiness. And, with support from Robert Aitken, he criticizes a Zen aloof from human concern and only tenuously aware of the need for human compassion. I agree fully with Keenan and Aitken that such an interpretation of Zen is incorrect and should be rejected. I simply do not see Takuan or his successors, some of whom *were* exponents of Kendo, as advocating such

a view. It is perfectly possible to argue that, in addressing his samurai correspondents in the way he does, Takuan is employing skillful means in a Mahāyāna sense of the term. In other words, he is addressing his samurai followers through language and disciplines that they understand, and in doing so, he is bringing them to a deeper understanding of the nature of their Zen practice. Notice that I am not saying that he is expounding on the concept of skillful means, but he is actively employing the method. Modern Zen *rōshi* who do combine martial training with *zazen* practice, can also be seen in the same light. Many people, particularly in the West, have been drawn to Zen and other forms of Buddhist practice through an initial interest in and pursuit of Eastern martial arts. Trevor Leggett and James Elkin are two outstanding examples of such cases, and there are many others in more recent times (GOODGER 1982). Of course, there may be many people who have been drawn to Buddhist practice and to the reorientation of their lives through other disciplines, such as calligraphy, flower arranging, or tea ceremony, but I suspect that the numbers drawn to Buddhist practice through the martial arts are probably greater. As far as I am aware, none of these people claim to have attained the wisdom and spontaneity of the Buddhas, but the “Dharmic” orientation of their lives is clear to see. I would think some may even meet Keenan’s exacting standards of what constitutes authentic Buddhist practice. I fully agree with Keenan that martial arts practitioners in the modern world should attempt to understand and articulate a rationale behind their practice. I further agree that they should avoid a “wishy-washy mystique that treats martial arts as somehow privileged.” I adhere to that proposition, and would point out that such mystiques and obscurantisms were not always avoided in the East.

On the issue of interpretation of Buddha-nature and no-mind language, I personally favor Dōgen’s sometimes radical and metaphorical rereading, or deconstruction, of these terms. But I would not wish to exclude other readings as un-Buddhist, and I certainly reject the suggestion that centrist or voidist interpretations of emptiness or no-mind necessarily lead to “head chopping” or moral collapse.

At this point I must clarify my use of the term “ultimatist,” as Keenan sees this as a major difficulty. I was not sufficiently clear in my initial paper, and Keenan rightly objects to the obscurity of my argument. I understand an ultimatist perspective to be problematic when employed by scholars, and less so when employed by followers of Buddha-dharma. It was the scholarly expressions of ultimatism that I was criticizing. Many scholars have a marked preference for dealing with *concepts* interpreted as relating to higher attainments, and neglecting the way ordinary Buddhists conduct their lives and engage with a wider culture and society. I clearly understand those *attainments* to be quite different from

the *concepts* and the speculation, conceptualization, and scholarly debate that is pursued about them. Ultimatism in my sense of the term is often associated with what Keenan describes as an “elitist and normative view.” My main point is that if one is attempting to understand the social, cultural, and moral context in which beliefs and practices are located, an ultimacist or elitist and normative perspective is not helpful. The majority of the populations of traditional China and Japan who were influenced by Buddhist concepts, language, and images were not in any significant sense following a Buddhist path of spiritual practice, and they were certainly not seeking the wisdom and spontaneity of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. This applies to the majority of the sangha as well as to lay people. The “Buddhism” of both groups was often integrated with, or as Keenan would say “obfuscated by,” a diverse range of concepts, images, and motifs. Often, rather than doctrinally correcting such beliefs and practices, it seems to me that frequently the Buddhist monastic “elite” simply accommodated to popular beliefs. A minority ignored them completely and simply addressed their teachings to the immediate monastic community. Of course, the concept of an “elite” is itself a very ambiguous one and frequently depends on implicit normative assumptions about authority and legitimacy. The elite group within the organizational hierarchy of one movement are rank outsiders or “heretics” in the perspective of another group. What I am saying here is that both emically and etically, the concepts of “elite” and “popular,” “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy” are complex, shifting, and elusive, in the context of Far Eastern thought and history. Much depends on the specific context and language. Susan NAQUIN has some important observations on this problem (1985, pp. 288–91).

Many of those who refined and developed martial-art skills and styles in China were not even “Buddhist” in a notional sense. I suspect that many of the stories of styles and techniques originating with Buddhist monks or Taoist priests represent popular attempts to invest these styles with authority and legitimacy, by providing an impressive “romantic” genealogy and investing the art with an aura of magical and mystical power. In “popular” understanding in traditional China, Buddhist and Taoist functionaries were regarded as having the most sophisticated and powerful magical techniques. To invest one’s art with an association with such powers and authority was a sensible move tactically, psychologically, and commercially. It is well known that for centuries Chinese rebel leaders like Wang Lun (NAQUIN 1981) have trained their followers in meditation, internal control (*nei kung*), magic, and martial arts to provide resistance to enemy weapons and ensure military success. In more peaceful times, if one was teaching martial arts professionally or one’s reputation as a master was at stake, then it did no harm at all for prospective students as well as rivals and enemies to believe that you have

magical ritual powers. My research student Nigel Sutton is currently engaged in work on just such a master of martial arts, magic, and healing in a Chinese community in southern Malaysia. Most people give him a wide berth, unless they are his students. It is fair to say they despite his low status socially and economically, he is one of the most powerful and feared men in the town. AMOS's observations of Shen da (spirit fighter) boxers in New Territories are also relevant here (1983). Attempts to identify martial skills and techniques with institutions or individuals that carried moral, magical and spiritual power and authority are not surprising. On the phenomenon of personal protection from physical and magical threats, anthropologists report similar moves amongst new healing and exorcism cults in Africa and South America. These frequently ally themselves to, or borrow the symbols and language of, the most powerful Christian church in the particular region (FERNANDEZ 1986, pp. 166–78). In a sense, the more marginal the individual or group practicing the art or cult, then the greater the need for the legitimacy provided by a fictive genealogy. One of the best-known examples of this process in Chinese martial arts is the “myth” of Chang Seng-feng, the early Ming-dynasty Taoist sage/immortal and “founder” of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, who in the most popular version of the story, had the complete system revealed to him in a dream. In reality, of course, no real evidence exists for such an early and vivid origin, but the myth exerts a powerful influence and adds considerable credibility to the appeal of the style to many Chinese and Western practitioners.

I reject Keenan's charge that I have confused the truth of ultimate meaning with an abstract and speculative style. I also reject the suggestion that I am unaware of or fail to understand the Mahāyāna distinction between *paramārtha-satya* and *saṃvṛti-satya*. This charge is “below the belt” on Keenan's part because I actually provide the references to Nāgārjuna's treatise where this distinction is most clearly articulated. By way of retaliation, I should point out that Keenan's tendency to polarize the two truths can lead to its own difficulties. The logic and the soteriology of the Mahāyāna mean that ultimately this distinction is itself provisional. This is necessarily the case, because, if the understanding of ultimate truth is the silence that abandons all concepts, then the *conceptual* distinction between ultimate and provisional must itself be provisional or conventional. Therefore, from the view or no-view of ultimate meaning (*paramārtha-satya*) no such distinction applies. This is rather important, because it explains how it is that the Mahāyāna teaches that saṃsāra is not to be differentiated ultimately from nirvāṇa (STRENG 1967, p. 217). It is also the meaning behind the Sino-Japanese expression *gon-jitsu fu-ni* 權實不二 (real and provisional not two). It also makes intelligible Nāgārjuna's statement about our dependence on provisional truth for higher truth to be known (see STRENG 1967, p. 213). I suspect

that Keenan fails to do justice to the subtle nature of Mahāyāna ethics because of his failure to pursue this point. In his criticism of Takuan he states that “the point about ethics is that one ought indeed to abide at some point. To float free from any context whatsoever does leave one aloof and detached.” I would argue that this is not the way some important Mahāyāna texts and authorities see it. If we accept that the Mahāyāna ideal of compassion (*karunā*) is an ethical ideal, and a practice that is fundamental to the tradition, then the advanced bodhisattva’s expression of compassion, according to the Prajñāpāramitā texts, works precisely by not abiding anywhere. In other words, the highest expression of the bodhisattva’s compassion is the compassion that abides in emptiness. The skill of the bodhisattva resides in this: saving all beings but not acknowledging beings to save; giving gifts, merit, and Dharma to beings but not perceiving gifts, merit, Dharma, or beings (CONZE 1968, pp. 79–82; cf. CONZE 1957, pp. 66–92). The bodhisattva must see all beings, states, and qualities with equal equanimity and not discriminate and appropriate on the basis of supposed individual characteristics of beings or states. To see dharmas equally and deal with them without grasping or appropriating, means that he must see them in the respect that they are equal. And the only respect in which all dharmas are equal is the respect in which they are empty of own-being (*śūnya svabhāva*). Therefore to be truly indiscriminate or universal or even-handed in his exercise of the *pāramitā* (perfections), he must exercise them in emptiness. The concrete abiding of the bodhisattva, described by Keenan, is not in my view as concrete or as fixed as he suggests. I personally do not see Asaṅga’s arguments on the extremes of behavior that skillful bodhisattvas may adopt to teach and save beings, as either casuistic or ethically ambiguous. They are merely different from conventional Buddhist ethics. I would also admit the danger of such ideas in the wrong hands or as dimly comprehended by those of lesser understanding. As Nāgārjuna says, “emptiness wrongly grasped is like a snake wrongly handled” (see STRENG 1967, p. 213).

I do not dispute the fact that normative judgements have been made by Buddhist authorities about formulations of Buddha-dharma and the nature of practice and attainment. However, the outcome of such disputes and judgements, as well as the criteria upon which they are made, are almost always indeterminate. Given the difficulty that Dharma masters have in making normative claims and judgments stick with any degree of finality, I am less confident than Keenan in the ability of Buddhist scholars to do so. On the broadest definition, Buddha-dharma is anything that leads to the removing of greed, hate, and ignorance. Such a deeply pragmatic or expediential soteriology is re-enforced in the Mahāyāna, where even Dharma, if it is conceptualized and pursued as an identifiable goal, must eventually be abandoned. Hence the an-

cient image of the raft is used in the *Vajracchedikā* (*Diamond Sūtra*) to represent the abandoning of Dharma as well as non-dharmas (CONZE 1957, p. 69). Not surprisingly, it is Ch'an that expresses some of the more radical formulations of the need to abandon all conceptualizing, attachment, or goal-directed practice. Huang-po (Ōbaku) and Lin-chi (Rinzai) provide excellent examples of this (SCHLOEGL 1975, p. 22; BLOFELD 1958, p. 40). Given such radical disengagement, and given the fluidity and flexibility of the methods of skillful means, then the issue of the finality or certainty of normative judgements within the Mahāyāna becomes deeply problematic.

To return briefly to the issue of sports, martial arts, values, and traditions. Keenan wrongly accuses me of dismissing the skills of Western athletes and of saying that Western sports lacked traditions. My statements here were specifically addressed to the sports advocated by him for the "warmed-over Taoist" treatment, i.e., skiing, kayaking, wind-surfing. They are all fine activities, but they do lack an overt social dimension, and traditions. I do not deny the private, individual exhilaration of downhill or cross-country skiers, but they are not "engaging with the world," in the sense of engaging with human social relations and communication. Keenan's failure to address the socializing aspects of martial arts training is still a glaring omission in a critique that raises some serious moral objections to the nature of modern martial arts practice.

To conclude briefly, I suspect that part of our disagreement may be a product of cultural differences. Some martial arts practitioners in the U.S. may be more inflated in their claims to spiritual insight, and consequently Keenan's scholarly Buddhological sensibilities may well have been provoked by such claims. I have indeed noticed that the non-martial artists amongst the first group of North American exchange students to take my course in "Religion and Martial Arts" seem to have some very naive assumptions about, and exaggerated expectations of, the spiritual and empowering dimensions of martial arts training. This is no doubt partly a symptom of the cultural traits identified by Keenan. Other myths tend to revolve around the notion of the accelerated mastery of a martial art, and the idea of total proficiency against mass attacks. Such notions are perpetuated by the "Karate Kid" and other such movies. I have found that the best antidote to such myths and other fantasies is serious training in a martial art. In the U.K. people are generally more sceptical and restrained in their attitudes. Grandiose claims to spiritual insight or mystical power are generally met with indifference or a withering glance to the heavens. I am not here denying that a popular mystique of the martial arts exists—I have sought to point out that it has long been a part of martial arts lore in the East. My impression is that when it intrudes at all into the British consciousness, it is more

likely to be treated with caution or outright derision. Perhaps Professor Keenan should pursue his research in Britain. He would be very welcome.

ABBREVIATION

- T TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and WATANABE Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭 eds., 1922–1933. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Newly revised Tripiṭaka of the Taishō era]. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō.

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