

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Applying a Buddhist Paradigm of Spiritual Practice to Contemporary Martial Art/Martial Sport Study

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### Abstract

The Goryeo-era Buddhist monk Jinul (Zhina 知訥, 지눌; 1158-1210 C.E.) offered a harmonizing view of Buddhist spiritual practice by applying the then prevalent view of Korean *Seon* (선, 禪 [Chan], Zen; meditative contemplation) to his understanding of Chinese Chan. Jinul's approach emphasizes the comprehensiveness and applicability of the sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (SA/GC; 돈오점수 [*dono jeomsu*], 頓悟漸修 [*dunwu jianxui*]) paradigm of Buddhist spiritual practice, valorizing it as a definitive approach to practice. My qualitative research findings garnered through interviews of long-time practitioners of martial arts/martial sports (MA/MS) support my thesis that they are applying the SA/GC paradigm in their contemporary MA/MS practice. The practice toward syncretism of *śīla* (戒 [jie], 계 [gye], *prātimokṣa*; knowledge and learning of technique), *samādhi* (三昧 [sanmei] or 定 [ding], 정 [jeong]; focused concentration), and *prajñā* (智慧 [zhihui], 지혜 [jihye]; the continuous development of understanding and wisdom based on the enactment of *śīla*) appears central to the potential for a practitioner to experience an instance of understanding awakening (UA); a *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity. Long-time practitioners support the engendering, instilling, and perpetuating of a view of practice that orients them toward experiencing this syncretism and simultaneity. This should be a soteriological goal of MA/MS practice.

**Keywords:** *Seon* (선, 禪 [Chan], Zen), sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (SA/GC), understanding awakening (UA), *śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*

### Introduction

The Goryeo Dynasty Korean monk Jinul (지눌, 知訥; 1158-1210) offered a harmonizing view of Buddhist spiritual practice by applying the then prevalent view of Korean *Seon* (선, 禪 [Chan], Zen) to his understanding of the study of Chinese Chan schools by the 9<sup>th</sup> century Chinese syncretist Zongmi (宗密; 780-841). Jinul's approach emphasizes the comprehensiveness and applicability of the sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (SA/GC; 돈오점수 [*dono jeomsu*], 頓悟漸修 [*dunwu jianxui*]) paradigm (3), and valorizes it as the definitive approach to practice (11, 22).

The soteriology of Jinul's SA/GC paradigm of practice is applicable to the practice of martial arts/martial sports (MA/MS) (6, 7, 8, 9), and the SA/GC paradigm and its constituent elements applied in the MA/MS context align with explanations of realization of the self offered by researchers studying a wide range of martial disciplines. These explanations include Kim's "divine simplicity" (1, 16), Kleinman's view on one's creation of "an experience through movement which culminates in

meaningful, purposeful realization of the self" (18, 19), "right practice" (5), practice of essence in repetition becoming intuition (6), establishing "a frame of mind or a readiness to receive freedom of and from the self" (14), "*hishiryo consciousness*" (4), a practitioner being "linked [in his art] by the task of specialization to a 'formless, universal truth'" (20), and "discovery of his own body ... [by] 'Walking.' ... *Mom* (the human body) is the organic unity of *Ki* [which] realizes itself only through *Mom*" (17).

Classical Indian soteriological tracts typically portray *śīla* (戒 [jie], 계 [gye], *prātimokṣa*, *vinaya*; behavioral or moral discipline, precepts, and/or practice focusing on the nurturance of morality), *samādhi* (三昧 [sanmei] or 定 [ding], 정 [jeong]; meditative concentration/absorption and/or mental equanimity conducive to and derived from attention perfectly focused on its object), and *prajñā* (智慧 [zhihui], 지혜 [jihye], wisdom; cognitive acuity or insight based on perceiving all phenomena in their true nature) as specific constituents of a gradual and progressive regimen of spiritual maturation. Chinese Chan re-conceptualized *samādhi* and *prajñā* as states of mind operative at all levels practice and

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thought, and envisioned Chan as the ultimate form of meditation practice (2). Jinul re-conceptualized meditative contemplation as the syncretism of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* (3). Attaining these at once is experiencing a *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity; precisely the sudden “understanding awakening” (UA) of the SA/GC paradigm.

Two fundamental forms of Buddhist meditation constitute the basis for experiencing the *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity. These are calm abiding or stabilizing meditation (止 [zhi], 止 [ji], śamatha) and insight, analytical, or discernment meditation (觀 [guan], 관 [gwan], *vipaśyānā*). Calming meditation is the stilling and concentration of the mind; the necessary preparatory conditions for one to subsequently be engaged in efficacious discernment. The emphasis is on (enactment via) praxis, not in mere theoretical explanation (22). Fundamentally, discernment meditation is wisdom (*prajñā*) (10, 15).

Zongmi holds that “if one engages in spiritual cultivation without having first experienced enlightenment, then it is not authentic practice” (12). Zongmi defines enlightenment as “understanding awakening” (UA; 해오 [haeo], 解悟 [jiewu]; initial insight). It is very important to emphasize that both Zongmi and Jinul, as well as their current scholars (13), view UA in the SA/GC paradigm as a sudden and incomplete awakening. In order to experience UA again, the practitioner engages in a post-UA “gradual cultivation” (GC; 점수 [jeomsu], 漸修 [jianxiu]) of the initial UA experience; in this paper this is referred to as “(practice-as-)cultivation.” This allows the theoretical possibility of an experience of sudden and complete “realization awakening” (RA; 證悟 [zhengwu]) or complete awakening, Buddhism’s “true awakening,” to occur (13). UA is not the constant “state” that the “true enlightenment” of RA is. Thus, any reference by this study’s participants to “enlightenment” may be UA, not RA. However, it is the overall SA/GC paradigm of practice, a holistic way of life, which the participants emphasize as their long-time MA/MS practice. In accordance with Gimello’s view that “the true mystical experience … lies in the universal claim that its soteric goal is not an experience at all. It is a way of life, of conduct, a manner of acting” (10). This is the participants’ practice.

## Methods

As per the institutional review board (IRB) protocol at New Mexico State University, each participant signed a Participation Information Letter after being briefed on the purpose, methodology, risk and benefit, and confidentiality pact of the research. The participants were interviewed within the one-year IRB period in 2013. The names of the participants used in this

paper are pseudonyms to protect their identities, as per IRB protocol. The pseudonyms are Bill, Eric, Kwanjang, and Phil. There were two to three interview sessions of one-and-a-half to two hours each with each participant, which were held over a period of weeks or months. Many of the questions and the direction for each session were generated by the participants. An attempt was made to create an atmosphere in which the participant came to reflect on his or her career as a MA/MS practitioner. The purpose was to allow each participant to describe and define what they have come to understand as their personal definition of their MA/MS practice, based on their personal experiences. All participants are educators and certified masters in their particular MA/MS.

This paper presents the theory that MA/MS practitioners utilize the SA/GC paradigm of practice to experience discernment meditation, and this engenders and reinforces a commitment to morality, compassion, and interrelatedness. They may internalize this commitment to the extent that these are enacted intuitively. They create a dynamic and active responsiveness in their enactment of MA/MS practice as praxis via the SA/GC paradigm, and this is “right practice” (5). They apply this paradigm by envisioning *śīla* (technique) as the preparatory practice which is prior to, and in fact lays the groundwork for, the experiencing of UA (3). This initial UA experience authenticates subsequent “true practice,” or (practice-as-)cultivation or GC, which is the cultivation of the initial sudden UA (3). This SA/GC paradigm of practice “collapses the path” (道 [dao], 도 [do], *marga*) by envisioning the “path” as both a process toward a sudden UA experience as well as the cultivation of the UA experience itself.

In this paper, *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* are defined in the context of MA/MS practice. *Śīla* (technical and behavioral discipline) is the process of repetitively learning, practicing, and applying the physical techniques of training and strategies of applying them. *Śīla* also includes the learning of moral precepts, rituals, system of ethics, and philosophy involved in a MA/MS system, as well as their practical applications. *Samādhi* (meditative concentration) is focused concentration up to the point of being in meditation on the aspects of *śīla*, moment by moment, during their execution. Focused concentration on the technique being done in the present, or “essence-in-repetition” (4) which is “right practice” (5, 21), opens up the possibility for the sudden UA experience to not only occur but to be understood as such by the practitioner. Pre-UA practice is the practice toward the syncretism of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*. It is theorized that an experience of sudden initial insight, or UA, momentarily unites *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* into a simultaneity. MA/MS practice is the practice of focused concentration. *Prajñā* (wisdom, cognitive acuity, or insight) is the post-UA continuation and deepening of pre-UA practice. Thus, *prajñā* as

(practice-as-)cultivation (GC) includes the internalizing and intuiting of *śīla* so that the aspects of *śīla* may become integral to one's self-identity. The learning of *śīla* while in focused concentration augments the generation and growth of knowledge and expertise (wisdom) in a MA/MS. This research shows that long-time MA/MS practitioners utilize key aspects of the SA/GC paradigm. They explain that an important purpose of MA/MS practice is to present themselves the conditions which may allow for the possibility of a particular mode of mindful conscious awareness, the UA experience, to occur.

## Results and Discussion

### *Practicing toward the pre-UA syncretism of śīla, samādhi and prajñā*

Eric routinely went into the garage and performed up to 1000 kicks, and had some sense of a notion that "I was doing what I thought I had value and meaning in." This was an internally generated and self-motivated form of discipline that he freely chose to engage in. It was not externally imposed. Eric said, the self-training:

was self-satisfying [and] helped me maintain the proficiency in things and gave me a sense of value [and] identity gave me a pleasant feeling. ... [It was] something unexplainable. ... It was a positive attitude towards ... the things that I can do, can gain from ... but it wasn't clearly thought out. ... [It was] an ambiguous feeling that this was good for me. (Interview #1)

Self-training seems to have aided in the foundation of Eric's personality and value system. It seems that something in Eric's nature was both sparked by and nurtured his motivation to continue to develop his technique *śīla*) and to enjoy the process.

Phil feels that in whatever action one executes, it is critical to think about it and do it correctly. "It is not just that one particular act. ... There are lots of things that build up to for that particular act ... and [appropriate] steps to take." He emphasizes the importance of understanding a technique through constant analysis, reflection, and revision. He said: "When you're doing [a technique], the emphasis is on how many you do that. ... You will find more and more substance to it" (Interview #2).

To Phil, the simultaneous cultivation of *śīla* and *prajñā* demands cultivation in action, in doing or praxis, not mere enactment of technique or mere theorizing. Learning the basics (*śīla*) while concurrently developing wisdom (*prajñā*) and an understanding of and through the basics must be accompanied by praxis. He talked of syncretism of *śīla* and *prajñā* by stressing the importance of keeping in mind the question, "How do you

adapt [what you are learning] to the actual situation?" Development of *prajñā* through praxis, in the "real context" of competition, is achieved by repetition of the technique one chooses to develop as one's own special technique, "that's your base, your necessity, your foundation. ... That's your everything." This is an individualization of *śīla*, by continuous refinement and reflection.

Taekwondo is improvement. That's what it's all about.

... It's the thought behind all the competitors [, their techniques and strategies,] that makes all the difference

... the constant thought that you have to put into trying to get the ultimate. (Interview #3)

Phil is saying that the momentary execution of one's personalized, ultimate technique includes the application of intuited somatic knowledge based on continuously refined competency over an extended period of time. This aligns with Kim's "divine simplicity" (16). Phil stated "simplicity is an art form itself," but qualified this statement by stating that there are:

lots of things that build up to form [any] particular action. ... It might look simple, but is it really simple?

... This so-called technique, how much time do you actually put in? ... It is no longer just simple ... to simplify is to evolve. (Interview #1)

Bill discussed the utility of repetition of fundamentals concerning technique (*śīla*) and of the investigation of their practical applicability as instrumental to his development of the physical and conceptual understanding of not only his MA/MS but of principles and concepts universal to human movement, echoing Kim's "*Walking*" (17).

Practicing the fundamentals over and over and over again gives you the basis of concept as compared to actual specifics ... [and] the tools to be able to make [our] own choices. ... [Thus, I came to] understand that there are principles and concepts that are universal. (Interview #2)

Bill emphasized that his MA/MS practice is fundamental to his growth in self-development and self-understanding. He offered a wide definition of *śīla* by describing it to include physical, developmental, and moral aspects.

Taekwondo is the one art that actually, truly teaches students how to control their emotions; to transcend physical activity. ... The idea of making yourself a better person ... [by] transcending the kicking and blocking motions ... [and to] actually help [people] with their self-confidence, self-esteem, or maybe even anger management. ... It's absolutely truly how to control oneself ... to realize somebody's potential. (Interview #2)

Bill emphasized the concurrent application of techniques (*śīla*)

with focused concentration (*samādhi*) to progress toward the syncretism of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*:

You must practice with all of your mind, all of your concentration, all of your focus. … I do it with as much detail as possible. … The person willing to analyze … and go through a scientific process of their practice … is going to get much further in their cultivation of their martial art and cultivation of themselves. (Interview #2)

As for Kwanjang, he initially emphasized the value of his personal practice of MA/MS in instilling a wider awareness of things over being too narrowly focused on particulars. He pointed out that a calm mind of awareness (stabilizing meditation) through constant practice of technique (*śīla*) is fundamental to the gaining of “perspective” (*prajñā*; wisdom) over time and intense reflection (insight or analytical meditation).

It’s important … to never let anything or anybody rob you of your personal practice. … Martial art practice has helped me maintain a better perspective and a more balanced thinking process. … [A] mentor’s important job is to develop his protégé’s ‘calm mind’ … [and] help him develop balance in terms of perspective … [which] only comes over practice … and it’s an ongoing process. (Interview #1)

Kwanjang’s practice is his regimen of constantly refining (syncretizing *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*) his much more self-development-oriented “inner voice.”

Listen to your “still, quiet voice” telling you to do things you’re interested in … “intuitiveness” if you want to call it that … Practice is for the higher self within me to overrule the smaller but louder and … more obnoxious ego self. … [I’m] working on, on an ongoing basis, refining the spirit. (Interviews #1 and #2)

When asked what utility there is in the repetition, Kwanjang responded, “I am what I am because I’ve practiced the fundamentals.” Like a sword maker, a martial artist:

refine[s] the material to a degree of repetition and intensity and intention whereby so doing he was refining himself. … Martial art practice is … conditioning your fundamental techniques. … Your intention is to refine that technique but you’re refining the deliverer of that. … [Martial arts is] a moving art form that doesn’t exist apart from the practitioner. … [It is] an ongoing process. … Every aspect of the process is as significant as every other aspect of the process. (Interview #2)

#### *Experiencing a śīla/samādhi/prajñā simultaneity, or Understanding Awakening (UA)*

Eric described how he explored a sudden UA experience, the

coming to conscious attention of a deeper understanding of the training he had been doing for years.

[I was] realizing the internal aspect of Taekwondo … [which was] sort of like linking the past without [conscious] reflection, without with the present understanding. … It was sort of like sudden enlightenment. (Interview #1)

Eric then spoke of a turning point in his practice. He was becoming aware of an impending discovery, which was growing in strength and clarity. It was a centrifugal locus of control compelling him to engage in internal introspection concerning his purpose for continued practice. He said:

[I had] sense of special feeling. I’m about to discover something [that would] make me feel better. I was taking refuge in this new possibility … [because] all I [had] believed in was not there. … I didn’t want it, it just happened. (Interview #1)

Eric insisted that what he felt was something that he would soon discover to be self-generated. “What someone else feels or understands what I was doing, that was irrelevant.” He felt a strong desire to know what was happening.

All of a sudden I had this [urge] to know … to reflect on what I’d been doing in a hope to see this thing from my own perspective. It’s all reflective. … It’s a sort of post-realization, subsequent realization of what you had gone through. You have to analyze and filter your thinking, then come up with your rational answer to make peace with yourself. (Interview #1)

Eric’s interpretation of his feelings is indicative of a paradigmatic shift (UA) in his perspective. He suggested that the urge or motivation to learn about himself through the refinement of his kicking technique (*śīla*) is inherent. Eric pointed out that there is a deeper kind of “understanding” (*prajñā*) that is more complex than “mere” learning of technique, and implied this is grounded in technical learning (*śīla*).

Eric described his experiences of awareness of Herrigel’s “it;” what appeared to him as instances of internally-based moments of self-discovery gained through self-reflection through his practice. He said, “It’s sort of knowing … like discovering me, piece by piece. … [Trying to re-experience this feeling was] like a drug” (Interview #1).

Eric found he could put himself in a state of mind in which he was most susceptible re-experiencing this “it” by going off by himself and just kicking. Eric described his habit of training by himself as self-imposed discipline. Training had become more than merely practicing techniques. He said:

[I can now] … free myself from everything else. … I don’t think about anything when I kick. … It’s just me and the movement. … secluding and just doing. …

It's kind of an escape from reality. ... [If] I want to be me, I want to be myself, or I want to be nobody or nothing, I go kick. ... [T]he most genuine self-discipline is the one that [is] imposed by oneself. (Interview #1)

Then, Eric used the term "no-mind, which is *musim* in Korean" (무심, 無心) to describe his experience.

It's sort of like "to remember." ... Mind in the state of *musim* is usual-minded. It doesn't mean there's an absence of thinking. You think, but you don't let the think[ing] hinder you. ... A lot of things kind of integrate into the word *musim*. ... I don't consciously use it, but it happens spontaneously. ... You're conscious but you're not conscious. ... [It] gives a sense of calm ... [to] look at things from not [a] different but [an] empty state of mind. (Interview #2)

Eric often reflected on his practice: "Why does mind hinder your performance. ... OK, so I have just had this experience of *musim*. The next question is, 'So what?' ... I only realize 'it' afterwards (Interview #2). "It" seems to refer to his post-*musim* conceptualization of the experience of *musim*. He interpreted the special feeling intellectually after the fact, not during the experience. I theorize that pre-UA practice towards the synthesis or syncretism of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* allowed Eric the potential to have this *musim* experience, which was a *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity, or UA.

Bill discussed his initial conceptualization of the stilling of the mind through the internalizing of technique to a degree of proficiency through repetition.

First is analytical ... then it goes through the drudgery of actually consciously thinking about it. ... Then not to put too much pressure on myself not to think so hard. ... Truly accepting is where the wisdom of doing it correctly will come. ... I understood that there was a need to still be open because there's ... a feeling of something missing. (Interview #2)

Bill discussed the importance of having the will to push himself towards a syncretism of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*. He began to see the value of internalizing technique to the point of intuitiveness, so that focused concentration (*samādhi*) replaces the overthinking on all the particulars (*śīla*) of technique and becomes "natural."

Understanding is a good thing to a certain point [but] a person having an understanding of their understanding is a multidimensional thing and will go through a long ... all-inclusive process of finding the efficiency through the repetition, getting yourself so tired that your body does what it is naturally supposed to do ... as opposed to a conscious thought process. (Interview #2)

Bill described how the precise enactment of technique (without the imposition of discriminative thought) that feels right, occurs spontaneously after a long process of (over)thinking about technique. This is the *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity.

[I] let myself actually do the motion; to be the motion; to not ... force the motion, to let it happen, and usually that's where the success comes in. ... [It] happens by itself... [I]t's through repetition that you are able to bring it into subconscious thought and 'do it' as opposed to thinking, because thinking and then doing it is [sic] two actions. ... That one movement is subconscious thought. ... [R]epetition simplifies the situation. ... [Y]ou allow it to happen, as opposed to making it happen or purposefully doing it; it just comes out. (Interview #2)

Bill expounded on the sense of doing a certain technique with such proficiency that he described the enactment as a feeling; first as "muscle memory" and then as confidence.

I'm better when I focus on that one thing with everything I have. ... It became muscle memory at that point ... and [with] a level of confidence it becomes a natural reaction ... it is no longer in my ... conscious thought. ... Muscle memory is having the feeling of doing something right. ... It's truly "memory of the mind." ... The mind is absolutely involved, but it gets filed into the subconscious thought [becoming] more of a feeling. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang emphasized the wisdom (*prajñā*) that could be engendered by MA/MS practice enacted with a meditative (*samādhi*) mindset, and the importance of communicating that wisdom to others.

Practice is a kind of moving meditation exercise. ... Inspiration comes in waves, not necessarily during the activity itself. ... Things will jell in my mind. I'll come to a sensibility to realizations that I might not have been able to put together prior to that. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang's long-time practice is constantly evolving, contingent upon experiences of UA, and is a personalized expression of the self. Experiencing instances of UA, engendered by long-time MA/MS practice of "the fundamentals" (*śīla*), harmoniously "widens your frame of reference," grows "an intuitive sense for the whole of the interaction" (*prajñā*) and "simplifies your point of focus" (*samādhi*). His practice is:

a constant evolving and, hopefully, moments of feeling some sense or some enlightenment from that personal practice. ... [T]he more you understand about the fundamentals, the more interest and curiosity and desire to learn you experience, because it widens your frame of reference ... and at the same time simplifies your

point of focus. … If you practice the fundamentals in a balanced manner … [it gives] an intuitive sense or feeling for the whole of the interaction. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang points out that feeling, internalization of techniques (*śīla*) to the point of intuitiveness, becomes over time more a part of their enactment. Conscious thought is still important, but there is focused concentration on fewer (and minuter) aspects.

You don't have to go through the thought process. … Perceptible gaps … get smaller … but you still realize … you have to make little adjustments. … It's gotten to be a habit of an “unconscious competence,” quieting the mind … [or] “subconscious competence” because there's awareness that might not be at the fully conscious level. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang's discussed “intuitiveness,” which involves the gradual unfolding over time of technical proficiency (*śīla*) as an “adaptive continuum” of development that also engenders “specificity,” or development of fundamentals.

It's a continuum. … You get to respond to more changes … the longer that you get to practice … [so] intuitiveness is not an absolute. … I would consider it [as] adaptive. … If you understand something about the fundamentals, I'm sure there is a certain creativity involved. … There's a specificity … you get better at what you practice. … [You] develop more of a feeling of what you specifically practice. (Interview #2)

### *Understanding Awakening (UA) as the ground for Gradual Cultivation (GC)*

Eric spoke of a sense of clarity that emerged from and grew after his *musim* (UA, *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity) experience. It was a paradigmatic shift in perspective toward practice which prompted him to be more self-analytical and led him to consolidate a sense of personal identity. He stated, “Out of confusion came a clear identity. … I had it all along but it wasn't quite out” (Interview #2).

*Musim* was, indeed, ‘for life.’ This UA experience offered him additional motivation towards further synthesizing and internalizing his somatic experiences while training with a newly-acquired understanding of them. This marks the beginning of GC of the UA. When asked if his discriminating thinking intrudes into his experiencing of *musim* at the moment it occurs, he emphatically replied that he did. Thinking or analyzing at the moment of execution interferes in some way with the “rightness” of technique. But, Eric asserted, while *musim* does not interfere with the correctness of a movement, the *musim* experience:

must have an intellectual component. … You have to

be able to grasp that experience … and that takes place … afterwards. … You have to capture what you have actually experienced … [and] eventually it accumulates and becomes conscious … [to] store it in [your] body. [Now, practice] means so much … and yet it's so natural. (Interview #2)

Eric's interpretation of his *musim* experience as UA, and his affirmation that it occurred through his practice and subsequently had a liberating and life-altering effect on him, all echo Gimello's (10) definition of a UA experience.

Phil discussed “martial spirit” as serious and ongoing preparation of one's mind, meaning that the state of mind during MA/MS practice should be that of one practicing as if the proper execution of the right technique in the present moment is the critical factor to preserving one's life. He stated simply that martial spirit “preparation is practice. … [It's] do or die. … You [must] go through the process. … You have to have the thought process” (Interview #3).

Here, Phil confidently stressed the importance of one's preparatory input, the practice towards a *śīla/prajñā* syncretism, in the ideal present-moment execution of a technique. At this point I brought out a card that had the Chinese characters 無心 (*musim*; no-mind) written on it, and asked Phil if this concept had anything to do with his view of MA/MS practice. He said that it:

seemed to be a type of sudden realization of something that is suddenly made conscious … even though I do not plan it … [and] it depends on how you want to make the situation occur. (Interview #3)

Phil suggested that a no-mind (UA) experience, as it relates to practice, is intrinsically and intimately connected to one's subsequent conscious awareness of it having just occurred through practice. To him, the UA experience has a preparatory component; the process one engages in prior to it occurring. Here is how Phil interpreted no-mind (UA):

Because you go through the process … you might not plan it to happen … [or] have no intention for it to happen … [but] all of a sudden it comes out as a possible result. … Because you are going through the process of teaching, all of a sudden you gain something without the heart [心 (*xin*); mind] or without the thought [念 (*nian*)]. (Interview #3)

Phil also touched on the idea that while engaging in “right practice” (5, 8), the UA experience of no-mind cannot be pursued merely as a goal to be achieved, or a result to be anticipated or expected, as doing so might impede its possible occurrence:

It's an occurrence … something [that] happen[s] without you planning [it]. … You have no control over it. How can you control something that you really form out of

… repetition? I cannot purposefully try to develop ‘A1.5’ out of ‘A;’ it just comes to mind while I was practicing. … It just happen[s]. (Interview #3)

Phil confidently asserted that repetition and refinement of MA/MS technique (*sīla*) through practice and while in the “martial spirit” frame of mind (*samādhi/prajñā*) is fundamental to experiencing no-mind (*musim*, UA).

Bill described a UA experience as a euphoric feeling and establishes the validity of subsequent GC, or (practice-as-)cultivation, of that UA experience:

[I like the] feeling of getting something right. … Having that moment of brilliance is somewhat euphoric. … It makes you want to practice longer … to have that feeling over and over. … As long as I can at least get to that euphoric feeling once in that day … it gives me motivation to … do it again next day. (Interview #2)

Re-experiencing these euphoric feelings (UA) are key aspects of practice for Bill. He said:

I really think they are. … The interconnectivity between MA and life is a sense of a feeling … of being able to understand yourself as a better person … to know that you’re on the right pathway. … It’s very important to have those feelings of interconnectedness with martial arts, and people need those feelings. … If it is only physically repetitions then there will be no passion to continue. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang valorized these moments of inspiration (UA) and discusses how they have significantly influenced his view of practice.

It’s not something that you can demand show up. … [It occurs] when things are cohesive and the energy is right within me … but those moments are precious … significant, meaningful, and I think that comes from a regular practice. (Interview #2)

Kwanjang emphasized that “inspiration” or “a moment of enlightenment” (Interview #2), or UA, has fundamentally transformed his view of MA/MS practice and life. What he was referring to was post-UA, life-altering wisdom (*prajñā*).

Inspiration may sometimes mean something that you might have known already in the past but it’s in a different configuration. … It becomes cohesive. … Sometimes it feels like a moment of enlightenment. … It came to be understood on a soul level. … I would like to think I’m a different person from that point forward. (Interview #2)

## Conclusion

Long-time practitioners support the engendering, instilling, and perpetuating of the SA/GC paradigm of practice, which orients them toward the syncretism of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* as well as the potential to experience a *sīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity, or instance of sudden understanding awakening (UA). The practice toward syncretism of *sīla* (knowledge and learning of technique), *samādhi* (focused concentration), and *prajñā* (the continuous development of understanding and wisdom based on and in the enactment of *sīla*) is essential to the potential for a practitioner to experience an instance of UA. Long-time practitioners use a variety of terms to describe their UA, and all these terms refer to UA as a state of mind that fundamentally alters their perspective of their practice.

Continuous and gradual refinement via praxis is a key imperative in the practitioners’ approach to MA/MS practice, whether it be pre-UA practice (practice toward the syncretism of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*) or post-UA cultivation (or GC, the cultivation of the *sīla/samādhi/prajñā* simultaneity). While enactment of technique must accompany learning and understanding of it, these are insufficient for the development of wisdom (*prajñā*). The SA/GC paradigm of practice denotes that continuous refinement of technique (*sīla*) is achieved through ongoing reflection (*prajñā*) on it in praxis while in a “martial spirit” state of self-reflection and focused concentration (*samādhi*). A sense of correctness concerning practice, one that includes the generation, application and development of “focused concentration” (*samādhi*) or “martial spirit,” seems to be a necessary (though not in itself sufficient) precondition for the occurrence of an unintentionally (thoughtlessly, no-mind) produced execution of technique that is right (it may even be a newly-created technique) for the emergent situation.

Participants allude to a feeling of simplicity of a *sīla* (technical expertise) and *prajñā* amalgam that concurrently appears to them to have a functional element that can be intuited, and that includes the possibility of change, adaptation, or flexibility in terms of application or creativity. Growing “divine simplicity” (16) through repetitious enactment of technique (*sīla*) and development of understanding (*prajñā*) is key to both pre-UA practice and post-UA GC. In this paper, it is theorized that this *prajñā*-sustained process of (both pre- and post-UA) GC in the MA/MS context is both the ongoing generation of a mind/body form of knowing which constitutes somatic knowledge and the pre-UA practice toward the syncretism of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*. This allows the potential for an(other) instance of UA to occur.

UA generates an individual-specific paradigmatic shift in understanding, in which the practitioner creates (self-generated)

*prajñā* (wisdom) of his or her MA/MS practice. Upon reflection, the participants initially intellectualize a paradigmatic shift as a gradual process of change, but when they talk about specific instances of experience, the shift appears instantaneous in nature. The participants' continued post-UA practice (GC) appears to heighten the conscious awareness of perceiving subsequent experiences of (the simultaneity of) *śīla/samādhi/prajñā* as a natural effect or consequence of their ongoing practice. The participants assert that interrelatedness and relationships among aspects (elements or constituents) of their practice, and students and peers associated with it, are very important to their continued long-time practice.

The SA/GC paradigm of practice should be a soteriological "goal" of MA/MS practice from the beginning of a practitioner's career. The preliminary findings in this paper warrant further study as well as clearer descriptions of experiences and reflections by long-time MA/MS practitioners.

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