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SHOOTING WITH BOW AND ARROW IN JAPANESE VERSUS WESTERN CULTURES

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Abstract

This paper will use sociological cultural analysis to compare values and practices of shooting with the bow and arrow in Japanese vs Western culture, focusing on Eugen Herrigel's Zen in the Art of Archery, first published in 1948. Herrigel shows the differences in mentalities between the two cultures with respect to shooting with a bow, which in Japanese culture is considered a philosophical act, rather than an act of strength. Japanese archery requires extensive training, as well as a certain state of mind, together with specific values related to the deep respect of the student for the master. As Herrigel is a Westerner, he can use the Japanese cultural approach to archery to guide his readers regarding their expectations for learning the practice. Herrigel's book is of particular interest, due to current fascination with the specificities of the mindset and values inherent to any culture and civilization. The contemporary world urges us to be aware of the differences among cultures, and also to respect each and every way of thinking. Showing empathy towards cultural differences in thinking is customary, and even necessary, for anyone wishing to live in today's society. Moreover, the contemplation of Zen archery, as presented by Herrigel, can be helpful even to those who have no intention of taking up the sport, particularly, though not intuitively, academics. The practice of archery and the symbol of the bow and arrow has been analysed from several viewpoints: religion, philosophy, cultural awareness and evolutionary anthropology.

Keywords: Buddhism; Zen; virtue; Stoicism; meditation.

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1. Introduction

Globalization, and a desire to travel has influenced many, both politically and personally. They wish to relate to others for the sake of collaboration in international projects. Members of all cultures are now exposed to different mindsets visible in different lifestyles, traditions, values, and ways of reflecting on and perceiving their surrounding reality. Cultures can be distinguished through applying the grid of culture identity manifestations, which includes the following elements: “a. symbols; b. heroes; c. rituals, practices and traditions; d. values” (Baciu, 2013, 32). This approach can help identify and classify various mindsets to orient oneself while communicating with members of different cultures and also while functioning in a different cultural environment when studying or working abroad.

Historical cultural development among cultures often produces similar inventions during similar cultural stages, due to the common need for survival. Archery has developed throughout time and

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various cultural spaces in ways that are sometimes very similar, but at other times can differ significantly. Archery has been in common practice throughout the world, starting as a means of survival, continuing as a form of fighting, and in some cultures finally evolving towards a form of philosophy and spirituality, before transitioning to a form of entertainment and sport. Now archery can even be found in virtual reality, where a player can enter an immersive reality where he/she can practice shooting at a target.

Cultures around the world considered the bow and arrow to represent “a major hunting tool and weapon of warfare [...] from prehistoric times until the introduction of firearms”. The bow has been named “one of the most important inventions in history”. However, it is unclear exactly where and when the bow was invented, due to the difficulty in dating archeological items when the equipment “consists of perishable materials” (Grayson et al, 2007, 1).

Archery as a practice is not restricted to a single historical period, which is why it is necessary to understand its various historical transformations. Nowadays, archery in Western culture is considered a hobby and a pastime for both adults and children. For example, it can be part of the entertainment offered by hotels (Călina and Călina, 2021). It can also be included in school physical education curricula (Leşe, 2011, Simion and Croitoru, 2020). This accessibility of archery as a hobby in contemporary times, especially in Korea, is related to “various efforts to popularize and globalize the traditional archery in recent years” (Na, 2019, 22), and one can see this phenomenon manifest in Romania and in other countries as well. The series of books and films *The Hunger Games* has led to an increased interest in archery for the young public, due to the heroine, Katniss Everdeen, who uses a bow to survive and fight against evil.

Archery is a practice present all over the world, in various times in history, under different forms. It is associated with different mindsets in different cultures. The most striking difference is that, while “Today, archery exists as a minority sport ... In bygone eras, however, archery was part of everyday living” (Camus, 2017, 170). As time passes, archery changes from means of survival, hunting, defense and conquest of other territories, to forms of ritual, art, spirituality, entertainment, and competition.

However, after the emergence of firearms, the world witnessed the decline of the “use of the bow and arrow for military and hunting activities.” This was the time when “recreational archery” was introduced in many countries, “as an art and sport”. In ancient Greece and Egypt, athletes practiced what is called “sport archery”. Even in East Asia there is a form of “competitive archery” which was “developed as a martial art and ritual practice” which, unlike in Western culture, supported not only “social order”, but also spirituality (Grayson et al 2007, 2).

African culture, like Western culture, is also focused on the practical aspect of archery, rather than its spiritual and philosophical dimension, which could be a result of the living conditions in the area. As an example, Hadza hunter-gatherers in Tanzania are known to have built their own bows in order “to hunt wild game for food”. They relied on archery for food, with 90% of their diet made up of “wild foods” since they “had no crops, domesticated animals, firearms, or vehicles”. For the Hadza, among others, weapons such as the bow and arrow were considered “an important milestone in the evolution of foraging technology”, as they enabled “hunters to strike their prey from a greater distance, and with more kinetic energy, than is possible with thrown rocks or spears” (Pontzer, 2017, 57).

Western cultures, meanwhile, began to approach archery with nostalgia. As an example, in eighteenth-century England and Wales, archery became a pastime and a means of socializing for the aristocracy (Johnes, 2004).

The focus of this paper will be, from the part of Asian cultures, on Japanese culture, since, on the one hand, it has the particularity of taking, by cultural influence and contact, various cultural products, practices and traditions, and transforming them into something that can be recognized as specifically Japanese. On the other hand, Japanese culture has a special understanding of archery: “Throughout

history there has never been another culture that has so closely linked the act of shooting the bow with the condition of the human spirit”. Moreover, archery overlaps with Japanese culture through the practice of *kyudo*: “For several hundred years *kyudo* has served as the ideal expression of Japanese culture” (Onuma et al, 1993, xi). The concept of *kyudo* refers to the Japanese martial art of archery, which derived from *kyujutsu*, meaning the art of archery, as it was practiced by the samurai, who were situated at the top hierarchy of society in feudal Japan (Sinclair, 2004, 121). Another reason for the focus on Japanese culture in this paper is because Japan has continued to maintain the art of archery, while other Asian cultures, such as the Chinese, have shifted their mentality towards archery because of the “transition to modern firearms in East Asia during the early twentieth century”. Because of this, in China as of 2007, there was “but a single traditional bow shop [...] still in operation”. What is more, bows for Mongolian and Tibetan archery are manufactured instead of bows “used in traditional Chinese archery” (Grayson et al, 2007, 14-15). For Japanese culture, *kyudo* can be seen as signaling “a shift toward sport archery”, as it is “the modern form of traditional Japanese archery that combines elements of the old warrior and ceremonial styles with an emphasis on personal development through grace, dignity, and tranquility (Onuma 1993)” (Grayson et al, 2007, 15).

Meanwhile, in Korea, “The traditional archery flourished in the form of military service examination tests during the Joseon Dynasty and even in the Japanese colonial rule” (Na, 2019, 22). Even in Asian cultures, archery started from a basic human need of survival and defence. After the arrival of firearms, the focus shifted to the spiritual and ritual dimension. Korean culture retains its ritualistic and spiritual dimension while combining it with the modern form, shifting towards sports and to “modern Olympic-style archery, at which Korean athletes have gained international recognition in recent years (Duvernay 1996a, 14-19; Kim 2003, 1-20)”: “In Korea, archery was given new direction by King Kojong as a way to support physical activity while retaining the cultural emphasis on ritual and courtesy” (Grayson, 2007, 15).

A brief review of archery in Asian cultures provides the necessary background knowledge in the Asian mentality and its differences from Western culture mentality. Such a delimitation can be useful in order to know the context of the development of the art of archery in Japan.

Since Japanese culture has been, from various points of view, influenced by Chinese culture, one should take into account the context of Chinese culture related to archery. In early Chinese thought, influenced by Confucius, archery is used as “a metaphor for ethical experience”. According to Confucian thought, “the relationship between social roles and personal character” completely overlaps, as they believed virtue depended on doing what is proper. Moreover, “archery in early China was more of a community ritual than an individual pastime”, which means that archery had a “social dimension to it” (Behuniak, 2010, 588). A main difference between Western and Asian understanding of archery is related to the opposition of sports and art, respectively. However, the differences can be more subtle in contemporary practice, where even Asian cultures have been shifting archery towards a modern form, involving sports and competition as in Korea. Still, the status of archery as art is reinforced in Chinese culture due to the way an archery contest can be “a highly refined aesthetic event”, as “On the shooting field, contestants carried out movements to the accompaniment of various musical scores”. The role of the “set pieces of music” was “to promote and express the enjoyment of the contest itself” (Behuniak, 2010, 596). What is more, elegance was considered as important a skill as aim (Bodde, 1991, 293).

While “The bow is part of the legacies of peoples with ancient roots”, “Few cultures, however, can boast of an archery tradition as rich and lasting as that of the Middle Kingdom”. The role of archery in China has been related to “military skill and political governance, [...] moral behavior and good education, [...] demeanor and calisthenics”. In the beginning, archery was associated with authority, since the rulers of the first Chinese dynasties “were archers and hunting enthusiasts so that there was an early and easy association of the bow with authority”. In time, archery evolved from one purpose to another. In China, for example: “archery had turned from means of survival to leisure sport, court ritual, and skill of aristocrats” (Camus, 2017, 171).

In Japanese culture, horseback archery is called *Yabusame*, and is considered a traditional art “that dates from the Heian Era (10th century)” (Imura et al, 2002, p. 141). In Mongolia, the relationship between horse and rider is traditionally special, based on “the vitality between human and horse in the practice of horse archery”. They have the concept of *khii mor*’ which refers to the “euphoria one feels in riding fast on horseback with the wind against one's face”. Whereas in Mongolia “horse and rider still gallop across the expansive grassland steppe”, in Japan, as far as archery festivals are concerned, “horses gallop along a narrow runway within a temple complex in the heavily populated city of Kyoto”. Horses from Mongolia have reached as far as Japan through migration, together with their riders (Fijn 2021: 58).

Middle Eastern cultures also have a spiritual dimension attached to archery. In Islamic cultures, “from Turkey eastward to India”, and from “medieval times through the nineteenth century”, there is information on archers that “were renowned for both their exceptional skills and their superior weapons”. The bow and arrow were associated with religion, since these weapons were considered “a necessary means of advancing the spread of Islam”. A special category of weapons is made up by the “bow and arrow, which are extolled in many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, occupied a special place above all others (Yücel 1970, 46-49; 1997, 68-80)”. Therefore, “Training in archery was seen as a religious duty and a sign of status” (Grayson et al, 2007, 59). The religious dimension in the practice of archery in Turkey goes as far as claiming that “You did not shoot (anything) when you shot (arrows or spears), but God threw (them)” (Quran, 8:17). This compares the experience of shooting to an act of spontaneity (Koestler, 1960, 17). In Japanese culture, Zen Buddhism leads the practitioner to feel that it is not the archer who shoots the arrow, but the arrow that shoots itself, as Herrigel was taught during his experience with learning a meditative variant of Zen archery with master Awa Kenzo, described in his book *Zen in the Art of Archery*, first published in 1953. Therefore, in both cultures, it is important to note the stress on spontaneity and not on personal will. The latter could be attributed to individualist cultures that focus on achievement of the person. Herrigel not only compares the difference between Western and Asian mindset regarding archery, but also offers his own personal experience of a Westerner being confronted with a completely different practice regarding a common weapon in world cultures, the bow and arrow.

The question is whether or not the practice of archery in various cultural spaces and times is affected by religion, and to what extent. For this, the influence of religion on cultural mindset should be considered in the context of everyday life. In some cases, legends, folklore and mythology are sources of spirituality regarding archery. For instance, in Lakota culture (American Indians), the arrow is a symbol of the sun, with its rays, straight and strong, and the bow is a symbol for the crescent moon. The sun and, therefore, the arrow, are masculine symbols, while the bow and the moon are feminine symbols. What matters is to achieve a balance with the two principles, male and female, and with the bow and arrow, respectively (Martens, 2018). Bhutan, a state situated between India and China in the Himalayas, has myths and legends about archery, such as the following: during the 19th century war between Bhutan and Great Britain, the father of the first king of Bhutan shot an arrow from a mountain, killing the British general; in 600 BC, an Indian prince, who later became the Buddha, won an archery competition and the princess’ hand in marriage; while a 10th century Tibetan king was persecuting adepts of Buddhism, a Buddhist Monk killed him with an arrow while pretending to bow during a dance. Later on, during times of peace, in Bhutan, archery was practiced during festivities and competitions (Ping, 2021). Various images of gods using bows and arrows are also present throughout history and across world cultures, e. g. in ancient Greek and Roman art, statues such as that of Diana, the goddess of hunting, and also gods in Buddhist culture, painted in temples (Stanley, 2017), as well as the stories of the Prophet in Islamic culture, and others. Certain religions do not allow the use of bow and arrows for killing, such as modern Buddhism, which disapproves of using the bow for hunting as it had been used in the past: “The bow was a hunting weapon for millennia until the arrival of modern Buddhism began making archery a cultural outlier, a martial art among a population that disapproves of killing” (Stanley, 2017). For Buddhism, therefore, the bow and arrow can be regarded as a symbol (Stanley, 2017), connected with religion, and present in sacred spaces such as temples. Jewish religion opposes using archery for hunting for trophies, yet it agrees with

using archery for food hunting if this is a necessity. Religion has had a great impact on cultures and this is visible in religious symbols and practices related to archery.

2. Archery and Culture

“How to analyze culture?” is a question on which the choice of methodology and tools is based. Archery is a practice which depends, as has been shown, on the different cultures and on their mindsets.

The research methodology of the paper focuses on cultural analysis, according to which research is done through interdisciplinary means (Lemmon, 2002), and which belongs to the wider field of Sociology (Williams, 1976, 497-506). Cultural analysis, as a methodology, helps with understanding values and social norms which may lead to the practice and understanding of archery in various ways, in different cultures, and at different times in history. What is more, cultural analysis is especially helpful in showing how the members of a society have been influenced by the values, traditions and norms which make up their mindset (Lemmon, 2022). The practice of archery illustrates all these influences, as it is a cultural product that reflects the process of learning an individual’s native culture. The way culture is used for adaptation and survival is also a concern of cultural analysis (Lemmon, 2022). The practice of archery began as a means of survival, then underwent a process of adaptation from one culture to another, as it became a practice for improving the individual philosophically and religiously, evolving in more contemporary times to become a pastime and finally adapted to use in virtual reality.

Evolutionary anthropology provides further insight into the issue of survival. According to evolutionary anthropology, the bow and arrow provided the grounds for the beginnings of individualism in Western culture, since people no longer had to depend on the community for survival: “The western North American record suggests the bow did not increase the propensity of groups and individuals to engage in social coercion, providing instead an effective means for individual and families to defend themselves against attempts at such coercion” (Bettinger, 2013, 122). Gradually, as Western history progresses, there is a greater tendency to move towards individualism, which can be achieved once there is security, stability and sufficient resources. Once basic living conditions and needs are satisfied, cultures can move away from struggling to ensure these basic needs and further into the refinement and development of their cultural products, as well as into caring for their spiritual needs. The bow exemplifies the evolution of cultures through the evolution of the achievements of their members, and ensuring their basic survival needs, until they discover new needs. This evolution is reflected in the changing perception and practices related to archery. Technological evolution is part of the refinement and further development of cultures, through inventions which both ensure better living conditions and opportunity for learning, as well as entertainment. More recently, the bow is present in virtual reality simulations, thus attaining the latest development, that of the digital age. For instance, Purnomo et al (2022) present a virtual reality simulator that was designed to allow “users to learn and practice traditional archery motion sequences in a virtual environment”. Technological possibilities can offer experiencing the practice of Japanese horseback archery through virtual simulation: “Since a horseback archery requires both horse riding skill and archery skill simultaneously, ordinary people cannot experience this excitement during their lifetimes” (Imura et al, 2002, p. 141).

Cultural analysis also shows that “people use culture” in order to “create and express,” as well as to “advance and change” (Lemmon, 2022). Indeed, the use of archery to improve an individual, through the development of Buddhist meditation and of virtue shows how archery could be used to create better personalities through a better way of thinking. It also illustrates the belief that the outcomes of human actions are uncertain, just as the result of shooting may not be known. This is similar to the Western view of Stoicism. According to Sellars (2016), the good practitioner of the Stoic philosophy can be compared to an archer, since “he does everything he can to hit the target, but his happiness does not depend on whether he hits the target or not (Stobaeus 2,76, 11-15). What matters is shooting well, for whether the arrow hits the target or not depends on other factors outside of the archer’s

control.” For Stoicism, what matters to achieve happiness is “virtue”, which is considered “the sole good” (Blecher, 2006, 157). For Zen Buddhist archery, hitting the target comes as a natural result of shooting well. Archery practitioners can change the way they feel about themselves and improve, by means of becoming better persons.

Furthermore, the addition of anthropology as research methodology demonstrates that the bow and arrow can be interpreted as a cultural symbol, and the practice of archery as a symbolic action which is, in turn, culturally learned. The purpose of a bow is founded on a cultural code, and conventionally understood. This understanding of the bow and arrow is based on an analogy with Mihăilescu (2007), who compares it to offering flowers, based on learned conventions, which makes it become a symbolic action.

This section analyses Herrigel’s experience, which can be used as field study for research within cultural analysis (Lemmon, 2022). Field analysis is also a tool for research within the related field of cultural sociology (Savage & Silva, 2013, 111-126). Herrigel provides an account of his own experience with studying Japanese archery with a Zen Buddhist master, and compares this with the way archery is perceived in his own Western culture.

The experience of Zen Buddhism is, according to Herrigel (2021, 10), present in all areas of Japanese life, such as ikebana, the samurais’ training. He mentions in the preface that he believes that studying Buddhism in archery has influenced him in wishing to write about his experience in very clear and accessible language. The practice of Zen Buddhism can lead to an experience of “detachment”, developing contemplative skills, emptying someone of oneself, and becoming one with the deity (Herrigel, 2021, 14). The practice of meditation has become very popular nowadays, with the increased interest in mindfulness, which is known for its benefits in managing stress. Meditation is known for its benefits in therapies in the field of psychology: “For more than a century, many aspects of Buddhist teaching and practices have been recognized for its psychotherapeutic effects by Western scholars (Davids, 1914)” (Fung & Wong, 2017, 171). Zen Buddhism is not practiced in isolation only (and not only by monks); it can be practiced by something as simple as observing nature in Japanese gardens. Zen Buddhism can make someone more observant of the changes in nature, for example through the composition of haiku poems, which are based in the here and now, and do not allow the person to move towards the future or towards the past. Therefore, increased awareness of someone’s surroundings and less stress can be regarded as benefits of the Zen Buddhist mindset practice. The awareness of the impermanence of things in life is also raised by Buddhism, together with self-awareness, as in meditation the flow of thought is not stopped (Uchiyama, 2004, xviii).

To sum up, just like therapies such as psychoanalysis, Buddhism is “concerned with the nature of man and with a practice leading to his wellbeing” (Fromm, 1959, p. 79). The differences between the two are in their nature, which for psychoanalysis is related to mental health, and which for Zen is related to spirituality, religion, and mysticism: “Psychoanalysis is a scientific method, non-religious to its core. Zen is a theory and technique to achieve "enlightenment", an experience which in the West would be called religious or mystical. Psychoanalysis is a therapy for mental illness; Zen a way to spiritual salvation” (Fromm, 1959, 79). At the same time, Zen Buddhism can be relevant to secular life, and not just to ascetic life, as it can be seen by Western culture members, for whom religion means a detachment from the joys and concerns of everyday life. This is visible in the practices of Zen Buddhism which are all concerns of everyday life, such as ikebana, garden design, writing poetry, practicing calligraphy, and archery.

Archery is a practice that can be used as an occasion to practice cultural awareness. Cultural awareness has been defined as “An approach to conceptualizing the kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to undertake successful intercultural communication, which explicitly recognizes the cultural dimension of communicative competence” (Baker, 2012, 62). Through cultural awareness, one can become more understanding towards the mindsets of other cultures. This is an issue present in Herrigel’s *Zen in the Art of Archery*, where the European, wishing to better understand Zen Buddhism, decides to study the art of archery with one of the famous masters. However, the

experience leads to many misunderstandings, not just from person to person, but from one cultural mindset to another. The experience of Herrigel is unlike anything he would have expected. His experience as a student to the master could be summed up as follows, from the point of view of cultural awareness: “Learning anything new is difficult. Sometimes, learning kyudo can seem particularly so. The traditional Japanese method of instruction can be quite frustrating, especially to Westerners who all too often expect to be taught in a logical, orderly fashion. The Japanese tend toward loose interpretation of words. Often, that which remains unspoken is of more importance than what is voiced.” (Onuma et al, 1993, ix) The master Herrigel would use various statements that could sound strange and ambiguous to the ears of the Westerner, unused to Zen Buddhist meditation practice and philosophy, as in the following fragment:

‘What I have said’, the Master told me severely, ‘was not praise, only a statement that ought not to touch you. Nor was my bow meant for you, for you are entirely innocent of this shot. You remained this time absolutely self-oblivious and without purpose in the highest tension, so that the shot fell from you like a ripe fruit. Now go on practising as if nothing had happened.’ Only after a considerable time did more right shots occasionally come off, which the Master signalled by a deep bow. How it happened that they loosed themselves without my doing anything, how it came about that my tightly closed right hand suddenly flew back wide open, I could not explain then, and I cannot explain today (Herrigel, 2021, 40-41).

The practice of archery in this case is strongly associated with meditation, and less, if at all, with the usual understanding of sport in Western culture. The master speaks in a way that brings to mind the short stories in Zen Buddhist or Taoist style, where the reader needs to understand them through the framework of this very mindset. The explanation for the student’s success is that he had let go of thoughts related to exercising control over hitting the target. Once the student relaxes enough and lets go of these landmarks in his practice, then success can occur: “the archer hits the target without having aimed - more I cannot say.” (Herrigel, 2021, 44) It is all a spiritual exercise: “‘Your arrows do not carry,’ observed the Master, ‘because they do not reach far enough spiritually. You must act as if the goal were infinitely far off.’” (Herrigel, 2021, 42).

The spirit of motivation from Western culture is absent in this relationship between master and disciple, at least from a Western mindset. While being ambitious, and exercising over and over again would be the solution for a Westerner in learning something through repetition, in the case of Zen Buddhist archery this is exactly something to avoid. Being glad about succeeding is not something to be done in the practice of Zen Buddhist archery, either. The practice of archery is supposed to be approached from a spiritual point of view, while letting go of the preconceived notions of personal will, trying hard, focusing on hitting the target, or exercising self-control.

Learning Japanese Zen archery may seem more like a philosophical practice to a Westerner. The teachings of Herrigel’s master do not actually sound religious, but are simply part of a philosophical system that is not familiar to the Western students. Zen Buddhism is difficult to understand, however, and it is not even precisely defined. When a disciple asks a question such as “What is Zen?”, the answer is something such as “Three pounds of flax”, “A decaying noodle” (Koestler, 1960, 16), showing that Zen is only taught through ambiguous parables and also that “It knows no god, no afterlife, no good and no evil, as the rock garden knows no flowers, herbs, or shrubs” (Koestler, 1960, 15). Up to this point, Zen does not have a definition or a doctrine, and it can be regarded as elusive for the person not familiar with it, especially for a Westerner. A Westerner may think of Zen koans as riddles, making things even more unclear and more complicated than before. Indeed, Zen could be described as “self-debunking”, or as absurd, as leg-pulling (Koestler, 1960, 16). Such traits are easily noticeable, especially to Western readers of Herrigel, as he describes his adventures with the Zen Buddhist mindset of learning archery in Japan.

Why should the student in the art of archery just let go and feel that the arrow shoots itself? This is part of the Zen concept of non-doing (Grigg, 2012, 217). Zen encourages spontaneity, which is in opposition to “Confucian rigidity and social order” (Koestler, 1960, 20). Another concept relevant to Zen is that of *satori*, or “the sudden flash of insight which brings on Awakening or Enlightenment” (Koestler, 1960, 19). All of these are supposed to be achieved while practicing the Zen art of archery,

judging from Herrigel's account of his experience with the master. The act of illumination is not something that can be explained in words, or from a rational point of view, which is why it makes understanding Zen archery so difficult for those raised by Western culture. Grigg (1994, 282) sees how Herrigel "is having trouble understanding how the target is hit", and shows how the master is telling his students that he is "under an illusion" if he believes that "even a rough understanding of these dark connections" could help him, and refers to enlightenment and the ability to make it to the level where it shoots itself, as follows: "These are processes which are beyond the reach of understanding". These words make the experience of Herrigel even more elusive and apparently beyond the reach of a Western-minded student. The words of the Zen archery master sound more and more like poetry or riddles, sometimes even bringing to mind absurdist literature. Yet, Herrigel is working with an experienced master. Generally, in Western culture, the relationship between master and disciple can be based on the authority of the master and on the master's answering questions and giving clarifications. However, the Zen archery master makes the experience less and less clear for his student. While readers are going through Herrigel's account, they become more and more confused, just like Herrigel himself.

The confusion of Western readers springs from the Western notion of paradox. Cavendish finds a Taoist paradox which is similarly expressed in Zen by Grigg (1994). According to Cavendish (1980, 93), achieving, in his example, union with Tao, is "achieved by not trying to achieve anything, by ridding oneself of all desires". Grigg (1994) presents an analogy with a Zen aphorism: "A sword cannot cut itself. Desire cannot overcome itself; self cannot understand itself; the Way cannot be followed by trying." This is why the reader may conclude that the practice of Zen archery can be extremely difficult for a Western student since Western culture seeks to grasp an understanding of the process. After all, archery looks like a concrete experience, yet, at the same time, Herrigel's experience is that of moving towards an abstract realm which is unlike any philosophical system with which he is familiar. Grigg (1994) writes about this paradox in Herrigel's experience regarding "how to release the arrow without releasing it." Thus, "Herrigel is told that the upper end of the bow pierces the sky and from the lower end hangs the Earth suspended by a delicate thread. The arrow must be released with such a smooth motion that the thread will not break." This sounds not like a physical sport's instructions, but like a literary account, using lots of figurative language. It also brings to mind the riddles of Western fairy-tales that the hero has to decode in order to achieve his tasks and earn his rewards from the king or emperor.

Koestler (1960, 22) comments precisely on Herrigel's experience with learning the art of archery from the master. The main idea repeatedly expressed by the master regarding the Zen experience, that the student must relax: "...only by withdrawing from all attachments whatsoever, by becoming utterly egoless: so that the soul, sunk within itself, stands in the plenitude of its nameless origin...". The result of this state of mind should be spontaneity, meaning that the actions in drawing and releasing the bow should be automatic. Yet, the process is a difficult one. Herrigel goes through a "spiritual crisis", when he cheats by relaxing his body as a "conscious act of will", and not allowing the shot to "fall by itself from the archer 'like snow from a bamboo-leaf'". While the Western mindset values the strengthening of the ego, the Zen Buddhist Eastern mindset values what could be called an "egoless" person. The master tells Herrigel: "Once you have grown truly egoless you can break off at any time", and that the arrow will shoot itself when Herrigel is "self-oblivious and without purpose" (Herrigel, 2021, 41).

Herrigel does not need to let go only of his personal control, or of the control exercised by mind and body, but also of a mindset he has grown up with and has known all his life. He really needs to act, think, and view everything from a completely new perspective, which is very difficult. At this point, Herrigel is struggling with leaving behind all previous knowledge created by the culture he has been educated in, and accepting everything anew from a culture he is just stepping into. He is faced with two conflicting cultural mindsets, which is why he struggles with his experience of learning with the master. Learning archery in Japan leads to a clash of cultures, resulting in culture shock. While Herrigel starts his exploration of Zen archery with a great feeling of enthusiasm (the honeymoon phase of culture shock), he gradually starts to feel disappointed by the cultural differences, when he

does not understand what the master means, and finally moves towards accepting the cultural differences when he manages gradually to feel that, when he shoots the arrow, it does the action, not himself, as the master keeps telling him. His experience of culture shock is a challenge to get him to understand a different mindset, making archery a completely different practice than what he has been used to in his own culture.

Culture shock is best viewed as “an active process of dealing with change rather than as a noxious event” (Ward et al, 2020, p. xii), particularly when applied to Herrigel’s process of learning. Herrigel faces the interaction with an entirely different culture, not as a tourist, and not through a change in environment. He must go deeper in order to understand the entirely different cultural mindset which is the result of Zen Buddhism.

3. Archery: Based on Religion or Philosophy?

Western culture does not associate meditation practice or religious mindset with archery, which makes it difficult to compare Zen archery with Western archery. This is one reason why Herrigel, as a member of Western culture, finds it hard, if not impossible, to find something equivalent from his own culture that he can use to better understand the Zen practice in the art of archery. Generally, people tend to rely on previous knowledge and experience in order to classify anything new they come across. It is only in childhood that someone learns from scratch. Later in life, they are already shaped by former experiences, which function as bases for further gaining of knowledge. While Herrigel is open to understanding Zen Buddhism through the practice of archery, he finds it difficult, since his previous mindset, shaped by Western culture, hinders him in the process. Western archery is based on action, while Zen archery is based on non-action. This extremely opposite mindset makes it difficult for Herrigel to understand what he should do. If one also considers the ambiguity and riddle-like Zen Buddhist teachings coming from his master along the way, one can understand why Herrigel has had a hard time gaining insight into traditional Japanese archery.

In fact, things should be quite simple: Zen is about this world, unlike the Christian religion, where the present world is not considered the real one. The real world, for Christianity, is in the afterlife, and life here is an illusion. Zen works in an opposite way: life here and now, as one sees and experiences it through one’s various senses, is the only thing that one has. What is more, the spontaneity of shooting the arrow and the non-action of the ego could be interpreted as a consequence of constant practice from a Western point of view. Once someone practices a lot, or once that person does something for a long time, repeatedly, it can turn into a routine. Then they are no longer thinking as much about what they are doing, and they do it all automatically. Yet, this analogy shows that one is never free from including previous knowledge and experience when gaining new knowledge and experience. Humans constantly feel the need to look for a reference point and draw comparisons. They need something to rely on in order to feel less anxious in the face of the unknown. This is what Herrigel does: he relies on the idea that lots of practice can make him shoot correctly, yet it takes a very long time for this to happen. Therefore, it is unclear whether this technique would actually work with respect to the Zen Buddhist practice of archery.

Since Zen Buddhism is such an elusive concept, with no clear definition beyond various analogies with elements in nature, such as being told that a flower is a flower, for instance, and that one should not look for any further meaning beyond that; Westerners are even more confused regarding its nature. Is Zen a religion or is it a philosophy?

Western culture takes great pride in Aristotle’s philosophy, which may lead to a spiritual understanding of Western practice of archery. Yet, the images used in building metaphors by Aristotle and Confucius mean different things, showing how much Western and Eastern cultural mindsets and background can differ: “Archery is an example of a shared metaphor in the Confucian *Analects* and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. It seems that while both texts employ images that are close together, their meanings are far apart.” (Camus, 2017, 165). Yet, in the concluding remarks of the research done by Camus (2017, 183), there is mention of an author complaining that “contemporary scholars

who want to separate entirely the academic world from the athletic one are ironically at odds with the original Academy of Plato and the Lyceum of Aristotle” (Dombrowski, 2009, 9). Therefore, Western archery, in its early beginnings at least, was not only about physical force and training. It also originally included a spiritual, philosophical dimension.

The archery metaphor for Confucius and Aristotle refers to ethics, to the “mean”, or to “what is right”, in a proportional way, thus not referring to quantity. According to both Confucius and Aristotle, “the doctrine of the mean is meant to show that virtue should be conceived as an archery-like quality and that a virtuous agent who is disposed to act or live rightly is likened to an excellent archer who has the skill to hit the target” (Yu, 2007, 79–80).

Virtue is considered by both Aristotle and Confucius to be the mean between two vices: excess and deficiency. Therefore, to both of them, the mean refers to “what is right and appropriate”. The difference between the two views lies in the following: Aristotle’s mean doctrine refers to “the mean as a notion of quantity or proportionality”, while Confucius’ mean doctrine refers to the mean as “a normative or prescriptive notion” (Yu, 2010, 6799). Ancient and contemporary Chinese have the term *zhong*, both noun and verb. The noun can be translated as “middle” and “appropriateness” (Yu, 2010, 6800). The image of the archer aiming for and hitting the target can be used figuratively to illustrate the idea of “hitting the mean”. Inner and outer mean are not separate, just like the archer manages to hit the target due to acquired skill. Similarly, a virtuous person that manages to hit “the mean in passions and actions” does so due to the fact that the inner mean is “a sort of skill-like state in the agent, corresponding to the archer’s skill in archery”. Therefore, hitting the mean is similar to shooting an arrow: “The possession and exercise of the skills of archery make one good as an archer; correspondingly, the possession and exercise of the inner mean make one good as a human being.” This is the common approach to the ethics of Aristotle and Confucius (Yu, 2010, 6802). The use of archery as a model for virtuous behaviour for both Aristotle and Confucius is related to the time in which they lived: it was a period “which was still heavily influenced by the values of ancient heroic societies, especially the admiration of heroes in war and hunting” (Yu, 2010, 6803).

The virtue in archery could be regarded as a complete training, as a way of showing that the student is very much dedicated to learning everything that has to do with archery. The true honesty of understanding the practice of archery and respecting the master teaching this art will result in a virtuous student. The student has worked hard and understood that archery is much more than the end result, that of hitting the target. The process of learning is stressed, and the result is not the main target to be achieved. Therefore, the process of learning and the way the students dedicate himself/herself to it is much more important than the final result. Winning is not the main idea, but rather the proper progression through all the necessary steps. Winning is thus simply a natural endpoint of the entire process. If you understand the principles and values of archery, therefore, then hitting the target is just a natural result, which happens without needing to focus on it specifically.

Archery in Asian and Western cultures could be distinguished by, mainly, two dimensions: the Asian cultures focus on a dimension of art, philosophy, ethics, and spirituality, while Western cultures focus on a dimension of practical use and competition. Thus, in Western cultures, the bow and arrows were primarily so that individuals would not have to depend on the group for survival, and instead have the opportunity to defend themselves and to provide food for themselves, increasing their sense of autonomy. They also used the bow and arrow to create a hierarchical social organization based on skills in archery, such as in the case of Western North America (Bettinger, 2013, 118). The role of progress offered by the bow in economy and warfare is also worth mentioning, since archery could be used as a means to provide enough food resources as well as to keep invaders out of someone’s own territory or to conquer new territories. Through conquest, contacts with other established cultures could lead to the sharing of inventions and, thus, improvements in both cultures, making life more comfortable. The most frequent aspect of archery nowadays in Western culture is that of competition, of showing off strength and skill by hitting the target precisely. This aspect can be visible in contemporary competitions organized for various occasions, such as the Olympic games, but also even for students, who are praised if they bring back home a trophy.

For Western culture members, the general tendency is to consider war as a means of strategies, and quality of arms, as well as soldiers' training and endurance. In comparison, for Eastern cultures, war is described as an art or, better put, as a philosophy. For instance, Chinese author Sun Tzu's book *The Art of War* shows the same Buddhist mentality regarding warfare, which to the Western public sounds more like philosophy and lessons in morality. For instance, on one occasion, Sun Tzu stresses the Buddhist concept of non-doing, when he claims that it is preferable to conquer the enemy without fighting: "Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting" (Tzu, 2008, 18). The paradox is also present in Sun Tzu's book, claiming that in war one must "avoid direct confrontation" (Bourgeois et al, 2018, 3). This strategy seems nonsensical from a Western mindset, which would expect technical and military advice, rather than philosophical. The fact that the book can be applied to other domains in life than war shows the profound influence of Buddhist mindset over all Eastern cultures' activities. Archery is under the influence of the very same mindset in Eastern cultures, and the example of Herrigel's experience in Japan shows how the two mindsets can clash when attempting to understand the Eastern culture's approach to the use of arms, fighting, and wars in general. Musashi, a famous Samurai, proposes a model of direct combat and of gaining victory in *The Book of Five Rings*, yet he is also concerned with a philosophy and psychology of war, referring to the rings which are "a reference to the Buddhist belief in the five core elements—earth, water, fire, wind, and emptiness" (Bourgeois et al, 2018, 6). Musashi's book is about the spiritual development of the warrior, in this case of the samurai, as he refers to "the need for aspiring samurai to focus not only on the study of battlefield tactics ('conflict'), but also of poetry and calligraphy ('culture'), to achieve mastery" (Bourgeois et al, 2018, 6). There is no known strategic book on war in Western culture written in a similar way and proposing such means of personal development through war, just like there is no such understanding of the practice of archery itself.

While Aristotle also used archery to illustrate his doctrine of ethics, this is a philosopher's work, and it does not imply the same type of application when archers from Western cultures practice their shooting.

Religion is just one means of making up rules for the protection and functioning of society. Its influence can be seen in Eastern archery if one views Zen Buddhism as a religion; it is also visible in Middle Eastern cultures, where practicing archery was considered a religious duty. For Western cultures, archery is a secular practice. Sports and military technique do not merge with philosophical, meditation or religious ideas. Archery could be considered part of the practice of war, which is also a constant in history, and a driver of progress when it comes to various cultures and civilizations advancing and collaborating, eventually, with the conquered ones.

4. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that religion can be regarded as the origin for various types of philosophies and mindsets concerning the practice of archery and the symbol of the bow and arrow. However, traditional Japanese archery and Western archery use a mixture of religion, philosophy and interpretation of metaphor. The latter can be drawn from Camus' observations regarding the imagery of archery in the works of Confucius and Aristotle.

The ethics associated with learning archery in both Western and Eastern culture eventually becomes equivalent to contemporary research ethics. The contemporary discussion regarding plagiarism in academic research is a good equivalent. While doing a PhD or other form of research, the focus should not be on the end result only, that of receiving the degree. This is a consequence of respecting all ethical principles and of achieving all the necessary skills for understanding research, not just for the respective paper but also for a tenured academic's further research. In all areas of life, there is a need to be correct, so ethics is an important part of life generally. Archery and research are just two examples of practices and areas of life where these principles can be applied. Prizes or praises for an academic's activities should not be the main motivating factor. What matters more is the knowledge

that they accumulate, the skills they develop, and ultimately the experience they gain and the way they can use it further.

In the past, archery was used as a clear means to achieve something, generally to benefit the community, by hunting and defending oneself against enemies or for conquering other territories. Here, the end result matters the most, yet, in order for it to be achieved, nothing is certain. Shooting with a bow and arrow does not mean anything certain, after all; it just means trying and, eventually, struggling, or showing good intentions, or simply survival instincts. Archery is a symbol of dealing with uncertainty in life at all levels. After all, can anyone really control and be certain about anything in life? Life, by definition, is uncontrollable and unexpected. If one does not relax and subscribe to the principle of non-action in Zen Buddhism, the unpredictability and lack of control in life can lead to great anxiety. One form of control could be establishing various rules or ceremonies, specific to Eastern cultures, which are related to learning how to practice archery. Accepting the idea that nothing is certain, that everything is ephemeral and subject to change, has been transferred into various Eastern practices, such as Zen Buddhist archery. Even definitions of Zen philosophy are not clear, which shows the need to accept uncertainty. Yet, at the same time, rules that are part of the process of learning and of various ceremonies in Eastern cultures can be a way to establish some sort of control of at least some aspects, anxiety in the face of the ever-changing world.

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