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COUNSELING · HYPNOSIS · MENTORING · CONSULTING · TRAINING · PRESENTATIONS

Philosophy and Psychology of the Martial Arts

武術的哲學和心理學

SEMINAR FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS



J. KINGSTON COWART, M.S.

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SEMINAR SYNOPSIS

The Seminar

In this seminar, J. Kingston Cowart will explain and demonstrate how the physical movements of the martial arts embody profound philosophical and spiritual principles — which is why they work so well.

He will also show how modern psychological research supports the deep insights which the martial arts have traditionally revealed about human nature.

This is more than a lecture. The seminar includes hands-on applications of principles and an introduction to meditative consciousness as a martial arts mindset.

Participants will receive an extensive bibliography for later study and a multipage syllabus/ worksheet for use during the seminar. Bring pen or pencil and a firm writing surface (such as a clipboard or notebook). Mr. Cowart's teaching style is open and interactive. The material in the syllabus/worksheet will be considerably amplified in dialogue during the course of the program. Questions and discussion will be encouraged.

The Instructor

J. Kingston Cowart began his martial arts training at Brian Adams' Kenpo (Chinese) Karate studio when he was 18 years old. He gratefully acknowledges Brian Adams as a pivotal influence in his early life. He later received his 1st degree black belt in Kenpo from Parker Linekin. He is currently an adjunct associate instructor at Parker Linekin's Academy of the Martial Arts in San Diego.

A member of the International Society of Chinese Philosophy, his understanding of the martial arts is informed by many years of academic study, including B.A.s in sociology, psychology, equivalent units in religious studies (focused on world religions, eastern traditions, and philosophy of spirit), an M.S. in counseling, and an M.A. (ABT) in philosophy and psychology of religion (emphasizing principles of self-change).

Mr. Cowart has been a change consultant specializing in influence communication in counseling, hypnotherapy, mentoring, presentations and related areas since 1970. He holds California community college credentials in psychology, counseling, and philosophy & religion. He founded and taught the first martial arts classes at San Diego State University (1966-68) and the SDSU Self-Hypnosis Program (1971-1985).

He has taught police psychology at Southwestern College, and lectured on both altered states of consciousness and consciousness & self-change for the California State University-San Marcos Office of Extended Studies. His practical martial arts experience includes the disarming and/or forcible physical arrest of numerous suspects during several years as a reserve deputy sheriff for the County of San Diego.

PRELIMINARY MEDITATIONS

Martin Buber

“Will and Love” — Stanza Three

We cannot help,
Using power,
Cannot escape the compulsion,
To afflict the world,
So let us, prudently in judgement,
And mightily in conflict,
Love powerfully.

Lao-Tzü

Tao Te Ching

[*The Book of the Way and Its Power*]

Chapter 28

Know the masculine,
Keep to the feminine,
And be the brook of the world.

St. Augustine

Epistolam Johannes et Parthus

Tractatus 7 - Section 8

Love and do as you will.

When we reflect for a moment on the lines above we may discern that each selection has to do with the exercise of power and its relation to love. Buber would have us “love powerfully” as an antidote to the unavoidable intrusions into the lives of others caused by our very existence. Lao-Tzü suggests that we love receptivity to spirit in all of our affairs. St. Augustine also makes that point. Often misquoted as “Love God and do as you will,” his actual statement means much the same thing, for real love must always be a love of the ultimate good — in ourselves, in others, and in each goal and every action we choose.

With respect to the power inherent in martial arts techniques, we must never forget that our primary relation to any whom we may encounter, whether as partners in the training hall or as attackers in the street, must be one of love and responsibility — even when exceptionally forceful responses are required.

That is the true martial arts *way* no matter which of the many excellent martial arts *styles* we may practice.

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PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MARTIAL ARTS

J. Kingston Cowart, M.S.

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

Initial Questions¹

Q. Why are you here?

A. I am here to _____.

Q. How did you come to be here?

A. I _____.

Q. What is the one thing you must never do in martial arts (or in life)?

A. I must never _____.

Q. Ideally, if someone attacked you in a deadly manner with a vicious knife thrust and there were no escape, what would you *not* do?

A: Ideally, under those circumstances, I would *not* _____.

Q. What are the martial arts without their philosophical foundations?

A. Without their philosophical foundations the martial arts are _____.

Q. What lies at the heart of the martial arts?

A. What lies at the heart of the martial arts is _____.

Q. Aside from Heaven's Mandate (fate; the way things are) what determines the course and quality of your life?

A. What determines the course and quality of my life is my _____.

¹ Answers to fill-in and multiple choice questions can be found on pp. 29-30 below. The questions are intended to be provocative. There is a distinct benefit to be derived from thinking carefully for oneself about them for a while and discussing them in dialogue in the course of the program. Skipping ahead is therefore not recommended.

Three Approaches to This Seminar

In this program we will explore the ways in which the physical movements of the martial arts embody profound philosophical and spiritual principles; discuss how receptivity to those principles not only increases martial arts proficiency but can also lay the groundwork for in-depth self-change; and review some modern psychological (and other scientific) research supporting the rich insights which the martial arts have traditionally revealed about human nature.

The information presented may be approached in three basic ways: psychologically, philosophically, and spiritually. The psychological approach is limited to concerns about the way the brain, mind, and personality function in the material order — commonly without reference to philosophical constructs or spiritual values. The approach from philosophy involves the investigation of causes and laws which underlie material reality — specifically through the love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and methods of moral self-discipline. The spiritual approach entails receptive responsiveness to Spirit as the essential underlying principle activating all things.

Some participants, with perhaps an ordinary and general interest, will see the seminar as an informative conceptual overview of the topic.

Others will wish to go somewhat farther. They will want to actually augment their martial arts training and practice with meaningful insights regarding the philosophical and psychological principles which those arts embody in action. They may also find that these principles can be meaningfully applied in business activities, family life, and other pursuits.

There may even be a few who seek to understand their whole relation to existence in terms of the metaphysics which a deep grasp of the martial arts can reveal. They will thus have both of the preceding perspectives as well as a sincere desire for serious personal self-change.

You may not consciously realize your own approach until the seminar is over and you later discover yourself affected in one way or another — for there is more to your consciousness than the conscious mind alone. There is, to begin with, the usually unconscious initial metaphysical posit upon which we each base our entire perception of reality.

Brief Comments On Metaphysics

Metaphysics Defined

To begin to get an initial grasp of what metaphysics means in terms of the martial arts, let us start with the word "metaphysics" itself, which comes to us from the Greek word *metaphysikos* (μεταφυσική), meaning "after physics." Although this was originally just the name given to the book Aristotle wrote after writing the *Physics*, it long ago acquired the connotation "beyond physics" or "more than" physics.

For our purpose today, we shall define metaphysics as: "the philosophy of the nature and structure of reality," with a special care for whether or not reality is essentially spiritual or material and what that means for us either way. With respect to the martial arts, human beings can be described as entities which have an innate capacity for embodying metaphysical principles in martial arts training and practice.

Q. On what basis, therefore, might the martial arts themselves be said to have being?

A. They have being to the extent that they are _____.

Two Primary Views of Reality

There are two primary views of reality. One is materialist in nature. The other is often referred to as the spiritualist perspective.²

Materialism. The materialist approach to reality is inherently utilitarian.³ It values ends over means and formulates a calculus of conduct to engineer desired outcomes. Right action is said to be the doing of whatever offers an advantage over outward events in order to achieve a desired goal. Anything goes if it works, might makes right, and the end justifies the means. Results alone are all that really count. It is for that reason that Machiavelli said: "The actions of all men, and especially of princes, are judged by the result. . . . A prince, then should look mainly to winning."⁴

In China, the greatest champion of materialism (prior to Mao Tse-tung) was Mo-tzü. His goal was the greatest good for the greatest number. He therefore argued that any action which benefits the people at large constitutes right action. The difficulty with this lies in the problem of premises. The National Socialist premise that the greatest good for the greatest number of Germans required placing all power in the hands of Adolph Hitler brought no benefit to anyone at all except, ultimately, to the U.S. economy and to a new postwar German state which repudiated National Socialism.

Hitler, in fact, is an excellent example of the ways in which the utilitarian materialist approach to power backfires. His plan to subjugate the Slavs and give all of Russia to the Germans resulted in Soviet obliteration and subsequent complete communist control of half of Germany and the whole of Eastern and Central Europe (with the exception of Greece) for a half century. That is more than four times longer than the so-called "Thousand Year Reich," which lasted only twelve years. Hitler's ghastly attempts to eradicate the Jews by means of extermination camps produced tough, determined survivors instead — and gave them an unconquerable democratic state in a reborn Israel possessed of a fierce military prowess.

Mao and Hitler are two examples of those who do not understand that in human relations unrestrained force defeats itself. Every action produces a reaction, every challenge a response.⁵

For that reason, practitioners of the martial arts must always remember this:

Usually, whenever push comes to shove, shove pushes back.

² The spiritualist perspective is the viewpoint from which this seminar is presented.

³ While a spiritually informed materialist world view is arguably possible, it can only be fully asserted from the perspective of nondualism, which sees spirit and matter as one and the same — and thus renders the whole point moot to begin with.

⁴ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. C. Detwold, ed. L. Crocker (New York: Washington Square Press: 1963), 78.

⁵ Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (New York: Beacon, 1966), see p. 20.

Spiritualism. The spiritual approach differs entirely from materialism in its perception of reality and its call to conduct. Right action is neither dependent upon events nor determined by a calculus of results. It looks beyond them because men are subordinate to inexorable laws of existence which both rise above and underlie all material cause and effect. Lao-tzü, for instance, taught that there is a Great Principle upholding and flowing through all creation. He called it the Tao (*dao*; 道), "the Way" of everything that is, both seen and unseen. In the West, this conception of 道 is often understood as Spirit.⁶

Human beings participate in the overwhelming power of the Way only by submitting to it. If they do not, then they are quite powerless no matter how successful they may appear. Lao-tzü was familiar with material power and rejected it as a vain and empty exercise, believing that results-oriented success is always short-lived and, as noted above, inevitably creates a reaction against itself. True success lies only in following 道 as water follows gravity. Thus in every instance one is pulled in the right direction (often by being called away from wrong action). Therefore Lao-tzü wrote:

Know the masculine
Keep to the feminine
And be the brook of the world.⁷

Primary Metaphysical Posits

All theories of metaphysics derive directly from one of three initial posits: harmonism, utilitarianism, or unionism. These are first principles and are thus inarguable. There is no possible way to prove any of them, nor can we claim to believe in them on the basis of any kind of logic. In fact, we do not seem to choose them for ourselves at all, but somehow possess them (largely unconsciously) as part of our given nature. It is rare in the extreme for a person to shift from one initial metaphysical posit to another.

Harmonism

Harmonism is the belief that earthly existence (the world) is imperfect but the essential reality from which it originates is perfect. This *original source* is often referred to as "heaven" (defined differently in various traditions). Man's role on earth is to help heaven to improve the state of existence both morally and environmentally by loving the good and opposing the bad. Harmonism is principally represented in the East by Confucianism and in the West by Aristotle, Aquinas and Dewey.

Utilitarianism

The utilitarian posit is that both heaven and earthly existence are imperfect. Man's only role is to try his best to bring temporary order out of constant chaos, loving whatever brings the greatest material and economic benefit and advantage to oneself and society.

⁶ Tao with a capital "T" refers to the ultimate Way which activates all things. Spelled with a lower case "t", it refers to the particular way in which any given thing operates in the world.

⁷ Lao-tzü, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 28, trans. John H. C. Wu, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), 39.

Without such efforts man will be battered and crushed by the vicissitudes of life. This view is characteristically represented in the West by both Machiavellianism and Marxism. Chief examples of metaphysical utilitarianism in the East are the statist philosophy of Mo-tzü and, more recently, the communist dogma of Maoism.

Unionism

The third view, unionism, argues that both heaven and earthly existence are perfect. Man must simply let things alone, loving all that is, and allowing each person and thing to follow its own true nature. Then all will be well — which it already is and always has been, even though it might not look that way to those whose spiritual vision is clouded. Unionism is typified in the East by Taoism, both Zen and Hua-Yen Buddhism, and Advaita Vedanta Hinduism; and in the West by the spirituality of Meister Eckhart, the writings of Henri Bergson, and to some degree the theology of Martin Luther.

Circumstance, Situation, and Condition

Circumstance, situation, and condition are basic elements of human existence. Circumstance is that which *encircles* us. It is the surround in which all things are encompassed. One circumstance is encircled by another, and then another, and ultimately by the cosmos. Martial artists will note that individual combat may occur within the circumstance of battle, which is often circumscribed by war.

Situation is placement, the way in which one is *sited* within the surrounding circumstance. Human existence is situated in the material order and within time. Any individual human life consists of movement from one situation to another over time.

Condition is a specific *state of being* at a given moment in a particular situation. With respect to a person, it entails the state of body, mind, and spirit together. When a warrior in the circumstance of combat finds himself in the situation of being outnumbered, it may well be his condition which determines the outcome.

Time, Timeliness, and Timing

Time, timeliness, and timing are three related concepts with important differences between them. Each is meaningful to the martial arts in its own way. It is *crucial* that the martial arts student not misunderstand these differences. That is to say that not misunderstanding these differences lies at the *crux* of martial arts action. Mistakes in one's understanding of time, timeliness, and timing must inevitably impede not only one's ability to attain excellence in the martial arts but also in one's life. Critical situations can erupt at any moment in one's life. Any misunderstanding of time, timeliness, and timing can result in things going very wrongly very quickly — and even in the loss of life itself.

Time

Because human existence is embodied not only within the spatial limits of height, width, and depth but within temporal limits, as well, time is sometimes referred to as the fourth dimension. It is in time that all the things of this world come to be, endure, and pass away. Time is a determinant of circumstance, situation, and condition — all three at once.

It is thus both a medium and a measure of our lives. In the words of an American poet, Delmore Schwartz (1913-1966):

Time is the fire in which we burn.⁸

Another aspect of time is revealed when we speak of *the time* for something or of something. Although we in the West may often have heard that

to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven,⁹

the fact is that Chinese philosophy in general pays more careful attention to that idea than do most occidental philosophies. These lines from Lao-tzü's *Tao Te Ching* (道德經) [dao de jing] may be of special interest to students of the martial arts:

There is a time for going ahead, and a time for following behind;
A time for slow-breathing and a time for fast-breathing;
A time to grow in strength and a time to decay;
A time to be up and a time to be down.¹⁰

Another great Chinese classic, the *I Ching* (易經) [ee jing], known in the West as the *Classic on Change* or the *Book of Changes*, focuses on *the time* more far seriously than any other book in existence. Concerned as it is with how a person can discern and choose right action in the midst of constant change, the *I* can be an especially valuable resource for martial artists.

This is true not only for knowing the right time to fight or retreat, to strike or to throw, but also with respect to recognizing the time for change in one's own life because

the same action may be either
favorable or unfavorable
according to what is called for
by *the time* in which it is carried out.

Timeliness

Timeliness is a personal attribute. It is expressed as a posture of *readiness* in the person of the true martial arts master. It has to do with always being appropriately responsive to *the time* whenever it announces itself. This is absolutely vital in martial arts situations, given that many devastating attacks can be carried out in as little as 4/10 of a second!¹¹ Miyamoto Musashi, Japan's most historically renowned samurai swordsman, therefore said:

⁸ Delmore Schwartz, "Calmly We Walk Through This April's Day," *Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge*, ch. 2, *The Repetitive Heart: Poems in Imitation of the Fugue* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 66-67.

⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:1 (common paraphrase, cf. KJV).

¹⁰ Lao-tzü, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 29, trans. John H. C. Wu, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), 41.

¹¹ For laboratory evidence of the remarkable speed of martial arts techniques, see Brian Adams, *The Medical Implications of Karate Blows* (Burbank, CA: Unique Publications, 1986).

Never be late for the Way.¹²

In order to be sure that is always the case in your case, see to it that you are fully present (awake) physically, psychologically, and spiritually in each moment; and ready for anything.

Timing

Timing is a relation to action, a quality of movement in the moment. As such, it involves the justified (i.e., *fitting*) carrying out of whatever *the time* calls for. Musashi also said that timing applies to everything. He even asserted that

there is timing in the void.¹³

The void is "that in which nothing exists and through which existent things can move."¹⁴ It is space and thus, like time, is one of the primary realms in which martial artists operate. Its power is emptiness. Yet, it is not without timing (consider astrophysics). Here are two other statements about timing which are important for martial artists. One refers to our relation to ourselves. The other addresses a life-and-death relation to the world. In the first, it is asserted that

psychological self-change involves an existential act of self-transcendence of an embodied person who organizes his/her experience in time.¹⁵

In the second, Wyatt Earp (who, like Musashi, never lost a fight) reportedly said:

Fast is fine but accurate is final. *You have to take your time in a hurry.*¹⁶

Each of these statements involves an acting subject. In the first it is the person who organizes experience in time. In the second it is someone who specifically does so in a gun-fight. Because of the acting agent in each, both are inherently psychological statements. Nevertheless, the only sort of person in whom an act of self-transcendence or the occurrence of what Earp advises can really take place is someone with an imperturbable mind. True imperturbability of mind comes only in the deep inner quiet of willing surrender to Spirit.

True quiet means "keeping still when the time has come to keep still, and going forward when the time has come to go forward."¹⁷

¹² Musashi Miyamoto, *A Book of Five Rings*, trans. Victor Harris (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1974), 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴ William. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Highlands Press, 1980), 123a (2).

¹⁵ Shadmehr R. Holcomb, "Neural Correlates of Motor Memory Consolidation," *Science* 1997: 277, 5327, 821-5.

¹⁶ Commonly attributed to Earp without citation. I would be grateful for an original source.

¹⁷ Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton University Press, 1950), 201.

It is possible, therefore, for the martial artist to manifest perfect action in every situation, every time — for as one also learns from the *I Ching*,

whoever acts from these deep levels makes no mistakes.¹⁸

PART II: PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MARTIAL ARTS

The Great Discovery

By the turn of the twentieth century, William James, M.D., (1842-1910) was a professor teaching physiology, psychology, and philosophy at Harvard. He was the first philosopher/psychologist in American history and a most remarkable individual. He is regarded today as the father of both American scientific psychology and American pragmatism. James wrote many books, the best known of which are *Principles of Psychology*, *The Will to Believe*, and *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

His philosophy particularly emphasized the idea (new in its time) that we need not be as we have been — that we can change ourselves in deep and lasting ways based on the beliefs by which we choose to conduct our lives. He is widely quoted as saying:

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.¹⁹

In order to do that in our own lives, of course, we must carefully examine what we believe, choose those beliefs that are most likely to take us in the best directions, and then act on them with the utmost sincerity. Even though he recognized God as the “deepest power” in the universe, James understood that this power does not coerce our wills. We all choose for ourselves how to be who we are based on what might be called our *inner intent*.

James' discovery, therefore, was really a *rediscovery*. The issue of inner intent has been dealt with universally in some of the most ancient writings of the human race. In the Judeo/Christian tradition, for instance, the Bible's Book of Proverbs presents this famous statement:

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.²⁰

Similarly in a great text of the Hindu tradition, the Chandogya Upanishad, we find:

Verily a person consists of resolve.²¹

As one translator puts it, "A person is what his deep desire is."²² An explanation of this idea is found in the Brihadaranyka Upanishad, where the ancient *rsis* (or seers) of Hindu thought wrote:

We live in accordance with our deep driving desire.²³

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Commonly attributed to James. Help with a source citation would be appreciated.

²⁰ Proverbs 23:7 (common paraphrase, cf. KJV).

²¹ Chandogya Upanishad 3.14.1.

²² Eknath Easwaren, trans., *The Upanishads* (Berkeley, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1987), 177.

The Sanskrit word for resolve/desire in this context is *kratumaya*, meaning (as I understand it) something like "the carrier of intent" (*kratu*, will, intent + *maya*, horse, mare, camel). This is particularly important in light of the truth that:

what we desire, we will;
what we will, we act;
what we act, we become.²⁴

The first component of a spiritually informed martial arts psychology, therefore, is the desire for a well-ordered will. A well-ordered will is a mental set which desires virtue in right action. The sincere student will bring this focus to every aspect of his or her martial arts training and practice. An excellent way of ensuring this is through the development of a meditative consciousness.

Meditative Consciousness

The root of "meditation" is *med*, meaning "middle." Meditation suggests *movement to the middle*, to the center. Meditative consciousness occurs when the mind has thus been centered. It is best not to think of meditation, however, as *moving* to the middle for that indicates that we are the movers. Meditation is a matter of our becoming centered by *being moved* to the center. This occurs only when we have put ourselves in the path of it and waited upon it. The movement comes in its own time — on Spirit's initiative.

One basic form of meditation involves the practice of quiet centering in what we in the West call self-hypnosis. In one form or another — and known by many different names as a method for healing and centering — self-hypnosis has existed in all ages and civilizations.²⁵ While it is widely available today to those seeking self-discovery as well as lasting solutions to personal concerns, self-hypnosis has a long history of applications to religious and spiritual practice.²⁶ The phenomena of self-hypnosis are, therefore, part of our common human heritage.

Some Judaic scholars have found allusions to the hypnotic state in the Hebrew scriptures and significant connections exist between self-hypnosis and Jewish cabalistic mysticism, as well.²⁷ For that reason, self-hypnosis has sometimes been called "Judeo-Christian" meditation.²⁸

Nonetheless, it is not a purely Western practice at all. Several researchers have noted the practice of self-hypnosis in the cultures of Japan, Korea, Central Asia, and

²³ Brihadaranyka Upanishad 4.4.6. Ibid., 48.

²⁴ Brihadaranyka Upanishad 4.4.5; my interpretation. Cf. Easwaren, loc. cit.

²⁵ R. Morton, *Hypnosis and Pastoral Counseling* (Los Angeles: Westwood, Publishing, 1980).

²⁶ W. Bryan, *The Religious Aspects of Hypnosis* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1962).

²⁷ S. Glasner, "A Note on Allusions to Hypnosis in the Bible and Talmud," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 1955: 3, 34-39; M. Bowers, & S. Glasner, "Autohypnotic Aspects of the Jewish Cabalistic Concept of Kavanah," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 1958: 6, 50.

²⁸ Roy Masters, *How Your Mind Can Keep You Well* (Los Angeles: Foundation Books, 1978).

the Indian subcontinent.²⁹ Alan Watts was struck by significant similarities between eastern meditation systems and western styles of self-hypnosis; and Philip Kapleau's description of the *bompu* level of Zen seems identical with self-hypnosis.³⁰

Today, self-hypnosis has achieved widespread acceptance as a secular and scientific approach to self-change and as "an art of inner communication which can be used for many purposes."³¹ Entry into hypnosis has been described as the opening of a *trance vestibule*.³² This is an especially apt metaphor for our work today. A vestibule is an entrance hall between an outer door and the door to an inner chamber. It is a place of wakeful waiting, for the call to enter the chamber could come at any time. In self-hypnosis one's consciousness has come in from its concern with the daily round and awaits a summons to meditative consciousness.

[Practical exercise: Half hour introduction to self-hypnosis in martial arts training.]

Sociotherapeutic Aspects of Martial Arts Training

When a well-ordered will is sufficiently desired, it will arise. It will bring with it very significant changes in ways of relating to oneself as well as to others. With respect to oneself, there will be changes in self-image. These changes will help to produce changes in the way one perceives and deals with the world — which will contribute to further changes in self-image. We must take care here to note that psychological change does not equate with spiritual transformation, which is marked by complete *nonattachment* to any image of oneself or of the world at all. Yet, given that having some sort of self-image is an inevitable part of human existence, it ought to be as healthy a self-image as possible — even for those to whom it is not an object of attachment.

Self-Image Development

No one can be emotionally secure in the world without first being reasonably sure of his or her physical security. The child who lacks that security suffers a wound in self-image which communicates itself in many ways to children who like to victimize others.

Because children size each other up all the time, simply changing schools or changing peer groups will not change the consequences of the subtle self-presentation which identifies a child who can be bullied. Bullies who have never seen the child before can recognize his or her victim status at a glance.

²⁹ F. Marcuse, *Hypnosis Throughout the World* (Springfield, Illinois: Thomas, 1964); W. Kim, "Korean Shamanism and Hypnosis," *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 1967: 3, 193-197; J. Hallaji, "Hypnotherapeutic Techniques in a Central Asian Community," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 1962: 10, 271-274; J. Das, "Yoga and Hypnosis," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 1963: 11, 31-38.

³⁰ Alan Watts, *Psychotherapy East and West* (1961, reprint; New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Phillip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, Enlightenment*, 4th ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

³¹ C. Simpkins, and A. Simpkins. *Principles of Self Hypnosis: Pathways to the Unconscious*, (New York: Irvington, 1991), xi.

³² H. Rugg, *Imagination* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 135; my italics.

Bullies, of course, have their own problems with self-image. Many are so emotionally insecure that they use violence and intimidation as a means of feeling better about themselves and of taking what they want from others. One of the things they want most is self-respect. Bullying is a way of trying to gain self-respect by taking it away from others. There are other bullies, of course, who are simply over-confident and think bullying is their natural right. In such cases self-esteem has been carried to the point of "self-extreme."

During the two years or so that I taught the after-school children's classes for Brian Adams' Kenpo Karate College, I frequently encouraged parents by sharing with them a conviction based on experience:

Martial arts training is excellent for turning cowards into confident children and bullies into considerate children.

That expectation was consistently fulfilled over the years by those children who stayed with the classes for at least three months. As those who lacked initial confidence learned to trust their bodies to perform well, they learned to trust themselves in other ways, too. As the few participants who had tendencies to bully learned the principles of mutual respect which are vital to true martial arts training, they also changed. For the most part, of course, these were mainstream kids but self-change through martial arts has also worked quite well for other kinds of youth. In fact, martial arts training can be an important part of self-development for almost any child.³³

Sociobehavioral Change

Both research and anecdotal reports indicate that the right kind of martial arts training can create change in dysfunctional youth gang members. We have learned, for instance, that martial arts intervention programs can provide successful alternatives even for very troubled young people. The key is that such programs are successful when respect for others, self-control, leadership, and service to the community are part of a martial arts education taught by instructors who stress the nonviolent model of the gentle warrior.³⁴ As they learn to identify with their instructors rather than with gang leaders and with fellow martial arts students rather than with gang members, participants experience genuine developmental changes in social consciousness. After all, there is a great difference between being a member of an antisocial gang and being part of a social group with normative (and, in the case of good martial arts schools, often better than normative) positive values.³⁵

The ground for this is that, like all other higher-order animals, human beings have a natural capacity for aggressive behavior but have to be taught specific patterns of violence.³⁶ Where no patterns have been taught at all, right training is required. People who cannot fight to defend themselves are easily victimized by those who have learned to take what they want by force, threat, or intimidation.

³³ Bryant Lloyd, *Martial arts — Personal Development*. Vero Beach, Fl.: Rourke Press, 1998.

³⁴ Stuart W. Twemlow and Frank C. Sacco, "The Application of Traditional Martial Arts Practice and Theory to the Treatment of Violent Adolescents," *Adolescence* 1998: 33, 2, 505-518 (contains a very competent review of the literature prior to 1998).

³⁵ Hamish Canham, "Group and Gang States of Mind," *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 2002: 28, 2.

³⁶ Jose M. Delgado, "Neurobiology of Aggressive Behavior," *Bollettino Societa Italiana Biologia Sperimentale*. 1976: 52 (18 Suppl), 1-19.

Where bad patterns have been taught, relearning is called for. The gang mentality is on the side of intimidation and forceful taking — including the callous taking of human life. The martial arts mentality, on the other hand, sides with protecting. Protecting sometimes means forceful (even deadly) defending, which requires a set of values very different from those that encourage the use of force in order to gain personal advantage.

We may note in this regard that a strong philosophical argument can be made that everyone has a moral obligation to learn to fight in order to protect either themselves or others and to contribute to a just and safe society by doing so. On this view, that obligation or duty extends even to those who consider themselves pacifists — and because of their spiritual emphasis on egoless action, the Asian martial arts offer an excellent path to self-defense for anyone, pacifists included.³⁷

Actually, when you think about it, no one can really be a pacifist without knowing how to fight in the first place. Without the ability to fight there is really no choice as to whether to do so or not. People in that condition are not pacifists so much as *passivists* whose abject passivity marks an absence of moral and physical courage.

Martial arts training is an excellent remedy for that condition. It enables one to enter into physical conflict with an attitude of peace and humane concern for all involved.

Contemporary Psychology and the Martial Arts

We are fortunate to live in a time when more has been discovered about the human mind-and-brain than ever before in recorded history. The benefits of these discoveries extend to our understanding of the martial arts, as well. In briefly examining the contributions of contemporary psychology to the martial arts, however, we must not forget the value of earlier points of view.

Buddhist psychology from its origins to the present day is filled with meaningful insights. The Taoist and Zennist approaches to mental powers are still relevant to martial arts practice. In fact, in many ways what we are learning from current psychological research reinforces the wisdom of past traditions.

Psyche and Physis

Modern science is beginning to prove that, when marked by a mental set of positive willingness, *psyche* (the mind) can make real changes in *physis* (the physical world). While this is something which has been known to true martial arts masters for centuries, it may well carry the next round of civilization into realms of practice and understanding of which our own age has remained largely ignorant.

Today, some remarkable research into the effects of a person's mental set on *external physical outcomes* (psychokinesis) is being undertaken in New Jersey at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory on the campus of Princeton University. One of the most intriguing experiments conducted there, with direct implications for the martial arts, involves the use of a specially designed machine which has been shown to be sensitive to human thought.

³⁷ Allan Back and Daeshik Kim, "Pacifism and the Eastern Martial Arts," *Philosophy East and West* 1982: 32, 177-186.

That machine is a particular kind of _____
_____ known as a _____.

It is designed so that _____
_____.

Research results demonstrate that success in this experiment is more dependent upon a subject's ability to *willingly* desire a specified outcome than upon his or her attempts to *willfully* coerce it.

From a martial arts perspective this points to the reality of (circle any that apply):

A. *chi* B. *ki* C. *elan vital* D. *prana* E. *the force*

The implications of this research for martial arts theory and practice are profound, especially with respect to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Information from this research is primarily applicable to which of the following martial art styles (circle one)?

A. Aikido B. Ju-jitsu C. Escrima D. Kendo E. Karate
F. Judo G. Kung Fu H. All styles

Cognitive Neuroscience

A great deal of research also now proves that mind and body are far more remarkably integrated than most people realize. This idea was first demonstrated in the 18th Century through initial studies in the phenomena of hypnotism.³⁸ As we progress into the 21st Century more and more will be learned about the *internal (psychobiological) outcomes* of mental processes.

The Brain and Behavior. The process of mind-body interaction is fairly simple: thoughts produce images, which produce emotions, which stimulate the production of neurotransmitters, which affect the body in any number of ways.³⁹ Therefore (within as yet

³⁸ Maurice M. Tinterow, ed., *Foundations of Hypnosis: From Mesmer to Freud* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1970).

³⁹ Ernest Rossi, *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing* (New York: Norton, 1993).

scientifically undetermined limits) our bodies will respond physically to conscious and unconscious thought impressions as real events.⁴⁰

The reverse holds true as well: physical rehearsal can often affect the mind and emotions just as much as actual real time events. Realistic combat training regimens, for example, raise physiological excitement indexes in ways that are virtually identical to responses in actual battle situations. This significantly enhances the crossover learning effects of training to combat — including, of course, the benefits of mental self-regulation of reactions to situational stressors.

The same principle applies in physical training of other kinds. In fact, applications of this pattern of mind-body interaction are the mainstay of modern sports psychology.⁴¹ Hypnosis, for instance, has proven quite effective for improving sports performance. More importantly, self-hypnosis has been shown to be equally effective. In one classic study, 81.5% of the members of a collegiate women's basketball team found that self-hypnosis training contributed significantly to their competitive success. The techniques involved were also experimentally shown to reduce stress-related neural activity in the limbic system, the brain's primitive emotional center, without compromising the high level of exertion needed for excellent performance.⁴²

In other words, because the human body-mind system is regulated by a unified neural network, desired physical responses can be triggered by presentations of specific thoughts, feelings, and visualizations. This means that if we treat either our thoughts or rehearsed actions as meaningfully real then the mind-body complex will produce real effects in behaviors (including psychobiochemical responses) and emotions.

Behavior and the Brain. These effects operate right down to the level of the architecture of the brain. Studies of behavioral representation in the structures of the brain indicate that the performance of physical routines during the learning of motor skills actually creates neurological changes in the brain itself. More of the neural net is given over to the learned task as learning progresses. This expansion is so rapid that learning-related shifts in brain activity begin within six hours after the end of a given training session — even before changes in performance have time to become evident.⁴³ Actual structural changes in the brain can be observed with MRI scans as early as three weeks into the training regimen.⁴⁴ Knowing this, martial arts students can recognize that progress is really taking place at one level or another every time they come to class or practice their techniques, forms, and sparring movements at home.

The new research on behavior and the brain also reinforces the ancient understanding (rediscovered by William James) that we each need to develop a well-ordered will, for we

⁴⁰ Ernest Rossi and David Cheek, *Mind-Body Therapy: Methods in Ideodynamic Healing in Hypnosis* (New York: Norton, 1988).

⁴¹ Leif R. Diamant, and Richard M. Baker, "Mental States and Physical Performance," in Louis Diamant, ed., *Mind-Body Maturity: Psychological Approaches To Sports, Exercise, and Fitness* (New York: Hemisphere Publishing, 1991).

⁴² John A. Scott, "Hypnotherapy Training for Basketball: An Experimental Approach," *Medical Hypnoanalysis* 1984: 5, 3, 109-116.

⁴³ Richard Ivry, "Cerebellar Timing Systems," [Review] *International Review of Neurobiology* 1997: 41, 555-73.

⁴⁴ A. Karni, et al, "The Acquisition of Skilled Motor Performance: Fast and Slow Experience-Driven Changes in Primary Motor Cortex," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 1998: 95, 3, 861-8.

can clearly see that how we choose to act does indeed create who we become — even neurologically!

Human Emotions

Human emotions are a class of responses of the body-mind complex to its experience of perceived reality. Comparative psychologists since the time of Charles Darwin have noted that many animals seem to have emotions very similar to those which human beings experience.

As early as 1872 Darwin was also able to demonstrate that human emotions are virtually identical across racial groups and even among isolated bands of people who have little or no contact with other cultures. He further noted that individuals who are blind from birth have patterns of emotional expression identical to those of sighted persons.⁴⁵ A number of cross-cultural studies have shown that identical facial expressions of emotion can be found in people from all parts of the world. These and other observations indicate that emotions are inherited rather than learned, leading to evolutionary theories of emotion which emphasize their role in the survival of species.

In addition to their general inheritability, there is nevertheless an individual developmental component to emotions. As noted earlier, the limbic system is the brain's basic emotional center. Emotions governed by the limbic system alone are often so primitive and intense that it has been called the "reptile brain." It is not until we are about 22 years old that our brains begin to process experiences through the frontal cortex, the "rational-intellectual part" of our neurology. Prior to that age our relations with the world are based far more on emotion than on reason. As we mature, this changes and greater balance obtains. This is one reason that adults often think adolescents don't make "good sense" and that adolescents think adults "don't know anything." Their perceptions are based on two very different kinds of reality processing. It is not just "the benefit of experience" that leads to better judgement as adolescents and young adults mature. Developmental changes in brain function play a very large part in the growth of reason and thus in the presentation of more "reasonable," situationally appropriate behaviors. Therefore,

Martial arts students will always consider the developmental level of those with whom they train and interact.

Whatever their developmental level may be, when people react emotionally to persons and events in their environment their responses can involve strong feelings, significant changes in physiological function, and powerful psychological impulses. Any and all of these can lead to a variety of behaviors. Most of the time these behaviors are intended to create changes of one kind or another in the people and situations which have aroused the emotion in the first place. The sincere martial artist will therefore continually ask:

What am I trying to make happen now?

We may also direct emotions at ourselves as a result of internal psychological conflicts. Whether directed outwardly or inwardly, emotions can confuse our interpretation of what is happening to and around us. The primary problem with emotions lies not in the emotions themselves, however, but in the fact that we are susceptible to being carried away by them — and emotionally driven behavior often fails to fit the situation at hand.

⁴⁵ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899).

Negative emotions are especially liable to lead to more rather than fewer problems, but misplaced positive emotions can easily have the same result.

Sigmund Freud based his theory of unconscious emotional *repression* on the idea that some emotions are so dangerous that we often try to hide them (and their past causes) from ourselves.⁴⁶ When that happens we may tend to *project* our own feelings onto someone else, assuming that since certain feelings are in play, and that they cannot (must not) be our own, then they have to belong to the other person. We may also *displace* emotions from one person or situation to another. People who had difficulty with an authority figure in childhood, for instance, may have intensely negative reactions to police officers or work-place supervisors.

In fact, it is not uncommon for people to project or displace feelings and expectations related to family members onto members of work, recreational, and other groups to which they belong, unconsciously making father, mother, sibling or other family-based figures out of them. This can be especially troublesome when the family of origin is dysfunctional. Feelings of anger, distrust, suspicion, sadness, longing, resentment, defiance, and the like then enter into relationships where they would not otherwise arise.

Projection and displacement are just two of several basic defense mechanisms of the human personality.⁴⁷ They are nonetheless probably the most important ones for martial artists to be conscious of. The interpersonal conflicts which serious practitioners of the martial arts are most likely to encounter will generally be based on projection and displacement — whether they come up in unsolicited public confrontations with strangers or in personality conflicts with other students or instructors in the privacy of the training hall. Most importantly, the martial artist will keep watch over himself to ensure that he does not project or displace emotions onto others.

Emotion in the Martial Arts Moment

The good soldier is never aggressive.
A good fighter is never angry.⁴⁸

Emotional control is a hallmark of Asian cultures, where the action ideal involves being physically decisive and energetic without becoming emotionally aggressive (which we now believe occurs through activation of the limbic system). The Japanese are said to be especially notable in that regard and we may thus take them as our model for reflections on right relation to emotion in the martial arts. The deep respect of the Japanese for refinement and succinctness of emotion is expressed in such obvious rituals as the tea ceremony and also in the subtle nuances of everyday relations, which very few foreigners can recognize and even fewer can understand.

One example of the Japanese relation to emotion which is relatively open to outsiders, however, is the haiku. This style of poetry arose in Japan in the 16th century. Within a hundred years Matsuo Bashō, historically the greatest master of the art, had refined haiku into an expression of Taoist and Zen Buddhist philosophical imagery.

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Macmillan, 1927).

⁴⁷ Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (New York: International Universities Press, 1966).

⁴⁸ Lao-tzū, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 68, trans. John H. C. Wu, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), 99.

In this highly precise form of poetry, deep feeling is presented with considerable impact. Like the movements of the martial arts, the wording of the haiku is also concise. All haiku have but three lines. The first line is only five monosyllabic characters long; the second has seven characters; and the third has only five again. Yet with exactly 17 syllables, an entire emotional experience is presented in a single moment.

Here are four haiku examples which martial artists may wish to carefully consider. We will discuss them now in dialogue and then explore their possibilities with respect to martial arts techniques during the demonstration phase of the seminar.

A crimson dragonfly
As it lights, sways together
With a leaf of rye.
Shôson

With the radish he
Pulls out, a radish worker
Shows the road to me.
Issa

If it had no call
The heron and the snow
Would indeed be one.
Sôkan

Oh, the summer grass!
Of stalwart warriors' dreams it
Is the aftermath.
*Bashô*⁴⁹

Again following the Japanese model, the astute martial artist will never allow emotion to cloud the moment when the time has come for action.

Timely action is always decisive. The word "decisive" comes to us from the Latin, *decidere*, meaning to cut down, through, or off. It can be thought of in terms of a decisive blow against an opponent — and also as a state of mind which cuts down or through emotion to the heart of the matter at hand. In the martial arts lexicon we may take it to mean both at once.

Psychological Pathologies and the Martial Arts

So far we have been talking about the martial arts in their best light — their ability to transform the personalities and social interactions of participants from patterns of maladjustment to expressions of humane values.

⁴⁹ Shôson, Sôkan, and Issa: see Kenneth Yasuda, *The Japanese Haiku: Its Essential Nature, History, and Possibilities in English* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1957), 203, 163, 194. Shôson's first line here has six syllables, which is permissible in English.

Because human beings are involved, however, there are some darker aspects which must be acknowledged. Dishonesty, avarice and related types of greed, manipulation, deceitfulness, pride, jealousy and all the other forms of human insincerity can be found in the martial arts just as often as anywhere else.

That is because in many ways the training hall represents a microcosm of the society and culture in which it exists. Many different personality types will thus be found there.

Sometimes people will come to class depressed, agitated, or confused due to issues in their own mental health. Students or instructors who are manic-depressive may seem to be very different at different times. Individuals with social anxiety disorder may be very interested in the martial arts, yet find it a struggle to participate in group classes.

There are, in fact, any number of common psychoemotional problems which will naturally affect the martial arts “family” in any studio at one time or another. They are generally no harder to deal with there than in most other social environments.

Nonetheless, other more serious problems can arise as well. While they cannot be discussed in depth here, there are three categories which must be addressed. These are “The Beast,” personality pathologies, and character problems.

The Problem of “The Beast”

At some point in their training, some students of the martial arts become captivated by the power they have acquired. They begin to feel the emotional rewards of physical mastery — and to derive a primal pleasure from demonstrating their prowess over others. Their fellow students become objects (battle dummies) to them rather than partners and they enjoy unleashing their power against them, causing pain and distress and, in some cases, injury. This condition is called “The Beast.” When it obtains, it is usually transient. The student outgrows it. Often a bit of guidance from the school’s owner or a senior instructor is enough to help a student afflicted with “The Beast” to get beyond its grip. If not, however, the individual can become a real danger to others and must be barred from the training hall.

Pathological Personalities

There are three personality pathologies which can create serious difficulties within any group or organization — and because proficiency in the martial arts results in a considerable extension of personal power, the martial arts environment can be very attractive to people who are marked by them. Such people have little interest in developing “an attitude of peace and humane concern for all involved.” They do not primarily seek to be useful to others, but to use them instead. Moreover, they are sometimes able to develop a devoted following as operators of their own martial arts facilities.

Therefore, no matter what their rank at any given time, the kinds of people described below can represent serious obstacles and sometimes real threats to martial arts students.

Bashō: see Harold G. Henderson, *An Introduction to Haiku: An Anthology of Poems and Poets from Bashō to Shiki* (Garden City, NY: Double Day Anchor, 1958), 26-27; first line, my interpretation (Henderson invites his readers to interpret Bashō in this difficult instance).

Sociopaths. Sociopaths are generally described as persons who have no conscience to limit them in their relations with others. The worst cases are classified as true *criminal psychopaths* — the type most likely to become serial killers.

Those whom we call *major sociopaths* can also be very dangerous social offenders especially if they have a grandiose self-concept. Most, however, fall into the category of *minor sociopath*. Like major sociopaths, they are entirely exploitive of everyone around them, yet can be very adroit at masking their motivations for very long periods. Major and minor sociopaths are exceptionally astute in sizing up the strengths and weaknesses of others and using them to their own advantage. They often exhibit the discipline and determination to master musical instruments or develop other skills to attract and influence others — and can use the martial arts in the same way.

Minor sociopaths may never come to the attention of law enforcement for serious offenses, but they tend to build up a history of mistrust and aversion among those who have known them long enough for their patterns to become apparent, especially when it comes to sexual and financial exploitation. All sociopaths are utterly self-centered and essentially predatory. Sincere martial artists may recognize them by their ability to flatter and seemingly encourage others, yet always in the service of their own hidden interests alone. They may resort to intimidation and violence (almost always in the absence of witnesses) to advance their goals.

Narcissists. Narcissistic personality types derive their sense of self-worth only through reflection — by seeing themselves admired in the eyes of others. Needing to believe themselves superior to anyone around them, they require such admiration at all times. Anyone who threatens these conceits becomes a target of aggression. This is the kind of martial artist who belittles people in the presence of others, often through the guise of “constructive criticism” and other passive-aggressive tactics. They fear people who fail to admire them sufficiently or who may receive what the narcissist regards as competing respect and admiration. Those whom they fear may be subjected to a negative campaign of lies and innuendoes conducted behind their backs, the purpose of which is to discredit them so that their influence does not spread. When the image of their superiority is significantly threatened (even if only in their own minds), they may engage in any action, including violence (personally or by proxy), to restore their sense of self-worth.

Hyperaggressives. Some people have a great deal of repressed or suppressed anger for which they seek an outlet in aggressive behavior. They are not always recognizable as bullies because they channel their aggression into socially acceptable activities such as sports. More than just highly competitive, such individuals always “play hard,” “play rough,” and “play to win” — but in doing so they exhibit an excessive willingness, indeed an inappropriate desire, to *overcome others*. They seek personal triumph rather than situational victory, even if that entails injury to those whom they desire to defeat.

In the language of contemporary psychology, hyperaggressives are said to have anger control issues, but the fact is that they do control their anger — just in the wrong direction. They do not generally act out angrily against those who can harm them in return. In fact, when obstructed by such persons, or various frustrating situations in their lives, they are likely to take their anger out on other people instead, through the mechanism of displacement. Unfortunately, they can find the martial arts highly attractive, at least for a while. If their aggression is returned or otherwise not tolerated by other students they tend to move on. In milder cases, the influence of a wise sensei can make a difference, but more serious cases are usually intractable without long term therapy.

Dealing with Pathological Personalities. Avoidance offers the best protection against pathological personalities in the martial arts. People with such problems are very unlikely to change. Any time a student encounters another student or an instructor who has the characteristics described above, he or she should alert the owner or head instructor.

Where that does not seem advisable, the student should simply find another school. If the problem is brought forward but not immediately and successfully addressed, then it is definitely time to train elsewhere. No one who owns, teaches at, or participates in a school should behave wrongly toward others or permit anyone else in the school to do so. If that is happening, it means that the school itself is an unhealthy one. Continuing one's association with such a school can easily result in significant negative consequences, many of which are unpredictable. Avoidance clears the way for healthier experiences and better results elsewhere.

Whenever pathological behavior violates the law, the police should be immediately informed. Otherwise, escalation will occur with eventual but inevitable serious consequences for other victims later on.

Character Problems

Dishonesty, lies, deceptions, manipulations, deceit, theft, and the desire for power over others are not limited to people with pathological personalities. In many cases, they are simply expressions of bad character. People of truly *good* character are actually rather hard to find, so it is no surprise that character problems show up in the training hall from time to time. That is why many schools provide lockable lockers and/or encourage students to leave valuables at home or in their cars rather than bringing them to the studio.

Sometimes the potential for the school as a character-building community can make a difference in people who have a predisposition toward character problems. That is one reason why it is always a good idea to bring persistently troublesome behaviors to the attention of a reliable authority at the school. Another reason is simply that notification is necessary for the protection of those whom persons of bad character may seek to disadvantage.

Some cases can be incorrigible, requiring separation from the school. Anyone who is caught stealing from the school or its members, for instance, and is unwilling to make restitution and change his or her behavior should be barred from the facility.

In any case it is crucial to maintain the vital distinction between a willingness to help others change and the foolishness of allowing them to victimize us or anyone else. On the one hand we can put up to a certain extent with some character problems such as lying, boastfulness, gossiping, and the like. On the other hand, behaviors which are physically or emotionally harmful to others (including theft) cannot be tolerated.

Jesus gave us an excellent approach for relating to people
whose behaviors may create significant problems
for us when he told to his followers to be:

wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16 KJV).

That leads us now to consider the philosophical and spiritual elements which are to be found in the martial arts — and which, for some practitioners, are their primary purpose.

PART III: PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS IN PRACTICE

In the Asian martial arts, the highest expression of action is said to be *wei-wu-wei* (爲無爲), usually translated as nonaction or actionless action — or better yet, *nondual* action. It is action which is not initiated and completed by the individual but arises and subsides solely at the inclination of Spirit (the Tao, 道).

This is not to suggest that the person is passive rather than active. Instead, "the 'action of non-action' in the nondual sense occurs when there is no 'I' to be either active *or* passive."⁵⁰

In the West, this way of being is expressed very well in St. Paul's remark that

"it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."⁵¹

Nonduality

In order to grasp the nondual sense of *wei-wu-wei*, we need a sense of nonduality itself. The term *nonduality* generally refers to an all-encompassing ultimate Oneness which philosophers characterize by the nonexistence of either subject or object (for there is only the One). We find the classic statement on nondual action in the *Bhagavadgita* (The Song of the Lord) where Krsna tells Arjuna:

He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction — he is wise among men, he is a yogin, and he has accomplished all his work. Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of works, ever content, without any kind of dependence, he does nothing though he is ever engaged in work.⁵²

For the one who does *not misunderstand* this, it leads to what the great Taoist master, Chuang-tzü, called "tranquillity-in-disturbance" which can also be thought of as "peace in strife."⁵³ According to Chuang-tzü,

Tranquillity in disturbance means perfection.⁵⁴

That which is perfect is whole. Perfect action is *whole action* in which the doer, the doing, and the deed are one. There is neither subject nor object in such action. It just happens. It

⁵⁰ David Loy, "Wei-Wu-Wei: Nondual Action," *Philosophy East & West* 1985: 35, 1, 77.

⁵¹ Gal. 2:20 (RSV).

⁵² The *Bhagavadgita* IV.18.20. Translation by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (initial phrase edited here for clarity). See Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds., *Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 117 (in Loy, 78).

⁵³ Fung Yu-lan, trans., *Chuang Tzu*, with commentary by Kuo Hsiang (New York: Gordon Press, 1970), 40 (in Loy, 80). Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 83, (in Loy, 78).

⁵⁴ Fung, loc. cit. (in Loy, 78).

just is what it is.⁵⁵ It arises complete in itself and fits perfectly into the fulfillment of the moment.

Martin Buber described it in these terms: "This is the activity of the human being who has become whole: it has been called not-doing, for nothing in particular, nothing partial is at work in man and thus nothing of him intrudes into the world."⁵⁶

Whole action *inhabits* the person who has dropped all attachment to self-image — who can say "I am not my mind, I am not my body, I am not my acts" — but it is *inhibited* by any lingering sense of mind-body duality.

Complete "peace in strife" (the *unvarying settled disposition* of the true martial arts master) is possible only in the person who fully realizes that mind and body (and indeed all things, including all human beings) are one in the same. The difference between "one *in* the same" and "one *and* the same" marks the difference between *qualified* nondualism and *absolute* nondualism.

Each participant would do well to look into this issue on his or her own at some point after this seminar. Many dictionaries of philosophy define each term. Any librarian can help with further inquiry.

Flow

When the expression of its unity is undisturbed, the mind-body complex immediately matches the presentation of any moment — indeed every moment, all the time. We say *immediately* because there is no *mediation* involved, nothing in the *middle* between the moment and a nondual response to it. The response is therefore unhindered and effortless. As we have already seen, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual ways of understanding the nature of reality are discrete but not necessarily separate. That is, they are *different from* but do not have to be taken as *exclusive of* one another. As human beings we are, after all, both spirit and psyche embodied.

A major difference between the spiritual and psychological is a matter of what philosophers call *agency*. The agent in the following sentence is the person. "To be spiritual . . . is to unblock the door and to let the waters of life flow through. . . . to be sensitive to subtle energies and to respond to them."⁵⁷ Although it is not stated directly, there is an implied "understood subject" at work. The unblocking and letting and being sensitive is clearly done on the initiative of the individual. What the sentence means is that "*For a person* to be spiritual. . . is *for that person* to unblock. . . ." Written in a more spiritually informed construction, this sentence might read, instead: "Spirituality obtains when the doors are unblocked to let the waters of life flow through and there is sensitivity and responsiveness to subtle energies." In that sentence no human agent or subject is implied because the individual neither initiates nor receives the action. All that is said is that it happens.

We may borrow an image of this from the cartographers who create the maps of our world. In terms of natural geography they call the line which describes the fall of a valley by

⁵⁵ One is reminded here that Yahweh announced the inexplicable wholeness of his being to Moses with the words "I am that I am" (Ex. 3:15 KJV).

⁵⁶ Walter Kaufman, *I and Thou: A New Translation with a Prologue "I and You" and Notes*, translation of *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1970), 125.

⁵⁷ Catherine L. Albanese, "The Subtle Energies of Spirit: Explorations in Metaphysical and New Age Spirituality," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 1999: 67, 2, 310.

connecting all of its lowest points the *thalweg*, the valley way.⁵⁸ It is the path along which water in the valley will always flow in response to the natural force of gravity. It also marks the exact middle of the valley itself, which is important when it comes to setting boundary limits. In surrendering agency and following the Tao as water follows gravity, we avoid obstructing our own flow through each of the many situations we encounter in life.

Attention to the tao (or way) of each situation will thus reveal to us the way in which things must flow according to the nature of the time and circumstance in which they are situated.

It will also show us the boundary, the dividing line, between one side of things and another, so that we know the limits of our situation and can avoid going too far with any given action or attitude. When we attend to the ultimate Tao (道) itself in this way, our actions naturally keep to the middle and flow along the line of least resistance.

The condition which permits this is called *surrender*. Right surrender is the attitude and act of willing submission to what the Chinese call Heaven's Mandate, or the will of the Tao. In the West we think of it as unreserved surrender to the Spirit of God. The idea is that, in every instance, Spirit invites our surrender to itself and our part is always limited to two possible responses: surrender, or refusal to surrender. When a person refuses to surrender, whatever way is chosen will not coincide with the Way itself. Its consequences will never be positive, even if they seem gratifying in the beginning.

The outcome for the person in a condition of refusal is that instead of flowing easily and successfully through situations and events along the line of least resistance, he will find them flooding over him instead — dragging him along and crashing him, possibly crushing him, against obstruction after obstruction until the time has passed. For the person in a condition of spiritual surrender, however, the outcome is very different. In her case, virtue in right action will be embodied and enacted at every turn. She will thus flow through the center line of each situation in every moment with imperturbable "peace in strife."

At the Heart of the Martial Arts

As previously noted, *virtue in right action* lies at the heart of the martial arts. It is up to those of us who care about the martial arts to give being to the *virtue in right action* inherent in them by allowing it to be embodied in us — in the training hall and in life. Right action, simply enough, is the doing of the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reason. As for virtue (Latin, *virtus*), one connotation of the word is "virility" or "manliness," and another is "strength." The most comprehensive meaning, however, is "power." In Chinese it is *te* (de; 德), the power of moral character. There are three general senses in which "power" is usually understood. It can be regarded as:

1. an interpersonal relation in which people are influenced directly or indirectly to control themselves in one way or another in response to the (good or bad) moral character of another person;
2. a form of coercion known as *condign* power in which people of bad moral character are controlled by the threat or use of physical force; and

⁵⁸ Thalweg: from German, *thal*, obsolete form of *tal*, valley, + *weg*, way. Cf. *yin* as the Valley Way.

3. a physical or psychic substance, the energy or breath (*chi*, 極) which flows into and operates or animates something.

All three meanings are significant to those who seek true proficiency through the diligent practice (i.e., *kung-fu*; 功夫) of the martial arts. Among them, *ch'i* (極) is of chief importance in the performance of martial arts movements. *Ch'i* means energy, breath, breath of life, *spirit*. The same concept is found in Sanskrit, where it is called *prana* (प्रेण) and in the Greek word *pneuma* (πνευμα). The relation between breath and spirit is obvious in English where breathing is called *respiration*, breathing in is *inspiration*, and those who are dead are said to have *expired*. To be inspired by a speaker is in a very profound sense to breathe in the spirit of her message. The spiritually sound martial arts practitioner is inspired by the Tao (道) and its power (*te* [德]) is breathed out in action as *ch'i* (極) — not as an ego-related technique but simply in the spiritual surrender of nondual action (*wei-wu-wei* [爲無爲]).

The possibility for that in human affairs, according to traditional Chinese philosophies, is based on the underlying power of a deep, compassionate, human-hearted love of others, or *jen* (仁). The character for *jen* is a pictograph composed of a form of the character for man, *ren* (人), and that for two, *er* (二). This expresses the understanding that human being (that form of being which is human) is inherently social (involving two or more persons). Being human is thus never a matter of individual isolation but always of relatedness to others. Moreover 二 itself depicts the union of heaven above and earth below, an image of the masculine (creative) and feminine (receptive) powers in harmonious relation to one another. Combining 人 with 二 in this way, 仁 exemplifies the ideal of that same harmony between and among persons, as well.

This, then, is the essential ideal within the martial arts: that even in mortal combat there can be harmony and compassion, a mutual relatedness based on the inherently humane love of other human beings and of humanity itself that is the quintessence of being human to begin with.

PART IV: PHYSICAL DEMONSTRATION OF KEY MARTIAL ARTS CONCEPTS

(Space provided for participant's notes and diagrams)

Yin and Yang

Know the masculine,
Keep to the feminine,
And be the brook of the world.⁵⁹

What is in the end to be shrunken,
Begins by being first stretched out.
What is in the end to be weakened,
Begins by being first made strong.
What is in the end to be thrown down,
Begins by being first set on high.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lao-tzü, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 28, trans. John H. C. Wu, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), 39.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 36, 53.

Roots and Branches

Things have their root and their branches; their end and their beginning.⁶¹

It cannot be that when the root is neglected that what will spring from it will be well ordered.⁶²

Virtue is the root. The person who makes the root secondary and the result primary will reap only conflict.⁶³

⁶¹ Confucius, *The Great Learning*, 3; my interpretation. Cf. James Legge, *Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean* [Chinese and English] (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 357.

⁶² Confucius, *The Great Learning*, 7, in Legge, *Confucius*, supra, 359.

⁶³ Tseng Shen's commentary on *The Great Learning*, 10.8; my interpretation. Cf. Legge, op. cit, 375.

The Void

The Center

The Pivot

The Door

Retreat

"Things cannot forever abide within their place. . . . Retreat means withdrawing."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Wilhelm, op. cit., 550.

Return

"While all things are striving together, I contemplate only the Return. For flourishing as they do, each of them will return to its root."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid., ch. 16, 21.

PARTICIPANT'S NOTES

ANSWER KEY

For Fill-In and Multiple Choice Questions

Page 1

Q. Why are you here?

A. I am here to die.

Dying is the *one* thing we all *must* do. We begin to die from the moment of birth. Those who pay attention to this will understand that it is important to die well — to face death, when it comes, with courage and acceptance. This can be done only by one who has lived well: i.e., embodied as much as possible the full potential inherent in his or her own given nature — and has faced life with courage and acceptance.

Q. How did you come to be here?

A. I don't know.

We may have beliefs, but no absolute, rational, empirical knowledge.

Q. What is the one thing you must never do in martial arts (or in life)?

A. I must never “score points” on other people (engage in put-downs against them or seek triumph over them).

Q. Ideally, if someone attacked you in a deadly manner with a vicious knife thrust and there were no escape, what would you *not* do?

A: Ideally, under those circumstances, I would *not* obstruct the fulfillment of the moment.

Q. What are the martial arts without their philosophical foundations?

A. Without their philosophical foundations the martial arts are empty exercise.

Q. What lies at the heart of the martial arts?

A. What lies at the heart of the martial arts is virtue in right action.

Q. Aside from Heaven's Mandate (fate; the way things are) what determines the course and quality of your life?

A. What determines the course and quality of my life is my inner intent (what I am ultimately, and probably unconsciously, trying to make happen).

Page 3

Q. On what basis ... might the martial arts themselves be said to have being?

A. They have being to the extent that they are embodied in action.

Page 14

That machine is a particular kind of random event generator known as a ball-bearing cascade.

It is designed so that hundreds of ball-bearings fall down randomly (and thus relatively equally) into two separate containers.

From a martial arts perspective this points to the reality of (circle any that apply):

A. *chi* B. *ki* C. *elan vital* D. *prana* E. *the force*

[Circle all.]

The implications of this research for martial arts theory and practice are profound, especially with respect to:

1. Aristotelian, Taoist, and Hua-yen Buddhist beliefs concerning the interpenetration of being.
2. The idea that intent is more powerful than will.
3. The difference between willingness and willfulness.

Information from this research is primarily applicable to which of the following martial arts styles (circle one)?

A. Aikido B. Ju-jitsu C. Escrima D. Kendo E. Karate
F. Judo G. Kung Fu H. All styles

[Circle H]

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