

The background of the page is a soft-focus photograph of a traditional Japanese garden. In the foreground, a dark, rectangular stone lantern sits on a bed of fallen leaves. Behind it, a large, gnarled tree with sparse, light-colored foliage stands against a bright, hazy sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

Martial Arts

Teaching The Mind

By Blake Basell

Dedication

I'd like to personally thank those that have made this opportunity possible for me.

To my instructors; Mr Jason Bradley, 6th Degree ITF Instructor/Examiner of the Oceanic TKD Academy, Geraldton, WA. (1996 to present), and Mr Frank Garcia, 3rd Degree ITF Instructor of the Low TKD Academy, South Hedland, WA (1990 to 1996); your dedication to the Art of Taekwon-Do and your attention to detail has paved the way for my journey through ITF Taekwon-Do.

To Senior Master Low Ming Tuk (ITF Instructor/Examiner of the Low Taekwon-Do Academy, WA); your presence used to frighten me as a child, and continues, as always, to fill me with awe to this very day.

To my fellow peers within the Martial Arts world (which includes my sister; Miss Megan Basell) and to the students I've taught; you continue to provide me with new inspiration that makes the most gruelling training regime or the worst day at work diminish as soon as I enter the training hall.

To Grandmaster Leong Wai Ming, and Grandmaster Choi Chong Hwa, you provide me with a standard that I will always endeavour to master.

To General Choi Hong Hi for providing me with a Martial Art that continually evolves, making it seemingly impossible to master, allowing me to totally express myself while attempting to do so.

To my family (my parents; Bob and Glenys Basell, and my sister; Megan Basell); your strong moral values and sense of justice, combined with a determination to work hard to the best of your abilities, has moulded the person that I have become.

I thank you for feeding my childhood fascination with Martial Arts movies (and my desire to learn how to jump backwards into trees). I will always appreciate your patience with my life long journey in Martial Arts.

To my friends (both inside and outside the training hall), you've always provided me with a strong arm when I've failed to see the blindingly obvious, and an ear when I've wanted to rant, rave or babble about Martial Arts, quite often when you've had little or no knowledge on these subjects (and sometimes, very little interest...). You've always provided your attention, wisdom and advice... even if I'm sometimes too stubborn to use it...

And finally, to all those that have ever presented me with a challenge, a difficult decision, or have simply done me wrong; you have provided me with the continual opportunity to learn and grow. For this, I will always be grateful.

Martial Arts; Teaching The Mind

Introduction

Moral • **adj.** **1** concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour. **2** following accepted standards of behaviour. • **n.** **1** a lesson about right or wrong that can be learned from a story or experience. **2 (morals)** standards of good behaviour or principles of right and wrong. ■ **ORIGIN** Latin *moralis*.

Ethics • **n.** **1** the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or how an activity is conducted. **2** the branch of knowledge concerned with moral principles. ■ **ORIGIN** Latin *ethice*.

Since the beginning, Mankind has co-existed with one another in what has become complex communities comprised of families and friends, co-workers and associates, each fuelled by a desire for friendship, protection and a sense of belonging and self worth.

It has long been believed that these communities would have started out as small groups or tribes, benefiting early Man with an efficient means to hunt and defend themselves. As Mankind began to develop intellectually, these small groups slowly began to grow in size, incorporating other surrounding tribes forming communities, and in turn, collectively making the predecessors of today's civilised societies.

As these early societies grew, Mankind would have found it increasingly difficult to tolerate others within the local communities, as arguments, disputes and conflicts would have tested the boundaries of what was considered right and wrong, and the difference between just and unjust.

To combat this, rules and guidelines were agreed upon to assure a more peaceful lifestyle. These rules soon became Law, ensuring swift punishment for those who refused to co-operate with one another, threatening the peace within their community. The age-old rule '*an eye for an eye*' was to be no longer tolerated if Man was to live together for the greater benefit of Mankind.

Social guidelines were implemented to dictate the proper behaviour, or etiquette and protocol, between people on a more day-to-day basis. While people didn't receive as harsh a punishment for non-compliance with social guidelines as they did with the Law, social guidelines became in a sense, their own enforcer. Someone not complying with society's views on correct behaviour would be shunned or outcast and would not benefit from the community's collective.

In the end however, the only thing that seemed to threaten the existence of Law and social guidelines, was Man himself, its very creator. In an attempt to create the perfect lifestyle, built on the foundations of peace and harmony, Man had created a system that sometimes became too hard to put into practice or too complex to understand, forgetting that Man himself is a product of nature, and, combined with a unique intelligence, will naturally place a stronger sense of worth on self gain, rather than that of community or society gain.

It was with this realisation, that many people within society saw the need for a strong sense of moral culture, and a strong sense of pride, required for the community by those living within the community. It was obvious that by instilling these morals within the people, the community would continue to grow, benefiting the people as a direct result. Hard work and effort were to become their own reward.

Natural instinct however, while it could be developed and honed, could never be totally removed. In the back of his mind, Man would always place a logical priority over self-gain before community gain.

The next step then, was to determine how to educate those who made up the communities. Curriculum on moral culture and social behaviour were quickly introduced into the education systems, targeting the young under the "*prevention is better than cure*" theory. Mass forums were used to educate the working class and elderly citizens.

In most cultures, systems of hand and weapon combat, used for self defence and hunting, would have predated the forming of communities and societies, and would have been vital knowledge required by all, if the early communities were to survive climate changes (through physical health benefits), predators and other warring communities.

As social behaviours were being introduced as a means of promoting peace and harmony, the concern would have been how to effectively combine moral culture and combat. Attempting to instil the principles of right and wrong in a person, while at the same time teaching them to kill efficiently was, and always would be, a fine line to tread.

It was probably because of this, that specific groups of able people were chosen to act as community protectors or warriors (which would later become the more disciplined military forces). By making this distinction, it would be easier to teach the general public, as the greater population, the differences between right and wrong, and then concentrate on the difficulties of teaching the smaller military forces, the differences between right and wrong during times of peace, verses the differences between right and wrong during times of war.

Because Martial Arts have been around for nearly as long as the Human Race itself as a specific or specialised system of hand and/or weapon combat, and has always been viewed as the community's right to learn, one of the most difficult tasks in implementing moral and ethics would fall to the instructors of Martial Arts.

They would need to play a vital role in the implementation of moral cultures to the general population, if it was to be any success. Martial Arts instructors would need to find some way of teaching the differences between right and wrong to a civilian population, then teach what would be an acceptable circumstance for a student to utilise their training for the defence of themselves or others, and how far one may go in the purpose of defence before it would be considered unacceptable.

Unfortunately, in today's society, filled with endless technological advancements, greater understanding through increased knowledge and better health; people all too often see the failings of Mankind.

In local communities, the community sees increases in theft, assault, violence and crimes against the young and the frail. On the international scale, society continually sees poverty and suffering at the hands of dictatorship. Mankind continues to see violations of Human Rights through crimes against humanity. It would appear that war is a part of Mankind's past that they cannot let go of, as though conflict is a requirement for their being.

Or perhaps conflict is just simply the result of Man unconsciously prioritising self-gain over social gain.

Today, many instructors feel frustrated with the lack of morals and ethics taught within Martial Arts, which have been vital in promoting peace and harmony within local communities for centuries. Martial Artists feel an overwhelming pressure to continually produce students of outstanding character, as though they are expected to make the world a better place, the world viewing them as unique individuals within society, or some sort of "guardians of the peace".

Regardless, now more than ever, people turn to Martial Arts to teach the young and the old, the values of moral culture.

Parents turn to Martial Arts, feeling that today's educational systems cannot teach discipline to children due to political correctness. Their children seem to see no consequences in today's world, and show little fear in punishment or poor grades.

Now, more than ever, the true Martial Artist accepts this challenge, knowing that if they can only change the life of one person, just one person, then their effect on international peace will know no bounds.

"The utmost purpose of Taekwon-Do is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the stronger's oppression of the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom and faith, thus helping to build a more better and peaceful world."

"It is my firm belief that through Taekwon-Do, anyone can garner enough strength to become a guardian of justice, to challenge social disunity and, to cultivate the human spirit to the highest level attainable. It is in this spirit, I am dedicating the art of Taekwon-Do to the people of the world."

General Choi Hong Hi, Founder of the International Taekwon-Do Federation.

Martial Arts: Teaching People To Interact With People

In today's society, where an analytical, questioning mind and individuality is nurtured, it is often considered difficult or near on impossible to teach morals and ethics, as they are believed to differ from person to person, depending on the individual's beliefs and environmental conditioning.

While this does occur between cultures (as we begin to include religion), and does create some difficulties when teaching in multicultural societies, when instructing a

group or a majority from one society, we find that morals and ethics are far from an individual's point of view, but rather, an individual's choice to follow.

Using the example of "friendship", society's standards on being a "good friend" would include being kind, supportive, trustworthy and understanding. When a friend is continually untrustworthy, cruel and disloyal, the friendship would quickly dissolve. The friend who behaved in a constantly unfriendly manner didn't have a different understanding or opinion of the term "friendship"; they just chose not to follow society's standards.

Once this is understood, teaching people to interact with others in their society is simply a matter of positive and negative reinforcement. Reinforcing the positive effects that morals and ethics have on the community, then, reinforcing the negative effects a student will encounter, should they choose not to live by society's standards.

Teaching morals and ethics should be taught the same as most other forms of education (explanation, demonstration, imitation and practice), with an emphasis on discussion and questioning. Without the opportunity to question the morals that have been laid out before them, students will either not understand them, or will not understand how to implement them. Because of this, it is extremely important for the Martial Arts instructor, as well as the senior members within the academy, to implement these moral values in their day-to-day lives.

An old saying by Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948), "We must become the change that we want to see," implies the necessity of living by the ideals that one teaches. By doing this, the Martial Artist has a better understanding of what it is he or she is trying to teach, and in turn, will be able to more effectively convey these teachings to their students. It also has the added benefit of being able to offer constructive answers to a student's questions, ensure guidance, and provides students with a role model or a goal for achievement.

If a student is young enough, the old "lead by example" rule works very effectively. By leading virtuous lives, instructors effectively show all those around them, the benefits received from the community as recognition for their contributions to society; friendship and respect being among the many.

It is even possible for the Martial Artist with a strong moral character to contribute to their society even after their death by leaving behind exemplary examples for others to follow.

Teaching more mature students the importance of morals and ethics can be more difficult, as the mature student has had more "real life" experiences in order to form their own opinions. Although morals and ethics still need to be taught in the same way, the mature student doesn't necessarily respond as easily to the "lead by example" rule.

Not to say that the Instructor shouldn't lead a virtuous life or lead by example, but a mature student, based on their "real world" experiences, usually needs to see more of a practical application.

Most people have heard of the stories that tell of the unfortunate criminal, who unknowingly attacked a martial artist, only to have the martial artist better them physically and morally, changing the attacker's life forever, but rarely do people get to experience these situations themselves, allowing them to learn and grow.

JZ Murdock, an Akido Martial Artist from Seattle, WA (USA), recounts a personal story on www.helium.com where he was attacked suddenly while walking down a street in Tacoma, WA (USA), by a person walking in the opposite direction. After a brief scuffle that lasted only a few seconds, Murdock threw his attacker to the ground, ending the fight. As the attacker fell however, Murdock foresaw the attacker's head coming in to heavy contact with the pavement, so he grabbed his attacker and pulled him back upright, saving him from extensive head trauma.

The attacker, dazed and in shock, asked Murdock why had he stopped him from falling, when he had tried to attack Murdock in the first place. Murdock replied,

"If I hadn't you could have been killed. I have no right to kill you. Not if I can avoid it. Perhaps I even knew you couldn't win. I do have the training to kill quickly, which gives me a responsibility that I cannot ignore, even for you, even for someone trying to harm me."

In Murdock's account of the situation, he went on further to say;

"But in times like this, where its kill the criminal, or do nothing and allow him to go on unchanged, I think this was a good alternative. I didn't set out to change him, but in my actions, in my desire to live my life a certain way, following a certain philosophy, I think it lead to the right thing happening. One can only hope."

It is these sorts of real world experiences that go so far to helping Martial Artists understand, just how important ethics and morals are when they deal in the arts of self-defence. The more disciplined the students mind becomes, the more disciplined the student's use of Martial Arts will be.

On occasions, a Martial Arts instructor will be confronted with a new student that has an over powering personality. Often these people are described as bullies, and although people commonly picture bullies as teenagers from a school environment, they do unfortunately come in all ages.

When confronted with any new student looking to begin training, the Martial Arts instructor needs to be able to determine if the new student will have the potential to be a bully, not only with the academy's students, but in the community as well. If the instructor believes that the new student can potentially be a bully, then they need to ascertain if they can change the new student, making them a better person. If not, they have a responsibility to refrain from teaching the new student, as the bully, combined with the knowledge of Martial Arts, could well become a destructive force within the academy as well as in the community.

Control is another aspect of Martial Arts that is closely linked to one's morals or ethics. A Martial Artist's mind needs to be trained for reaction speed in order to survive a threatening confrontation, but also for interpretation speed, allowing the

Martial Artist to know when and how to diffuse a threatening situation with minimal force. Without a strong moral grounding, the uneducated or uncaring Martial Artist can be quite dangerous to himself and the community.

A genuine Martial Artist never goes out of his or her way to look for an opportunity to better another physically, but rather takes advantage of all situations where they can show another the error of their ways, and perhaps offer them a better way to think.

Often, a skilled Martial Artist will diffuse a serious or threatening situation by simply talking through the conflict to a resolution, knowing that, should they need to rely on any physical form of self-defence, there is always the possibility that they, the attacker, or a bystander may be injured in the process. If and when a Martial Artist is required to rely on their training to protect themselves or another, the moral and ethical teachings that they have based their training, and potentially their lives on, will see that they only use the required amount of force to stop the opponent, and not needlessly injure the aggressor.

“Here is natural instinct, and here is control. You are to combine the two in perfect harmony.”

Bruce Lee

The Bushido Code used by the Japanese Samurai (1185 - 1871) in order to better one's life, placed a high importance on being responsible for one's own actions and accepting any consequence resulting from either action or inaction. Honesty was also an important part of the Samurai's Bushido Code. The Samurai believed that they never had to “give their word” or “promise”, as by simply saying or doing something, they were bound by ownership to that “thing”. Nothing would stop a Samurai from completing a task that they said they would perform.

Responsibility holds major importance for any serious Martial Artist. As mentioned earlier, Martial Arts are a result of evolved combat styles used for the purposes of self-defence or defence of the community. The old saying; *“I learn how to fight to avoid fighting”*, shows that as a Martial Artist, one is taught the responsibilities of knowing how to quickly diffuse an attacker or an aggressive situation, and attempts to resolve differences without causing injury, utilising their mental training before having to rely on their physical training.

Martial Artists should always be aware of their ability, and always hold themselves responsible for their own actions and any consequences that may follow. For a Martial Artist, responsibility is not only defined as living a virtuous and just life, but also in being honest to oneself and to all others.

Martial Arts were never taught for the love or sake of fighting. They were practiced and perfected because of the realisation, that the protection of peace, one's own safety, and the safety of one's family and community were far more important than any other issue.

“... but I do not love the bright sword for it's sharpness, nor the arrow for it's swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend...”

Faramir, JRR Tolkien's The Lord Of The Rings; The Two Towers.

Martial Arts: Business Or Non Profit Organisation?

Today, there is much debate regarding how Martial Art training academies should be run. Many argue that the original concepts or philosophies of Martial Arts have been lost in the pursuit of money and commercialism.

General Choi Hong Hi, the founder of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, talks in the Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia about the definitions of business (an organisation with the objective of making profit from the sale of goods or services) and how it conflicts with the traditions of Martial Arts by contradicting the virtue of integrity.

“Therefore, under no circumstances should Taekwon-Do be used for any commercial or political purpose whatsoever.”

General Choi Hong Hi

Originally, Martial Arts were taught to civilians in small groups as a means of armed or unarmed combat used for the very real purpose of self-defence. This instruction was usually provided in exchange for food, clothing and manual labour. As Martial Arts spread throughout Asia, teaching these arts was a means to make sure a particular style or form didn't die out, and was passed on to the next generation. Martial Art academies became an important step in the evolution of Martial Arts.

As trade between Asia and the western continents flourished, eastern Martial Arts slowly began their integration into the western society. Over time, a number of medias played an important role in the development of Martial Arts outside of Asia, film being the biggest one. With ambassadors such as Bruce Lee, and the many more that followed, Martial Arts soon became commonplace in many western communities.

Although there may have initially been some enterprising people who saw Martial Arts as a means to make money, most instructors continued to teach Martial Arts for the health and moral benefits that they believed were vitally important.

The difference in social structures between western and eastern societies also played a large part in Martial Arts becoming commercialised in the western societies. In Asian communities, children would often live at their place of education, where Martial Arts were used to provide fitness and health, discipline, and moral values.

In the western societies, because the majority of children didn't live in fully catered schools, parents would often drop their children off at "Martial Arts Classes" after school for a few hours a week, hoping that their child would receive well needed exercise and some practical self-defence skills.

Unfortunately for the Martial Arts instructors in the western societies, they were also expected to provide the teachings of all aspects of Martial Arts, which included the development of morals, patience and discipline, all in the space of a few short hours a week.

It was largely because of these differences in social structures, and the lack of knowledge regarding the concepts of Martial Arts by many Western parents, that enterprising people were able to commercialise Martial Arts, by advertising it as more of a sport or competition based education, rather than a way of life, and in turn, attracting even more students, further tainting the traditional teachings of Martial Arts through miss-information.

Because Western Martial Arts classes aren't fully funded by the Government, as are many of their Eastern counterparts, instructors are required to charge fees and memberships to their students to pay for overheads such as hall hire, insurance, equipment and administration costs. If an instructor has devoted his working career to being a full time instructor, they also require additional costs for income.

It is here that another moral issue arises. How much value, or cost of time, should an instructor place on his or her knowledge, what is deemed acceptable, and where are the limits?

Unfortunately, these questions will never be easily answered. The cost or value that a Martial Arts instructor places on his or her own knowledge will depend largely on the instructor's own moral upbringing and teachings. This leads to another reason why it is important to instil the correct moral and ethical values in today's Martial Arts students as, being the next generation of practitioners, they will become tomorrow's instructors.

There is however, several ways to tell a Martial Arts Academy's views on Art verses Business. Ideally, the new student wanting to become a true Martial Artist should be looking for an academy that has strong community backing.

The true Martial Arts instructor, following the traditional values of Martial Arts, will have an academy that is heavily involved in the community. This involvement may be shown in many different ways, from charity work to donating time for public service. In his Encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do, General Choi Hong Hi wrote:

“By contributing labour to the community, especially to the poor or disabled, the student learns charity, humility, comradeship, tolerance and a sense of generosity.”

The instructor that frequently travels to attend training seminars as well as their own personal training under more senior ranks, while regularly taking other students from the academy as well, is dedicated to learning and perfecting their chosen Martial Art and places a high importance on their own learning in order to better educate the academy's students.

The amount of training equipment that an academy possesses can sometimes be a good measure of an instructor's moral values. As previously mentioned, in today's Western society, it has become a requirement for Martial Arts instructors to charge a fee for their classes to cover various costs and overheads. An academy with a lot of training equipment may be an academy where the instructor puts a lot of the training fees back in to the academy, benefiting the students he or she teaches.

Another way of determining an academy's or instructor's moral and ethical views, is to look at the quality of students the academy produces. The most important thing to look for in this instance, is not necessarily just the student's perfection in ability, but also the student's understanding of morals and ethics.

If the students of the academy have been taught to value morals and ethics well, they will show certain characteristics. These may include always arriving early to class and staying back late for additional training to work on improvement, voluntarily begin cleaning the training hall or equipment before and after class, and be willing to assist and teach other students within the class. Willingly training at home, outside of class, is also a good characteristic of students who have strong moral groundings, showing responsibility.

Additionally, as academies organise local community events, such as charity work or fundraising events, the number of students eager to help in a well-taught academy will be high.

The moral student will always be willing to help, expecting nothing in return. They are taught to be ambassadors of their Martial Art, and are always mindful of their conduct inside and outside the training hall, knowing that their behaviour will not only reflect on their instructor, but on their Martial Art as well.

Students who have little or no understanding of morals and ethics, or place little importance on them, are generally the students that expect to rise through the ranks

simply because they pay their fees and turn up to class. The ability of these students will often never improve over long periods of time.

Conclusion: The Martial Art Or The Martial Way?

Martial Arts are generally described as “Do” or “a way”, “a path”... a process of continual growth... a journey with no end.

In the wrong hands, a Martial Art can potentially be a very destructive force. Without the right guidance and the following of sound moral vales, the Martial Artist can easily become a danger to him or herself, to those around them, and to the community as a whole. As a Martial Artist’s morals and ethics can depend largely on their instructor’s own values and beliefs, it becomes important for the instructor and the academy’s senior ranks to lead virtuous lives and lead by example, for the good of their students, the community, and in turn, the good of the Martial Art itself.

The true Martial Artist’s influence knows no boundaries. They always seek to encourage a sense of justice, to know the difference between right and wrong. Should they have done wrong, a Martial Artist has the compassion to feel guilt, accepts responsibility for their actions or inactions, and takes the necessary steps towards a moral resolution.

*“A sword by itself doesn’t rule. A sword lives through skilful handling.”
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

So too does a moral or philosophical idea. It isn’t enough for a Martial Artist to simply understand or agree with an idea of just. They are required to continually question their actions, to ultimately know their true selves through self-examination. Then, and only then, can the true Martial Artist attempt to make the required changes, if they are to separate themselves from the immoral or corrupt.

*“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”
Bruce Lee*

The title of “Martial Artist” can only ever be earned.

In the end, the true Martial Artist gauges their responsibilities by a few simple questions; how did they serve society? Who’s lives did they change? Martial Artists are simply a link in the chain of personal growth. Their responsibility; to pass on their knowledge to the next generation... knowing that they cannot right all of the wrongs on their own... that they can only attempt to leave behind a better world, than what they found.

*“Through intense training, the Samurai becomes quick and strong. He is not as other men. He develops a power that must be used for the good of all. He has Compassion. He helps his fellow man at every opportunity. If an opportunity does not arise, he goes out of his way to find one.”
Bushido – Way of the Warrior*

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