

On Skills and Ways (jutsu and do) – Sensei Sylph Dominic Hawkins -
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Martial Arts is as varied in its' expression as any art form. The ways and forms that can be expressed in movements of the body are infinite, especially when interacting physically with others and the world. Like any other art form, the process and practice of it has the potential to lead to new perspectives of mind, greater experiences of self and act as a highly esoteric personal journey through our internal worlds of thoughts, feelings, associations and motivations.

Some people will perceive these discoveries as spritual experiences, and others as moral or ethical world view alterations, but regardless of the individual's persepective of their framework through which they are wanting and willing to view their experiences, on an overall scale, it is regarded that good 'art' should 'cause' self reflection and the blossoming of wisdom to various degrees.

An 'art' is a 'way'. In literal terms, the practice of the 'tangible' martial arts is a vehicle that leads to the realisation of universal principals, not necessarilly only linked to movement physics, but entire concepts of social interaction, human behaviour, underlying motivators and logical progressions of thought processes and problem solving.

Two very common japanese words, '*jutsu*' which can mean 'skill' or 'subject', and '*do*' which can mean 'way' or 'path', highlight this in a Martial Art context. Certain terms can be used as a prefix or suffix to further specify the etymology of the practice such as how the suffix '*ho*', similar to the suffix '*po*', can be used to denote '*a path/way that originated in China*'.

If we take a very litteral example, the '*jutsu*' of an art should dissolve into, or become, the '*do*' of that art through the student's study over time.

Studying the 'martial skills' / 'skills of war' (Bujutsu), should be a path to the experience of the universal qualities and principals, the 'martial path' / 'the way of war' (Budo).

Any of our '*jutsu*' have the potential of dissolving/evolving/morphing/unfolding into their related '*do*'.

Using Hoshin Ryu as the example, we can say that Hoshinjutsu and Hoshindo are unbreakably interconnected, and one informs the other in a two way mutual relationship.

If we take this beyond the Martial Art context, we can see this at work in other fields of thought.

The practice of the skills of plumbing (Plumbingjutsu) can eventually lead to the experience/realisation of the way of plumbing (Plumbingdo).

As funny as it sounds to westerners, we actually see this a lot in our day to day lives. The old tradesmen who have almost lost their self-identity and become their trade. The old bricklayer who lays the bricks in silence, and seems to almost be having a relationship with the bricks, compared to the young apprentice who is either copying the old teacher's instructions in a robotic

fashion, or is working their way through the brick laying like a bull in a china shop. When we watch them work, and when we see and experience their work, there is undoubtedly something 'more' in the brick work of the old teacher, and something hard to define but tangibly 'young' about the apprentice's work.

One unskilled in an art, who can not accept that they are at the beginning of their long journey can only lie, through imitation, to others who are equally unskilled, but a wise eye can see the falseness of the work and the youth of the skill in an instant.

Beyond simply defining the terms and demonstrating their meanings, we must look to discover what we mean by 'way' or 'path'.

A path to what?, a way to where?

The answers to these questions are only esoteric in nature. They prompt us to use our imagination to visualise a future context, something that is not tangible around us, something which does not live in a box, or which can be locked in a safe.

In Martial Arts, it becomes apparent rather quickly that you don't know what you are doing. Even if you follow the exact instructions and steps in precise mechanical fashion and can re-create the form like a robot, you start to see that you need to understand the underlying principals of motion more in order to adapt the form to different contexts. The left hand, the right foot, the partner who is 5ft tall, the partner who is 7ft tall, the rigid partner, the soft partner, and so on.

While some students are unwilling to acknowledge to themselves that they do not have a full grasp of the technique, and therefore refuse to explore the answers or seek guidance, and stagnate in a 'young' application of the technique, the student who allows themselves to be humbled by the discovery that there is something going on here which is beyond their current ability, put themselves squarely in the position to learn.

But where is it that we continue to learn from?, what is this source of further depth?. Our teachers may be able to help us with comments and notes that change our physical motions and hint to us at principals that we have missed, but it is up to us to enter into a living dialogue with the 'skill' itself in order to extract more of its understanding, or rather, to be able to 'receive' the understanding from the skill.

Sometimes, we must be quiet, in our speech and our minds while we are training in order 'hear' the conversation that we are having, and it is an amazing experience when you are moving slowly through a physical motion or some technique, and you can feel yourself 'seeing' a new component, or feeling the effect of manipulating a principal of motion alter the way you have done this technique 1000 times before.

This process tends to be humilifying, as we must open ourselves vulnerably to this quiet relationship in order to 'hear' the whispered guidance. The loud and obnoxious are not the people who become masters of their arts, be it music, painting, dance, building trades, metalwork or movement practices.

It is easy to spot the difference between those who treat their physical vocations and practices as a beloved and those who think that they are above the action and the practice, and treat it as a burden and a bondage in their life rather than an ever-present fountain of infinite depth which is available to them whenever they are in the right frame of mind.

In this way, it's easy to see how two different students could respond to a simple class. If the class activity is basic fundamental movements and kata (patterns/forms) and the same activity is repeated for the entire class, at the end of the class, look to which student was bored and which student was further enlightened by the activity. It is easy to see which one will still be training in 10 years time.