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## Living the Martial Way

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# Living the Martial Way

Senior Thesis

Philosophy

Linfield College

2011

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Advisor: Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza

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*"The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat  
but in the perfection of the character of its participants." –  
Gichin Funakoshi (132)*

### ***I. The White Belt: Introduction***

I am an avid student of the martial arts. When I was younger I studied Tae Kwon Do as a sport, and managed to get my black belt at the age of twelve. Unfortunately, I was too young to appreciate the intricacies of the martial arts, and lost interest for several years. It was not until I got to college that I began to miss studying the martial arts, and searched for a school near my campus. After visiting several dojos, most of which seemed unappealing, I was able to find White Wolf Martial Arts. White Wolf Martial Arts is a school comprising of several different styles, including *Tang Soo Do*, *Kenpo*, and *Urufu Ryu*, with each class taught by a sensei, or teacher, and the whole school overseen by a master. In the White Wolf School, all students are not only physically tested, but also placed in mentally draining situations that push the limits of endurance. Belt ranks are regarded with the utmost seriousness, and each student must prove that they have the proper mentality to handle the responsibilities of their positions. The White Wolf School seeks to cultivate maturity, honesty, bravery, and other virtuous qualities in each of their students. In the end however,

all of these qualities cannot be taught, but are up to the students to learn for themselves. The most valuable quality that the school can provide for their students is knowledge. The knowledge taught by the dojo, and the virtuous qualities gained by the students are all designed to path of living, known as The Martial Way (Nou).

This philosophy is illustrated in the book *Living the Martial Way*, written by Forrest Morgan. A student of the martial arts and a member of the United States Air Force, Morgan is well versed in the knowledge of combat. Though his years in the martial arts made him a skilled fighter, the true wealth he obtained in his studies is his understanding of a form of living known as the Martial Way. The Martial Way is a mindset that is established by martial artists who wish to become warriors. Martial artists who have an endless pursuit of wisdom and seek excellence in all aspects of their lives have achieved the mindset of a warrior. When applied to the martial arts, students will become truly unbeatable (Forrest 9).

So important is this philosophy in the White Wolf School that *Living the Martial Way* is a required text for all students before they can attain the rank of black belt. As such, if I ever wish to become a black belt, I must understand the philosophy that guides its standards. I am therefore very interested in what qualities make up a warriors. Warriors are people who seek knowledge above all else, and aim for excellence in all aspects of their

lives. They achieve excellence by following virtues that guide them to live honorably and never be swayed from their goals. A martial artist who accepts the mindset of a warrior will be physically trained and mentally disciplined. He or she will abide by their virtuous codes both in public and private lives. By adopting this lifestyle, a warrior is choosing to live The Martial Way.

In this thesis, I will examine what the idea of a warrior entails, looking at its ethical facets, as well as its historical development, particularly in the East, since this is where the values which seek cultivation are best preserved (and this is the tradition of the White Wolf School). I conclude that a warrior is a person who seeks knowledge and the betterment themselves through honorable virtues. Section two looks at what it means to be a warrior, whereas section three focuses on the different philosophies that constitute the mentality of a warrior. This continues to section four, where I examine how to apply the mindset of a warrior to the martial arts, and how to live The Martial Way. Finally, a short conclusion brings main themes together.



## ***II. The Orange Belt: What Does it Mean to be a Warrior?***

Many, if not most societies around the world have developed a warrior class. Often the warrior classes are regarded in high esteem, and either occupies the leading roles of society or they serve under lords and other leaders. The warrior class is taught deadly information that must be used for the protection of officials, ordinary citizens, and fellow soldiers. Being that the warrior class is often burdened with responsibility of the safety of their society, and through violent means if necessary, members of this class often carry a code of conduct that separates them from ordinary citizens. This code establishes a standard for which the warriors are expected to act. This idea of a code of ethics takes the form of virtues, and is present in many different cultures around the world.

Western societies have many examples of what it means to possess warrior virtues, most of which are influenced by Christian ethics or classical philosophy. Hackney states in his book *Martial Virtues* that the ancient Greeks viewed virtues as the qualities that enabled people to fulfill their purpose, or telos. Homer's warrior is described as being of high social status, practically wise, brave, beautiful, skillful, and strong. These traits, according to the Greek notion of virtues, allow warriors to fulfill their telos, or purpose, as warriors. In *The Republic*, Plato describes his ideal form of government (Hackney 31-33). His system is a

hierarchy based on merit, in which a small group of philosopher kings make up the governing body, the strong-willed, ambitious people filling the warrior class, and the merchants and workers occupying the lower class (ibid.). Members of the warrior class fulfill the role of guardians, in that they protect the citizens from foreign attack in enforce the laws of their government. The members of this class must be swift, strong, courageous, as well as intelligent (Ibid.). Aristotle states in his book of ethics (Cohen 888) that human beings flourish, or become truly happy, when they seek knowledge, to contribute to their community, and moral excellence by following virtues. He believed that virtues were the mean in between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency, for by avoiding depriving or overwhelming oneself a person can live a happily. For instance, courage is a virtue that martial warriors seek. A warrior who lacks courage is a coward who is afraid to act, but a warrior with too much courage becomes reckless to the point of foolishness. This is not enough, for Aristotle believed that human beings must take part in a society in order to retain their humanness. Therefore, human beings must try to pursue excellence in a way they will benefit society. Aristotle does leave room for relativism in his theory. This is not to say that virtues are completely relative, but that what it means to be courageous for instance varies from person to person. A person who just began learning self-defense techniques would be foolish if he or she tried to intervene if a person was attacking a

bystander with a club. The least an amateur in the martial arts should do is notify the proper authorities so that the victim of the crime can be helped. A martial arts master with years of experience, however, would be cowardly if he or she had the opportunity and capability to assist yet simply called the police. Yet both of these people would be guilty of being cowards if they did absolutely nothing, for to be helpful to society, each person must do what they are safely capable of. A person is wasting their potential if they are not performing to the best of their abilities (Cohen 888-890).

Other warrior virtues developed later in other Western regions. The honor code of chivalry was developed and utilized by the warrior class of medieval Europe, the knights. Chivalry was a system of ethics, which historian Maurice Keen lists as "prowess, loyalty, generosity, courtesy, and *francoisie*" (Keen 36). *Franchoisie* is considered the concept of how one's outward behavior reflects one's inner self. During the First Crusade, knights were set up as holy warriors, and provided with resources to protect the travelers on the roads to and from Jerusalem from attack. Over time the concept of chivalry began to adopt several Christian values such as the desire to sacrifice oneself for the greater good, as well as doing all that one can to assist the needy and helpless. These codes all ethics became "an attempt to tame murderous instincts by providing a Christian ideal of the warrior" (Keen, 38). The idea was that these warriors would combine their love for battle with a sense of

honor. In other words, warriors were provided with a standard of behavior, for which they would act for the good of others, not their own selfish wishes. Christianity played the role of guiding knights to seek good and achieve spiritual excellence. They were expected to be ferocious on the battlefield yet kind and gentle to ordinary citizens in need. This set the distinction between a knight and a common soldier. Although chivalry began to die down after the 1500s, it had long lasting influence over Western behavior and sense of honor (Keen, 35-39).

Several Eastern warrior codes of virtues have developed, most of which are influenced by the Asian philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.. Confucianism has significant influence on martial arts. These will be looked at sequentially, in addition to some additional martial cultures, such as the Korean and the Japanese.

Confucianism is a "religion" that originated in China around 500 B.C.E. Chung Ni Chu, more commonly known as Confucius, or Master K'ung Fu Tzu by his disciples, created this philosophy. Though not meant to be a religion but more of a way of life, his teachings were often confused with the demands of a deity, and Confucius became a symbol of worship for many cultures across China as his teachings spread. In fact, for much of the historical information regarding Confucius, it is difficult to discern the myths from facts. Though beliefs about Confucius vary, his basic principles are abundant throughout much of

Asia. Because China was a prominent cultural and political force throughout much of history, its philosophical practices were adopted by many neighboring countries (Forrest 235).

This philosophy involves the practice of self-cultivation, particularly within a social context, for which one seeks to better oneself in the hope of achieving *ren*, or the state of being "truly human." Confucianism contains Five Constant Virtues: benevolence, righteousness, courteousness, wisdom, and honesty (Hackney 43). These practices are designed to promote wellness in the practitioner, and when practiced by all will create harmony in society. Violence and war would be eliminated, replaced by kindness and diplomacy. If all citizens practiced these virtues, it is hard to imagine disharmony and conflict would arise. A great emphasis is placed on tradition, and the reading of classic texts as well as the practice of customs is considered an important part of learning the Confucian virtues. By repeating and understanding customs, practitioners are able to see how things function and gain a true understanding of their exercises. Keeping traditions active also shows respect for the your ancestors, the people who, directly or indirectly, shaped you into who you are. Respecting these practices promotes the continuation of old yet valuable qualities. This is applied to martial arts in the form of *kata*. Katas are ritual forms and are a significant part of the martial arts. After enough practice, martial artists may see the true

principles behind these forms, and can learn to apply them in varying circumstances (Hackney 43-44).

Taoism is the path to find the unity of the universe, or the Tao. Taoism is a philosophy founded by Lao Tzu. Taoism is based on the idea that all things in the universe are composed of and governed by a single metaphysical concept known as the Tao, or the way (Forrest 236). Practitioners seek to find and understand the Tao within all things. The Tao, unfortunately, is often hidden from view and therefore not easily grasped. Once a person has learned to live in harmony with the oneness of the universe, they have become *chen-jen* or the perfect person. Harmony with the Tao is called balance, which is best symbolized by the *taiji*, or the *yin-yang* symbol.

A person is able to achieve selflessness in Taoism when they are able to understand that the universe is one, and that all living things are part of that. In the martial arts there are many styles that emphasize virtues that are similar to or, no doubt, influenced by Taoist philosophy, such as the valuing life, respecting nature, going with force instead of resisting it, the path of moderation, and respect for ancestry. So prolific is Taoism in the martial arts that any styles whose name ends with the word "do," meaning "the way," is teaching its virtues (Hackney 46-47). Practices such as Aikido, Tae Kwon Do, and Judo follow the way of

nonviolence. Their techniques are designed to follow the path of nonviolence, and are guided by the idea of the flexibility and mobility of water in their techniques.

Buddhism is a philosophy developed by an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama. Gautama was born in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., and grew up very privileged with wealth and luxuries. He was raised in a religion called Brahmanism, which believed that all souls would reincarnate after death. Given enough lifetimes, a soul pursuing excellence will reach a state of moral perfection known as Nirvana, and escape the cycle of rebirth. Despite having a privileged life, Gautama eventually felt emptiness in his pursuit of worldly desires. He observed that happiness was only temporary, and that all things eventually led to suffering. (Forrest 240-241).

To escape this endless cycle of rebirth and suffering, Gautama gave up his wealth in possessions to live as a wanderer and beggar. He spent years searching for an escape, subjecting himself to several forms of self-deprivation, but still could not find what he was searching for. Eventually, he realized that both lifestyles of deprivation and indulgence were ineffective at reaching salvation. Eventually, Gautama meditated, and realized that suffering was fueled by unfulfilled desires. He had been unable to relinquish his suffering because he desired alleviation from it. In giving up his desired, Gautama was able to become Buddha, and enlightened being. After achieving his goal, Gautama began to spread

his philosophy, teaching a concept he call the Four Truths; life is suffering, to end suffering one must relieve themselves of desires, the loss of suffering leads to Nirvana, and the one may reach Nirvana by practicing the Eightfold Way. The Eightfold Way is a guideline of meditative practices designed to eliminate the body's cravings for the self. Meditation is an important part of the martial arts, for meditation teaches warriors to calm the mind and control thoughts and emotions. This helps train practitioners to dominate their emotions and not allow themselves to be controlled by their feelings (Forrest 242-244).

In short, Buddhism is based on the idea that life is suffering. This suffering is caused by our desire for attachments, from our desire to obtain objects and our fear of losing the attachments we have. The ethics of Buddhism aims at eliminating our attachments. This is achieved by the "Threefold Training of study, instruction, and practice" (Hackney 45). Through study and instruction, students are able to realize that the universe is actually one, and that any notion of separate bodies is an illusion. Parishioners can learn to detach themselves from their false perceptions by meditation, understanding the falseness of reality, and mindfulness training. With enough of this practice, people will achieve virtues such as liberality, benevolence, and understanding. Eventually practitioners may realize the self is not separate from other entities, and that one must eliminate their attachment to the self (Hackney 44-45). This philosophy has great influence on the martial arts. Warriors



who embody Buddhist practices avoid self-gratification to glorify the ego. Their prowess as martial artists only brings them self-defense when necessary, but more importantly an understanding of the universe. They also lose their fear of death, and are able to sacrifice their lives for a cause. These virtues are found throughout many of the warrior classless around the world, especially in Eastern cultures.

To expand the scope to other Asian countries that have also had a deep influence on martial arts, in Korea, despite the major martial art styles originating from Japanese or Chinese, the moral virtues in their styles derives from *Hwarang*. The Hwarang were an aristocratic group of warriors who lived in ancient Korea. These warriors were chosen because of their physical beauty and proficiency in combat. When necessary, the Hwarang would give their lives to serve their country, for they considered die in the line of duty the highest honor. The hwarang lived by a code of ethics passed down by a Buddhist monk, which required them, "(1) to be loyal to their lords, (2) to show piety for their parents, (3) to be a trustworthy friend, (4) to never retreat from battle, and (5) to kill only when justice requires it" (Hackney 50). All of these qualities made the Hwarang honorable warriors, for they fulfilled their roles and society without being corrupted by superiors or themselves. They upheld these codes by showing respect for all living things, avoiding the need for material possessions, and by having no fear of death (Hackney 50-51).

In Japan, the samurai lifestyle was based on a path of living known as bushido. Influenced by Chinese all the previous codes from China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, as well as the native Shinto (to be covered in more detail in the next section), samurai dedicated their lives to becoming fierce warriors and sophisticated intellectuals. Outside of martial training, samurai practiced several artistic pursuits, including poetry and flower arrangements. Overall, samurai aimed at honing their martial skills and to build a fearless spirit that would let him die serving a lord if need be (Hackney 51-52). The following Japanese story, as recounted by Forrest, helps illustrate this fearless spirit (274-277). It tells the tale of a tea maker who defeated a Samurai. One day, a rogue samurai, or a *ronin*, was traveling through the market and bumped his sword sheath against the hip of a tea maker. Enraged by this insult, the *ronin* challenged the tea maker to a duel to the death, but agreed to give the tea maker until the following day to find a sword and train. Terrified, the tea maker sought the help of another samurai from his own village, and begged the samurai for assistance. The samurai agreed to train, and he trained the tea maker late into the night and early the next morning, but the tea maker was unfamiliar with swordsmanship and was clumsy with his blocks and strikes. After just a few hours of training, the samurai knew the tea maker was hopeless, and informed him that he was going to die. The samurai saw the disappointment in the tea makers face, and suggested

that he make tea one last time. Despite his exhausted and depressed state, the tea maker quickly placed himself in the mindset of the tea ceremony. As he prepared his tea, he blocked all other thoughts or concerns from his mind, and focused his entire being on the task at hand. The samurai stopped him in his preparation, explaining, "Your mind is empty. You neither desire life nor fear death. Tomorrow when you meet your enemy, I want you to empty your mind as you have now and raise your sword above your head" (Forrest 276). Later that morning, the *ronin* met the tea maker for their duel. As the rogue samurai approached, the tea maker held his sword above his head, and emptied his mind of thoughts. The *ronin*, who had expected to see a man stricken with fear, was surprised and intimidated by the tea master's conviction and lack of fear. The *ronin* withdrew his blade, stating, "I cannot defeat you," and walked away from the duel. This story truly embodies the nature of the way of the samurai, or Bushido. As both samurai's from the story noticed, when the tea maker entered a state of complete focus, he lost any fear of death and was only concerned with what he had to do in that moment. The samurai believe that a person who is able to do this is the true embodiment of the warrior spirit, for they believe that a samurai warrior must have no fear of death and an undying loyalty to their lords and their discipline (Hackney 53). A warrior with these virtues is not held back by fear, and have the courage to accomplish all obstacles.

Despite the vast variety of warrior cultures from around the world, there are many overlapping virtues that are expected by fellow warriors and valued by society. Warriors are highly valued for their physical prowess, including their strength, speed, combat skills, and flexibility. Courage is a highly valued virtue for warriors, and most codes of conduct expect warriors to be willing to lay down their lives for a cause. Warriors must have a strong sense of justice, which extends far beyond simply knowing right from wrong. With the knowledge to wield weapons and techniques with deadly force, ordinary citizens and society as a whole are dependent on warriors knowing when to apply their skills to maintain order and harmony. Should they fail to do so, the citizens in such a society would suffer. They must practice honesty, as well as displaying a sense of loyalty to their lords and fellow warriors, keeping in mind a sense of honor. A strong spirit is an important quality, which allows them to maintain self-control and resist temptation. Wisdom is an important quality in a warrior, for they must know how to apply the knowledge they possess. There is a difference between an attacker in a drunken rage and a murderer who is out for blood. How the warrior will eliminate these threats varies incredibly, for the warrior would wish only to incapacitate the drunkard, but may be forced to kill the murderer to save his own life. They must have a love of knowledge, and a thirst to improve themselves in all aspects. Finally, benevolence is a very valued quality in warriors. A warrior is nothing but a killer to

society if he or she doesn't have respect for living things and a sense of compassion for other citizens. Benevolence keeps a warrior's role strong but kind, for they fight to protect their citizens, but out of necessity not anger or hatred. This also prevents them from becoming simply instruments of death, and makes their killing of unjust a favor to society (Hackney 56-57).

People often associate the idea of a warrior with that of a soldier. In reality, a soldier is just one of the courses a warrior may pursue, but not all soldiers are warriors. A soldier can be anyone who takes up arms for a country or leader. A warrior is a person that seeks knowledge and excellence above all else. Therefore, if a soldier seeks tactical knowledge and strives for superior combative skills *while maintaining good virtues*, he or she is following that path of the warrior. This path is not limited to the battlefield or combat. A runner who trains to the best of their abilities, exercises regularly, and is unwilling to accept defeat or limitations is taking the warrior path.

One can object, how can a warrior practice nonviolence and still be referred to as a warrior? Because the word "warrior" contains the root "war," the concept of warrior is often confused with that of a soldier. "Martial" in "martial arts" in fact comes from the latin root mars, referring to the Mars the god of war. With all of these references to war wrapped around the idea warrior, it is no wonder why warriors are associated with violence. While a

warrior does engage in warfare, it may not always be a violent engagement. A warrior may seek to overcome their mental weaknesses, including doubt, depression, fatigue, temptation, and corruption. All of these weaknesses can be overcome through hard work and personal training, without ever resorting to violence. By battling with these weaknesses, warriors are in a sense at war with themselves. As long as a person battles and seeks to control or defeat these flaws no matter what, they are living the path of a warrior (Nou).

Another objection would argue that the virtues mentioned above are good as an extra, but that a martial artist or a warrior should primarily, and above all, be a soldier, one who is good with combat skills, creating tactics, and obeying orders. At most, only the leaders of the soldiers would need to embody those virtues, not the warriors/soldiers themselves. In order for soldiers to be good soldiers however, they would need to embody virtues such as self-control, loyalty, courage, justice, and a pursuit of excellence. A good soldier needs the self-control to not be manipulated by fear or greed. He or she must then have the courage to not fear death, so that he or she may loyally obey the commands of the superiors. While a mindlessly obedient soldier is great for a ruthless tyrant, such qualities will not help society as a whole, which is what the soldier is seeking to preserve. The warrior must be wise enough to recognize when an order will create disharmony in a

society, and must be able to stand against injustice. It is especially important because soldiers are not soldiers constantly. When off duty, soldiers become members of society with deadly knowledge. The soldiers must therefore know how to act on their own, and can't be depended on an honorable leader at all times. Above all, the most valuable attribute of following these virtues is the examples that will be set. Citizens of a society where all soldiers act justly would be motivated by the helpful virtues for the soldiers to act accordingly. The harmony and safety brought about by that actions of the warriors will create a greater connection to society and allow people to flourish honorably. Foreign soldiers and even citizens will observe the benefit of enlisting soldiers that are virtuous and able to think for themselves. Alternatively, soldiers that act without these virtues would promote dishonesty and injustice. When citizens don't feel that society provides them with the protection and safety they need to live, they will act in their own self-interest to survive. It is therefore crucial that warriors embody the practice of their virtues in their public and private lives.

### III. The Green Belt: The Philosophies of The Martial Way

Martial arts take many of their virtues and practices from ancient philosophies. Next, the philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are revisited, to which Shinto is added. This time the emphasis lies not in the virtues this embrace per se, but in the social context and the martial culture they construct.

Socially, practitioners of Confucianism seek to develop *ren*, which is the exercise of compassion and love for others. An important part of this concept is to have a dedication to those closest to you, a dedication and loyalty that overshadows self-interest. Confucius believed that to reach this state of being, one must exercise *li*, the idea of recognizing one's place in society. This means that people must acknowledge who their superiors and inferiors are, and act upon their roles thusly. A leader possesses control over all citizens in their realm, but must accept the responsibility of protecting the citizens and maintaining order. A farmer, for example, must recognize that he or she has a duty to produce food for their society, and obey the governing officials in return for their protection. The idea of fulfilling roles in society is not meant to suppress some and empower others, though many monarchs have used it as such. Instead, because each of us has varying qualities, people are best suited to fulfill different positions. Additionally, this not meant make a person



completely selfless, but rather conditions a person to perform their interests in a way that will benefit society. Understanding your roles in relation to others, and fulfilling those roles to the best of your abilities teaches you to respect the positions of others and allows you to earn the respect of others (Riegel). Because China's military integrated the sense of duty and loyalty into its honor code, its soldiers recognized their position in society and their warrior nature. This meant that warriors were expected to be brave, as well as intelligent and loyal (Forrest 232-235). Modern warriors are still expected to follow these Confucian principles. In his personal life, warriors should strive to benefit society from their work, and never seek to disrupt social harmony. If fellow citizens are ever in danger from attack, it is a warriors duty to do all they are capable of to ensure that citizens safety. Being that warriors possess dangerous martial skills that others do not, they must constantly be responsible for the knowledge they possess, and therefore careful when they apply it.

As we ascertained earlier, Taoism is an elusive, difficult concept to grasp. But, this can be overcome to some extent however through the concept and practice of noninterference. Noninterference is following the path of least resistance by going with the natural flow of the universe. This is best symbolized by water. Water is the one of the most powerful forces on Earth, yet it is very passive. Water flows with gravity and follows the path that restricts it the least. It can take on any form, and over time can erode the tallest of

mountains and create the deepest of canyons. A person who follows the example of water will be able to work in harmony with nature and understand the Tao (Forrest 236).

In addition to the path of noninterference, Taoism recognizes the duality of opposites. All things consist of two opposite elements, and throughout existence all things will cycle through phases of these elements. Because all things change into opposite elements over time, all of these elements are at least partially present. This is most commonly illustrated with the Chinese symbol Yin and Yang. Though it goes by many names, the theory of Yin and Yang is present in many Asian cultures. In this symbol, the two elements of dark and light intertwine to form a circle. The Yin is represented by the darkness, and symbolizes the soft, feminine aspects of the universe. The Yang is represented by the light, and symbolizes the hard, masculine qualities in the universe. These opposites are always intertwined, and a part of each is found in the opposite (Forrest 236-237).

Fundamentals of Taoism are found throughout many different martial arts styles. The concept of noninterference became the foundation of most soft martial arts styles. Soft martial arts, such as tai chi or aikido, are styles that utilize the natural flow of energy. Defensively, soft styles redirect or move around offensive attacks, which cost minimal effort. This is in direct opposition to hard styles, which uses the body's own force to guard

oneself and execute powerful attacks (Forrest 237). There are many martial arts that rely on the user's soft energy to redirect the opponent's hard energy. The doctrine of these arts is that every person possesses a mixture of soft and hard energy, or light and dark. By mastering the dark energy in your body, a person is able to defend him or herself using their light energy. Though an attacker utilizes dark energy, he or she still possesses light energy. Therefore, when attacked, the martial artist can use soft motions to attack, which will redirect the attack as well as activate the attacker's light energy, thus eliminating their will to attack. This is truly the embodiment of the Taoist philosophy; the use of unresisting actions to control the light and dark energies of the body.

The idea of a "way" has a significant influence in many styles. Japanese and Korean styles tend to have martial styles that end with "Do," such as Tang Soo Do, Tae Kwon Do, Aikido, Judo, and Karate-do. In Japanese and Korean, "do" means "path" or "way." The masters who created these styles did so because they believed these styles were a way to reach Tao. In order to properly master their martial styles, practitioners were forced to adopt the Taoist mindset. Often these styles required the practitioners to be flexible and adaptable, much like the constancy of change in water. Therefore, when warriors adopt the properties of water, they can just as powerful of a force (Forrest 238).

To revert now again to Buddhism. Buddha's teachings being a philosophy rather than a religion, many of his followers began to misinterpret his intentions after his death. With the hundreds of different sects of Buddhism, most can be placed into one of two categories, the Theravada and the Mahayana (Forrest 244). The Theravada styles are the most like Buddha's original teachings, and followers of this style tend to live as monks and not practice methods of worship. The Mahayana style is the more popular style, but is highly different from Buddha's original teachings. These followers view Buddha as a spiritual being that was sent to aid humanity. This style tends to a great variety of sects, many of which take influence from local beliefs and they incorporated Buddha's teachings.

Mahayana Buddhism has had the greatest influence in martial arts throughout Asia, especially the "intuitive" and "meditative" sects. These practices focused on looking inward gain knowledge and reach enlightenment, known as Ch'an in China and Zen in Japan. It is said that an Indian monk named Bodhidharma brought his teachings to China, and established the forms of exercise that later evolved into the fighting styles of the Shaolin monks (Forest 244-247).

Buddhism had a significant influence on the martial arts of Japan. The Samurai greatly respected the fighting skills and strategies of the monks, and often studied their techniques to utilize them in battle. They saw that through disciplined training, the monks

were capable of developing fit bodies and disciplined minds. The undying spirit developed my martial training allowed warriors to overcome any obstacle they face (Forrest 247). Many samurai became students at monasteries, and grew strong spirits through Buddhist practices, which served them well in their public lives and on the battlefield. Zen in particular was very useful for the samurai in achieving the warrior spirit. Practitioners developed *mushin*, a mental state where the mind is free from worry and distraction. Donn Draeger, a martial arts historian, said that for the samurai, Zen

“taught him to be self-reliant, self-denying, and above all, single-minded to the supreme degree that no attachments whatsoever — emotional, intellectual, or material — would distract him from his professional role of fighting for a dedicated cause.” (ibid)

This allowed warriors to fulfill their duties to their lords, who respected the samurai's fierce determination to complete goals and unwavering loyalty. They were able to better themselves by never overindulging or depriving themselves of needs. Very similar to Aristotle's golden mean, following the middle path meant that warriors were able to expel greed and yet follow physically healthy lifestyles. With these qualities the samurai were able to truly embody their warrior roles as well as spirits.

Finally, another one of the most significant beliefs to influence the martial arts is Shinto. Shinto is an ancient religion based in Japan. It is different from other Asian beliefs in

that its founder is unknown, it has no sculptures or idols, no sacred text, and is solely based on this world and the relationships with family. So prolific was this practice throughout Japan that it was considered a universal belief, and did not even have a name until the spread of Buddhism throughout Japan, where it was developed to differentiate it from other practices ( Forrest 248).

Though not as wide spread as other practices, it has great influence over Japanese fighting styles and therefore influences are large portion of martial arts. Shinto itself shaped the way in which the martial arts are perceived and practiced in Japan. Great importance was placed on tradition and rituals, in which gods and ancestors were respected. This placed great importance on forms, or ritualized patterns of movement in the martial arts, as well as several other traditions. In addition, the martial arts is taken with the utmost seriousness. The Japanese utilized combat styles that focused on weapons, for weapons carry a great sense of reverence in Japan. The concept of holding a weapon is taken very seriously, and training with one is almost a spiritual practice. A similar style of reverence is paid to the training area of a martial artist (248-251).

As Forrest explains (248-251), the Japanese refer a to training hall as a “dojo,” which translates to “Way place,” and less literally as “place of enlightenment.” Dojos are seen not specifically as areas where one learns to fight, but a place where one builds spiritual

qualities. These training halls are given the utmost respect by those who practice there. They are held in high reverence, and are thought to be significant component of those who practice there. Additionally, this view is expressed towards all aspects of the dojo, including the weapons inside as well as the teachers, or senseis (ibid).. Many of the familiar elements or training halls are carried over from Japanese practices, including bowing when one enters and leaves the dojo. The characteristic of respect is a very important quality (ibid.).

While not directly linked, religious beliefs have played a significant part in shaping the doctrines of the martial way. Religions have such large influence on the warrior lifestyle worldwide, and often significantly shape their codes of conducts. The most common Asian martial arts come from China, Korea, and Japan, so it is therefore no wonder that the philosophies and religions in these areas shaped the ethical codes of warriors. With these philosophies forming the basis of their values, warriors live the practice of The Martial Way.

#### ***IV. The Brown Belt: How to Live the Martial Way***

Perhaps one of the greatest martial artists to embody the warrior spirit and live the The Martial Way is Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan karate. Though he may have been slower, weaker, and even less skillful than several of his counterparts, he is deemed by many to be the greatest modern master of karate. Funakoshi was born at the time of the Meiji Restoration, when the emperor of Japan was restored to power and the samurai class was dissolved. At this time, the practice of martial arts was forbidden, and Funakoshi was forced to study in secret. Despite this, from a young age to late in his adulthood, Funakoshi studied under great masters of his time. When not, eating, sleeping, or working, he dedicated his mind and body to the martial practice. Though threatened with the possibility of imprisonment or death, Funakoshi chose to study martial arts for the sole purpose of bettering himself. He practiced the Martial Way in all aspects of his life; whether in his training, his work, ethics, and overall mind-set (Morgan p17-19). This, is the true embodiment of the warrior mentality.

It is important to understand the difference between living the martial way and practicing martial arts. The Martial Way is a true philosophy, a lifestyle that shapes a person's attitude and behavior. The martial arts are just part of that lifestyle, and practicing



or even being a master in a martial art does not make you a warrior. Forrest states (9) that many of the people who practice martial arts can be divided into three categories: the hobbyist, the competitors, and the thrill seekers. The hobbyists view the martial arts as a past time, on the same level as a recreational soccer match or their evening card games. These people are usually obsessed with rank, and consider black belts adequate end goals. They care little about the philosophical teachings of the art, and seek only the fighting skills they may gain. The competitors view the martial arts as a sport. This is a problem because, as George Leonard explains in *The Zen Way to the Martial Arts* (Introduction), "To practice Zen or the martial arts, you must live intensely, wholeheartedly, without reserves, as if you might die in the next instant. Lacking this sort of commitment, Zen becomes mere ritual and the martial arts devolve into mere sport." For the people that practice this way, the martial arts are about being a better athlete, and their main focus becomes winning medals and beating challengers. These students concentrate only on the aspects of the arts that will help them win points in sparing matches. Finally, the thrill seekers are the people searching for the "deadly secret" to martial arts. They've seen movies or performances where a person does a spinning black flip kick, or knocks out an enemy with a pressure point technique, and want to learn how it is done. They sign up hoping the instructor will quickly teach them how to perform the techniques they desperately wish to learn, and care little

for other elements of the martial arts such as forms, meditation, and even practice. After they fail to find what they're searching for, they drop their practice to find another way of obtaining their goal (ibid).

The practice of martial arts is an important part of cultivating the warrior spirit within the martial way. In modern cultures, especially in the western world, people tend to view the martial arts as a hobby, a way to exercise, a sport, or a form of self-defense. It is easy to see the physical benefits of training, for the students of the martial arts gain strength, flexibility, and speed. Some even view the martial arts as a means to achieving almost supernatural abilities, such as the pressure point techniques that can incapacitate an opponent with a single touch. The true aim of the martial arts however is to cultivate the warrior spirit. This brings us to our next common misconception; what it means to be a warrior. A warrior is not simply a person who fights. Soldiers, or even martial art masters, may be excellent fighters yet still not possess the qualities of a warrior. A true warrior is distinguished by his pursuit of internal goals instead of external ones. They seek to gain wisdom and develop character, including a strong will, courage, as well as the lack of an inflated ego. He observes his true nature and examines what traits need improvement. Warriors must also accept the mindset and qualities of warriors. This is not to inflate the ego, but to remind themselves to strive for excellence in all of their undertakings, whether

it is their martial practices, professional work, or even daily tasks. It is for these reasons that warriors commit themselves to studying martial arts, for truly mastering the arts requires that a warrior embody these concepts (Forrest 9).

It is also important to understand the true nature of martial arts. Many people, including martial arts students, view each martial style as the single path to becoming the ultimate fighter once mastered. Different styles were not created because the original practitioner viewed the techniques a superior or elite. Truthfully, martial arts styles were formed when warriors discovered that certain techniques were particularly useful for him or aided him in specific situations, such as in battle or when being robbed. The warrior created a training regiment for himself that would allow him to practice his technique to prepare for these situations in the future. Other warriors observed his training, and soon he developed a following.

In truth, the martial arts are set doctrines that shape the strategies and tactics employed by the students. The kicking styles such as Tae Kwon Do and Tang Soo Do follow the doctrine that the leg is longer and stronger than the arm. Kicks are therefore an excellent way to avoid an attack and strike an opponent when they are out of arms reach. This doctrine shapes the strategy of keeping the opponent at a distance, which is effective unless your opponent manages to get within arm's reach. No style is therefore completely

superior or inferior to any other style, strengths or weaknesses depending on their context (Forrest 43).

Each practice is simply a method of cultivating the qualities that people are lacking. Warriors who seek to improve themselves should not do so through only one practice. A martial arts student should never be naïve enough to assume that his style is undefeatable, and that there is nothing to gain from another style. Narrowing oneself to a single practice does little more than limit the amount a warrior can gain. In the end, there no superior practices, just superior warriors, and increased knowledge creates increased chances of success. The greatness of a warrior is not measured by his martial arts skills, for the practice of the arts is merely one aspect of living the martial way. It is those elements that are gained while training that make a person a great warrior (Forrest 44).

An important part of living the Martial Way is being physically fit. Possessing knowledgeable of the techniques required to vanquish an opponent will not assist you if you don't have the strength, flexibility, or endurance to perform them. Simply exercising is not enough, for martial artists must test all aspects of his fitness. To live the Martial Way, one must find a way to train his power, speed, stamina, agility, and coordination. Power is the ability to use force in a technique. This is different from strength alone, which is the measurement of how much force the muscles can release. Power is based on the amount of

mass engaged is a movement and the amount of acceleration mass. When these two features collide into a target, power is measured. The amount of power a person can produce is determined by strength and flexibility. Speed is another crucial part of fitness. Not only can speed increase your rate of attack and ability to evade, it is an essential component of power. Because power is based partially on the amount of mass being moved, smaller fighters will have less power in their attacks. They can compensate for this by increasing their speed, which will make up for their lack of mass. Again, to build speed a warrior must condition his strength and flexibility. Additionally, they must learn to relax the muscles than tense when the body is under stress, for they slow movement and hinder the body's ability to react quickly.

Another important part of fitness is stamina, the ability to work for long periods of time. Warriors should train for hours to attain high levels of stamina, despite the fact that most fights are over very quickly. A high level of stamina allows a martial artist to train for hours, which increases the ability to self evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Understanding these characteristics of the body will further a warrior's self-knowledge, and allow them to gain a better understanding of how they must train themselves. Each warrior's path is unique, and it is therefore up to the warrior to discover how to construct his or her Martial Way. Agility is the body's ability to move quickly, efficiently, and easily.

An agile fighter can easily maneuver in battle, both to avoid hazards and to move in for effective strikes. Strength, flexibility, and relaxation are all important characteristics of agility, for the body must be able to change direction quickly and continue its pace for prolonged periods of time. Finally, the most significant aspect of fitness is coordination, the ability to understand and control the body's moments. Coordination not only requires strength, flexibility, and relaxation, but also the cultivation of all other aspects of fitness. Additionally, a warrior must train his body to perform the techniques of his practice, which develop neuromuscular pathways and increase the minds' ability to control the body. Training these characteristics will not only increase one's fitness, but also allow a warrior to understand what conditions require improvement. Coordination allows a warrior to dominate the body and control how it moves and reacts. This ties together a warrior's ability to understand oneself and cultivate their spirit to overcome his or her physical obstacles, or self-control. A warrior must become disciplined enough to ignore his fatigue, tiredness, and doubt. (Forrest 201-205). This follows the Buddhist practice of being able to dominate over the mind and control the body's urges. It also frees the warrior's mind from distractions. This provides the warrior with the unwavering ability to complete their goals despite their fatigue or pain. A warrior without the fear of pain will possess courage. Continued embodiment of this virtue will allow a warrior to develop both physical and

mental strength as well as flexibility. They will also have self-control, and be able to dominate their actions and not be motivated by greed or even the anger and need to retaliate

Staying fit doesn't only involve training and staying physically active, but also the practice of keeping the body healthy. To keep a fit body, a warrior must live in manner that strengthens the body and avoids harm. This can be done by managing several lifestyle choices, including diet, attitudes towards vices, rest, and stress,. An athlete cannot expect to get stronger on a diet of hamburgers and French fries, nor can he expect to stay physically healthy and cognitively functional if he drinks heavily, takes drugs, and deprives himself of sleep. The body is the warrior's ultimate tool, and therefore must be cared for in the manner that best suits the body's specific requirements. This, of course, varies from person to person, and it is up to the individual to discover what conditions are best for their body. This again ties into the Buddhist principle of following the middle path. Never exceeding what the body craves, and never denying the body of what it needs allows the body to function properly. With a body that is sustained and cared for, the warrior can focus and cultivating a sound mind. Creating a sound mind is also an important part of managing health. With a sound mind and body, cultivated by proper training and choices, a person will be capable of living The Martial Way (Forrest 195).

Unfortunately, this idea brings to light a major concern: are all warriors able to pursue excellence in all aspects of the martial arts? It is unlikely that a paraplegic would be able to become a master of Tae Kwon Do, a style that emphasizes kicks. In other words, it can be objected, that the view defended here favors those who excel physically in terms of prowess and fitness, and that this excludes most people, and worse, that it leads to an elitism that is not warranted.

Overall, someone who is completely paralyzed would be unable to practice any martial style, and would be unable to excel as a warrior. This can be overcome by recognizing an important aspect of the martial arts; the mental training. Warriors need not always be physical in order to better themselves. In fact, most of the challenges warriors must overcome are mental. A warrior is therefore to conquer negative emotions and control negative thoughts through mental practices such as meditation. Many physical handicaps can be overcome by finding ways to work around limitations (Nou). Nick Newell is a 25-year-old Mixed Martial Arts fighter from Springfield, Massachusetts. A student of Muay Thai, he currently holds six wins and no losses. What makes this truly extraordinary is that Nick is missing his left forearm and hand. Nick is able to overcome his limitations, and is highly capable of defeating opponents with the advantage of two arms. He is in fact able to use his handicap to his advantage. With only one whole arm, Nick is



able to condition his right arm more than other fighters, and as such, his strength in that arm exceeds that of other fighters (*Disabled*). This is the true embodiment of the warrior spirit; the inability to accept defeat and the willingness to push past limitations and obstacles. He is following the Taoist path of least resistance, flowing with his condition instead of fighting it. Turning it into his advantage instead of allowing it to overwhelm him. Even in more severe cases of handicaps, such as paraplegics; warriors can turn their own unique qualities into advantages. While a fighter in a wheel chair may be unable to perform kicks, he is much lower to the ground and is therefore able to perform low punches as well as throws. I myself met a one legged martial artists, who learned to wield his crutches as a weapon. He was even able to jump high enough to kick opponents in the chest then land on his remaining leg. As previously stated, all warriors must follow their own path of The Martial Way, while still abiding by ethical codes of honor.

It is essential that warriors practicing The Martial Way live their lives honorably. Honor is a set of codes of ethics, and is established not by laws or religious requirements, but because employing it creates stability and avoids cowardice. In an army, honor is essential to assure cooperation amongst the troops and loyalty to the commander, otherwise the lives of all the soldiers and the citizens they protect may be lost. Outside of battle, stability of social order is dependent on soldiers using their martial skills in ways

that promote harmony, not chaos. Even students of the martial arts must recognize that they are gifted with deadly knowledge. If used incorrectly, people can be easily harmed or even killed. It is therefore important that warriors following the martial way fight for society, not themselves. The main difference between normal fighters and warriors however, is the significance of honor in their lives. Honor is based on three principles; obligation, justice, and courage [Forrest 137].

Obligation is the very foundation that honor is built on. This does not only refer to chores and business contracts, but to the duties in society. Because all people are bound to society in some way, it is the moral obligation to repay the services provided for them, whether by an individual or society as a whole. Confucius taught that citizens should recognize their place in society (Riegel). Based on the qualities everyone should know where they should be in order to be the most helpful. A ruler looks out for the good of his citizens, creating laws to protect the citizens from internal conflicts. Subjects provide their ruler with loyalty, and work within their positions to allow society to function. By following their roles and carrying out their duties, society is assured satisfaction and cooperation flourishes.

Obligation also brings about the necessity of respect. It is important that warriors not only respect their superiors, but also respect their inferiors and the martial arts as a

whole. Showing respect to those who teach you will develop humility in a martial artist, while showing respect for your inferiors will develop humbleness. This concept also ties back to Confucian values of respect for parents and ancestors, or filial piety. As a son should respect the work a father does for his family, so too should a disciple respect the teachings of their master. Respecting this knowledge will keep the practice true to its intention, and will remind the student of time and effort their teacher dedicated to learn it. Both of these qualities keep the martial artist from developing an inflated ego, which will alienate oneself from society and weaken their ability to recognize the flaws of their character (Forrest 143).

Justice is the core of honor, the understanding of right and wrong and the action of doing what is right. Doing what is right does not determine whether or not an action is just and honorable, for the motivation behind the action is a more significant factor. While an action may be right in the end, was it done because it was the right choice, motivated by guilt, or fear of punishment? The honor in justice is more significant than that of obligation to a lord. Justice may be considered an obligation to society, for acting justly ensures the function of society. While a lord may provide payment, society provides warriors with security and safety from chaotic anarchy. It is for this reason the all citizens, especially warriors, have a debt to preserving peace in their societies. Therefore, to preserve the

harmony in this system, a warrior cannot enter into an obligation that would incite injustice. Courage is the aspect of honor that is most widely recognized. It is highly valued in every society, and is considered the highest obligation of soldiers for their leaders. While dying for one's country is highly honorable, living a life honorably is truly the highest act of courage. The living honorably means that acting justly and doing what is right takes precedence over all other concerns, even death. This also means fulfilling your obligations and accepting responsibility for your actions, especially if you are in the wrong. The consequences of creating false information may be far more destructive than facing up to your mistakes (Forrest 144).

It is easy to assume that there is a great danger with many people studying the martial arts. Even with good people practicing them, the knowledge and skills and martial arts are very dangerous, and people are more likely to get hurt. It may even be possible that learning martial arts will make people more violent and therefore more likely to cause disharmony in society. While in the wrong hand the martial arts is a dangerous weapon, warriors who practice this art are less likely to be dangerous. Warriors can be divided in two categories: those that follow the path of violence and those that follow the path of nonviolence. Warriors that follow the path of violence often train their minds and bodies for combat. As with all warriors, they seek knowledge and excellence in their pursuits,

including how to counter opponents and train their bodies to perform techniques. This is how martial arts are divided into the “light” and “dark” arts.

The “light” arts, influenced by the concept of nonviolence, seek to use the opponent’s energy against them to counter their movements, and there are rarely if ever any attempts to attack the opponent. The “dark” arts are motivated by violence in that they use the body’s own force to neutralize opponents. While these paths have opposite ways of handling opponents, they still follow the same guiding principle; react physically as a last resort. The first line of defense for all martial arts styles is to be out of the way of attack. This can be achieved by diplomatically avoiding the fight, to block the incoming attack, or even by escaping from the situation. No responsible martial arts schools teach students to stand and fight in all circumstances. Instead, they teach martial arts as a set of skills to save your life if you are ever in a situation where escape is not an option. It is for this reason that the martial arts actually makes warriors less violent as they become more skilled in the art of avoiding the situation (Nou).

Gichin Funakoshi refers to this style of nonviolence as “inning by losing.” One such situation happened to him as he was walking to his father-in-law’s alter to give an offering. Two men, one armed with a club, approached him and demanded his money. Funakoshi calmly told the men that he did not want trouble, and gave the two men all he had; two

cakes. Though quite capable of defending himself, Funakoshi knew both he and the men would be safest if he did not try to fight them (Funakoshi 29-40).

## ***V. The Black Belt: Conclusion***

Karate Master Funakoshi once said, "The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat but in the perfection of the character of its participants (Funakoshi 132)." I have learned much about the martial arts from my research, and feel that Funakoshi's statement truly embodies the idea of the Martial Way. This quote explains that the martial arts is not a tool for war, but a path to better the practitioner. It identifies that the martial arts as not a way to dominate over others, but as a way to dominate over oneself. The path of the warrior is not a mystical path to achieve fame or supernatural skill, but a lifestyle to cultivate excellence in the practitioner. With virtues influenced by Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the warrior will flourish in the martial arts and become a helpful member of society. Practitioners will physically fit, and cultivate an undying will to face and defeat all challenges. In all aspects of their lives, to echo Funakoshi's opening citation to this thesis again, a martial artist who accepts the mindset of a warrior will achieve greatness, live honorably, and gain knowledge about his or her mind and body.

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