

Contemporary Martial Arts: Self expression or self oppression?

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 2009

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ABSTRACT

This study examines notions of discipline as seen in the practice of commercial martial arts and the manner in which devotees and other stakeholders approach and negotiate with it. I present arguments explaining that it is the influence of the contemporary capitalist system that generates the perceived desire to produce and hone a particular type of discipline, which is translated into labour potential. I argue that martial arts are in fact intensely ambiguous, and that the genre ultimately serves as a shelter for practitioners as well as a jumping-off point into the spectrum of application, one that is deeply implicated in the production of subjectivity. This research is interdisciplinary and so should be used flexibly in application. This project will contribute to the advancement of our understanding of the martial arts in contemporary society and the role of the body within it.

Key Words: Martial Arts, Discipline, Labour Power, Social Reproduction

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Introduction:

Far from being a descriptive and classificatory term positioned outside of history, language or science, sport is in fact a discursive and historical construct at the intersection of a multiplicity of domains (eg., arts, politics, science, technology, medicine, media, etc.)¹

No matter the era, the techniques of transmitting martial arts from master to student are fascinating. The martial arts, and those that practise them, have found ways of persevering throughout history. Whether flourishing as something of a Court's fancy,² as cultural dance,³ or having been banished to the underground⁴ and trodden upon,⁵ the arts that survive carry knowledge and take on many faces as they are passed on.

This thesis looks at the particular role of commercial martial arts studios and how the martial arts are passed on within studio walls. In particular this thesis looks at the role of the commercial studio as teachers of a specific life-style, and the ambiguity of the effects the practise has on the body.

Zen philosophy and martial arts have been bedfellows in the past and continue to be contemporarily. With the strong mental focus, compassion, and spiritual influence of Zen, and the intense physical precision cultivated with the martial arts in mind, I begin with an anecdote concerned with war and philosophy that will introduce us to an important principle in this thesis, that interpretation is flexible and undeterminable.

¹ (Rail, 1998, p. 143)

² BaGua, one of the three famous Chinese internal arts, was taught by a man who came to be employed by the Manchu's of the Imperial Palace, China (Wang, 2009, pg. xix)

³ As in Silat, an Indonesian and Malaysian art that emphasizes one and two person dances, often with knives/swords.

⁴ Capoeira, a Brazilian slave fighting art, was hidden within dance from those that would wish malice upon them for practicing.

⁵ As martial arts, literature, and many other cultural artefacts were during stages of the Cultural Revolution, China.

A great account of the flexibility of interpretation has been written about in a book titled *Zen at War*, by Brian Victoria.⁶ The book demonstrates in full detail the atrocities that occurred in World War Two in the Pacific, and more specifically the ideology espoused by Japan through the lens of Zen. The book explains that while Christianity and Islam are just as well known for ties to bloodshed and evil as each is to spirituality, Zen has received little attention, even though it has been implicated in the mobilization of war in the Pacific. The point of Victoria's book is not to put down the practice of Zen. Instead it aims to show that Zen is an ambiguous philosophy and open to interpretation, including being used to justify war.

That Zen philosophy had a part in war-mobilization in the Pacific is not surprising when one considers the range of connections between some martial arts and spiritual philosophies.⁷ A Daoist sage is thought to have been the creator of the martial art Taiji Quan (Tai Chi Chuan). There are still 'fighting monks' in the Chan⁸ (Zen) Shaolin Temple. There are documented accounts of Zen and the sword being connected.⁹ The martial arts and accompanying philosophies have been shown to be consistently open to cultural interpretation. The martial arts may be used for positive spiritual development on the one hand, and to justify wartime atrocities in World War Two on the other, and for other practices in between. Martial arts, in other words, can serve many purposes, and these can be intentional or unintentional.

In modern commercial martial arts schools, Zen has a place in teachings. In the commercial schools I observed in Victoria as part of my project, there are teachings that co-ordinate the body and

⁶ (Victoria, 2006)

⁷ One could use the term 'religion', but I have chosen not to because spiritual philosophy can encompass a greater span of ideas.

⁸ 'Chan' and 'Zen' are the Mandarin and Japanese pronunciations for the same Chinese character, translated loosely as 'meditation'.

⁹ One particularly well documented Zen master, Takuan Soho, had befriended many Samurai of differing ranks. The book *The Unfettered Mind*, contains letters sent to his sword-wielding friends that relate Zen to the sword. (Soho, 1986)

mind for the sake of personal mastery, so that the student will develop spiritually in tandem with the physical growth from such a dynamic activity. Regardless, within such commercial studios, due to the nature of economic survival in a contemporary Neo-liberal society,¹⁰ and through the commercial methods necessary to run the school, I argue studios also imbue those who train martial skills with abilities that are directly transferrable into what may be called labour-power.¹¹ I argue that while schools are training advanced students physically, mentally, and spiritually, the schools may also be training the students to be better, more docile cogs in a societal system that runs on labour. I suggest there may not be a 'war' in the World War II sense spoken of above, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, but there is a socio-economic 'battle' in, and leading up to,¹² the job market that permeates the lives of those who live day-to-day. Calling it a 'war' may be a stretch from that, for example, which is hotly debated over in the Middle-East. Nonetheless, on both 'war' fronts there is struggle in the fight for survival.

As I alluded to, survival may also refer to existence in an economic context, the Neoliberal context. While the martial arts indeed represent survival in the most primal, physical sense, for many it also represents survival in a greater sense such as emotional balance, fitness, or some sort of spirituality. But the martial arts can also relate to survival in an economic sense. My work is based in a Neo-liberal economic period that is known for, as has been documented as nothing short of tense for those whom I am concerned with, labourers. Labourers are important because they constitute a large percentage of the work force. In the following quote Itoh outlines some factors of Neoliberalism while expressing some factors that lead to the tension felt by labourers:

¹⁰ Properly defined in the next paragraph.

¹¹ Labour-power is the output of energy that, when sold by an individual to an employer, becomes labour. When one arrives at the workplace one is paid to work, perform tasks or create objects, and is therefore selling one's labour-power as the energy and time for money, as 'employment'. So, for one to be potentially more effective than others at certain tasks makes them more competitive in a job market.

¹² Such as in job training, and, as I argue, certain other types of pedagogy, like martial arts training.

[A]s capitalist firms promote automation in order to compete flexibly in the market, they have increased employment of irregular workers to economize and flexibly adjust labour costs. [I]n common with all major capitalist countries in the world... the labour market has become more competitive and individualistic compared to the previous period of high economic growth. The strength of trade unions has been eroded by unfavourable labour markets, increased numbers of irregular workers who are hard to organize, the privatization of public enterprises, and competition from low-waged foreign workers in the process of globalization of the economy.¹³

In short, labour, and its potential has become the source of stresses and contentious battles regarding its skill-level and cost. This, among many other factors Itoh outlines, he has claimed is part of the general neoliberal lean that the large governments have espoused since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rudnyckyj makes a related point; “the consequences of failed schemes for national modernization in which the state is no longer the principal agent responsible for improving the lives of its citizens [leads to] this duty transferred to citizens themselves, who are empowered to become individually responsible for bringing about the kind of economic growth that the nation-state has been unable to guarantee.”¹⁴ This may lead to a weakening of the ties between the support of a country and its economy. With the general reduction in the strength and arguably effectiveness of a sense of national economy and an increase in the converse, an individual’s Neoliberal entrepreneurial sense, it appears that for a population to feel the effects of economic prosperity one must take training into one’s own hands. And that is precisely the point, that the scope of martial arts such as these (professional) nourished within the economic and social environment outlined above gives way to the potential for these studios to be viewed not only as places to learn self-defense, or to cultivate a “healthy mind healthy body,”¹⁵ but also as a ‘workforce readiness program’. The arts are interpretable.

John J. Donohue has stressed the interpretive nature of the martial arts explaining that martial arts as a static practice with static ideals and predictable results is, in fact, uncommon, rather that it is a two-way street where socio-cultural practice gives rise to the value and use of the martial arts just as

¹³ (Itoh, p. 45)

¹⁴ (Rudnyckyj, 2010, p. 4)

¹⁵ This was the motto of one of the schools I visited.

much as the other way around. Donohue wrote, “[t]he ideological charters of relatively stable symbolic systems can, in fact, be manipulated and reinterpreted to alter their functional role in a changing social environment. In these situations, it is possible that ideals endure, not because they stand for something, but because they can stand for anything.”¹⁶

Donohue’s contribution to the last paragraph, and really to this thesis, is an important one. His overall contribution, however, is one that is more inspirational than informational. Do not misunderstand, he has many martial arts related writing credits to his name, but most do not address the theoretical breadth and implications that I needed to construct this thesis. In fact, including a handful of contributors to the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*¹⁷ there are only a few academics writing about the martial arts, and almost none that come close to what I have tackled throughout this project. Therefore, I look forward to the academic exploration of this particular arena of the martial arts in the future.

The martial arts values of self-discipline and focus as they have evolved in a modern context are the focus of this thesis. My goal is to identify and form an understanding of the mechanisms of discipline as taught in the ‘professional’ martial arts and to put it on the map of social relations in the context of contemporary society. There is a market presence for martial arts as part of a discourse for the acquisition of social values that on the one hand can represent the strengthening of labour power in the contemporary regime of so-called ‘capitalist’ labour production.

On the other hand such practices can lead to what many martial arts profess as being a free expression of the body. I actually mean it in not such a way as an ‘either-or’ equation, rather it is a system of grays. Such is the ambiguity of training martial arts that I wish to demonstrate through the medium of this project.

¹⁶ (Donohue, 1997, p.12)

¹⁷ Some notable authors are: Donohue, Friman, and DeMarco.

The traits of value that are encouraged in a martial arts studio are, among many similar, honesty, perseverance, hierarchy, focus, and all seem to be encompassed by the father of them all, discipline. This training may at any moment become an intentional or unintentional means of collectivization towards an oppressive universality. But in stark contrast to that, the same values also carry the profound potential to lend the practitioner a medium within which one may express the way one feels in a non-alienated space. The ambiguity of the *affective*¹⁸ potentiality that is always in flux occurs, as I will show, in a “virtual space”¹⁹ that translates emotional intensity and physical text into interpretation. Power, exercised as actions of self-discipline carries with it the potential to be an oppressive force or an expressive force in one’s life. Whether intentionally done through the medium of martial arts or not, the events that I had the opportunity to observe in the studio during fieldwork demonstrate a particular method of harnessing labour-power.

This thesis explores the potential practise of harnessing labour-power in a very specific region on the micro scale in a select few commercial martial arts schools in Victoria B.C., Canada. The context of martial arts demonstrate how the body, in a broad sense, is moved by certain cultural, political, economic forces toward certain goals. Related to movement of the body is another concern when delving into this topic, the notion of the martial arts as a body of knowledge as an expression of the economic forces, which is to ask a question of style.

This thesis argues that the issue of fighting style of martial art is not relevant; rather the style that matters is the commodified style, referred hereafter as *commodified*, or *professional* martial arts. It is a *style* that must promote both itself and what it offers, while also providing what prospective ‘sign-

¹⁸ A definition I would like to suggest would be to explain affect as ‘influence’. But mere influence does not properly cover the emotional intensity and the effects it has within the body as perception, and acted out through any number of bodies, discussed further on, including *disciplined*, *practised*, and *consumer*.

¹⁹ (Massumi, 2002)

ups'²⁰ looking to join martial arts will want and directing marketing to a target demographic in an efficient, business-like manner. These schools are not a second job or mere hobby for the operator of the school; it is typically the owner's own place of employment and source of income. Arguably a style of its own, commodified arts are a product of modernity and are the modern-day market manifestation of a 'traditional' style. Although the term 'traditional' does to some extent give a sense of static non-development in some discourse, I use it here, not in that way, but only to serve as a flexible category with which to juxtapose my definition of the modern-commodified form of martial arts. Though my distinctions are one of many ways to categorize²¹ the different facets of martial arts, or martial styles as a whole, the distinction also opens up a new way to look at martial arts in today's world. By that I mean, while the idea of selling martial arts is not new, the relationship with marketing strategies and business methods involved in promoting martial arts are relatively new, and so is the academic work surrounding those new relationships. There is an opportunity to research within such a distinction because it demonstrates changes that take place perhaps once a commodified style becomes the more common manifestation of the martial arts. Those changes have happened quite suddenly, within the last thirty or so years, and make for an open door through which to perceive the equally evolving world market during the same period, and so the application of the term commodified as a style of martial arts seems appropriate.

Before I continue, it is important to note that even before the commencement of this project I had been involved in the martial arts, and am involved with the commodified martial arts. What little experience I have adds up to eighteen years of martial arts training, the latter ten of which I have been an instructor. I understand that the insider position that I hold and the experience that I have may be problematic, but I believe that it is no more or less problematic than being an outsider. Rather, I see the

²⁰ Prospective enrolments

²¹ Among the many terms used for classifying the martial arts, some of the more common are: Hard/Soft, Internal/External, Ground/Stand-up, North/South(Shaolin), Japanese/Chinese/Thai.

argument surrounding the dichotomy of ‘insider versus outsider’ (regarding which one is more optimal for research) as an argument that glances over the fact that to be either insider or outsider is a position that is relative and dynamic, and one must be self-aware regardless of one’s position. My opinion is reflective of Naples who claims that “[i]nsiderness or outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members.”²²²³ This idea that one’s position, even one’s ‘self’, is ever shifting and differently experienced and perceived by community members is also a recurring theme throughout the progression of this project.

Problem Progression (Outline)

In the first chapter I define the term discipline. I seek to demonstrate that while the meaning of discipline may come from numerous sources, it is from the influence of Industrial capitalism that discipline not only derives a strong sense of meaning, but also a high degree of relevance on the socio-economic map. I then move to search for a few key historical associations of discipline, or any other of what one in the West may perceive as ‘industrial values’, in the martial arts. One must realize that values like discipline and hierarchy are fundamentally not spoken, acted, or perceived of the same way from, for example, periods of historical China or Japan, or today’s constantly in-flux contemporary society in North America. The contexts and conditions that a particular value conjures up are “relative to”, Sakai notes, “a given historical movement and region.”²⁴

Further locating martial arts in a specific movement and region, in the next chapter I carry the idea of the mix of martial arts with the industrial revelation of the ‘commodity’ into the contemporary era. I demonstrate the alterations, and methods to deal with, the martial arts as becoming a commodity,

²² (1996, p. 140)

²³ For a much more qualitative analysis of the topic see Chavez’ (2008) article, including concise tables outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each position.

²⁴ (Sakai, 1992, p. 4)

in essence, the problem of the studio as a commodity. The chapter demonstrates a fundamental change that made the influence of the consumer (read: society) upon the martial arts more possible, and the way that martial arts studios have had to adapt to that influence. The school, a capitalist entity would not last were it not for the support of consumers, thus it must only reproduce those values deemed socially acceptable and valuable. However these values are advertised they are part of a reproduction of culture. While it appears that one may be learning martial arts the same way as those who come from some other era, one can only learn within the context of the regime one exists in. There is of course nothing really wrong with this, in fact the whole utility and practical function of any given martial art lies in its adaptability to the physical and cultural landscape.²⁵

In the third chapter I turn from the commodification of the studio to the human body as commodity. I grapple with the idea that one's social surroundings (peers, leaders, and institutions) act as a regime that generates feelings that create a need for the discipline that martial arts studios offer. I highlight elements from within the studio that emphasize what can best be explained as a disciplinarian "that reigns supreme in yourself."²⁶ In other words, the topic considered is that those who sign up for martial arts may do so out of one's own volition, at least on the surface,²⁷ but it may driven by the feeling for "the social game embodied and turned into a second nature."²⁸ The cycle of social production is reinforced by the extreme highlighting of key social values within the studio. To what extent the power structure that is exercised this way may be detrimental or beneficial remains to be discussed, but what is sure is its ambiguity.

²⁵ As a brief example, Northern Chinese martial arts involved broader movement and more kicks due to the more open terrain than the more crowded urbanity that the tightly wound close-quarters Wing Chun from the South for two relatively mild differences.

²⁶ (Foucault, 2003, p. 29)

²⁷ Meaning that there were no steadfast 'rules' per se that stipulated one's necessity to join.

²⁸ (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 63)

To delve further into ambiguity, the last chapter, continues the theme of the body and explores the idea of the fluid action of the 'interior' of the body, and the inherent ambiguity of interpretation. Through the discussion of *flow* as it relates to body/mind ideas new and old, I wish to demonstrate that signs point to the systematic subjectification, and mechanization of life and labour and yet there are equally as many signs that lead the individual who exercises his discipline as a form of knowledge of the self, as art, to the source of the body as the centre of de-centering. In short, the final chapter deals with the theoretical discussion of the body as a place of becoming.

Investigative Methods

In this project I tie in both philosophical argument and observations of martial arts studios. This project observed practices in three studios during the winter of 2010-11 in Victoria, Canada. I used semi-structured interviews and observed martial arts classes to approach the problem of life skills as taught by commercial martial arts schools. The bridge from theoretical foundation to empirical study persists in the textual, or rather, the inter-textual analysis. In conjunction with Sakai's explanation, intertextuality in the case of this project refers to, but is by no means limited to, the inclusive analysis of physical actions and performance, of verbal and non-verbal communication, and of other types of cultural signification.²⁹ It is, I believe, through the lens of the state of contemporary society that I may grasp the atmosphere that "determines the possible forms of textual production."³⁰ For this textual analysis, I chose to attend three martial arts schools.

To ensure I observed practices only at schools that relate to this project I constructed some simple criteria. The criteria for what I have labelled a professional martial arts school is one that makes an income from the membership fees collected from students. I chose studios where the owners' full-time employment is at the studio, and where the membership fees are at least one-hundred dollars a

²⁹ (Sakai, 1992)

³⁰ Ibid., pg.4

month.³¹ Another criteria for inclusion was that studios used an advertising campaign (newspaper, fliers, etc. to promote their schools.) Last was to obtain permission to interview and make class observations.

I witnessed and documented many research worthy and culturally significant events on the training mats of the studios. I observed classes of both large and small numbers and also held casual and semi-casual interviews with adult students and parents of student youths, and instructors. On occasion I also gained access to written textual material relating to teaching and business methodology relating to the martial arts. In addition to gathering marketing information from interviews, other backing statistics were also drawn from a resource for martial arts related business knowledge called MATA,³² which also has a substantial database of teaching methodology. In grasping what field data I collected, I compiled a set of concepts that reflects the feelings of some of those interviewed and of observations.

Theoretical Preliminaries

The pedagogy of commercial martial arts as an institution begs to be studied. These are institutions that are in control of the welfare of social interaction, especially due to the high rate of individuals who have at one time or another been involved in the martial arts. The purpose of such a study is to theoretically identify some of the main intertextual sources of *discipline-production* within society that perpetuate the 'skill' of discipline, and in turn, ultimately reflect that knowledge upon society as a whole so to spread thoughtfulness of what it can become. And so the mediation of discipline within martial arts styles becomes a style all itself.

Discipline and Body as Text

³¹ The choice to use that price of membership acts merely as a baseline to show that both the school has income (professional) and the students are making a reasonable financial commitment to the school.

³² <http://www.martialartsteachers.com/>

Discipline is an integral part of learning and training in the martial arts, as in many skill sets. Although discipline can take on a different social context within different social regimes, generally, it is the directing of an individual by another or oneself along a determined process or toward a determined or determining product – tangible or intangible – as a goal set. Similarly, self-discipline allows one to progress without direct, extrinsic supervision toward a goal, but instead relying on an internal, intrinsic drive to identify whatever one feels, or has been trained to feel, what must be done. Therefore discipline represents a process of internalization, as a progression from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. Discipline appears to be a kind of umbrella term that in the studio also draws on such related words as, respect, courtesy, balance, manners, self-control, patience, all of which I heard used or encountered whilst doing fieldwork at the studios. Discipline represents many of the life skills I identify as being taught and reference to the term often implies the intrinsic and extrinsic, the mental and physical.

The martial arts are indefinitely associated with knowledge of the body and the potential to instil physical attributes like defence, strength and speed, and mental attributes like discipline, focus, and perseverance. I argue that those same values are desired in the social life of our labour driven society. They are expressed through, what Sakai identifies as a “complex of institutionalized verbal and other social statements.”³³ The internalized complex of statements is learned by, and expressed with the body. To be careful, there is no real homogeneous ‘body’ that one may study, rather there are many ‘bodies’. The martial arts develop a body with a certain model, usually ideological. This is a regulation of the body, through the gateway of the physical body but ultimately with the affect being on the integral physical-psychological unit, sometimes with moral implications. With the martial arts, the body is given a physical ‘diet’ in the light of Bryan Turner’s definition, “to adopt a mode of living which is a

³³ (Sakai, 1992, p. 3)

regimentation of the body and a discipline of the person,”³⁴ a *regime*³⁵ of the body, if you will. It is important to keep in mind that while the regimentation is stylized its purpose remains ambiguous. In each chapter I put emphasis on different types of bodies. I employ the idea of the *disciplined body*, a body of honed practise and social awareness. At other times what is written is more relative to the *consuming body*, not that which pertains to the digestive system, but metaphorically to the consumption of commodities and ideologies. I do also refer to the *physical* human body, and in such times it should be contextually clear or I will use the term ‘human body’. There is not one body that is static; physical, consuming, interpretive, acting, disciplined, all are connected but each representing distinct traits, and all perpetually in flux. One acts, and however one acts one is always demonstrating ideological and physical representations derivative of past influences impressed upon the bodies. When the body moves, speaks, or sings, within the way it performs anything it is re-creating something. It is re-creating interpretations of texts.

The body is important for more than the regulation and regimentation, for it is a text, or, rather, a *body of texts*. A text is “the possible sum of, first, the verbal signification evoked by a certain pattern of signs inscribed in some material and, second, the coded body including both signification and material.”³⁶ And as we may observe when breaking down any social entity, there are bodies inside bodies, inside bodies. In this case there is also no exception. While the physical human body is undoubtedly a great focus, it is a body that acts as but one text, layered upon layers of other texts, such as speech, sign, verbal and active cadence, and so on. With the consideration of ‘textual materiality’, the idea that it is the sum of all or a selected few such layers of text that leads to meaning. One may imagine a complex woven body of texts, which like song, dance, gesture, and other visual artefacts, martial arts

³⁴ (Turner, 1985, p. 152)

³⁵ “[C]onsists of a set of protocols and rules according to which utterances and actions are directly meaningful.” (Sakai, 1992, p. 4)

³⁶ (Sakai, 1992, p. 2)

is indeed included as. As a multilayered text, martial arts can be *read*, and while *reading*, exists ambiguously. Texts are also given meaning based on the system within which they operate.

A Particular Type of ‘Capital’

To better read the bodies-as-text we must look at the economic environment that they operate, and are formed within. For clarification, the definition of contemporary society I use is, aside from the monetary exchange between structures of finance capital, the certain role of powers that generates interests, and validates and assimilates specific desires in the body which regulates the affirmation of a so-called ‘capitalist’ world-view. More specifically, it is the ‘commodity’ that that takes an up-front role. The martial arts are commoditized, and along with the information, the people who train, from instructors to students, are affected. From the ‘art’ as a service to be sold to the student, the consumer may become a more valuable commodity in the labour market. The ultimate aim of this work is to highlight the ambiguity of such a society where one may feel the need to be a better commodity. That is one interpretation of the term *society of control*³⁷ in which industrial values are imposed upon oneself in what resembles an extreme, personal form of Neoliberalism. It is through inter-textual interpretation that the ambiguities inherent in the martial arts will show. Within the regimes of financial capital and consumer capitalism we may come to grasp what the professional martial arts can mean in the North American sense, or at the very least, come to grasp an interpretation of the values mentioned.

Desire-machines (Social-machines)

The bodies, the values, and commodity capitalism are some of the machines that have an upfront role in the analysis of pedagogy in a commercial martial arts studio. Everything mentioned so far, and far more, are forces upon and also subject to the processes of *desire-machines* and *social-*

³⁷(Deleuze, 1995)

machines. It has been said, that “there is only desire and the social, and nothing else”³⁸ presuming a symbiosis.

Desire is the free form of creativity and expression which stems from the internal individual (the ‘inner’) as a force of production. Desire, one’s interest, initially relates to the project in the way desire is affected by social-machines, and later on in this project maintains relevancy as the particular item of expression of the *roji* (explained below). Like desire, conatus relates to expression and action. Conatus, in its most basic and fundamental state, is “an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to transform oneself.”³⁹ It is essentially knowledge of the self, and as practitioners of the martial arts have professed for centuries, the martial arts are a system of self improvement and reflection.⁴⁰ The martial arts, then, appear to be built with bricks made of conatus: “[d]esire is in production as social production, just as production is in desire as desiring-production.”⁴¹ We must remember, to isolate *desire-machines* from *social-machines* is to pervert the process that is ultimately being described because desire is not a stand-alone object, but rather an open system ready to influence and be influenced.

Roji

Within the above system of *desire-social machines* people function as both influenced and influencers, producing desire as much as desire may be influenced. These people are the central focus of this project. Included with the explanation of social-machines and subjectivity, there needs to be a place of potential shelter, whatever that may be. Such a place is created by the multitude⁴², those who, as Virno defines them, must make house with the “feeling of not at home,” and acts as a place of refuge

³⁸ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 29)

³⁹(Foucault, 2003, p. 26)

⁴⁰ Two notable records are, any publication of Miyamoto Musashi’s *Book of Five Rings* (五輪の書), and Bruce Lee’s *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* (cited).

⁴¹ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 348)

⁴² Those of heterogeneous nature.

from the constant feeling of social puppetry.⁴³ The multitude is a term that encompasses all of the heterogeneities of peoples; they are the many, the surplus population, the non-elite. That place of refuge is a *roji*,⁴⁴ a term coined sociologically by Nakagami Kenji, literally meaning ‘alleyway’, is a physical or virtual space where those of the multitude frequent to express themselves. The *roji* is a social alleyway that like the Jazz culture of the thirties may quite literally be an alleyway housing a jazz house as a source of cultural dissent. The *roji* can very quickly turn to a place of change. It can become a place where a change in the body and mind comes from a leader in the *roji* (self appointed or otherwise) under the guise of ‘improvement’, or ‘development’, and de-legitimises the individual for the good of the group. In trying to filter out difference, they may “assimilate...themselves in the interest of pursuing ‘sameness’.”⁴⁵ That ‘one speaking for many’ is quasi-elite; they may be anyone from within the *roji*, a teacher, local business person, or farmer. Explained in context and in further detail later in the work, a person acting as a quasi-elite rises from the *roji* to direct their interests upon the group, for better or for worse. The aim is often towards “universalized imaginaries,”⁴⁶ wherein everyone strives, in the name of some ideological ‘good’, to reconstruct themselves and others homogeneously. In short, it is one speaking for the many. This can be dangerous. This is a slippery slope, and can swiftly become a type of grassroots fascism.⁴⁷ So, a *roji*, a place of open expression, such as a martial arts studio, can in fact be expressive, or quickly become oppressive.

The martial arts *roji* comes in both forms, physical and virtual. Aside from the capitalist front of the martial arts school, there is a *roji* made from the genuine interactions of those involved in training; they train for a multitude of reasons and interpret in a multitude of ways. Aside from the proposed

⁴³(Virno, 2004, p. 34)

⁴⁴ Alan Tansman, *History, Repetition and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji* (Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 24, No. 2), p.276

⁴⁵ (Aalgaard, 2011, p. 4)

⁴⁶ Coined by, (Aalgaard, 2011)

⁴⁷ Defined in the scope of this project as: The singular ‘voice’, stemming externally from within the *roji* or internally within the mind, that seeks to hinder certain types of expression under the guise of purely ideological motivation, for example as, ‘help’, the monarchy, development/progress, or religion.

homogenous reproduction of social atmosphere, and capitalist face of martial arts, I posit that there is, always a place of dis-organ-ization⁴⁸ necessary to produce the heterogeneity needed for ambiguity. In other words, there is a space that allows for re-evaluation, and potential negation of reproduction that results in creating 'sameness.' The place may, for the time-being, be called *roji*,⁴⁹ and is created by the bonding of those of the multitude in a space, virtual and/or physical, wherein the 'self' is reinvented in ever more complex ways. Indeed art is created, but to what extent that art may be a beautiful expression or the art of control lends itself to be analysed.

Conclusion

These theoretical terms, no matter how elaborately explained and exemplified are ultimately lifeless without subject; like shoes without laces, the ideas cannot be bound tightly, but instead fit loosely and could fall off at any step. Such preliminaries are just headspace, until one breaches the empirical and historical. Before we begin to understand what the martial arts can do to a population or a body, let us consider first the impact of the economic regime in general, and in specific on the martial arts as an entity that is both commodified and commodifying.

⁴⁸ This is in reference to Deleuze and Guattari's BwO (Body without organs), a term coined in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* titled 'Thousand Plateaus'

⁴⁹ Coined by Nakagami Kenji,

1 - Martial Arts and the Spirit of Capitalism

The incomparable doctrine of True Buddhism can be understood only after long, hard discipline and by enduring what is most difficult to endure, and by practicing what is most difficult to practice. Men of inferior virtue and wisdom will not comprehend it. All their labours will come to nothing[.]⁵⁰

Those words were apparently spoken by Bodhidharma, the first Zen patriarch, to his first disciple. They are compelling words, carrying years of deep thought and discipline. As the popular myth goes, for a number of years Bodhidharma lived in a cave near the famed Shaolin Temple in China's Henan province. For reasons shrouded in myth, he found himself teaching the sickly monks of the temple exercises to allow for greater health, and therefore greater meditative insight. The exercises were derivative of yogic and Indian wrestling and fighting movements. He is credited with having started the Shaolin tradition of the practise of martial arts for self-defence and as a form of enlightenment via 'moving-meditation'.⁵¹ Discipline has been a pivotal virtue of training since the inception of the Shaolin tradition of martial arts, and the above quote shows it.

In this chapter I follow the narrative of discipline through an exploration of a selected history of martial arts and of capitalism. What ties these two together is the notion that discipline is a core principle in both. In martial tales and even pop culture pertaining to martial arts one's adherence to either one's master or to one's personal quest invokes notions of overcoming difficulty. Capitalism, meanwhile, appears to generate a notion of developing the body's capabilities to produce labour power. The purpose of industrial and commodity Capitalism appears to be based off of an emphasis upon a commodity, whether the human is the item, human is creating the item, or both. In this chapter, I explore this apparent interrelation between capitalism and the martial arts, and delve not just into the creation of capitalist discipline, but also into some of the applications of a martial arts brand of

⁵⁰ (Spangler, 1982, p. 11)

⁵¹ (Spangler, 1982, p.11)

discipline. Throughout, I wish to carry the notion that they both can position discipline with the potential to be developmental and detrimental.

What is Discipline? Or more importantly, in which way, or under what assumptions, do I refer to the word 'discipline'? 'Discipline' is a term that is used widely to speak to issues of punishment or degrees of loyalty, and is one which has been highly theorized⁵² and historicized in detail. In short, discipline is a loaded term, and in the interests of successfully navigating this discussion without incurring the need for an even greater sized theoretical compass, I have chosen to define this term within certain parameters. I only wish to deal with what I see as the relevant aspects of discipline within the scope of this work. The discipline employed here is not punishment; as in when a mother spansks her child for wrongdoing, but it is closely connected. Discipline represents the key intangible force that may compel one to embody a certain type of psycho-physiological praxis, including things like gait, speech, actions, and ways to go about such actions, ways to respond to actions/events, ways to feel, among other responses. Discipline, explained this way, encompasses all so-called life-skills taught in many martial arts, and is expressed outwardly, as is particularly evident in youth programs which I discuss in detail later. Also very notable is the fact that the representations of discipline I describe are not those that could be said to lie solely in one's head, but also and particularly those that include actions and expressions - movements and utterances. It is perhaps more correct to say that one's level of discipline, if it were measurable, would be the name for the flexible and flexing process by which one acts upon one's structured experiences. Just as Bourdieu said for his key word *habitus*, discipline pretends at times to be the measurable outcome of circumstances such as 'familial upbringing and educational experiences.'⁵³ To be clear, the reason discipline sometimes appears to be measurable is due in part to the way some of those who speak English use the term. One must *have* discipline, and if they do not

⁵² See Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* for a compelling historicity of discipline in the Anglo-'Western' world.

⁵³ Pg 51, Bordieu: Key Concepts. Ed. Michael Grenfell. 2008 Acumen

have it they must learn it. No matter how the term is used, be it colloquial, physical, mental or some synergy thereof, I demonstrate that discipline is a key value in society, despite its ever-morphing nature. In the following, I portray discipline in the light of industry.

A Industrial take on Discipline

Under the rubric of industry, discipline takes on a mechanistic feeling. In this sense discipline takes on the meaning of an adherence to particular standards of work relating to a more efficient generation of labour power. A shift occurred during the Industrial revolution that changed the idea of production. There was a great emphasis on the increased output of goods produced on factory-lines.⁵⁴ This increase in production necessitated a similar increase in the need for workers. With industry striving for more reliable machines and factory-lines, it was not just the steel parts that needed fabrication. The workers, migrating from lower-populated areas to industrial cores for work, also needed to be ‘developed’ in a manner that would ensure their capability to work in an orderly fashion. The more productive and more orderly a labourer worked, the more one would be said to possess better labour-power. The more in-synch with the machines and other labourers one acts in turn culminates, in theory, a better production level. That is the aim of industrial discipline.

The general aim of industrial capitalism⁵⁵ was to mould⁵⁶ labourers alongside the development of more efficient machinery. The machinery may refer to both production line machinery and social machinery that comes along with industry. While the economic side of industrial output may be focussed closer on goods production, “it is crucial [to note] that in this period much debate on consumer culture was carried out in terms not of the consumption of goods but of *time*: a debate about

⁵⁴ (Price, 1986, pp. 29-37)

⁵⁵ Defined here as the process of the accumulation of capital through the extraction of surplus value from the labour provided by the workers discussed above.

⁵⁶ Explained as “use” in Price’s, 1986, *Marx and Education*, p. 206

leisure...which concerned how to keep public order outside work hours.”⁵⁷ Leisure time, expressed according to those who wanted such order, would be activities that assist in keeping people busy and away from decadence (moral and economic), or that assist in building and maintaining factory-like skill acquisition. Both of which maintain order, and, if there is a fee for the activities or training, can even contribute to the economy. “Consumer culture in the mid-nineteenth century appears to emerge from a series of struggles to organize and tame, yet at the same time to exploit commercially, the social spaces and times in which modernity is acted out.”⁵⁸ The trained, disciplined, efficient labourer has a skill that can, in industrial terms, be a power that drives production.

The capitalist buys labour-power in order to use it; and labour-power in use is labour itself. The purchaser of labour-power consumes it by setting the seller of it to work. By working, the latter becomes actually, what before he only was potentially, labour-power in action, a labourer. In order that his labour may re-appear in a commodity, he must, before all things, expend it on something useful, on something capable of satisfying a want of some sort. Hence, what the capitalist sets the labourer to produce is a particular use-value, a specified article. The fact that the production of use-values, or goods, is carried on under the control of a capitalist and on his behalf, does not alter the general character of that production.⁵⁹

With great clarity Marx delivers the explanation of labour-power, and shows that it was in the interests of production line managers and elites to harness the labourers’ power. Equally important than the material, technical operations was the control of the virtual operations– the time-space and mind-space – to allow for the adherence to an industrial system and to create docile labourers.

Such virtual operations increase rationality in the lives of labourers. As Price put it, “Marx’s vision of a rational co-operative future society poses a tendency towards increasing rationality, not rationality as a prerequisite as some socialists suppose.”⁶⁰ Discipline is thus a desirable asset for higher production in the workplace, but it is also made by working. It can make for higher rates of production,

⁵⁷ (Slater, p. 15)

⁵⁸ (Slater, p. 15)

⁵⁹ Marx, K. The Capital. Part 3. Ch. 7. Sec.1 p.124. Referenced on, 2010-11-17 from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf>

⁶⁰ (Price, 1986, 279)

greater cohesion, and a decreased need for employees (due to greater efficiency). It is functionally necessary for increased profit.

Because of such a utilization of the human body as labour in the pursuit of profit, there came about paradigm intended to 'sharpen' the effect of labourers already working (efficiency production) and create the embodiment of the desired general industrial labour skill-set. Two examples of the latter are the encouragement of the increased use of the timepiece and hygiene. Simply put, the timepiece added an increase in regimentation that documented work days and controlled break times, while hygiene allowed cramped industrial work-spaces to skirt illness, lest it hamper production. Adult workers were not the only demographic affected by such programs.

Children too, were not left alone by the industrial labour skill-set; just as important, they reflected a fresh potential. Trained from youth in a paradigm based on the factory model of hierarchical industry-based discipline,⁶¹ the children are categorized in classes dictated by 'production-date' and are educated in clean-cut disciplines (Science, Language, History, Philosophy, and Physical Education). Children are inducted into the regime of docility.⁶² The children are trained to be better at all of the same qualities that are most desirable for when they are to enter the work force. Those latent physical and mental qualities are labour potential. From the beginning of their brand-new compulsory education system they are taught to sit, listen and learn in a particular fashion, all more conducive to, and resembling the factory line of, production; as if the child is brought to education, not education brought to the child. Learning is divided into subjects, organized break-times, punctual start and end times for the school day, and schooldays are as frequent as workdays to note a few similarities. Those who made efforts in education reform aimed towards the improvement of the child's discipline, thus ensuring better labour preparation.

⁶¹ (Price, 1986)

⁶² (Price, 1986)

In children and adults alike, control within the industrial system emphasizes management of others and oneself, despite inherent stresses. The echo called 'discipline' as we seem to know it in contemporary society appears to come from the original voice of those trying to heighten such labour preparation, which again contemporarily, creates subscription through a type of fear. There were the industrial 'improvers'.⁶³ 'Improvers' were reformers calling to the as of yet non-rationalized labourers whom were, in the opinion of the improvers, seen to have been wasting their potentially productive time at "fairs, the weekly market, and, of course, in the alehouses."⁶⁴ In this case, as was explained earlier, discipline relates to time management. The concept dictates the utilization of the modern working individual's day down to small divisions. Time management is often put to units sold per hour, minutes used for washroom breaks, or contemporarily, the seconds that it takes to check a personal email. And as the quote above highlights, such improvers may also be concerned with time-management outside of the workplace. One is constantly made aware, externally by rules and guidelines and management, and internally by one's own conditioning by loyalty, guilt, or worse, fear, that if caught, a lack of time management can lead to termination. This is not a hypothetical situation.

After the economic troubles in the 1970's neoliberal trends began to take precedence over the more classical "Fordist" model of production. Sometimes referred to as Post-Fordism,⁶⁵ the trends included a general movement towards globalization, competition from low-waged foreign workers, and privatization of public enterprises.⁶⁶ All of these, and other free-market trends implemented around the depression led to little to no job security and unstable job acquisition. With the left-over understanding that good labour demands discipline combined with free-market competition we find ourselves in the contemporary economic climate that this study is pinned under.

⁶³ (Lock & Farquhar, p. 490)

⁶⁴ (Lock & Farquhar, p. 490)

⁶⁵ (Itoh, 2000)

⁶⁶ (Itoh, 2000, p. 45)

One must be better and more competitive than the next person. Through subscription to the social norm of balancing one's income in mortgages, leases, or any other types of debts required in sustaining the consumer lifestyle, one must be more competitive at selling and maintaining one's labour potential. The "fear and dread"⁶⁷ is real that if one is unable to maintain the juggling act due to any inability to sell one's labour potential then the balance act becomes more of a landslide, burying those de-commoditized individuals under the same consumer habits encouraged, nay, demanded by the market economy. Therefore the individual must manage all things related to oneself in an attempt to assure economic survival.

As explained above, it is economic survival, and by extension actual survival in the mortal sense, that drives one to work within the industrial system. But, do not hastily assume that 'capitalism', incorrectly identified and used as a blanket statement, is a being that chugs along without drivers, or that the 'system' is manipulated only by puppeteers. The system is moved by those that take part, workers, business owners, and investors alike. Those being transformed are not, save for specific incidents, being unwillingly roped into being rationalized labour-power. Many in fact embrace it. It is far too easy to slip into holding the fallacy that the people are utterly commanded by the whim of the elite, despite quality research done that counters the belief.⁶⁸ One such example – or multiple examples – are the movements that surrounded inter- and war-time Japan.

A 'New Life' from Bricks of Discipline

To give examples of the massive changes incurred by labourers, on labourers, I draw attention to examples of Japan during its modernization. Japan has a well documented recent history that covers the country's accelerated change into an industrial society.

⁶⁷ Virno explains in depth, using these terms, the repercussions of the surplus population and job-loss in contemporary society. (Virno, 2004)

⁶⁸ See Aalgaard, 2011

During the post-war years, during the attempted clean-up and revitalization of Japan following the near societal collapse⁶⁹ immediately following surrender, Prime minister Katayama promoted the 'New-Life' campaign, in which citizens were encouraged to "save more, work harder, and avoid the black market."⁷¹ All of this was to encourage the "establishment of rational and democratic habits in daily life."⁷² Even local government workers were rewarded for their efforts with town clocks, an essential tool for the sharpening of the villagers' lives into those of labourers.⁷³ But the left-leaning post-war Katayama cabinet began the 'New Life Campaigns' modeled after movements that occurred during the inter-war period. One movement, occurring in the southern Japanese colony of Okinawa, was one of nothing less than grass-roots fascism. Tomiyama's description of the lifestyle reform movement in wartime Okinawa – during which time Okinawans actively sought to embody perceived aspects of what it means to be 'Japanese' and repress aspects of their own culture as a means to ensure the value of their labour power, and therefore their survival – is an effective example of this.⁷⁴ A situation such as this is not uncommon, "the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for."⁷⁵ These actions were not some anomaly that occurred solely as a lead up to Japan's militant position at the time either.

Similar events occurred post-war as well. "In actuality..." Garon notes, "There was little to distinguish the early post-war campaigns from their predecessors. The goal of 'national salvation' was

⁶⁹ (Gordon, 2003, p. 228)

⁷⁰ Though much has been written, I will refer to an excellent text titled, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, by John Dower (2009. Norton and Co., New York) This text outlines precisely what aspects of society were affected by the post-war depression, and what sub-cultures rose from the decadence.

⁷¹ (Garon, 1997, p. 165)

⁷² (Garon, 1997, p.163)

⁷³ See *Molding Japanese Minds*. By Sheldon Garon. Princeton Univ. Press. (p167-9)

⁷⁴ See Tomiyama Ichiro, *'Spy': Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa* (Osaka: Senri Ethnological Studies 51, National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), p. 126.

⁷⁵ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p.29)

telling” and “autonomous” participation was envisioned by the government,⁷⁶ and many people alike; however, for different reasons than pre-war Japan.

While the industrial improvers, and these pre and post-war campaigns in Japan may have been organized and partially propagated by the elite, it was policed internally. This activity of social-policing is akin to what Foucault famously termed the social panopticon,⁷⁷ which is the so-called glass house that everyone lives in, all activities are public at the village level and so ‘community’ can quickly slip into a peer-on-peer type of oppression through observation brought by the community, upon the community. The *roji*⁷⁸ policed itself. It often stems from the notion of conforming for a ‘greater good’, or one making sacrifices for some meta-narrative ideology like the ‘Emperor’ or the ‘Economy’. Those that emerge from the working class to lead such movements are sincerely trying to help, but herein lies dormant a curious danger. They are moving towards a type of homogeneity that causes further subjugation. Or, as Osugi identifies as persons “within the subjugated [who] join the subjugating class,”⁷⁹ All in an attempt to turn those involved “into one body”.⁸⁰ Those “subjugating” are what Tomiyama⁸¹ refers to as the *quasi-elite*. Acting from within the *roji*, they desire to ‘free’ others via supposed, justified change.

Discipline then comes not only from *top-down*, which is frankly a tired mis-understanding of systems such as those above, but from within a sense of community and from people with a shared story. Oppression can come covertly, under the ruse of acting communally as ‘us’. It is not merely our bosses, teachers, and political leaders who force discipline upon everyone. By being part of society we are constantly within what Foucault and Deleuze have discussed many times – the social panopticon and the society of control, respectively. The situation functions in a cyclical fashion, akin to that of a Zen

⁷⁶ (Garon, 1997, p. 154)

⁷⁷ (Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison, 1979)

⁷⁸ Defined under the subtitle of ‘Theoretic preliminaries’ in the Introduction of this work.

⁷⁹ Osugi Sakae, *The Fallacy of National Statism* (April, 1918), p. 246, quoted in Katsuhiko Mariano Endo, Osugi Paper, conference proceedings from 2010 (p. 25).

⁸⁰ (Sakai, p. 74)

⁸¹ (2000)

koan (riddle), the below quote explains this beautifully: “there are no desiring machines that exist outside the social machines that they form on a large scale; and no social machines without the desiring machines that inhabit them on a small scale.”⁸² The social and the individual’s desire are cyclically affecting each other.

What I first choose to discuss is merely an entry point into the perpetual cycle explained above. That I choose to begin with the production of the social machine is not any attempt to solve a chicken-or-egg argument of which comes first. A discussion of the Social machines in the broader sense includes day to day human interaction at work, home, school and the marketplace while also including the machines that generate social behaviour in work, home, school, and the marketplace. State and financial institutions as social machines generate identity by (ideological) campaign or commodity through propagation. The individual and social streams cross and intermingle, moving different directions at different times and in different examples, and are always present.

Economy of Movement

Rationalization for the purposes of industrialization as an economic era still exists, but, because it is driven by people, its molds and manifests are always differently focused. Martial arts and sport, too, have been specifically targeted as a paradigm space where rationalization, and sportification, acts for the dominant regime at the time.

One instance of rationalization in martial arts is the shift from *bujutsu* to *budo*. The character used to write ‘bu’ in both of the terms (武) means ‘martial’, therefore both of these terms denote a loosely translated ‘martial arts’. But it is the specific shift from emphasis on one to the other that is significant. The ‘jutsu’ in *bujutsu* (武術) means ‘technique’ and therefore *bujutsu* denotes a more battle-focused fighting art, whereas the ‘do’ of *budo* (武道) means ‘way’ or ‘path’ and implies a focus on the

⁸² (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 340)

refinement of technique as a personal project or way-of-life. Japanese martial-techniques to a path of martial arts (lit.). Around the inter- and war-time period in Japan many “-jutsu” arts came to be known as “-do” arts, Kenjutsu to kendo, aikijutsu to aikido, and sometimes karate to karate-do. During the relative political stability of the Tokugawa period, the former war arts came to be divided up by weapon used or according to slight differences in masters’ interpretation. The arts were used instead as a form of education for the warrior-class, and became infused with a certain brand of ethics. While there was no homogenous ethical message shared between those that propagated the use of martial arts of Tokugawa warrior-class pedagogy,⁸³ what was shared was simply the fact that the art became somewhat pedagogical in utility. Meaning, during the relatively stable Tokugawa regime, samurai fighting art began less about representing one’s ability to kill and more about one’s dedication. The warrior class, however, disappeared following the opening of Japan at the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate during the mid-nineteenth century. At which time the martial arts briefly lost popularity, and were re-discovered by those in the late nineteenth century that found the ideological education paired with *bujutsu* to be valuable. What was thought to be valuable was the way that the martial arts were used in partnership with values, like discipline and loyalty, to better ingrain both the arts and the values into the practitioner. They were seen as “an educational tool for the cultivation of morals and strength of character” for the Sino- and Russo-Japanese wars.⁸⁴ The shift of emphasis was then from battle tested techniques of combat, to martial arts neatly and separately organized by weapon use and style name, rationalized categorically, used for confidence-building and spiritually and morally educating a wider populace. In fact, It was the *Dai-Nippon Butokukai* (All Japan Martial Arts Federation) that is credited as making the name-shift in 1919.⁸⁵ Imparting Budo became compulsory in education in 1931, and it was used as an educational tool for the spread of nationalism during the nation-wide push towards military

⁸³ Some may ignore heterogeneity instead idealizing such a ‘smooth’ homogeneity as calling all of what was taught “Bushido”, thus trying to prove some sort of echoing ‘warrior-spirit’ and claiming a continuity of ‘Japanese-ness’.

⁸⁴ (Hamaguchi, p. 9)

⁸⁵ Hamaguchi, p10

mobilization. Once many schools and styles were categorically organized, the *Dai-Nippon Butokukai* attempted, fairly successfully, to unite all budo schools that practiced independently. Thus a community, born of quasi-elites, is made, previously un-connected but now bound by a sense of national representation all teaching for a similar cause. But, after the increased presence of martial arts as pedagogy not all went smoothly into the mid-twentieth century.

After having been mobilized in pre and inter-war periods, the martial arts groups and federations were disbanded immediately post-war. The arts reappeared later, but again in different clothing. Because activity shared amongst a community (such as an all-Japan federation) has strong social connections, being born-of and harboured in the social spaces, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (S.C.A.P.) dismantled many social structures in Japan's society with the intent to cull any dissention. However, during the post-war reconstruction, martial arts again appeared after being banned by the S.C.A.P. merely a few years earlier. This time martial arts were re-instated, as less of a machine of nationalism for directly,⁸⁶ but martial arts and sports pedagogy were still utilized as means to an end; the end was for a stronger economy.⁸⁷ In an effort "extending to all aspects of regular workers' lives" many large and medium-sized companies "formed sports clubs in addition to providing... support systems for living."⁸⁸ Nicknamed *Toyotism*, in reference to Fordism, Japanese enterprise-based welfare includes recreation at the workplace and after work hours as a method of company cohesion. Nakayama explains:

The life processes of labourers are totally assimilated into the dominant corporate system, as the human relations within the corporation extend to and penetrate into their personal domains. Thereby, a kind of 'corporate community relation' is formed. Actually on the basis of this 'community feeling', the conflicts of interests between worker and manager are absorbed into 'the corporate co-operative systems'. That is, they are neutralized by the exaltation of the corporate consciousness.

⁸⁶ As a direct tool of war.

⁸⁷ See, Nakayama's *Economic Development and the Value Aspect of Sport*, (2006) for elaboration

⁸⁸ (Nakayama, 2006, p. 63)

In this way:... labourers are pushed into positive participation in the work process 'spontaneously' ..., although their initiatives are limited, at best, only to spontaneity on the level of the device and the improvement in the working process at their job sites. It is suggested the fundamental characteristic of Toyotism is 'the corporate community consciousness'.⁸⁹

So sports are being used in this case as they are in the Olympics, but the cohesion may not lend itself to nationalism so easily as it does to labourism. It is not utilized as an elite activity, but is rather used as something aimed at everyday people for social-organization.

In another compelling combination of martial arts, pedagogy, and rationalization, a similar change occurred in China. However, this change was for the creation of a martial education system focused around schooling. The rationalization of martial arts is not a new thing, not as new as the business and marketing strategies and intense commodification that emerged in the 1980's in the west⁹⁰ and that persist even now in the West and elsewhere. In the early 20th century the martial arts of China went through a "scientization" and a "new martialization"⁹¹ during which many of the martial arts from different regions were scoured for techniques and sets⁹² with educational qualities that could be taught as part of an educational curriculum. Larger and longer classical sets were taken and broken down into separate moves so to promote easier learning. The *scientization* refers to the calisthenic justification for the use of martial arts in schools as well as secondarily "purging the martial arts of superstitious relics like 'spirit fists' or 'divine swords'" and other, as the author loosely puts it "conspicuously modern touches."⁹³ The arts were being dragged into the spotlight of modernity, whether it was agreeable or not.

⁸⁹ (2006, p. 63)

⁹⁰ Discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

⁹¹ (Morris, 2004, p. 192)

⁹² Sets, also referred to as forms, are sequences of more than two and up to as many as a couple hundred movements that simulate fighting sequences. They are movements that contain within them fighting application.

⁹³ (Morris, 2004, p. 192)

All of these changes were part of the debate relating to the movement to modernize. The martial arts movement as just outlined did not exist without debate. Within the circle of support there were those who advocated meditation in such a curriculum, while others opposed the idea. One is recorded as claiming that teaching meditation in schools would only transform China into a “Daoist-Buddhist nation” and that China would become like India, Tibet and Mongolia, “example[s] of once-great peoples whose (supposedly) debilitating and meek religious traditions had transformed them into the ultimate laughingstocks of the modern age, feminized non-nations.”⁹⁴ Outside of the circle of support for the *Pure Martial Arts Society* were other educated youth who still understandably, but unfairly associated all Chinese boxing with the backwards, mystic ‘boxers’ of 1900 and those who participated in the Boxer Rebellion. Naysayers to the incorporation of martial arts into school curricula made claims that it was a part of ‘Old China’ and not the Modern West, and that it belonged to those in the countryside and not the “enlightened classes of urban China.”⁹⁵ What resulted, the creation of *guoshu* (国術 lit. country [martial] techniques), was not merely an education system, it was “literally a body of national skills.”⁹⁶ In the end, it was only those in the *guoshu* community who justified themselves to make the “rhetorical claim to Chinese purity and to a direct correspondence between the fate of their ‘national arts’ and the nation itself.”⁹⁷ The utilization of martial arts for as pedagogy was debatable at best, and neither side was without politics and rhetoric.

Similarly, the Shaolin temple, origin of one of the great Chinese martial arts legacies, is not beyond rhetoric either, verbal or physical. Zhu Tianxi, Shaolin master, reported that in the early nineteen-nineties he, some fellow Shaolin masters, and masters of different styles from around China were asked by the *National Martial Arts Manage Center* (sic) to create the “Shao Lin Quan Typical

⁹⁴ (Morris, 2004, pp. 192-3)

⁹⁵ (Morris, 2004, p. 193)

⁹⁶ (Morris, 2004, p. 220)

⁹⁷ (Morris, 2004, p. 221)

Routines.”⁹⁸ The routines, or ‘forms’, are sets of fighting movements that are practiced solo to improve among many things, application, endurance, focus, intent, and spirit.⁹⁹ The reason the masters were asked to do so was in order to create simplified routines that resemble, in *essence*, what the full Shaolin routines are actually. The National organization’s purpose was to “spread Shaolin Kung-fu”¹⁰⁰ as a soft-power¹⁰¹. A greater understanding as to exactly how playing martial arts can change people was surely not far from the minds of those in the National Martial Arts Manage Center. And Although Master Zhu was merely a quasi-elite teacher assisting an undeniably elite, PRC party-driven institution; he nevertheless fully grasps the affect that martial arts practice can take on the body. He claims, “Playing Shao Lin Quan you were required to practice your external by strengthening your tendons, bones and skin, your internal by cultivating your minding, Qi (inner breathing & strength) and spirit. It integrated your interior training with exterior and theories with practice. ...Each motion ...had its function and meaning.”¹⁰² At once, we see a man, who has genuinely dedicated his life to his practice, asked to simplify his art for the sake of breadth, rather than depth.

Verbal rhetoric is not set apart from Shaolin either. It is prized by the People’s Republic of China as a treasure, and utterances like “The Yellow River culture and the civilization of the Chinese nation with long history have nourished the Shao lin Temple and created the world’s famous Shao Lin Quan school”¹⁰³ are propagated about it. Published in both Chinese characters and English, the quote appeared in a magazine intended to spread Kungfu internationally. With full intent in side-stepping the theoretical, political ‘can-of-worms’ that is the PRC, it is clear that nothing is really beyond rhetoric. But despite words such as those above, the Shaolin arts persist at being practiced by non-Chinese and

⁹⁸ (Zhu, 2007, p. 52)

⁹⁹ (Zhu, 2007)

¹⁰⁰ (Zhu, 2007, p. 52)

¹⁰¹ One explanation of soft-power that carries a fresh degree of clarity is: the “politics concerned with the commodification of the body’s capabilities, and especially those facilitated through social policy as cultural policy.” (Taken from Katsuhiko Mariano Endo’s forthcoming manuscript titled, *Empire State of Mind*. Part II.)

¹⁰² (Zhu, 2007, p. 52)

¹⁰³ (Zhu, 2007, p. 54)

taught by Shaolin practitioners in cities other than those in China. For what really does “the Yellow River culture” mean to a non-Chinese individual living in the mountains of Montana? The arts are being absorbed by many, in many ways, and will continue to be grasped within the infinite spectra of perception.

Conclusion

If the goal of this paper is to understand commodified martial arts in a contemporary setting, then one must first have a basic grasp of the history that has led to this particular issue. This chapter addressed the issues of commodity labour power and potential, and the idea of martial arts having been both a target and tool of rationalization.

I show from the beginning of this chapter that within industrial labour capitalism there is a deep seeded necessity for organization, discipline, and rationalization in general that I believe carries forth into contemporary society. Within the context of that labour-driven community I also identified the cyclical context of the spread of discipline, and the way certain ideals may be brought upon oneself by a type of community ‘us’-ness.

In the latter half of the chapter I shifted from rationalization in industry, to rationalization in martial arts. I demonstrated that the martial arts are, a) malleable, mouldable according to social desires, and b) that the arts have been molded before. If the arts follow both of those precepts, then it is safe to assume that they may still be changed to fit and adapt to the climate within which they are present. These ideas are important to the greater picture of this project to show that there may be a synergy in place between this industrial discipline and the great pedagogical power of martial arts to imbue strong values upon its practitioners, and that they are not mere puppets or victims, but actively seeking such means.

We find even in modern-day endeavours, that oppression like that which was explained during the chapter surely has not disappeared, no matter from top, down, in, or out. Margaret Lock commented on 'our' desire to potentially bring upon 'ourselves' this weight.

In modern times, ...disciplining of bodies for capitalist production is not confined to the workforce and to child and slave-labour, bodily discipline willingly embraced among the middle classes worldwide as part of aesthetic and health-related practices is deeply embedded in consumer and capitalist culture.¹⁰⁴

A 'bodily discipline willingly embraced', evokes not an image of a master and slave, but of master in slave. Such is self-discipline, the discipline that often prescribed by parents to the very children who begin martial arts.

So with all of this we see that martial arts have an undeniable ability to move people (pun fully intended). Movement may come from so-called 'grass-roots' – from the *roji* – or it may be top-down; it may be pursued in the name of rationalization, economics, nationalism or any other perceived direction and ideology. While the ideologies themselves really only change in minor ways, it is the interpretation of the actions and ideology that remains highly powerful and dangerously neutral, thus ambiguous. And with that we move to see how discipline, among other values are sold with martial arts.

¹⁰⁴ (Lock & Farquhar, 2007, p. 491)

2 - Divergent Paradigms:

Professional Martial Arts in the light of capitalism

Introduction

The martial arts have received a heightened level of attention in the last half of the twentieth century. Martial arts from many nations have become well known outside of the country of origin, and others can be said to have flourished as what at times feels like a global pastime.¹⁰⁵ The martial arts in many ways become intersected with money as they both are becoming increasingly part of a globalized system. As the martial arts of different regions often develop as a system so entwined within culture that it appears organic, so too does a monetary value system sometimes seem omnipresent as it develops within regions. In the last chapter we looked at the development of pedagogical discipline and rationalization as a function of industrial capitalism and also the martial arts as a system not outside the reach of rationalization. Though the martial arts and capitalism have historically developed with relatively little intersecting, more recently that is not so.

The martial arts seem to be having more and more to do with commodity capitalism. Commodity capitalism can appear to envelop and become incorporated with hitherto relatively non-economic artefacts, turning the mundane, the sacred, and the profane into objects of economic appropriation. Just as so many other cultural artefacts have gone the same path, it was inevitable that these two - martial arts and commodity capitalism - would come together to create a massive martial arts empire. Although it is easy to say that it was a 'theory' such as 'neoliberalism' or 'capitalism' that was responsible, those responsible were rather people with capitalist intent, and so the stages in the process of change are not as clearly identifiable as they may seem. Practitioners and investors interested

¹⁰⁵ For example, many of the sports in The Olympics are derivative of military techniques. For 'Asian martial arts' in specific, Taekwondo and Judo are both Olympic sports.

in promulgating skills or turning a profit, be it out of necessity or out of desire, have developed market strategies tailored to making the martial arts 'sell'. In order for this martial arts empire to have begun its marketization it needed to modify the pre-existing system.

With articles like Yong Jae Ko & Jin Bang Yang's *Globalization of Martial Arts*¹⁰⁶ in which the two discuss the ways that the martial arts are able to spread globally, while raising questions like: "How can leaders enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of martial arts organizations?", or, "What are key strategies to promote martial arts products, services, and events?", it becomes apparent that while research is being done on the commodified martial arts, it is taking place without any grounding as to precisely *how* the martial arts even fit into contemporary society. It seems as if such research is 'jumping the gun' – or perhaps 'fist' is more appropriate – without taking into account what the martial arts mean to the current economic regime. Yong and Jin's article is not wrong or misleading, it just seems that aside from reading like a company's fiscal report or an instruction manual, the article addresses an interesting connection between business and the martial arts without questioning in their research the base assumptions as to how those 'martial arts' act as a economical, cultural construct. For this we must look at in what ways martial arts were modified to fit the economic system it so thrives within today.

This chapter introduces the main principle behind what it was that ultimately changed martial arts into what I refer to as 'professional martial arts', and then further define some of the phenomena of this modern manifestation of the martial arts. The large-scale¹⁰⁷ change to commodification is what altered the martial arts into what is most common today, something which exposed a fundamental disturbance of the relationships in the training studio. That disturbance then forces those in the so-

¹⁰⁶ (Ko, Y.J., 2003)

¹⁰⁷ There should be distinction made here between the large-scale change, where martial arts are massed into contemporary society as a service industry, and the small –scale commodification that has taken shape as a government 'buying' protection, or vigilante work, etc... in pre-modern societies. The difference is that this latter commodification was not nearly as common as having training schools in supermalls.

called 'martial arts business' to develop methods of maintaining a presence in a capitalist society. It was a disturbance that subsequently led to the development of two changes: the process of attaching values as commodities to the martial arts through modified marketing techniques, and the creation of 'sign' commodities by the martial arts industry. Due to length restrictions, this list is by no means exhaustive. Both of the aforementioned are perversions of the way in which these particular martial arts businesses use martial arts to create knowledge and reinforce consumption.

Shift in Paradigm

While industry has been influential to today's society, its influence has come under a new regime, causing and resulting from a re-evaluation of industry in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries. According to Hardt and Negri:

It has now become common to view the succession of economic paradigms since the middle ages in three distinct moments, each defined by the dominant sector of the economy: a first paradigm in which agriculture and the extraction of raw materials dominated the economy, a second in which industry and the manufacture of durable goods occupied the privileged position, and a third and current paradigm in which providing services and manipulating information are at the heart of economic production.¹⁰⁸

Informatization, the particular name that Hardt and Negri assigned to the regime, and its theoretically heavy implications are not so important here; what is important is the observation that is made by the authors. As was discussed in the last chapter, industrial discipline carried with it the mindset of the factory, the means of production were physically laden, and the product was often tangible. This tertiary production regime has shifted from the domination of "industry to that of services and information."¹⁰⁹ It is important to remember that just as agriculture did not disappear whence the shift to industry occurred; neither does industry disappear at the time of *information*, and neither do the values. Rather each successive regime presents new methods of interpretation in approaching the so-called earlier

¹⁰⁸ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 280)

¹⁰⁹ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 280)

stages of development. The authors explain that when agriculture was modernized as industry, the farm progressively became a factory, with all of the factory's discipline, technology, wage relations, and so forth.¹¹⁰ Just as the point was made last chapter that martial arts can be interpreted differently depending on the era, so too can the implications from economic eras past be approached differently through the current economic regime.

Ultimately there is a relation that can be made here between the era under discussion and the martial arts. That relation is that the professional martial arts as a service – and including, but without emphasis, any secondary industry related to the martial arts (eg. clothing, gear, merchandise) – are being commodified. The arts are a system of information, an intangible good, being sold as something within the service sector. This is referred to by Hardt and Negri as “immaterial labor”, and is “labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication.”¹¹¹ The authors explain the ‘faces’ of such labour. One such ‘face’ of immaterial labour is the *affective labour* “of human contact and interaction.”¹¹²

This labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion. ...Such affective production, exchange, and communication are generally associated with human contact, but that contact can be either actual or virtual[.]¹¹³

And although the authors refer to the health services as example, it is no stretch at all to extend such an explanation to the service of professional martial arts. As should be expected in the face of such change is the revision of ‘commodity’. I highlight a couple of key changes to professional martial arts in light of a re-interpretation.

The Shift in Roles

¹¹⁰ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 281)

¹¹¹ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 290)

¹¹² (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 292)

¹¹³ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 292-3)

There has been a clashing in the roles of the master and student in the traditional method of instruction and the capitalist method of exchange. The traditional flow of the transmission of skill in almost all professional martial arts is being contradicted by the capitalist 'flow' of transaction.

First, in order to understand the change, one must grasp what are considered the traditional roles. This is the relationship of the master and student. This process of transmission is one that many will still know, because something similar to it still exists in contemporary society: that is, apprenticeship. It is a relationship wherein the student entrusts the master to impart knowledge to the student at appropriate times during training. Many training sessions that were focused around the mental, physical, and spiritual cultivation of the student involved the need for the student to persevere and maintain subservience to the master.¹¹⁴

Additionally, there is also reverence and a high degree of respect for the master shown in many arts. Examples of this include the reverence and respect shown to Morihei Ueshiba, founder of Aikido, whose picture one will find on the wall of every Aiki training hall,¹¹⁵ and to Zhang Sen-Feng, founder of Taiji Quan, who is revered as the greatest Daoist influence on the Chinese martial arts.¹¹⁶ Their roles in the martial arts may be discussed lengthily, but this explanation serves our discussion well enough to proceed to the influence of the commodity upon such roles.

The creation of definite consumer power in the marketplaces is obvious in modern Canadian society.¹¹⁷ Within the purchasing of goods by the consumer, from the merchant, the consumer possesses the power of choice and often the power to change the circumstances surrounding a purchase to his/her own favour. This attitude may be seen in almost any retail store, where the

¹¹⁴ (Gummerson, 1992 p.9).

¹¹⁵ (Sosa & Robbins, 1987)

¹¹⁶ (Chow & Spangler, 1982)

¹¹⁷ And, I believe in many first-world capitalist economies.

underlying rule is that ‘the customer is always right’. In direct terms, the flow of transaction is a phenomenon that puts the merchant in a subordinated position to the consumer.

If we locate these ideas within the martial arts, we can see that the commodification of martial arts has led to a clear power-shift. The choice has moved to the student/consumer while subordinating the teacher to the position of merchant. The roles have now been reversed, creating a contradiction. The merchant serves goods to the consumer, but the student earns knowledge from the teacher. The inclusion of capital into the situation quickly degrades the relationship between the two. As soon as the student feels that the teacher must serve him as ‘consumer’, then the essential master-student relationship becomes conflicting, and the process of learning becomes something that is not as valuable as that which is earned without resorting to monetary transaction. If ignored, this becomes a potential cause of the creation of McDojos¹¹⁸ and synonymous belt-factories.

As we can see, there is a basic contradiction in the manner in which these two relationship concepts intersect. The shift in the status of the teacher to that of a subordinated merchant is a *reversed hierarchy* – the name I will give to identify not just the combination of the two juxtaposed relationships, one being teacher-student, the other, customer-merchant, but a battle for dominance from each of the opposing hierarchical paradigms. Thus the reference is to the process, not the outcome.

The solution to the opposition was to be found in a practise known in the business world and not in the martial arts world. The way that the emerging martial arts market manoeuvred around the problem of *reversed hierarchy* was through, as Hunt and Morgan¹¹⁹ called it, “relationship marketing”.

¹¹⁸ McDojo is often a pejorative term used to refer to the business method of a type of martial arts school. It is a play on words, using the ‘Mc’ from McDonalds (one of the many easily recognisable corporation in the globalized world) and ‘Dojo’, which means literally ‘place of the way’ or training studio. Often what constitutes a particular school being called a McDojo is subjective, but common tendencies are: being able to sign on a contract that guarantees a belt in a definite amount of time, and high monthly dues for impersonal instruction. Simplified, the term implies that Mcdojos put money first.

¹¹⁹ (1994)

This involves new types of relationships that, in this case, spawn from the clash between the two previously identified forces. “Relationship marketing”¹²⁰ was defined as “all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchange.”¹²¹ Though the marketing that they speak of is not strictly related to martial arts, it encompasses some of the martial arts marketing phenomena that happened later in the same decade.

An example of business savvy specific to the martial arts is MATA (Martial Arts Teachers’ Association), founded by John Graden. John Graden was educated in business, and was successful in Karate tournaments in the US. After making a name for himself in the tournament circuit, he opened up his own schools. Seeing how many good schools went out of business, he formed MATA. MATA is a martial arts school operator and teacher-focussed website which targets the business aspect of the martial arts. The website offers instructions on how to acquire a store-space in a mall, dialogues for signing prospects up over the phone, and suggestions for maintaining an organized teaching system. Overall, this service is aimed at improving the prosperity of the school, improving the quality of teaching, and keeping students happy. The website is available for a monthly membership fee to any school operator. This site is no anomaly; there are others, such as *Championsway* and *A.T.M.A. (Association of Traditional Martial Arts)*. This company, and the others like it, have blended martial arts and business together while attempting to solve many of the problems that the *reversed-hierarchy* poses. This is, plainly put, the packaging of business savvy knowledge oriented towards the professional martial arts school owner, with the aim of maximizing the sale of the school owner’s own martial arts knowledge set. It is a sale of information to maximise the sale of information.

Use of Knowledge

¹²⁰ (Hunt and Morgan, p22)

¹²¹ This particular quote was pulled from Ko’s 2003 article titled, *Martial Arts Marketing*.

As discussed so far, the partnership between marketing sense and martial arts is a relatively new concept. Similarly, the intrinsic benefits of martial arts, other than the ability to fight, have been professed for hundreds of years, but along with the increased influence of business on martial arts the benefits themselves are becoming items for sale. The precise way that intangible values like discipline and focus are being 'advertised' as services in commercial martial arts has been a development that has come about since the mid-nineteen eighties.

Martial arts were, and most often still are, respected as disciplines that take years of perseverance to master. There is no real lack of respect for the long, hard, tedious practice of martial arts, just as the desire for something quicker and easier is surely nothing new. What is relatively new is the sheer availability of alternative devices or activities that are more easily acquired or conquered.¹²² Modern society has adopted 'fast food' not only as a commodity for ingestion, but also an ideology of life. It is a life in which one can receive the extrinsic rewards for the smallest of accolades without ever really desiring to aspire for more. On the other hand, Martial arts at times may be too pragmatic, sometimes taking a student many years to achieve a desired goal. Something needed to happen to create greater subscription to martial arts. Martial arts need to adapt, and if one were to apply an ethic generally to all martial arts, one could say that it is the 'adaptability' of the fighter that may be applied to the commodity market.

To adapt, many martial arts school owners/promoters have had to search for new ways to increase the perceived value of their service, the martial arts. In other words, for the owners to increase their profit, they have had to look for ways to highlight their art and make it appealing to society at large. Something/s must be made into marketing tools that can take aim at a particular target base. Whether it is weight-loss classes for adults or life-skills pedagogy for children (aimed at parents), there

¹²² Such as video games or a walk.

are leads that are put out to draw prospective students in. What is needed, then, is proof that the school can fulfill such promises as, for example, the claim that it can create 'confidence' in anyone. Before we consider how the school can create perceived value let us sidestep the issue at hand and look at the idea of perceived value a little closer.

The simple function that the market (read: consumer¹²³) has in creating value is one that must not be overlooked. In the case of the commercial value of life-skill values in the martial arts, consider what Marx closed section one of chapter one in *Das Capital* by stating "If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value."¹²⁴ In terms of the subject matter, if a martial arts school moves its marketing focus in a particular direction, adding a kickboxing class, for example, or offering leadership training, it is presumably done so in order to add value to the students' potential experience. If no profit came from the chosen direction, from a business standpoint, it would be impractical to maintain a program that draws no revenue. Therefore, to add any component to the school with the (presumed) intent to increase perceived value a school owner/operator must create marketing that justifies and reinforces the school's new component.

Once a program is generated that has perceived potential it may not be able to stand on its own, it may need reinforcement. Although the many benefits of martial arts training that go beyond the ability to fight have been known for some time, and even being promoted on the basis of such benefits,¹²⁵ it has only been in modern times that those benefits have needed to be empirically verified in order to legitimately increase value and draw income through the advertisement of such benefits. The reason that empirical knowledge concerning the commodity may come to be, it can be suggested, is again related to the support it supplies to the value (that is, both commercial, and life-skill, value.) Scientific logic and empirical data set a clear and acknowledged standard that can, if focused on an ideal

¹²³ As opposed to the school owner.

¹²⁴ (Marx, Retrieved October 12, 2008. www.marxists.org.)

¹²⁵ Examples of this were given last chapter.

topic, legitimate claims made about the martial arts, which in turn gives a justified reinforcement of sorts to the advertisement of a particular value.

Stephen Oliver's franchise *Mile High Karate's* website,¹²⁶ for example, not only allows one to read a set of academic studies, but more importantly, locates the studies on the website in a manner that makes it clear that these studies are being utilized as advertising tools. The studies that are available to be read are in the middle of the homepage, with name and email address input lines for subscription to an advertising mail list above the articles, as well as contact information for new student sign up and franchise interests. Two studies posted on Oliver's site, written by doctors in their respective fields who are also martial artists, declare that martial arts classes are beneficial for children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). Two selected quotes from one of the articles praise martial arts for their developmental value.

Martial Arts has a way to evolve into a set of activities and methods used for personal growth and self-development.¹²⁷

Martial arts have been empirically validated to have positive effects on self esteem and self-confidence, better management of both feelings of aggression and feelings of vulnerability...¹²⁸

At the risk of repeating myself, I must stress that both of the available articles on ADHD are written by academics with backgrounds in the martial arts. My intent here again is not to disprove the research done by the psychologists who did the study. What I do mean to demonstrate is the creation of knowledge and development to further the corporate agenda of this martial arts company. It is not *what* was put there; they are just articles. Rather, the point is *how* these articles are used. Such knowledge retains a special degree of ambiguity when the variable of advertising, for example, does not exist, but when it is utilized in a context such as this it becomes less ambiguous and in this case, is quite cunning.

¹²⁶ www.milehighkarate.com (collected Nov. 2010)

¹²⁷ (Morand, 2004, p39)

¹²⁸ (Morand, 2004, p40)

Keeping with the same website, next to the academic articles is a brochure in *.pdf format titled *Mile High Karate Education Benefits*. The article outlines many of the company's emphasized life-skill values that have been derived from the martial arts. It covers confidence boosting, character building, high stakes testing, fitness & good health, athletics, ADHD and special needs benefits, and psychological benefits, while not once mentioning the ability to defend oneself or the improvement in martial tactics and ability. As a point of fact, none of the articles on the site cover these latter details at the time of this research. The school professes to sell an intangible knowledge set, which becomes physically tangible insofar as movements are expressed via the physical human body, but then manifests again in the intangible world as confidence, discipline, and other so-called life-skills. Those skills are packaged as an item to be marketed and sold.

Signs

The marketing used in packaging the martial arts has also come to produce an abundance of signs. Signs are the images one may see that are attached to a commodity. It is the use of a brand logo to denote a particular company without lengthy description. Millions of people worldwide recognize the 'M' of McDonalds, for example. That is a 'sign'. Rail claims that within the "postmodern"¹²⁹ condition images and sport are reduced to "representation", since this, and "not direct experience, comes to determine all meaning."¹³⁰ The use of signs through marketing ploys also creates a degree of servitude between the consumers and the producers of the 'product' in question. Manufactured and empirically (academically) reinforced life-skill values are a way of creating symbolic representation that may be sold, attached to what may otherwise be a seemingly unnecessary or meaningless product. It is where the value of the commodity is no longer located only in the direct object or system. In the case of martial arts it is also what the arts imply and what one might potentially become that may even be marketed.

¹²⁹ A term Rail used, and I am merely paraphrasing.

¹³⁰ (1998, p151)

The arts itself, or equipment and products related thereto, are sold as a way to allow the purchaser to better ‘take on’ the lifestyle, look, or culture that the particular product aims to promote. This can be beneficial, as in the case of selling a martial art by claiming its passiveness; eventually, over time, one may actually come to embody such a claim. Of course, it can also be neutral or negative at times, being detrimental to an art’s integrity. It may be that signs and marketing “integrate people within the general system of exploitation by encouraging them to define their identities, desires, and interests in terms of possessing commodities”¹³¹ So while a student/practitioner may become more disciplined by wearing a certain uniform, or more focussed by using a certain brand of “Shaolin brand Green Tea” who is to say that he is not being exploited as a consumer?

In a manner that is sure to further complicate the marketing scheme of evoking knowledge to gain capital interests, the observer must acknowledge that this marketing scheme is not a one-way street. Previously, we have seen how the martial arts may use knowledge as a commercial tool to legitimate claims of value, but some companies may use martial arts, or one aspect thereof, such as the lifestyle associated with them (which itself is a commercial fabrication) or a particular practitioner, to sell products. Once again it should be stressed that this is nothing new for the commodity market in general, but for the martial arts this has only been occurring over the last twenty-five years or so. Often products will carry a martial name on it in an effort to represent some part of the lifestyle that supposedly surrounds the art itself. Two examples may be raised in order to convey a more concrete understanding of what this means: the use of the ‘Shaolin’ name, and the case of that American media circus, the UFC, and a news article that discusses an attempt to establish a martial arts television channel. In the first two examples, the two names (Shaolin and UFC) are chosen for their difference in representation (one ‘classical’ martial arts, the other a spectacle, sportified and contemporary, respectively).

¹³¹ (Slater, p. 121)

The name 'Shaolin' has become highly commercialized. The Shaolin Temple, in Henan province, China, is the site of the more specifically named 'Northern Shaolin Temple'. Its history is dense and myth denser. Some aspects are, and will forever be disputed. Among popularly held myth, the temple was a destination on the travel route of Bodhidharma¹³², the patron saint of Chan (Zen). Seeing the weak bodies that the meditative monastic life leads to, he devised exercises that started the legacy of the fighting monks of Shaolin.¹³³ While the performance movements are more available seen, there is rich understanding of fighting techniques that spread throughout the Asian continent and blended with native styles. In the 1990s there was a problem with a lack of regulation pertaining to the name 'Shaolin'. As a result, many products were branded with the Shaolin name without the permission of the temple. Beginning in the early 2000s, use of the Shaolin brand name was restricted solely to the temple itself (at around the same that time the temple received its wish to become a UNESCO heritage site.)¹³⁴ Even with the temple now in total control of the use of its name, there are still many products that carry it.¹³⁵ There are Shaolin shoes, videos, weapons, healing creams (eg. Dit Da Jow), soaps, travelling troupes, and many other products, all released under the fallacy that their names derive from the fantasies of literature or from movies.¹³⁶

The second example carries a name represents an organization whose lifestyle runs almost contradictory to Shaolin: the Ultimate Fighting Championship. The UFC, as it is commonly referred to, is now a regularly televised fight promoter. There are UFC branded shirts, hats, gloves, and many other items, all intended to label the consumer as a UFC supporter and allow them to buy into the aggressive image of the sport. Though in apparent opposition ideologically, both of these examples are differing

¹³² A quote credited to him opens the previous chapter.

¹³³ (Chow & Spangler, Kit)

¹³⁴ (Ching)

¹³⁵ (Gwin, 2011, p. 101)

¹³⁶ Almost every book about Kungfu mentions at least a brief history of the Shaolin, and movies such as Jet Li's *Shaolin Temple*(*Shaolin Si*) (1982) are a strong part of martial arts popular culture.

representations that together demonstrate the flexibility in interpreting the martial arts for commercial packaging.

No theory or discussion can better explain what is intended by this section more than an article taken from the MATA (Martial Arts Teacher's Association) website. The article in question discusses a businessman named R. Anthony Cort who appealed to major cable distributors for a martial arts network on television. His vision was to air various martial arts related shows. He expressed how he felt about the marketing opportunity, stating, "The channel could become a recruiting tool for the 28,000 schools teaching Karate, Judo, Taekwon Do, and even Yoga... Martial arts schools need to advertise and we have the ability to bring a whole new level of advertiser to the cable industry."¹³⁷

At this point it seems as if Slater's comment was tailored to this argument. "[B]ecause modern society is characterized by commodification and rationalization, people's needs are themselves the targets of intensive social pressure, both as to their form (needs must always be needs for commodities) and content (status competition, advertising and marketing, life-style imagery and so-on are brought to bear.)"¹³⁸ So, in short, martial art marketing employs research in order to devise and solidify a name for itself. In turn the sales of the brand and products, be it the system itself or an article of clothing, may stand upon this name. The purchase of these or any similar products, while only mimicking material likeness to the image, are used as advertising devices that merely sell a fabricated image.

Building upon these concepts of signage and knowledge as fabrication, Slater again elaborates on how the consumer indeed appears to void his economic freedom. He states: "If the needs of the individual are defined by society and are defined as needs for its products, then people will simply indentify with society and find it satisfying, not because it satisfies their needs but because it has

¹³⁷ (Parke, paragraph 9-10)

¹³⁸ (Slater, 1997, p. 128)

defined their needs in terms of the satisfactions it offers.”¹³⁹ Adults and children alike, steeped in the system of images that flow from commercial martial arts schools’ marketing in specific and capitalist production as a whole, can come to the limited understanding that a disciplined person with a strong work ethic is most valued. The population projects that belief upon their children, and the manner in which they choose to raise them. It is desirable to have a skilfully flexible or an academically intelligent child that can ‘make it’ in a high-paying job. The valued habits of discipline, respect, control, and patience are sought after more by parents who understand the basic value of personal improvement, thus masking the homogenising ‘good-little-capitalist’ values they tacitly prescribe as self-development. With this supposition, the perpetual battle between the social-machines and the desire-machines moves along, and all in the name of survival.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the intent of this chapter has been to demonstrate through concrete examples the nature of the commodified martial arts market. However, it is the individual’s right, even responsibility, to question this nature of the market. It is particularly the martial artist’s responsibility to be mindful of what is portrayed in the name of martial arts, and cease any practices that would be tangential, or even detrimental to the art, just as one would presumably not willingly teach a technique that does not work. A healthy starting point may be to ask oneself if the changes that this chapter has raised are positive or negative. How, and to what degree? While this chapter has attempted to present the information in a balanced and neutral manner, it should, ideally, serve as a stepping-off point for more passionate discussion. The point of this chapter has been to show the potential misuse of the martial arts, hopefully to show the degree to which their future lies in the choices one makes in regards to such practices, and how much potential the martial arts have for further development.

¹³⁹ (Slater, 1997, pp. 128-9)

This chapter has outlined the development fundamental disturbance, called the *reversed-hierarchy*. Then I showed how in subsequence, the *reversed-hierarchy* has led to the particular use of knowledge and signs as tools in a commercial martial arts business market. A key theme underlying this work is that the martial arts and marketing are not only used as ‘intangible tools’, but that all of the knowledge and signs are also used as tools to further commodify the martial arts. Without doubt, the modern martial arts have developed far beyond the purely fighting sphere, and with the advent of commodified martial arts we have seen a blending between modern business and the age-old concept of combat to create a most interesting hybrid of modern society.

Professional martial arts have come to be *informed* by the system that surrounds it, that alters it, that makes it possible. Selling a lifestyle becomes made up of the market, the consumers, and the ideology; the particular set of practices being offered. That ideology, the *habitus*, is one whose fibres are constructed of discipline. But the questions, which type of discipline, within which system, embodied in which way, and how it is taught, bring forth the need to deconstruct “discipline” at a bodily level. In the next two chapters, we shall move closer to the acting human body system, in order to discuss key issues of expression and oppression.

When the mode of differentiation between significant factors and textual materiality changes, the same text may well be susceptible to an entirely different understanding.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰(Sakai, 1992, pp. 2-3)

3: A Body of Martial Arts, a Body in Martial Arts

A young boy and an aged man sit hunkered over a water bucket. The older man leads a pact: “I promise to teach Karate, that’s my part. You promise to learn. I say, you do.” The young boy, a student, is handed a wet sponge from a bucket and instructed to wash and wax all of the dusty, old classic cars that surround the two. The student, beaming an outwardly confused demeanour, is reminded again about the promise, “Remember deal, no question.” The student begins the task. The viewer is fast forwarded to later that evening; the student is still waxing, however, incorrectly. The older man sharply corrects the student and demands continuation. Begrudgingly, the student obeys.

The famous scene, from Karate Kid,¹⁴¹ surely familiar to American pop-culture fans, later leads to the message that Karate is in everything one does. But, there is more to the scene: the student performs tasks without question, for long durations, and only later is it revealed that the tedium is an extensory method of practise.

Practise is an integral part of learning martial arts. It creates new paths of movement, and also refines pre-existing ones. With practise, certain movements become imprinted upon the physical body. This chapter deals with not only the physical action of practise, but the ideological connections to those actions. Sometimes the ideological connection is attached to better understand the technique/s being performed, while other times the connection is made so to teach a life-lesson that may not otherwise have been perceived if it were not for the metaphorical explanation of the instructor. Throughout this chapter I demonstrate the ways that the physical imprinting may be used to impress a mental lesson upon the practitioner. The lesson that is expressed may be construed as one that directs the practitioner towards discipline for ‘industrial’ reasons related to conditioning for labour, for bodily expression

¹⁴¹Karate Kid, 1984. Around 50 min. mark.

related to understanding oneself in a more complex way,¹⁴² or somewhere in between. No matter how one may perceive what occurs within this chapter, what is most paramount is the practised body.

To assist in demonstrating my point regarding the practised body I attended martial arts schools to gather data. I visited three martial arts studios in the greater region of the city of Victoria, Canada during the winter of 2010-11. During my visits to the schools I was able to conduct interviews and observe regular classes. For both names of those interviewed and school names/locations anonymity was promised. For the interviews, I conducted three interviews at each school with parents of students, each lasting approximately ten minutes. Also, in each location I held an interview with the owner/operators. All interviews with parents were semi-casual,¹⁴³ on a volunteer basis, and were conducted during their child's class so to minimise inconvenience. Interviews with owner/operators were similar to the parent interviews in that they were semi-casual. For class observations, I had arranged to observe only a couple of classes in each studio. However, due to breaks in between interviews, or other unforeseen events, I was free to observe four-five at each studio. Class observation, was what really gives this thesis, this chapter and the next in specific, the living detail in observing practise in action.

Practise is a fundamental aspect of martial arts. An interesting conflict that is present in the martial arts is that one trains the body for increased control of strength and dexterity, yet ultimately trains to be able to create adverse affects on one's opponent. Although not a straight-forward division, one devises to preserve the 'self'¹⁴⁴ against the other. That martial arts are known to be a method of peace and development that employ techniques of violence and harm is an ambiguity that martial arts as a general whole seems not to hide. The actions of the practitioner are affected; the thoughts of the

¹⁴² Next chapter explores this in detail.

¹⁴³ I had a sheet of a few ideal questions to ask, but generally kept the conversation more natural and fluid. Also, the interviews were audio recorded for ease of recollection.

¹⁴⁴ However the subject perceives of this: be it individual, family, tribe, or nation. This term is explored in far greater depth in the following chapter.

practitioner are affected; thoughts and actions streamlined as non-dual, the martial artist is a disciplined representation of the culmination of one's teachers' teachings, those of the generations of teachers that preceded, and one's own discovery. Movements are practiced repetitiously from when they are first learned until they are a part of the body, naturally attaining physical expression.

The process through which the martial artist goes through can be explained by a simple and very old Zen and Daoist adage.

Before I studied the art, a punch to me was just a punch, a kick was just a kick. After I'd studied the art, a punch was no longer a punch, a kick no longer a kick. Now that I understand the art, a punch is just a punch, a kick is just a kick.¹⁴⁵

However, this version presented here is not the one written in the classics (which if one were to desire to read as such one only needs to exchange "punches" and "kicks, for "mountains" and "clouds"). Perhaps more appropriately so, this more recent edition by the late Bruce Lee has been updated to extend specifically to martial arts. Nevertheless, the adage holds a weight that speaks to a process of learning; a learning spiral. It is a journey that begins when one knows very little, "just a punch...just a kick." Training then proceeds to an intermediate stage when one grasps and acts things in a very detailed, analytical sense. And in advanced stages one returns to acting as if everything is naturally so; one understands at a very technical level but one remains unhindered, unfettered by the flow of information and with a mind as fresh as a beginner's. One returns back to a stage where the subject matter is once again 'just so' but one's depth of knowledge is presumably greater. In this sense, the compounding of knowledge is therefore circular in character but ascending, or descending, if you will. This is a process of learning and disciplining the body and mind, hyphenated as body-mind,¹⁴⁶ which implies a greater unity rather than two disjointed concepts.

¹⁴⁵ (Lee, 1975, p. 41)

¹⁴⁶ Takuan describes a similar concept as "extending the mind throughout the body" (Takuan, 1986, pg.31)

With the disciplined body, the body is subjected to different disciplinary regimes. As is evident from the first two chapters, there appears to be a moral imperative – either to cease ‘bad’ behaviour or to adhere to ‘good’ behaviour – which suggests connections to ethics, history, culture, and religion. Regardless of the specificity of the ‘source’ of discipline, whatever regime it reflects and for whatever reasons, a space is made that encourages a certain type of development in the body.

A Reflection in the Body

“The physical aspect of the martial arts gets the young people in the door. Then the mental aspect changes them.”¹⁴⁷

One would be at odds to find a martial arts style that does not profess the benefits of practice over time. *Kung Fu (Gongfu)* is a term popularized approximately only during the last half of the twentieth-century, and makes reference to Chinese martial arts. Translated, though, it makes neither explicit nor implicit reference to combat of any sort. ‘Kung Fu’ can be roughly translated as ‘mastery’, or ‘skill’, implying a certain type of skill that is acquired only over time. Another well-known martial arts term is *Karate*, translatable as ‘empty hand’. But there have been a handful of writers that theorize farther with the meaning. As noted by Webster-Doyle, the ‘empty’ of ‘emptyhand’ has a deeper meaning as “it is this ‘empty-self,’ *kara-te*, that is the foundation of all martial arts.”¹⁴⁸ Doyle’s idea harkens back to some of the writings by Funakoshi Gichin¹⁴⁹ in his autobiographical text, *Karate-do: My Way of Life*.¹⁵⁰ They appear to emphasize the fundamental aim of *conatus*¹⁵¹: to gain knowledge of the self and apply it one’s life. Both of these popular martial arts’ names denote a skill-set that demands effort over time to master, and both necessitate focus and discipline.

¹⁴⁷ (Hendrey, p. 88), quoting Webster-doyle.

¹⁴⁸ (Hendrey, p. 93)

¹⁴⁹ Funakoshi was a presenter of modern Karate to Japan in the early twentieth century.

¹⁵⁰ 1975, Kodansha International. New York, NY

¹⁵¹ “Taking care of oneself requires knowing [*connaitre*] onself. Care of the self is, of course, knowledge [*connaissance*] of the self” (sic.)(Foucault, 2003, pp. 28-9)

It is not sufficient, however, to have one simply think about discipline, or even to put it on, like one may put on a 'kind face' for first impressions. One creates the "disciplined body". The disciplined body acts from a similar place socially that resembles, as Foucault famously theorized, the "panoptic" gaze.¹⁵² This term means those in a society, not knowing when they may be being watched, take on the mentality of the watcher and begin to police their actions, looks, or anything that they may feel 'society' could be watching for. Therefore, their actions become self-monitoring and the social-pressures begin to act from within.¹⁵³

When asked about the importance of teaching discipline one martial arts instructor that I interviewed shared the following:

When you come into this life is the only time you are an equal. After that point you have to earn, everyone works and everyone has to pay the price of something. So discipline early in life, if you do this as a young child you learn how to work, you learn how to be disciplined.

'Work' and 'discipline' show up here, linked together. This quote could just as easily be the catch quote for a poster promoting either 'obedient, docile bodies'¹⁵⁴ or 'personal motivation'.

This idea was not only spoken by the leaders, but by a few parents as well. "To get [my son] a bit of stimulus, little bit of structure, a little bit of discipline" was one father's answer to my query as to why he chose martial arts for his child. The same question was asked to another parent, who stated that "at least that's what I want for my children to be there for them – that idea of working hard for success." I received similar comments from a few of the parents until one parent elaborated a little further. "I want my daughter to be well prepared for whatever she comes across." Said one father, a tradesman, he later told me. What had been said up until then was not so surprising as what he followed with, "I think the economy's a bitch... and doing karate isn't going to get her a 'karate job' (using air quotes) but I think

¹⁵² (Foucault, 1979, p. 195)

¹⁵³ (Foucault, 1979, p. 195)

¹⁵⁴ (Foucault, 1979)

she might do better with this [training] than swimming.” Although there is surely room for interpretation over what he had said I feel confident in asserting that the father feels that while there may not be a great economic atmosphere the best way he feels he can prepare her to maneuver trying economic times is through martial arts training.

As an interesting addition to the former interview, the parent was asked what keeps his son interested. The father looked at his son and deflected the question to him (his son was in attendance). The father re-iterated, “why do you like it?”, and the son quipped, “I don’t”. Although this was the only clear example, I was left with the impression that, while the other children from other interviews may have enjoyed martial arts more than that boy, it was the parent(s) that had at least as much, if not more, interest invested in the training of their child. That is to say, the parents were not mere passive attendees simply indulging their child in what he or she wanted to do, but rather was an actively interested party: every parent interviewed, with only one exception, expressed that they liked the life-skills and the hyperbolized disciplinary atmosphere.¹⁵⁵

Although overt statements that make specific reference to job prospects do not exceed what I have mentioned, I was lead to believe that the parents of students do feel that their child will be better ‘prepared for life’ because of the aforementioned atmosphere. And due to the particular economic climate this study and much of the world is experiencing, I do not hesitate to inject my belief that such preparation is just as much in hopes for economic competitiveness¹⁵⁶ as it is for creating active, happy children. Though specific job preparation would surely be rash at a young age, even during times of high economic development, general savvy makes more preparatory sense. Rudnyckyj¹⁵⁷ uses a relevant term when he speaks of such labour preparation in a flourishing economy as “faith in development”,

¹⁵⁵ The one exception I am referring to was a parent that seemed to want to talk more about Ultimate Frisbee than martial arts, and as a result every question ended up leading to the benefits of that sport over martial arts.

¹⁵⁶ I am careful not to use the term ‘security’.

¹⁵⁷ (2010)

whereas when confronted with general preparation in a low-to-no development economy one must “develop faith”. Modified in relation to this thesis, the turn I choose to use is ‘facing development’ and ‘developing face’. If there is a bust in the development of a regional economy one may be unable to become involved in a period of high job demand, therefore unable to ‘face development’ and contribute. One may instead become more concerned with the latter and develop a social acumen so to have a higher competitive advantage when an economic turnaround or another opportunity arrives, therefore, developing a ‘face’. For many reasons, developing a face as preparation for how one must act is at the core of the life-skills training of a commercial martial arts studio.

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Clap, clap. “Line up everyone, stand on a dot in your self-control stance.” “Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.” “Let your mind control your body, not your body control your mind.”<sup>158</sup>

That is how the class started during the times I attended one of my field schools. It was effective; everyone lined up, stood and waited a minute or so until the instructor would bow in with them. This was not explicitly a children’s class occurrence, it happened in the adults classes too. One might ask “What is a self-control stance?” The self-control stance, a name used in one of the schools I attended, is standing still. Everyone stood still on a designated position marked on the floor with their arms behind them, or at their sides. The naming might be confusing, as it was referred to as a ‘stance’. The self-control ‘stance’ is lumped in with the horse stance<sup>159</sup> or bow stance,<sup>160</sup> other stances that looked more like what one might imagine a ‘martial arts’ stance to be. The naming of this stance alone suggests that it may be more challenging than the earlier explained horse stance. But this is not the case – the horse remains the most physically demanding stance. So, why was the self control stance, a stance

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<sup>158</sup> Notes taken while observing class.

<sup>159</sup> A low stance where the practitioner places his feet at twice shoulder width and then bends his knees so that his waist is at the same level as the knees.

<sup>160</sup> The lead knee is bent at a 90 degree angle and the back leg protrudes straight back with little or no bend in the knee.

that has a name that sounds as if it possesses some self-fulfilling prophesy, so special? It is the first stance that the children and adults learn, and it must be done correctly. Later on, as an adult, the stance does not carry that name, but is instead referred to as the 'neutral stance'. Which should, in my own tongue-in-cheek view, be called the 'ambiguous stance'.

Next in the instructions came the phrase that was uttered more than just at the beginning of class. Like a mantra it echoed in my head. This phrase was, 'let your mind control your body, not your body control your mind.' What was meant by this phrase was to remind the young children to stand still with their hands at their sides, not fidgeting, not playing with their belts, not looking around the room or at their parents, and not speaking unless spoken to. This phrasing is curious and can potentially be problematic because it assumes a split in the body, one where it is no longer just an arbitrary observation of a separation of mind-and-body, but gives the distinction an appearance of validity, of two separate operating systems wherein there exists some sort of struggle. It also seems relevant at least to note, that the separation of thought and action (conception and execution) was an industrial concept meant to streamline production.<sup>161</sup> What is 'in production' is important, and it is referring to, in the case of the martial arts class, the production of docility, the production of a state of body, during which an instructor may more easily influence those in the state.<sup>162</sup> To some, the above may just be regular standing, but it is far more than that. It is a cultural expression, an expression shared amongst a group, acted for a specific purpose, with implied meaning. On another occasion, following the phrase that accompanied the self-control stance also that earlier day, the instructor continued, exclaiming, "someone can tell you what you need to do, and you do it without being asked a second time. That takes self-discipline; that is self-discipline." And again, a similar phrase came up in a discussion at the

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<sup>161</sup> Regarding the "principle of the separation of conception and execution." Braverman (1974) is paraphrased by Price (1986)

<sup>162</sup> It is important to consider the implications of this, but not to confuse those implications with the point I have just made.



end of another class, it was, “self-discipline is when you do something that needs to be done without being asked to do it.”

Once they have demonstrated self-control, the students bow-in. An imperative in the studio is the bow. In fact this simple demonstration of respect speaks in representative lengths about the hierarchical structures within the studio. Children learn never to talk out of turn, and adults, never to speak when the instructor is teaching. One scholar, Duncan recorded a Taekwondo Do studio that had the words “House of Discipline”<sup>163</sup> on a sign inside above front window. Duncan also wrote of a more extreme use of a ‘self-control’-like stance: “during every testing—about once every 3 months—the black belts who are not seeking advancement to the next level must attend and must stand at attention around the perimeter of the room.”<sup>164</sup> This is a reinforcement of values that sends a two-way message: not only to those undergoing testing, by demonstrating a show-of-hierarchical-force, but also to those standing, who are to keep up the discipline, because they are role-models. In both directions the notion of the panopticon is re-enforced. Role-models are still being watched, and those coming-up the ranks are being watched; everyone is monitoring everyone else.

Another instance, this time from an interview with an instructor, highlights the use of association to express discipline in other instances.

This is where a pulling hand goes; this is why you do a pulling hand – because it relates to making your bed. It’s difficult to do; making your bed is difficult to do. And if you can relate pulling a fist in one way to making their room, then you have a match that kids can understand.

This is an example of the ties that bind a mechanical movement to supposed ideological constitution. Especially clear in this example, this ideological pairing of movement and disciplined acts demonstrates that it is anything but implied in the act-in-itself. These actions are made into signs representing a

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<sup>163</sup> (Duncan, p. 8)

<sup>164</sup> (Duncan, p. 8)

specific way to think and act. Surely, a match such as this with the highest pain-to-ideology ratio is the Horse stance.

Another staple of training I had witnessed many times was the Horse stance. Horse stance training is something more familiar to the classical Asian martial arts, particularly Chinese and Japanese emptyhand<sup>165</sup> arts. The horse stance is a stance where one positions their feet about twice the shoulder width apart and bends the knees as if sitting on a low chair, for an extended duration of time. In a martial arts school, and by extension, for many in the Asian martial arts circles,<sup>166</sup> this is well understood as an act of endurance. The practise builds muscle, but more importantly strengthens tendons and connective tissues in the knees and allows the body to become accustom to, and subsequently come to ignore, the aching of lactic acid build up in some of the larger muscle groups in the body, the gluteus and quadriceps. Because of the challenge inherent in performing this stance and the time it takes to build the body up to perform it not only for extended periods but also to become comfortable in the position it is not surprising that this stance has come to be associated with an ideological sort of discipline as well.<sup>167</sup> It was explained to me that in one of the schools I visited every adult class begins with horse stance and depending on the level the duration increases by a couple of minutes each time. But what I found more compelling was again in the youth class. Like the adults, the youth class begins with the horse stance, but during the period the children 'sat' in the stance the instructor spoke of perseverance. "Sometimes things like this horse stance aren't comfortable. But you push through it because you know you have to."

### **An Affective Ideology**

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<sup>165</sup> I specify emptyhand arts here not to exclude the horse stance in weapons training but because the horse stance is so fundamental that it is typically expected that the practitioner is well adjusted to this sort of training before moving on to more advanced extensions of the limbs.

<sup>166</sup> It can easily be considered one of the most fundamental stances in many styles of Asian martial arts, almost all styles of Chinese martial arts, Japanese Karate, and Korean empty hand arts. It is also well utilized in Sumo.

<sup>167</sup> (Kit, p. 60)

In the studio there is an emphasis put upon the need to become disciplined; for the body to act in accordance to a task at hand. One is also expected to remember this discipline, however, when not performing it at the studio. These observations that follow are ones that ultimately end in affecting change in those involved, but are ideologies that are uttered or represented in ways other than with the body movement directly, as in the examples up until now. One written artefact that stood in the schools I visited clearly expresses this, the school creed. This is from one of those schools:

My goal is to become the best person I can be.

I will achieve this objective by disciplining my mind and my body,  
working to overcome obstacles that hinder my positive growth.

I know this will take discipline.

I am ready to make the commitment to myself  
in order to become the best person I can be,  
and to share this progress with others.

-A student creed from research school.

This mantra appears simply wholesome and nurturing at glance, but upon deeper consideration it is highly interpretive, highly ambiguous. Listening to the children recite the words reminded me of the Lord's Prayer, and how it was once a staple in public school.<sup>168</sup> It is an ideology taught by daily ritual and memorization. J.A. Managan wrote of "the utilization of games as a form of social control."<sup>169</sup> These sorts of rituals, symbols, and in particular, songs and creeds "constituted value judgement masquerading as facts to reinforce commitment."<sup>170</sup> This is the creation of the martial arts studio as an institution where a certain and specific degree of commonality is desired. There were also creeds in the other field schools that I visited, and during personal trips to other schools, many of the schools proved

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<sup>168</sup> *BCCLA Position Paper Religion in public schools, 1969.*

<http://www.bccla.org/positions/freespeech/69religion.html>. Retrieved July 15, 2011

<sup>169</sup> (1981, p. 28)

<sup>170</sup> (Managan, 1981, p. 6)

to have them then also. Duncan also observed when visiting a field school, “[t]hey learn to recite the tenets (or values) at the beginning of every Tae Kwon Do class: “Courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, indomitable spirit.”<sup>171</sup>

During a class discussion on the term ‘self-control’ that I observed, the question was posed: “can you cry with self control?” This was quickly followed by, “Can you be angry with self control? Can you be excited with self control?” The children hesitated to answer: knowing the implications of ‘self-control’ stance and its rigidity surely stunted them offering an answer either way. As defined in-class earlier, this term means not letting your body get ahead of your mind, not letting anything slip by unaccounted for. Finally, the instructor, with a smile, said “of course, when you cry, just don’t bawl. When you are angry, don’t throw a tantrum. And when you’re excited don’t flail.”<sup>172</sup> So, self control in this instance means the ability to restrain one’s emotions, be it out of necessity or social unacceptability to not do so. In other words, one is not to emote beyond what is socially acceptable. While not many people appreciate a temper tantrum, expression is natural to the human system, and when effort is made to stunt it, there stands a thin line between oppression and socialization – as if the two were not nearly synonymous already.

In another attempt to meld the behavior between the studio and home, in one of the schools that I visited homework cards were utilized as a means to gather and ‘grade’ the student on values like integrity, manners, self-control, tidiness and practice. A reminder of the parent-instructor facets of the social panopticon, the homework card is sent home every month and the child student’s belt advancement is dependent upon grade quality. If he/she receives a grade too low, the student does not receive the corresponding stripe that represents the unsatisfactorily performed value on the report. The

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<sup>171</sup> (Duncan, 2007, p. 8/62)

<sup>172</sup> Notes taken from class observation

stripes are what tie-in the peer level of the panopticon, because the student then puts his/her stripe on their belt, clearly visible to others. One wears their discipline quite literally on their uniform.

### **Acting as Instructor**

These tools used by the studio ultimately lead to teaching a respect for authority, and a trust in authority. Respect for ‘authority’ here can be effectively conceptualized as respect for one’s instructor, parents, school teachers, and extended to future bosses/management. And as much as they are expected to follow instructions from adult leaders, some are started upon a path of learning how to give instructions too.

Children are chosen to fulfill minor official positions that offer “experience in leadership of fellow students,” the chance to lead demo teams, leadership groups, and so on.<sup>173</sup> These leaders and assistants are essentially acting as the quasi-elite of their class. Quasi-elite, what Tomiyama referred to as “leaders”<sup>174</sup> a group themselves from the *roji*, in this case the student population, but who have found success in perfecting their own interpretation of the “interior.”<sup>175</sup>

These ‘leaders’ became the very human embodiment of [their practise]as apparatus, and as we shall see, [have] the ultimate effect of silencing difference in their quest to ‘help’ the amateur[s]... reach the interior that the apparatus points to.<sup>176</sup>

Activities may begin with holding bags, or with teens helping with kids’ classes. Job opportunities are also available. As in the case with two of the schools where the question was explicitly asked, “Do you hire instructors from within the student body?” The answer was a definite “yes,” followed by the explanation that they hire *only* from within as the knowledge set is apparently specific, and other

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<sup>173</sup> (Price, p. 272)

<sup>174</sup> Tomiyama, p.135

<sup>175</sup> The interior is complex, but it may best be described as, one’s interpretation of the felings that those in the *roji* have, turned into an ideology that is used to communally move the *roji*.

<sup>176</sup> (Aalgaard, p. 55)

teaching methodologies run the risk of being divergent with what 'should' be taught there.<sup>177</sup> Of course this makes sense in business too; why would one want to train someone in a particular way only to hire from the outside, especially when their training was paid for by the student? In fact the whole situation is probably not unlike what every corporation would likely love to do, but on a larger scale – namely, mould staff from the outset in a specific skill-set while having those job candidates pay for their own training. These assistants, whence achieving the rank of black belt and reaching an age at which they can own a business, are eventually offered the chance to open a franchised school of their own, said one owner. There is a certain degree of quality control with that, a level of sameness that is safe for a spreading business. As another company owner in a magazine article/advertisement put it, franchise opportunities “help the instructors become more successful... [because] we maintain quality control and uniformity.”<sup>178</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, the head instructor is often the owner or acting manager of the school, while at the same time also acts as a role model for the students. Such a role model speaking of such an ethic of discipline can easily be considered to be a disseminator of a labour ethic. But here we are confronted with the person of the 'analyst', who exercises his judgement in sincerely trying to 'help' the students. The 'analyst', as the accumulation of the desires of the quasi-elite/elite (whomever that may be: parents, teachers, bosses) is impressed upon others in the name of *improvement*, and the lessons are supposed to inhabit the mind of the disciple in the precise way as was intended by those imparting the lesson. If those learning the lesson, in fact understood the lesson in the precise way that the teacher intended (with all of the nuances that make it 'real' in the teachers' mind) this is then an equation for homogeneity. Homogeneity, the production and treatment of everyone in the same way with the end result of everyone acting the same way, can be extremely problematic. But

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<sup>177</sup> Quick notes taken after a non-recorded casual conversation with a school owner.

<sup>178</sup> (Howlett, p. 86)

this cannot simply be the end; the variables involved in the imparting of knowledge are not that sturdy. The mind is by imperative, an interpretive device. It comprehends by way of perception, a necessary activity that by way of selective sensation one draws meaning. That selective experience draws from a plethora of 'texts' that, particularly during class-time, move, speak, are drawn from past experience and all-around sensorily seep into the body, *affecting* the interpretation of what is being perceived. To try to guarantee that any of those texts are being interpreted homogeneously amongst all students and teachers is utterly absurd. But, one must remember, as Arthur Koestler penned, "the first universal characteristic of hierarchies is the relativity, and indeed ambiguity."<sup>179</sup>

### **A Discursive space**

I present an historical example of the interpretation of a text for, and within, a discursive space. This example may help to contextualize the observations within the studio I have written about so far. I refer to the utilization of 'bushido' the 'Samurai spirit' for the war-mobilization as it appears during twentieth-century wartime Japan. It is presented in a somewhat similar light, but used for very different reasons. Though there was an effort to historically reinforce 'bushido' so to associate it with a sense of national pride, the association was just that, merely a new construct of the Japanese national movement at the time geared towards war mobilization. The connection was not a real connection through history though, just a new narrative for an old(er) idea.

That Japanese militarists stressed and drew heavily upon the samurai war legacy is... true, insofar as they portrayed the samurai as a static group with no differentiation or evolution. Likewise failing to make distinctions, the allegation that Japanese war crimes in World War II stemmed from the culturally-based 'warrior's code' neglects the modern industrial-imperial impulses which manipulated the samurai image.<sup>180</sup>

Within a certain regime, a condition is created that utilizes certain cultural artefacts, be they verbal, physical, structural, and so on, and portrays them 'ideally' in a light that appears to deflect any

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<sup>179</sup> (Koestler, 1967, p. 47-8)

<sup>180</sup> (Rosenburg, 1995, p. 15)

contradictive or critically alternative conception regarding the meaning of said artefact. Situated deeply within a neo-liberal economy that bears an industrial spectre, discipline, as taught in the ways I have noted until now in this chapter, like the quote about wartime bushido, may have “the modern industrial-imperial impulses” needed to seek out ways to generate a more powerful labour-force. This is similar in function to what was discussed last chapter under the sub title *Signs*, wherein martial arts artefacts are used to express a certain motivating idea.

What we are looking at is martial arts as a text. I have just exemplified bushido, but before that I presented the training methods within a commercial martial arts studio, both are texts. They are texts that include the teaching of certain physical movements, attitudes, and responses that are tied into cues that are visual, auditory, tactile, and proprioceptive in nature. The text (martial arts) reads differently during different temporalities and in different paradigms.<sup>181</sup> In other words,

The significative aspect of the text is what is recognized as remaining identical through an independent of various changes in textual materiality. For this reason it would be slightly misleading to say a text is a composite of meaning and material. The differentiation itself is unstable unless institutionally determined. ...[W]hen the mode of differentiation between significative factors and textual materiality changes, the same text may well be susceptible to an entirely different understanding.<sup>182</sup>

It is then, not the material that is under the greatest analysis, but the meaning of said material in a certain space. That space, the “mode of differentiation between significative factors and textual materiality”<sup>183</sup> is the *discursive space*. It is a space of active discourse. That of which the ‘mode’ is part and parcel is the *regime*, or “institutional arrangement,”<sup>184</sup> as one interpretation of Sakai’s words. The use of the term ‘institutional’ is an important term when dealing with commodified information (knowledge set), and reproducing said information in a uniform way, such as in a martial arts school. It is

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<sup>181</sup> Much in the same manner, those deemed the ‘enemy’ in a war are dependent on what side one is on, or on which side wins the war. It is relative to what side one is on, and is typically determined through hindsight.

<sup>182</sup> (Sakai, 1992, pp. 2,3)

<sup>183</sup> (Sakai, 1992, pp. 2,3)

<sup>184</sup> (Sakai, 1992, pp. 2,3)



in that way that the expression of discipline is completely determined by the dominant regime specific to that group, big or small, at that moment. How, why, and when to respond, is determined discursively. Similarities, and means of expression live on in all different types of texts (verbal, non-verbal, physical, historical) and are ideologically reproduced and reinterpreted simultaneously within even larger and more dominant regimes. If martial arts are a 'text' within the institutional arrangement of neo-liberalism, then discipline is both the protagonist and antagonist. So, it is not at all strange that one may interpret that the commercial martial arts text in this economic climate may be involved in reproducing discipline with the emphasis upon training labour-power.

Within any discursive space these means of expression (martial arts movements) and the ideology coupled with it are passed pedagogically through quasi-elites to the *roji*; that denotes a type of reproduction, but it is really only an *attempt* at reproduction. It is an attempted reproduction of the interpretations of the past, as present texts, as the quasi-elite perceive it, and as the *roji* desires it. Both the student and teacher is part of a system of consumption in the studio; and all consumption is cultural.

Slater lists what are four tenets of consumption:

1. All consumption is cultural
2. Consumption is so because meanings involved are necessarily shared meanings.
3. All forms of consumption are culturally specific.
4. And it is through culturally specific forms that we reproduce cultures.<sup>185</sup>

One, two, and three are indeed compelling but it is the fourth, and its subsequent explanation that lends the most to our analysis. Slater elaborates number four:

To be a member of a culture or 'way of life', as opposed to just 'staying alive', involves knowing the local codes and needs of things. By knowing and using [the codes and needs] I reproduce and demonstrate my membership of a particular social order. Moreover I *act out* that membership.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> (Slater, p.132)

<sup>186</sup> (Slater, p.132)

What is relevant here is the invocation of 'way of life': if one talks to an adult martial artist who is serious about what they practise they will almost undoubtedly speak of 'way of life' while explaining why they do so. 'Way' is often used when translating many martial arts and philosophies, particularly those that end in *do* or *dao*, as in *kendo* (way of the sword). The 'way' of life in the studio, how to bow, stand, move, talk, is coded to be relatively homogeneous, but that alone does not imply homogeneity.

There may be *acting out*, but that acting, unless verifiably the same meaning as the text from which meaning was derivative, is nothing but ambiguous. Just as interpretation is ambiguous, so is acting. If culture boils down to the individual, then so does interpretation and interiority. To stake the claim that everyone who 'acts' (reproductively, as a performer of culturally learned traits) does so in a puppet-like manner excludes the primary act of agency and selective perception, which is an entirely heterogeneous act. And to make such a claim to homogeneity is to not only theorize, but also idealize. Though while what Slater wrote is correct, it should be made clear that the *acting* does not necessarily equate with the notion as a derivative text in precise mimesis. While subject matter may be directed with intent, the un-predictability of the effects of the subject matter, the performance of teaching, and the experiential backing of those learning lend to such a unique learning experience that cause-affect assumptions about oppression or expression are important to consider, but not to believe in.

It is still in the best interest of the factories and other places of employment to bring people who are well disciplined into their service, and understandably, such a workplace discursive space attempts to produce like-minded workers moving towards similar goals. Those who do not succeed in adequate job acquisition and maintenance do run the risk of being unable to support themselves, and can easily end up unable to survive, first economically, then actually. So it may be important to acquire life-skills early so to better prepare for such a harsh labour climate. That is not to say that the martial arts stand as merely an institute of bio-political labour production: the arts are, and have been for a very

long time, associated with personal mastery and liberation, albeit achievable for a significantly smaller amount of people. The truly interesting matter in regards to an individual undertaking the martial arts is that although the desire to join may be genuine, due to the years of social indoctrination that one undergoes simply by virtue of being a member of 'society', one's intellectual climate and personal self are almost surely governed around the invisible drive to be an obedient, compartmentalized, organized human being.

This level of indoctrination leads Slater to ask: "Why should we continue to submit to the exploitative conditions under which the capitalist production is carried out?"<sup>187</sup> While an important question, it is not one that can be answered within the scope of this work. However, what he follows with is very pertinent to this discussion, and a problem that we will explore next chapter. "[L]abour required to secure the means of mere existence... could be reduced to a minimum, and thus the real human need for non-alienated praxis could at long last be met: the need for human activity to be a conscious project of self-development rather than a struggle for material survival"<sup>188</sup> But it is easier, and yet far more difficult than that. I say it is easier because we in fact still possess the facilities to carefully and thoughtfully interpret the 'texts' that we are perpetually bombarded with at any moment. We can pose a threat to homogeneity and its packaging through our own real heterogeneous interpretations.

The body in martial arts is one that learns rules, yields to authority in the studio, and demonstrates an understanding of how to carry oneself. We have seen that the pairing of ideas and representation together with the physical activity that occurs in the studio creates a powerful environment of change. That change could lead to an increased work ethic, as evidence by the spectre of industrial discipline lingering on in the minds of quasi-elite, or it may simply just make one's life easier by opening them up to the possibilities of the human body as a site of expression. Could there be a

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<sup>187</sup>(Slater, p. 123)

<sup>188</sup>(Slater, p. 123)

'trump-card' so to speak in the martial arts, a way to self-development that can steer safely away from self-oppression? If there is, it lies in the interpretive aspect of *training* martial arts, and what happens to the body system. The next chapter moves the idea forward.

## **4 - Volatility of Affect**

[M]any styles of Kung Fu have incorporated 'deliberate efforts' in attempts to achieve mastery of what may be called external or 'hard' muscular systems of self-defense. In basic training, a Kung Fu devotee would have to go through a series of strenuous exercises with 'deliberate efforts' to ensure proper body conditioning. Following continuous physical practise, day after day, year after year, his highly controlled punches, kicks, and blocks would become mentally refined to the point of spontaneous reaction.<sup>189</sup>

### **The Problem of the 'Practised Body'**

I found myself sitting on the waiting bench of the studio one day during a lull-period between interviews. The voices of the children in-class rang down the hall like voices echoing when you enter a pool. Every few seconds there was a loud 'slap', from kids kicking the focus mitts.<sup>190</sup> The class pushed on as I sat there. I had interviewed the parents that had wanted to talk, and the others were sitting in the practise area watching their kids do the class. A man came in the door carrying a gym bag and wearing training pants. He was not there to pick anyone up. He was there to train. Realizing he was too early for his class, he introduced himself, and sat down. After some small talk I explained why I was there and asked him if I could go over a few questions. He obliged. The interview went well, but it was one of the last things that he said to me that stood out. He said:

There is always that physical release that's needed, and the mental re-centering. I think a lot of people forget that. It's much like going to the gym, y'know, they get that release. You get that feeling of 'I accomplished something for me', rather than going [to work] and making somebody else an ass-load of money.

He spoke confidently and mindfully. I believe that he genuinely feels that his training is more than mere escapism, but rather a project of the self. It is interesting to see that he feels he finds 'physical release'

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<sup>189</sup> (Spangler, 1982, p. 19)

<sup>190</sup> Focus mitts are hand-held striking mitts, usually shaped a little larger than the hand fully opened, used for building accuracy in strikes by limbs.

in movements that he has practised many hundreds of times. He is building and releasing; he is building a practised body.

Over time, one's expression in the studio becomes that of apparent spontaneity, as in the quote that begins this chapter. But can that be said to be 'true' spontaneity? For that would mean that completely un-practised, possibly inappropriate movement would spring forth from the actor. That is not the case as described; the movements appear without conscious effort, and they are performed with utmost efficiency. The moves may be explosive, serene, fluid, accurate, intense, or representative of a unification of mind/body, but spontaneous? What we are dealing with is a body that has gone through movements in such a high level of repetition that the body grows accustomed, mentally and physically to the processes and positions that constitute that which the performer desires.<sup>191</sup> The performer is practised.

The *practised body* is similar to the *disciplined body*, in that arguably one may need the latter to attain the former. But what makes the practised body stand alone from the disciplined body is that the practised body has undergone movements and sequences thousands of times until the actions become automatic, almost second-nature. As we have discussed in previous chapters, practise leaves a strong imprint upon the body and it is practise in this manner that is open to misuse.

Last chapter dealt with the studio as a place of change, that is, a place that uses the physical to affect the mental. Let us now explore the site at which the body-mind processes the change we have seen that occurs in the studio. In this chapter we will move to look at some processes of interpretation, and then identify the same processes already existing within the general cannon of martial arts philosophy. Through a process deemed *flow*, integral to the martial arts in specific, and activity

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<sup>191</sup> I say that the performer desires because at this point, we should understand the system of *desire* and the *social* enough not to confuse the performer as a lone 'desirer', but as simply as a point of soft distinction within the affective interplay.

worldwide in general,<sup>192</sup> we come to view the redefinition of *self* and the importance of that redefinition to affect change in the body. In affecting change in the practitioner the physical movements and ideological associations that commercial martial arts training (and martial arts training in general) offers end up not simply altering, but redefining the practitioner, making him/her more complex. Like the point made in all previous chapters, this complex redefining of the self, relying upon one's methods of interpretation, is ambiguous. In summation, this final chapter is a comprehensive exploration of the ambiguity of the system of change that occurs within the practised body, all stemming from *flow*.

The activities practised and highlighted in the last chapter are some techniques that work towards developing a disciplined body. But, what of the practised body? Both bodies are included in a social reproductive system that has ties that run deep coming from the West's industrialist past, culminating in such places like education and employment. There is an emphasis on labour, and the increasing need for one to be stronger labour power than the next person. The studio itself is not untouched by our labour-driven society, with all of the implications that come with referencing such a strong regime. It seems as if once one becomes a labourer, whether physical or calculative, one may come to feel the need to release daily tensions; to find mindless escape precisely from within the system that we are entrapped by.<sup>193</sup> Such a trend in thinking is not uncommon.<sup>194</sup> It is healthy in the very least, to consider the social bindings that people often unwittingly subject themselves to sometimes. "Everyday life, work and leisure (as well as high and philosophical culture) in the reified capitalist world are all characterized by the same 'contemplative', rather than active or creative, attitude to the world[.]"<sup>195</sup> Slater continues, after elaborating on 'contemplative',

One lives within the social order as if it were a natural environment rather than one produced by human action. One can only contemplate this objective nature: observe given

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<sup>192</sup> As posited by (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

<sup>193</sup> (Slater, 1997, p. 121)

<sup>194</sup> I reference Slater heavily for such explanations, but another is Adorno.

<sup>195</sup> (Slater, 1997, p. 120)

laws, functionally conform to them or calculate within their framework in order to serve one's self-interest. Modern capitalism, then, transforms all objects into commodities which are viewed contemplatively, appropriated through possession *rather than praxis*.<sup>196</sup> (Italics added)

This is quite possible, and Slater iterates the argument of human objectification in a very clean fashion, almost dogmatically. Repetition to rid of unwanted thoughts and movements can be abused.

The problem is that the whole concept of life, work, and generalities in a 'mass perception' can be anything but 'clean'. Csikszentmihalyi's work shows that people have a lot more agency than Slater's argument affords. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that, in fact, observing given laws and calculating within their framework<sup>197</sup> is precisely the way many find deepening levels of complexity within themselves. *Complexity* is not to be presumed synonymous with confusion, but instead meaning something closer to greater introspection and deeper understanding and leads to increased perceived value<sup>198</sup> of one's life. So then praxis (as something that has the potential to increase the complexity of the 'self') would also stem from a similar place as what seems almost contradictory to praxis, 'objectification', in Slater's terms. That feeling is reflected here, "[t]he sense of inevitability arises from the objectification of human practice in a law-like social world."<sup>199</sup> It appears that Slater is presenting an argument with a general presumption that all social order and all calculation within their framework implies a transformation into commodity that disallows for the inclusion of praxis in the individual's life. But while it is healthy, even progressive, to consider our social shackles let us treat the human organism as one that endures, and so not always perceive in such mechanistic lines of thought.

Is it really so that praxis can exist, and not be a mere mechanism of control? If so, can it be found in the studio? The effects of such active or creative endeavours may be utilized in many ways, and so also remain ambiguous. But, so long as the practitioner remains present in the activity and the

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<sup>196</sup> (Slater, 1997, p. 120)

<sup>197</sup> To re-iterate Slater.

<sup>198</sup> Not to be confused with 'value' in the capitalist sense.

<sup>199</sup> (Slater, 1997, p. 120)



activity serves no direct capitalist interest,<sup>200</sup> could it be non-alienating? Csikszentmihalyi has studied human activity and can lend to the debate: if martial arts uses the practitioner, or the other way around.

## Flow

Two students face-off on the mats<sup>201</sup> donned in gear on hands, feet, groin and head. They are preparing to spar. Sparring is one method of training for self-defence, sport, or both, and consists of two or more people using their assorted attacks and defences against one and other. Although the movements have been practised in semi-predictable repetition previously, during sparring nothing is predetermined, except for certain dangerous techniques or restrictions made for sport, depending on the school. While some schools or styles may claim that there are no rules, there are always rules, or principles stipulated. Whether they are safety rules, or principles of physics that improve one's efficiency, the student will always follow within those guidelines. This is not to say that targets are predetermined, but stylistically there are ways for the student to stand or move, with a twist here, or a push there that may be believed to create a better technique. There are always rules of engagement.

While training in this manner, one may be cognitively aware of every detail of movement, or utterly dreaming, paying no attention to what is happening. It should be clear that the latter situation lacks the engagement to respond to anything, but it is the former too that lacks engagement. Over-analysis can lead to inattention to a wider, more necessary sphere. Both instances are two extremes, lack of, and too narrowed attention. With a balance of the two, coupled with a suitable degree of challenge for the person or people involved, they may enter into a state wherein there is only fluid response. While engaged in the activity one reacts without pause, and moves without hesitation. It is like the driver who, without moment of thought moves his foot instinctively over the brake when the car

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<sup>200</sup> Or, relation to capitalism may not matter at all.

<sup>201</sup> The studio floor-space.

ahead slows; it feels as if it is a controlled accident. It is the occurrence of an “optimal experience”<sup>202</sup>, during which the actor experiences a loss of self-consciousness,<sup>203</sup> and the reason for performing the activity becomes the activity itself. Csikszentmihalyi has deemed the event *flow*, and one of those interviewed by him described it as “self-communication.”<sup>204</sup> This is shared across many cultures and peoples.<sup>205</sup> *Flow* itself appears to be an anomaly. For flow itself is not a technique, but it is an embodiment of technique along an imagined line where a perfect convergence of ability and challenge spark such a smooth execution that actor, action, and surroundings are not merely cooperative, but redefined. The idea is not foreign to martial arts, and Csikszentmihalyi does briefly mention the ‘Asian disciplines’ of Yoga and martial arts, complimenting the supposed historical feats of some practitioners. Elsewhere the same sentiment is shared, as reflected in this quote, found in a journal for martial arts related academic literature, “Through physical activities, such as kicking, punching, throwing, and various... classical weapons... they went beyond sports performance to develop the self.”<sup>206</sup>

To return to Slater’s earlier assertion, the practice of martial arts can also be viewed as merely escapism. So the argument can be raised that a “loss of self-consciousness”<sup>207</sup> during *flow* may just be a highly developed method of running away from one’s life of labour. What then can possibly be an exit from mindless entertainment that simply entraps us? Like the television that only “offers to the worker, who is deprived of any real individuality by rationalized production systems, a wide choice of easily

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<sup>202</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

<sup>203</sup> We return to this term later, and discuss in-depth.

<sup>204</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 54)

<sup>205</sup> Csikszentmihalyi has published a great deal on this, his most inclusive read would be *Flow*, within which he accounts for many different activities performed by many different people, including, but not exhaustively: Rockclimbing, tending a farm, motorcycle riding, martial arts/yoga, and mass movements.

<sup>206</sup> (Pieter, p. 38)

<sup>207</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 62)

consumed images of 'pseudo-individuals'. The images... do not provoke critical distancing."<sup>208</sup> If we are so 'distanced' then what may introduce us back to creating "non-alienated praxis?"<sup>209</sup>

In the case of the actual potential for achieving a sort of liberation of limiting perceptions of *self*, there exist a very small percentage of those who will succeed in realizing it as a trait. Ironically, we have an amazing abundance of activities, both necessary and leisure - especially the latter - which by investing psychic energy into we have the opportunity. But as Csikszentmihalyi observed in his expansive research, "[o]pportunities alone, however, are not enough...we also need the skills to make use of them."<sup>210</sup>

### **Pleasure vs. Enjoyment**

The differentiation between these two terms relies on the use of one's perception. In consideration as to how we find pleasure, some will imagine travelling to far-away locations while others find it sitting at home on a quiet night in front of the television. Pleasure defined is "a feeling of contentment that one achieves whenever information in consciousness says that expectations set by biological programs or by social conditioning have been met."<sup>211</sup> Eating food when we are hungry is pleasurable because it re-balances our chemistry. Resting at night while "passively absorbing information from the media, with alcohol or drugs to dull the mind overexcited by the demands of work, is pleasantly relaxing", for example.<sup>212</sup> Pleasure is important, and has a function in life as a restorative homeostatic experience, but by itself does not bring happiness. Going beyond pleasure to draw more meaning than the satisfactory amount one may have been programmed to feel leads to 'enjoyment'. Csikszentmihalyi defines enjoyment: "enjoyable events occur when a person has not only met some

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<sup>208</sup> (Slater, p.121)

<sup>209</sup> (Slater, 1997)

<sup>210</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 83)

<sup>211</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 45)

<sup>212</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 45)

prior expectation or satisfied a need or desire but also gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do and achieve something unexpected, perhaps something even unimagined before.” Any experience that one may derive pleasure from, one may also derive enjoyment, but they are not synonymous. A martial artist that attends class solely to lose weight is not necessarily the same as one who truly enjoys the nuances and subtleties of different movements in the martial arts. Like a casual eater versus one who really pulls out the flavours of a dish. The sort of discipline involved in enjoying an activity does not change compared to one who takes only pleasure. Experiencing enjoyment may not make the act any easier than anyone else but surely feels less taxing.

Pleasure alone is not flow, but instead appears as a pre-requisite. “[p]leasure helps to maintain order, but by itself cannot create new order in consciousness.”<sup>213</sup> It should be one’s hope, following the idea of *flow*, that one’s rewards system transforms from extrinsic to intrinsic, and so enjoyment becomes autotelic<sup>214</sup> as opposed to exotelic.<sup>215</sup> Then, enjoyment leads to experiencing the state of flow that breeds greater detail and ‘deepening’ of the *self* that mere complacency, in the form of pleasure, cannot do.

### **Fluid ‘Self’**

As particular interest for the interpretation of flow as an experience of self-altering capacity it is imperative that the conditions of flow be better understood. It should also be understood that Csikszentmihalyi’s is contemporary research that speaks to many similar observations throughout many

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>214</sup> Self-contained enjoyment in which the act itself is the reward

<sup>215</sup> Pleasure taken from external reward

martial traditions in Asia.<sup>216</sup> I go further in depth later on, however. Actually, Csikszentmihalyi observed that the phenomena occurred across all regions of people he interviewed.

“Regardless of culture, stage of modernization, social class, age, or gender, the respondents described enjoyment in very much the same way. *What* they did to experience enjoyment varied enormously... but they described how it felt... in almost identical terms.”<sup>217</sup>

The shared terms, and sensations that Csikszentmihalyi found that those interviewed experienced I will list as the eight major components to enjoyment. They are as follows:

1. The experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing.
2. We must be able to concentrate on what we are doing
3. The concentration is usually possible because the task undertaken has clear goals ...
4. ... and immediate feedback.
5. One acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life.
6. Enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions.
7. Concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over.
8. The sense of duration of time is altered; time appears to pass very quickly, or very slowly.<sup>218</sup>

The seventh component is important because it begins to give us an understanding of the point of self-discovery, and the complexity in the process. First, let us discuss the “concern for the self disappear[ing]”, also referred to as “loss of self-consciousness.”<sup>219</sup>

To be clear, the loss of self-consciousness is neither a loss of self, as in being lost in the woods, nor is it misplaced consciousness, as in perhaps, a knockout. It is a loss of the dual feeling that one is a separate actor from the task at hand, and that necessitates a redefinition of self. One ‘becomes’ the activity. As the *self* is relative and re-definable the notion of self envelops and enfolds as a process of ‘be-ing’. Groups of people working toward the same goal, such as the surgeons that Csikszentmihalyi spoke of said that when all operating they feel as if they act a one organism, or “like a ballet... with the

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<sup>216</sup> (Draeger, 1969)

<sup>217</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, pp. 48-9)

<sup>218</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, p. 49)

<sup>219</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 62)

individual subordinated to the group performance.”<sup>220</sup> Now, that last comment is particularly loaded with dangerous ideas that can quickly turn oppressive, such as ‘acting as one’ and ‘subordinating the individual’ which can lead to the sacrifice of heterogeneity for the ‘greater good’. But it is clear that is not so in that case. The fluid definition and redefinition of self is a human characteristic that *implies* no fascist lean, but with ever so gentle winds a schooner can go far off course.

During which time one experiences a loss of self-consciousness, one does not simply become unaware or unable to function. On the contrary, one becomes an aperture through which the event as a system views itself. Argues Csikszentmihalyi, a “[l]oss of self-consciousness can lead to self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward.”<sup>221</sup> The re-defined self that emerges “stronger,”<sup>222</sup> I wish to highlight, is a deeper, more complex notion of self. Csikszentmihalyi refers to the complexity as occurring in two ways: *differentiation* and *integration*. *Differentiation* is the experience of becoming different, towards uniqueness. In short, differentiation resulting from flow allows the individual to become the handler of rarer skills. *Integration* generates a unification of parts, occurring from flow just the same as differentiation, though seemingly the terms oppose. The body (through whichever body that particular flow-instance occurs) progressively becomes more systematic, more automatic, more co-operative, and less dis-jointed and maladroit. So, the term ‘complexity’, used here, implies not the pejorative “difficulty and confusion”<sup>223</sup> as the more common usage may at times conjure; instead, it implies the meeting and pairing of binaries as a functional system of development in terms of breadth and depth. So the frequent and flexible re-definition of ‘self’ in this case leads to a greater balance of one’s roles as a ‘part’ and a ‘whole’, and mixtures therein.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 65

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 64

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p.49

<sup>223</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 41)

The process of expanding complexity of the self that occurs post flow-experience depends upon the existing condition of the body's developmental stage. The 'developmental stage' that dictates the duration and intensity of the flow state would perhaps more accurately be understood as "multiple intelligences."<sup>224</sup> Wilber relieved the difficult task of explaining *flow* by determining that whichever of the "multiple intelligences"<sup>225</sup> and which *states* or *stages* one is at within anyone of those intelligences are helpful indicators of development of the *self*. The *multiple intelligences* refers to the different lines of development that people find particular aptitude or difficulty along, such as cognitive, emotional, musical, kinesthetic intelligence and so on. But, of course, they do not operate as separately and distinctly as they appear when conceptualizing the 'intelligences'. In analogous terms, when a curl is done with a dumbbell weight, the bicep benefits the most from the experience and becomes stronger – deeper and more complex its potential becomes. Though when trying to isolate a bicep, the forearm, hands, shoulders, back and leg muscle often also engage regardless of the attempts to isolate. Similarly, one cannot easily isolate genres of intelligences, just as one cannot easily isolate a single muscle. More emphasis can be put on a certain targeted genre, but systematically the body learns to be efficient and while it becomes specifically stronger (specialized and rarer) the body works wholly to complete the task (integration). However, the "intelligences" used are the ones that become more complex; the more integral the activity, the more integral the complexity.

*Flow*, however, may function only as a peak experience for the intelligences but allows for the potential to develop farther (note the specific use of *state*, and *stage*):

[One] cannot... be introduced to all the qualities of higher stages without actual growth and practise. [One] can have a peak-experience [as a] higher state, because many states are ever-present, and so they can be "peek"-experienced right now. But [one] cannot have a

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<sup>224</sup> (Wilber, 2007, p. 41-2)

<sup>225</sup> (Wilber, 2007, p. 41-2)

peak experience [of a] higher stage because stages unfold sequentially and take considerable time to develop.<sup>226</sup>

So without the ‘actual growth and practise’ and discipline that has the potential to drive down certain desires and lead to oppressive effects one may never be presented with the opportunity of experiencing the “qualities of higher stages.” The explanation that Wilber gives for states and stages stands as strong backing for the idea of *affect*.<sup>227</sup> That the internalization of that-which-*affects* goes through a filter, if you will, with a meshing that at different points is made up of differing levels of experience along differing stages of intelligences. The meshing at each intersection sifts out what is judged to be relevant in a selective process as *perception*. So to assume, keeping with the metaphor, that all that passes through the meshing is absorbed *exactly* as delivered is to believe that one may catch the ocean with fishing net. Thus, the flow experience is ultimately ambiguous, and utterly personal.

Returning back to the development of *self*, Wilber continues.

However, with repeated practise of contacting higher states, [one’s] own stages of development will tend to unfold in a much faster and easier way. There is, in fact, considerable experimental evidence demonstrating exactly that. The more [one is] plunged into authentic higher states of consciousness – such as meditative states – the faster [one] will grow through any stages of consciousness. It is as if higher-states training acts as a lubricant on the spiral of development, helping [one] dis-identify with a lower stage so that the next stage can emerge, until you can stably remain at higher levels of awareness on an ongoing basis, whereupon a passing state has become a permanent trait.<sup>228</sup>

Then, for the sake of clarification, I re-iterate what I wrote earlier:

*The duration and intensity of the process of complexity of the self that occurs post-flow experience depends upon the existing condition of the body’s development in the realm of whichever of the “multiple intelligences” were drawn from to allow flow to occur.*

Understanding that “multiple intelligences” are the watershed from which one draws perception and particular skill, then, the “existing condition of the body” is the states and stages of

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<sup>226</sup> (Wilber, 2007, pp. 43-4)

<sup>227</sup> A definition I would like to suggest would be to explain affect as ‘influence’. But mere influence does not cover the emotional intensity and the effects it has within the body as perception, and acted out through any number of bodies, including *disciplined*, *practised*, and *consumer*.

<sup>228</sup> (Wilber, 2007, p. 44)



development within such intelligences. The idea of an individual that can be fluidly both *integrative* and *differentiated*, and who is a practised body in such a way as outlined thus far, must not be confused as one who is separate from ambiguity. Surely, such a body carries the heightened potential to be especially *affected* and *affective*; it is still a balance act and still dangerously ambiguous. Armed with this understanding of *flow*, an ambiguous event beyond mere mechanical mastery, I would like to visit a problem that has been accounted for only in parts up to this point. It is the problem of choreography, as written by Naoki Sakai.

Movement as a text, with watchers (learners) and actors denotes two sides of a coin called participation. “This participation is not achieved by one’s conscious effort, however, but by the disciplined and habituated human body that participates in a communal action called [martial arts].”<sup>229</sup>

Sakai explains the process as such:

In the coordinated movement of various texts, each performer was to be given a specific role – as in a dance team – and was expected to play that role in harmony with the whole. The ideal regularities that in principle kept the dance intact could then serve as a *lure for endless, habitual practice and bodily inscription*. [T]hose regularities... become transparent and effectively indiscernible from one’s innate nature once the internalization into bodily practice... has been attained. This is precisely... transition from the *exterior to the interior*. Indeed, entry into an interior means a *total alteration of the way one perceives the world*, that is, a total change of the world.<sup>230</sup> (Italics added)

But, as I demonstrated, entry into an *interior* (as Sakai calls it) is a multitudinous event, it is *perceptive*. To claim that one who feels motivated by communal empathy<sup>231</sup> is either doing so against one’s will, or completely as a liberated individual is extremism as both accounts are merely ideological fallacy.

Now, to return to the seventh component of *flow*, having defined both ‘loss of self’ and ‘self emerging stronger’ we may begin to conceptualize as a process. It is a process where one begins with a

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<sup>229</sup> (Sakai, 1992, p. 308)

<sup>230</sup> (Sakai, 1992, p. 309)

<sup>231</sup> This was discussed under the subtitle *roji* in the introduction.

knowledge set, and through means of understanding the task at hand, one applies the energy of applicable ‘intelligences’ at an appropriate balance of skill and challenge. One foregoes reflective self-talk, redefining the extension of the body-system and entering a state of *flow*. Once the fluid state is ceased, the *self*, having been redefined, does *not remain* in perpetual re-definition, but does *not return completely to its previous state* either (pre-flow). The self becomes more complex, and still maintains potentiality. So with the theoretical understanding that choreography is an effective alteration of the world, a change in perception, and that flow is the event of that change we move to the presence of this interior developmental model as it relates to a base in martial arts and modern social theory.

### **The Fragility of the Virtual**

To label, for illustrative purposes the system described above it would be the ‘flow-system’, containing a pre-flow, flow, and post-flow state, and all of the nuances explained thus far. The flow system as a process then very closely resembles the process of organization, dis-organization, and re-organization, or *territorialization, de-territorialization, and re-territorialization*<sup>232</sup> written about extensively in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series by Deleuze and Guattari. The implications and applications of their system are vast, and could easily exhaust space limitations.

Here, I present but one interpretation. Pre-flow, one’s self is organized, having one sort<sup>233</sup> of idea-of-self; during flow one’s pre-existent notion of self disappears along with self-consciousness, while a different *self*<sup>234</sup> is experienced. The latter, what the former moves to in process, is a disorganized state,

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<sup>232</sup> The notion of territory I employ here is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s insofar as it does not refer to residence or real geographic distribution. If it were in reference to that then “the primitive social machine is not territorial.” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 145) Drawn from the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* set, the words together highlight a process, not product, of movement (physical, social, or otherwise). This is a very beautiful model. It can be imagined as circular or cyclical in operation, though I prefer to imagine something like an upwards spiral (I however imply no necessary value judgements upon the upwards direction).

<sup>233</sup> I intend the term ‘sort’ here to have two meanings. Both, in that it refers to a ‘type’ of something, ie. “this sort of clothing”; and also in a literary reference to the verb. ‘to sort’, implying something sorted, or organized.

<sup>234</sup> One that is simultaneously *inclusive* and *exclusive*, referring to the event at hand.

becoming the “system of action that is greater than what the individual self had been before.”<sup>235</sup> Post-flow, the individual ‘reorganizes’ with new boundaries of self and has become more complex than it had been. Although nearly everything is ambiguous, it is important to grasp that the moment of acceptance of a machine (discourse) as interior-emotion is the most volatile,<sup>236</sup> as it is a process of upset and change. Deleuze and Guattari assert that “one re-territorializes on persons and surroundings, but one de-territorializes on machines.”<sup>237</sup> The onset of *flow* is the synergy of equal parts challenge and ability; ability is human, where the challenge is the machine. Ability is flexible, challenge is systemic and coded pattern. Like a chess game, one challenges another player, but one does not do so directly. One challenges the other through the medium of ‘chess’. Chess carries with it a system of patterns within which both players must follow. One must use ingenuity to overcome the other via the game, thereby overcoming the game, but more so, one overcomes the *self*. One’s ability, flexible, yet honed, seeks to work with the machine, a game-cum-challenger. At that time, one’s definition of *self* extends to include the supposed ‘opposition’ and the game itself – in both physical terms (tactile, sight, sound, smell, proprioception) and mental (cognition, emotion). Therefore, for the moment the game is experienced and perceived, whether consciously or not, the *self* extends to the entire event integrally. Upon cessation one may ‘revert’ (for lack of better term) to the previous definition of *self*, but the imprint remains, potential remains. *Flow* is the breakdown of strict cognition, and the replacement of rigidity by flexibility.

*Flow* is virtual, for virtual only flows. It is, in a word, de-territorial. Flow de-stabilizes the ‘self’ and forces the practitioner/actor to re-evaluate the arbitrary divisions of actor and activity. ‘Virtual’ does not merely describe the space between internet providers, it is a term used frequently by Massumi that, in

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<sup>235</sup> (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 65)

<sup>236</sup> That is when *affect* begins to take hold and potentiality may begin to take shape.

<sup>237</sup> (Buchanan, 2008, p. 119)

simplicity, equates nearly with 'intensity'.<sup>238</sup> But, it really extends to the time-space where *affect* takes hold in the person. It is, as one of his descriptions explained, the missing half-second of brain activity surrounding an event-reaction.<sup>239</sup> He posits that it is not because the brain is actually 'missing' anything, but in a state of cognitive debt, processing extremely high amounts of experience and relating to the present to literally *make* sense, all the while, the body continues in time and space.

Something that happens too quickly is actually, *virtual*. The body is as immediately virtual as it is actual. The *virtual*, the pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies, is a realm of *potential*. In potential is where futurity combines unmediated, with pastness...<sup>240</sup>

In an explanation by Charlotte Bloch, *flow* is based upon a tendency towards the "ability of the individual to confront challenge, a process in which confusion is transformed into a rewarding sequence of actions, that is to say, chaos into order."<sup>241</sup> Therefore, in consideration and brief reflection, *flow* is at once, to paraphrase the latter, order into chaos and chaos into order. The state of dis-organ-ization is a state where one has the greatest potential to re-string connections between physical and mental states, between corporeality and ideology. Thus it is a time that great bounds may be made in any direction. One may just as easily re-territorialize into a body of oppression from previous notions of expression through a process of re-evaluation like *flow*, for example. All of this said, "The movement of de-territorialization can never be grasped in itself, one can only grasp its indices in relation to the territorial representations."<sup>242</sup> That is to mean in this context, *flow*, cannot be grasped, as once there is an attempt it quickly ceases.

All of this may just be in vein, merely theoretical if there is no reference to anything resembling these processes in the martial arts. Well, in fact, and mentioned briefly earlier, there are numerous, and detailed accounts of martial artists documenting similar feelings. Some derived from spiritual philosophy,

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<sup>238</sup> (Massumi, 2002, p. 27)

<sup>239</sup> (Massumi, 2002, p. 29)

<sup>240</sup> (Massumi, 2002, p. 30)

<sup>241</sup> Flow: Beyond Fluidity and Rigidity. A Phenomenological Investigation, p45

<sup>242</sup> (Buchanan, 2008, p. 119)

these terms appear as if they were written as post-dated interviews for Csikszentmihalyi's and Deleuze's and Guattari's work.

Fortunately, the ideas that have been discussed are not just concepts observed in western scientific psychological discourse, they are ideas that are prevalent in a significant amount of Asian martial arts, including many from China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, and India.<sup>243</sup> To begin with, the above section that discusses the process of territorialization resembles *Shu-ha-ri*,<sup>244</sup> and the idea of "formlessness to form-form to formlessness,"<sup>245</sup> the former from Japanese martial arts<sup>246</sup> and the latter spoke of in a text about Shaolin martial arts. Although not completely similar in order to the process of *territorialization-deterritorialization-reterritorialization*, *Shu-ha-ri* (守破離) is but another way to gaze at the interplay going on in a similarly viewed system, that of mastery. A conceptual translation is "obey", "insight", and "transcend", the process is used to describe the way a body becomes one of discipline and practice. It is representative of the process of territorializing the body through rigorous repetition of basics intended to in-form the body; de-territorializing, finding insight and creating new understanding; and re-territorializing, having moved beyond the need to cognate, one appears to spontaneously express movement. It flows in the same way as the quote of Bruce Lee's near the beginning of chapter three, and acts just as the Deleuze and Guattari concept, in a cyclical pattern, unceasing.

The *flow* experience – the state of formlessness, or de-territorialization – as an event also has a history of being identified in the martial arts and philosophy. Both *wuwei* (無為) and *mushin* (無心)<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> (Draeger, 1969)

<sup>244</sup> (Hendrey, 1997, p. 84)

<sup>245</sup> (Kit, 2001, p. 56)

<sup>246</sup> The two it plays a more significant role are Aikido, and Shorinji.

<sup>247</sup> (Pearlman, 2006) Both terms can be found on pages 217 and 201 respectively

are examples.<sup>248</sup> Both represent the notion of an act ‘happening of itself’, and happening through a route that feels spontaneous, and carry the very same feeling as described with *flow*. *Mu-shin*, literally, “non-mind,” is the explanation of the state in which the mind-body retains a relative degree of presence due to a practice and relaxation. *Mu-shin* relates directly to the notion of the *virtual*, specifically the desirable<sup>249</sup> minimization of cognitive analysis in lieu of more immediate reaction, and is exemplified with the sword master that wrote a treatise on how one must react in a fight, like ‘a lightning flash, or a stone spark’.<sup>250</sup> Just as one can understand that to defend oneself one cannot intellectualize a self-defense situation. If the defender were to stand with a thought process of, “Here he comes. He’s going to attack. It looks like he’s kicking with his left leg. I must move to the left. Block, Now!” there would simply be no time to respond. So it is believed that the mind must be relaxed and respond spontaneously and flexibly to what is presented. This is different from responding with predetermined patterns, or choreography. Therein lays de-territorial action, without thought, supposed free expression of movement. But at the same time, the movement comes from a practiced body, and is also then territorial. Frozen in an analysis such as this, the moment as experienced is destroyed by both the static and verbal representation of a living system where these concepts dance, back and forth. Both are states through which one may express one’s complex, and *complexing* self. *Mushin* and *wuwei* represent the *Ri* (of *shu-ha-ri*), and while one may quickly ascribe direct relation between de-territorialization and *Ri*, in fact it may be closer to think of *Ri* as the fluid, un-attached, un-inhibited interplay between de-territorialization and re-territorialization. *Mushin* and *wuwei* then, are events that are de-territorial, but they spawn from a body that had been utterly territorial, and will be again.

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<sup>248</sup> The former is in Mandarin Chinese, the latter in Japanese. *Both terms* come from *Chan*(Zen) and Daoist philosophy and so is often brought up in discussions relating to the martial arts that have been influenced. For a short list of examples, Shaolin Kungfu, Taiji, Bagua, Xingyi, Kenjutsu, Aikido, Jujutsu.

<sup>249</sup> I am speaking in relative terms that concern the martial artist, and specifically the martial artist as paraphrased that follows later in the sentence.

<sup>250</sup> “電光石火”, (hir.), ‘denkousekka’, (Soho, 1986, p. 26)

These states of consciousness have been named for what they produce in the body, and so the state precedes any name. Martial arts are, as Steven Pearlman attempted to demonstrate, a type of physio-philosophy. And while many may practice without Zen, Daoist, or modern psychology at the forefront of their minds, or even at all, they are in essence still exercising many of the same philosophical principles that those who do practice with philosophy in mind find and observe. I highlight the names of these states so to illustrate an extremely complex process wherein there exists a spectrum of inter-subjective textuality that is proposed upon a body, in a certain shape or form, and how the interior becomes a body as a “storehouse of habits.”<sup>251</sup>

Considering the entirety of above, let us explore the ambiguity of movement both as itself and as a metaphor for the nature of the balance of oppression-and-expression, as one.

### **Multiplicity in Fighting**

Any direction is a multiplicity of directions, not a division or singularity. To illuminate what is meant by that let us consider it in corporeal terms. Some of the following is a passage that was inspired by a quote of Ohno Kazuo's, a co-founder of a modern, very interpretive dance form, that attempts to locate itself deep in the emotional core of the dancer. Unfortunately, the quote 'proper' has been lost to website construction. The quote, which once was hosted by the website maintained in his name,<sup>252</sup> bears his conviction, paraphrasing of course, that any steps taken on stage, before and during the steps, carry with it a multiplicity of ways to arrive at another point on stage. It is compelling because it too is simultaneously oppressive and expressive. It is beautifully ambiguous.

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<sup>251</sup> (Sakai, 1992, p. 309)

<sup>252</sup> [www.kazuohnodancestudio.com/english/archives/index.html](http://www.kazuohnodancestudio.com/english/archives/index.html), retrieved Aug, 2011.

In the case of martial arts, when one pushes a point on an opponent's body one is pushing in a particular direction. That direction of force, so as not to be easily averted (countered) must be true<sup>253</sup> in all directional possibilities from that point while maintaining the desired angle of intended force. The force is no less direct because one maintains force but is sensitive to the multiplicity of force, it is not divisionary. One, in other words, barring luck, cannot predetermine a change in direction and respond before the opponent. The force, with one's sensitivity to directional potentiality, may be resisted in any direction. One's response to resistance would need to be according to the particular directionality of the opponent's attempted aversion. If not for the multiplicities of the force, one's initial force would be applied in a limited, linear fashion and subsequently left to be easily countered by a mere three possibilities: before contact, moving completely out of the way; within contact, resisting directly against the force (So the success or failure of either side descends into a strength or structural battle); or going with the exact line of force without changing the angle of aversion (like taking or absorbing a punch or yielding and adding to the power following the force to take structure.) Be it only because force is a multiplicity that force at all may be effective and full, a fullness that is at once a *unified force of multiple potentialities*.

Seemingly paradoxically, force is only divided when it is 'forced'; it becomes single directionality. That is likened to the principle that Steven Pearlman<sup>254</sup> wrote of; that if force exerted feels as if it is powerful, it surely is not, but it is *when force feels effortless that it is most powerful*. His argument is in regards to proper structure for delivery of force, but the concept works on other levels too. Although for self-defence, a *unified force of multiple potentialities* that generates force that *feels effortless* and is *most powerful*, but in terms of the social sphere, social movements in particular, this is the *most* effective type of *affect* and such a smooth-fascism that can be seen in the grassroots oppression that

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<sup>253</sup> Not 'truth', but as in proper alignment or adjustment, as in balancing, or leveling in a physical sense.

<sup>254</sup> (Pearlman, 2006, p. 44)



occurred in Okinawa.<sup>255</sup> Oppression brought upon, and accepted from within can slip by because it can feel natural.

To return to multiplicities, balance is yet another example, the standing erect human body. When balancing on our feet one may say one is 'standing up' or 'standing tall', and while it does make sense in one plane of understanding, it is really a limited of a model for balance, despite knowing that language has limits anyway. Our balance is a multiplicity of directionalities acting in such a way so as to appear as one, in this case 'up'. It may be easier to understand when in the instance of not having control of, or losing our balance. One will wobble apparently uncontrollably in random directions pertaining to changing variables often relating to tangibles (the body, material environmental objects) or intangibles (gravity/forces, mental/internal) with the loss of balance. To stand, one is perpetually in compensation of forces that may occur in any direction. One may fall-down, over, in, under, or to the side, if one ceases to respond to, or take into account automatically the variable potentials of any alteration in one's system of balance. So, in such a way then, we do not really 'stand up', rather it is more appropriate to say that we 'stand around'. Balance is the reactionary state that is sensitive of a multiplicity of directions of force applied upon a body.

When one trains, one must organize, goal-set, isolate, integrate, sharpen, and drill, but that is merely the dress rehearsal, barely the show. If a question is asked of me I cannot but be patient enough to wait until the speaker finishes what is to be said before I answer. I cannot, despite great desire to do so, 'know' what will be asked so to answer it before it is presented. The same is true in self-defense with an attack; it is a problem presented to me. I must respond, but the most I can do is read inter-textually woven cues so to gain a special and strategic advantage. In so doing I can shut down probabilities, ie. high percentage potentials. But, I must be patient. If I jump ahead I run the risk of reading incorrectly,

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<sup>255</sup> (Tomiyama, 2000)

like a soccer goalie that jumps in the opposite direction of a penalty kick, if I am too slow surely it was because I was in a state of paralysis by analysis. To be a multiple does not mean to say that there is no commitment, in fact there must be that and only that; commitment to the force necessary to shift in ways to disallow countering.

Put nowhere, it will be everywhere. Even in moving the mind outside the body, if it is sent in one direction, it will be lacking in nine others. If the mind is not restricted to just one direction, it will be in all ten.<sup>256</sup>

My multiplicity must meet multiplicity, and only in a state of becoming does multiplicity exist. It is in the non-directed-ness of the state of becoming that multiple potentials may arise and be felt. Acting not with thought-full, rational mind, the body acts as affected, felt. This may sound ‘fascist and fancy free’, or freeing, reactive, and fluidly responsive, when in fact, it has equal opportunity to be either, anywhere in between. *Mushin* is one way of explaining such a state, ‘no-mindedness’ literally, but just as easily conveyed as ‘full-mindedness’; ‘full’ of potential, of multiplicities that is, but never arriving, never getting stuck. It is an unfettered mind ready to interpret.

Every movement must be interpreted by the virtual before gaining physical representation. During the event of attack or defence the physical and mental (particularly emotional) topography transforms in fractions of a second. If Massumi observed correctly when he asserted that we are “overfull”, and therefore “missing” a half-second surrounding an event then the battle of reading, and correctly responding to the topography of a fight is in fact, a battle in the virtual space.<sup>257</sup> Now, this is not too far removed from how martial arts have been depicted. Pearlman<sup>258</sup> also asserts that fighting in the physical sphere is a battle for the ‘gate’. The “Primary Gate” is an intangible circle that is made from between the hips to the nose that, if controlled, lends tactical advantage to the controller. Observe a boxing guard, Muai Thai guard, Karate guard, most arts stress protection in that general area because it

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<sup>256</sup> (Takuan, 1986, pg.32)

<sup>257</sup> (Massumi, 2002, p. 28-9)

<sup>258</sup> (2006, p. 88-90)

is the most direct line of attack which also harbours vital targets.<sup>259</sup> In other words, the fight is both mentally a battle in a virtual space to occupy a point of physical space. Both spaces are filled through the creative, innovative interpretation of the application of principles learned. In the virtual space the battle is won by translating time-space into emotion and response, subsequently directing the body to effectively occupy the physical space, the 'gate'. The virtual and the physical move not as two, back-and-forth, but instead they are part of a fluid spectrum, shared with territorialization-deterritorialization, that serves to buffer and construct multiple realities. Therein lays ambiguity, ambiguously. If anything is to be taken from the above is that in methods of oppression lie expression and within expression lies oppression, always walking a fine line, dabbling in the spectra of greys.

## Reflection

Art, "is never decoration [or] embellishment; instead, it is work of enlightenment. Art, in other words, is a technique for acquiring liberty."<sup>260</sup> The quote, by the autodidactic Bruce Lee, applies to martial arts in general but ultimately was in regards to his feelings about the expression of the human body. This is where I draw back the quote used earlier in this chapter that claimed commodity items like television "do not provoke a critical distancing from these capitalist realities, but [act] merely as an escapist vehicle..."<sup>261</sup> I argue that it is not that simple. It is too easy to blame the item of interaction for the lack of engagement when in fact, it may have the potential to spur thought, but it is the human body, with active consciousness that possesses the ability to evoke a critical distance. And while we can look at television as an activity that really begs for no more than passive engagement, martial arts are very much a corporeal activity that involves, at times, immediate feedback. After having explored Csikszentmihalyi's research in regards to pleasure and enjoyment we discovered that it is interpretation that gives us as people the capacity to appreciate our engagements. And in such an understanding we

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<sup>259</sup> For a more comprehensive explanation see the author's cited entry.

<sup>260</sup> Lee, B. p.10

<sup>261</sup> (Slater, 1997, p.121)

can flip the coin to say the same in regards to our ability to evoke a 'critical distance' from the things we choose not to appreciate. It is also through the lens of flow that even with a practised body – supposedly bearing the intangible echos of innumerable repetitions – we see that the body can experience the freeing of 'self', all the while floating in 'neutral-soup' waiting for the 'fascist-crackers' or 'freedom-spoon'. This alone does not stand as critique that affirms definite provocation of critical distance; such engagement remains ambiguous. But at least what I can point out is that to make the assumption that one thing is a definite instrument either for or against engagement demonstrates a limited grasp of the freedoms in the interpretive territory to be for or against, or both. This chapter was only an example of the physical ambiguities involved in the interactions of fighting, but they are also to be grasped metaphorically and conceptually in other spheres. The *affect* of and upon a body has no shape; it gives no clues other than textuality. It can only be felt. What this entire chapter boils down to, then, is that even the notion of self-discovery, *mushin*, de-territorialization, non-alienated praxis, however one chooses to put a name to it, as they remain, are utterly ambiguous. They are all perfect examples of "discipline-in-spontaneity and spontaneity-in-discipline,"<sup>262</sup> and every term is simply highly skilled potentiality.

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<sup>262</sup> (Watts, 1957, p. 174)

## Conclusion

In England, there is a man who lives and breathes martial arts. Every morning he rises at six-thirty a.m., prepares a healthy shake and departs his house. He runs 4 miles every morning to his studio, then, he stretches, practices forms and trains on the sandbag. Once he is satisfied, and thoroughly awake, he sits crossed-legged with tea in-hand, and meditates. His name is Shi YanLei, and he left his life in the Shaolin temple in Henan province, China, to open his own school. He is at once a Shaolin trained martial artist, which includes the physicality of self-defense, stretching, and body-strengthening, and the mentality of Chan Buddhism and discipline, while he is also an entrepreneur, owning and operating his own training studio. The martial art system (really an amalgamation of many 'systems') known as Shaolin is one in which the purely physical 'self-defense' in the art shares the spotlight, so-to-speak, with medicine, spirituality. That is not to say that the physicality, and the rigors of training dwindle over time, quite the opposite, they deepen into finesse and subtle body-mechanics, but what does happen is that the harsh youth oriented body-molding conditioning acts as a gateway to the development of the mind, and ultimately the mind-body as a non-dual entity.

Zhu Tianxi, another well-known Shaolin master, wrote "following the principles that integrate your interior training with exterior, you are required to practice Shao Lin Quan with your intent, combining hardness and softness well."<sup>263</sup> Such a prevalent belief, and indeed application, in those principles combined with the ideas I have laid-down in the pages of this work act as the perfect jumping point to begin to comprehend the truly amazing, yet dangerous process of martial arts as a system not just of mobility, but of mobilization. That the person can become so disciplined through bodily repetition that the mind may be cultivated simultaneously leaves a smile on my face, and sends a shiver of fear down my spine.

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<sup>263</sup> (Zhu, 2007, p. 54)

Discipline, as a systematic way of expressing the body can be one of those devices that serve to inhibit the voices of the *roji*, burying them beneath trained behaviour and utterance. The discipline that comes from a curious place in the past is constantly re-evaluated in the present. Meanings are constantly being invented and re-invented, evaluated and re-evaluated within ourselves and our institutions.

Because different meanings are attached to text - used in the broad sense - during different regimes, the study of discipline in contemporary capitalism will show that while martial arts may have been associated with extra-physical values in the past, the area and degree of social definition that was implied has changed and is changing still. In the commodity- and industrial-capitalist regime that envelops the greater part of the globe the production of suitable labour power has both consciously and subconsciously been the aim of much of society. It generates the *fear and dread*<sup>264</sup> that one may be inadequate enough (health or skill-wise) to contribute, as the drive to effectively commodify one's own labour power drives one to improve in ways that are conducive to job security or acquisition. Those with the 'right' economic means can afford the 'right' education. Likewise, those commodified martial arts I observed are presented as a source of 'right' socialization offered for a cost. While self-defence and fitness may be higher on the list of reasons for adults practising martial arts, for children it is to learn 'life-skills'(values). It may be that in some ways to be a socially acceptable person, one pays money to become better labour-power. That last sentence is crucial: not only does one have limited labour freedom in society, but one must pay for their own socialization, if they feel they need it. That the responsibility to developing a 'face'<sup>265</sup> better prepares one for facing development rests upon a parent or individual is really no surprise, but that there is an industry for such endeavour is fascinating.

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<sup>264</sup> See *Grammar of a Multitude* By Paulo Virno

<sup>265</sup> Similar to the "face" one may lose when involved in frowned-upon social endeavours.

Consumer culture... structures individual needs in line with the system's needs: economically, to sell more goods and secure a docile and hard-working labour force that accepts the stick of alienated labour for the supposed carrot of (alienated) consumption; politically, to secure social order by getting people to identify with the system that oppresses them.<sup>266</sup>

A body invests in itself (or guardians invest in a youth) in the hopes, perhaps, that the investment will pay off in success defined in capitalist terms. The martial arts school is a place where, through training the child in 'life-skills', the child is 'taught' the importance of investing in oneself. Such an investment carries with it the ability to be interpreted as a capitalist investment. Such an endeavour is by nature homogenizing, if indeed it is true. But, as martial arts are art and can thus be precisely *non*-[discursive]space, there exists the potential for martial arts to be a *dis*-organ-ization.

Within industrial, and then again as "informatized"<sup>267</sup> discourse, the ethics of rational labour power are still, punctuality, diligence, obedience (to a hierarchy), etc, and are just as valued in the office place as in the factory. And, possibly of more immediate relevance to the professional martial arts, such skills are not only valued, but commodities themselves; intangible ideas that may be sought out and paid for. This is, at base, the same industrial labour ideology that Weber<sup>268</sup> identified in entrepreneurial and labourist capitalism. That society is based upon calculation, objectification, and alienation, in that "a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article."<sup>269</sup> So professional martial arts schools advertise the ability to teach and instil life skills to its students, some of the very same attitude traits that are most desirable in the labour force. This is not an accident, but also not as calculated as some structuralists<sup>270</sup> might have it.

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<sup>266</sup> (Slater, p.125)

<sup>267</sup> (Hardt & Negri, 2000)

<sup>268</sup> Most apparent in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1992, Routledge Publications, New York.

<sup>269</sup> Pg.87. Lukacs, G. (1971)

<sup>270</sup> See: Slater or Adorno

The control of desire by strong presences, namely commercialism, is undeniable. And those desires absolutely seep into the lives of the multitude, so much so that they find their way into the pedagogy of martial arts. Commercialisation of the martial arts itself cannot be a necessary evil, however. Price so ambiguously put it,

The professionalization and commercialisation of sport, increasingly incorporating it into the capitalist mode of production, is a fact which many deplore, but the degree to which it is educationally significant is very hard to tell.<sup>271</sup>

While discipline is a labour-power requisite, just because it is taught in a commercial martial arts studio does not mean that industrial interest is the driving force, but that is no reason to ignore the possibility of a lurking spirit of industry, or any other spectre. Surely the bodily practices in the studio reflect the strict hierarchical, regimented lives that Neo-liberal capitalism as a system may appropriate, but such practices represent other ideologies too. It is a shared ideology, and the corporeal practices of these life-skills cannot, and do not, belong to an ideology.

Within *affect* there is danger; within the desire to help may come hindrance. Those affecting others, intentionally or inadvertently, may express a need to become communal, to suppress the individual to an unnatural degree and become pathologically integrated. That can be oppressive. It is all too easy to correct others for reasons of 'conventional' sociality under the guise of self-improvement; and then to abdicate responsibility upon the individual and call it 'self-discipline'. It is those little items of heterogeneity are what create a healthy difference in the multitude. The point of potential danger is when the physicality and ideology blend into a practise that becomes 'interior', therein lays a balancing act where expression of a second nature may be dangerously homogenizing. Martial arts are incredibly *affective* in that way: to oneself (body/mind), on a student, on a teacher, on a partner, on an opponent. Of course, this is only a minor study but I pose that the same could be found on a larger scale too, and in other areas of study.

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<sup>271</sup> (Price, 1986, p. 275)



Wherever they are practised, the martial arts are, therefore, subject to variations growing out of the historical, economic, political, and cultural contexts in which they evolve.<sup>272</sup>

During this study what I found most interesting was the interplay between discipline and self-control and its presence in the studio. I found that the techniques of discipline/control are openly discussed and encouraged which makes for a unique type of pedagogy. The parents sit and watch as their children stand in class and smile when complimented that they have “good self-control”. That the methods of control are so overt and that what is expected not just of the students (subjects) but also the instructors (by the parents) is such an open discussion with report cards and other devices brings me to conclude that the martial arts studio is a place where some methods of bridging the gap from an idealized ‘discipline-to-control’ are represented as varying levels in a spectrum of between-ness. These are two terms that in the social sciences are heavy words and at times are hotly debated, but retrospectively neither exist without the other and as alluded to in the prior sentence generate a spectrum of *discipline-control*.

Being trained in anything (martial arts, dance, how to walk, etc.) creates only potentiality. That potential resides in the virtual. Society even only breeds potentiality. The more training, the more effective one becomes. The potential stays relatively neutral, as that is what is really meant by potential. It is through the medium of language, past experiences, and numerous other factors that one’s spectrum of potential is broadened and deepened in all aspects. Not only does one’s concept of ‘self’ expand in both depth and breadth, so too does one’s potential, it increases in complexity.

This disciplining of bodies for capitalist production is not confined to the workforce and to child and slave labor, however – bodily discipline willingly embraced among the middle classes worldwide as part of aesthetic and health-related practices is deeply embedded in consumer and capitalist culture.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> (Rosenburg, 1995, p. 18)

<sup>273</sup> (Lock, 2007, p. 491)

I think this quote works to a very interesting point, that certain practices, “deeply embedded” continue to affect our actions, however I believe that without a solid understanding of intertextuality one may use reasoning such as that above to launch a crusade against so-called capitalist artefacts, negating all artefacts without careful consideration. Such actions, precisely because they are “embedded” - taken for granted - may lack the original temporal and spatial ideological underpinnings they may once had and therefore, as I have demonstrated with martial arts, may be utilized ideologically in a plethora of ways. As a colleague of mine wrote so clearly wrote:

[T]here is a great deal of diversity in the manner in which the listener/practitioner of [music] approaches the music. Audience negotiations with the genre – that is, what the listener/practitioner takes a song to mean – can be entirely dependent upon the other texts in the individual’s life.<sup>274</sup>

While he wrote of a particular type of ‘folk’ music, I believe that it is not unreasonable to extend the relevance not only to this topic, but to any event wherein an ‘audience’ seeks to construe meaning. Such “audience negotiations” are the spectra of interpretation by the *roji*. Negotiating meaning onto life is what many seek in new and old endeavours and perspectives. There is a ‘freshness’ that comes over one who discovers something they like, or one who simply takes pleasure in what they do. As demonstrated, it is not the movements that carry with them implied meaning, but it is the meaning that adds pleasures to the movements, un-binding the psychology of movement.

### **Tool/Toy/Weapon**

This is an analogy that relates to ‘use-meaning’ that was taught to me during my own martial arts training. It explains the ambiguous function of objects in the hand to students and attaches direct responsibility of the user to the object in use. It goes much beyond such a simple corporeal reading and is a wonderful method of thought.

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<sup>274</sup> (Aalgaard, 2011, p. 90)

When one picks up any object with intent to use it in any manner they make a choice to use it as a tool, a toy, or a weapon. If one picks up a stick one has a choice, they may use it for a specific function that creates ease in a work load, or use it for training towards a specific task, it is then a tool. If the stick is twirled or passed back-and-forth, for example, used in a light-hearted, entertaining manner, it can be a toy. And if used for malicious intent, such as striking oneself or another it becomes a weapon. The three uses are fluid, not static, and can change with intent. One's personal responsibility is not necessarily to avoid any one of the options, but to be responsible and conscious of the choices one makes regarding usage. The same is true for almost anything, not just tangible objects. One may use a certain theory, for example, as a way to entertain thought (toy), a way to apply to build something (tool), or a way to damage something (weapon). A system like martial arts can be used similarly. One ultimately has the choice to use that system as a game (recreation), fitness or personal development (tool), a means to protect or damage (weapon), or any combination. Though here, Marx defines 'commodity' when he says, "man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him"<sup>275</sup> the phrase is telling of the nature of agency that one has in utilizing function in things. Martial arts are by no means an exception.

The martial arts are necessarily based within and restricted by the fundamentals of the human body system. Martial arts do not break the limitations of the human body system, for example, the shoulder cannot rotate in certain directions due to limitations given by the muscles and socket. Therefore, a martial artist must work with freedom within such necessary restraints. Martial arts are merely one directed approach to practicing those fundamentals. That concrete example in connection to what was said by Marx shows that Man may only go so far as to produce a system of martial arts techniques within, in this case, the natural restrictions of the shoulder. A comprehensive system is

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<sup>275</sup> (Marx, vol.1 sec.4) *Das Kapital*. Retrieved October 12, 2008. [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org).

based thusly and that practice is then capable of being sold to others in differing packages aimed at life skills, self-defence, competitive sport training, spiritual realization, the list of values goes on.

The Tool/Toy/Weapon analogy serves as not only to shed light on the functional ambiguity of training, but also as a way to educate the ways not only martial arts can be used but also effectively taught. It becomes one's choice as to how one may try to be an *affective* body.

With the knowledge that one may derive meaning and implied use from an object via their own ideas or others', and that those uses may be anywhere on the spectrum of potential, one cannot avoid everything simply because it may produce homogenization. Csikszentmihalyi pointed out, in a similar fashion that, "[i]t would be senseless, however, to ignore a source of energy because it can be misused." These 'life-skill' values are valued for a reason. The values themselves are not strictly a part or product of, or under the 'possession of' a distinct system. Rather they are separate from, but applicable to all – or at least many – methods of bodily expression. In a very shallow sense, the values assist in making the regime through which they are interpreted more effective by being potentially more *affective*. That is to say that, the values (as defined within a regime) act as a method of attempted reproduction of the regime that defines them. But, It would be throwing the baby out with the bathwater to assume that the values themselves are oppressive. Lest we do so, and through extreme negation of all ideological values, end up with people lacking effective guidelines and become physical slaves to our bodies' own lack of value. Though often vague, without any ideological values, like discipline, to produce at least a minimally effective body, one may enter a state like purgatory where the negation of every ideal effectively freezes the body into a state of un-workability, very similar to the other extreme of oppressive ideology. Csikszentmihalyi continues, "[t]he task is to learn how to enjoy everyday life without diminishing other people's chances to enjoy theirs."<sup>276</sup> This is borderline moralization, but beside that, for the intents of

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<sup>276</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.70)

avoiding stirring up a potentially socially oppressive atmosphere it is a good general rule to follow. How exactly it is put to practise is a slippery slope and like the worst part of the board game *snakes-and-ladders*, takes us back to the beginning of this research all over again.

What has been covered in these chapters is a heed of caution. Discipline can so fluidly move between 'survival' and acts of "snipping away of the ill-fitting ends of heterogeneity, incompatible with Culture, aimed at ensuring the value of an Other's labour power within the interior."<sup>277</sup> And the 'help' that encourages others to entertain a universally essentialized sociality, such as nationality, humanity, or labour power "is precisely the manner in which the general intellect fosters submission and silences Otherness."<sup>278</sup> And particularly in the spectre of discipline's past 'industrial' associations, and the current pogo-ing of the economic climate in Canada and the USA, the interplay within the studio should "clang alarm bells" as to how easy it can be to "silence the heterogeneous and facilitate fascism in the name of 'survival'".<sup>279</sup>

While ideology in a grander sense exists and can be oppressive or inclusive, it is not to be assumed that whoever comes across an ideology immediately succumbs to its bent. "Martial Arts", however it is constructed to appear, in whatever regime, may be promoted this-way or that-way but that in no way assures acceptance of such ideology by the *roji*. Every individual that trains will, through events of becoming, have experiences with, and about, any of the multitudinous facets of what may loosely be called 'martial arts', and will in turn create for themselves a body of understanding (and trained body) that is utterly unique no matter how pervasive any ideological narrative may be. It really all seems to boil down to the old adage, 'you can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink.' One may construct ideology for oneself or for share, but that in no way implies that anyone else must follow unquestionably, or homogeneously.

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<sup>277</sup> (Aalgaard, 2011, p. 116)

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

The martial arts have, for many people, become a 'common place'. The arts have become a place where those in the *roji* connect, relate, and express. And it is in there that we must ask what form the martial arts take. But the arts are far from representing any sole idea, such as character building, passivity, or aggression. They represent a construct, an intersection of signage and interpretation where the individual must grapple with ideals, actions, meaning, *oneself*, and others, sometimes quite literally. We must never misjudge imposition of the 'imaginary places' attached to the martial arts as something universal, lest we suppress a need for complexity. While the aim of this project was to elucidate the *professional martial arts* in specific, I firmly believe that, in extension the affective notion is shared with martial arts in general, and more specific the pedagogy of all, not just professional martial arts.

Despite how many words are written connecting the martial arts to the 'imaginary' of character values, and despite a clear interest on the part of the promoters and school owners to centralize the values as notions of an inherent system of character construction, the perceptions and interpretations that are born of subjectivity in the social and in the virtual cannot simply be reduced to any notion of 'industry's grip on Discipline', or 'tradition'; that is perhaps more of a job for the ideologue than that of the perceiver.

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As is apparent at this time, the learning of martial arts, at least those that this work addressed, integrates notions of meaning that move from the physical to mental, and mental to physical. Physical to mental refers to the access afforded to the brain via the conduit of strict physical output. At the risk of over-simplifying conceptually, to have input (to the mental) there must then be output (as physical); the output acts as a conduit for increased input. This was highlighted through examples in chapter three, as well as, in a deeper theoretical sense chapter four with 'flow'. The physicality of discipline, the regimentation and repetition is imbued upon the mind in a similar disciplinary fashion. In fact, although

far outside the borders of this research, it would be interesting to study the changes in the physical empirical mapping of the brain over such a process. 'Mental to physical', refers to the process of attaching meaning to the physical, and the mind causing physiological response – such as feelings, emotion, or simply re-action – to the meanings we associate with things. In the initial stages of learning the former is discursively so; the associations of meaning are not so flexible. This is possibly most clear when in reference to the intended fighting application of certain movements, and how specific positions carry meaning in context, timing, and so on, but was also discussed in chapters three and four citing examples of character development or certain moral imperatives that come to be attached to the physical. The immense implications of physical application in movement, for example, may be broken into three levels of understanding; for any given technique there is *structure* – the way to 'build' the position with the body carries with it many subtle details; *function* – "how it moves", adding motion to the movement, and *application* – how to utilize the technique in a way that makes it work to the user's advantage. Consider the idea of the internet and particularly, handheld devices such as tablets, smart phones. Such seemingly omnipresent technologies employ in the user's life what can be called an augmented reality. That is, tangible reality reinforced, and at times supplemented by another 'online' reality. It is, in a word, virtual. The machines (electronic devices) assist in the user generating a broader-deeper-different altogether perspective of reality. Let us return once again to the process of physical to mental, mental to physical in the case of martial arts. The use of martial arts as a machine to develop the mind and body into a certain process-of-becoming operates in a space called the 'virtual', where *affect* spawns meaning for both cognition and physicality. The martial arts, imprinted upon the practitioner like a cyborg, are an *augmented reality* that rests at the intersection of infinite disciplines.

Built upon our experiences, and interpretations of those past and present we 'become'. Each individual's historicity and perception augments his/her reality that only reinforces the complexity of consciousness and assures the individuality of affect. Experiences fade, but affect lingers, like the wake

trailing off from the aft of a ship, only to become part of the ocean of experiences, but our ocean is not 'our' ocean, it is billions of oceans. To apply that, we must resist our own temptation to essentialize, and bear within us the ability to embrace the fluidity of thought, of perception, of movement.

And the essentialized ideology does not necessarily reside above us, handing down shackles that bind our identity to 'sameness'. It is rather a self-induced paralysis, where in a moment of over-stimulated virtuality one gives-in to the ease and comfort offered by 'sameness'. It is a submission to soft power, a submission to the ever-appealing opposite of complexity, not simplicity, but stagnancy. The comfort may be appealing. But, we must forfeit 'sameness' and,

[p]refer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems... It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possess revolutionary force.<sup>280</sup>

The temptation to slip into complacency can be overwhelming, and nobody is outside of it, but one must remember that the "feeling of not at home"<sup>281</sup> is actually where real safety and expression lies. In that way it resembles the *power paradox*: True power feels, and actually should be, effortless; that which feels like powerful exertion is not.<sup>282</sup> While feeling not-at-home one may just have the greatest potential. The shackles we wear are devised by ideological 'key-words' that we subscribe to, that we believe in, and that compound our whole of existence into neat, over simplified, summaries of what we represent. Like an online dating profile that uses two-hundred words or-less to describe one's personality. It is those attachments that bind the soul, that falsify and trick us into feeling that is what we are made of, mere associations with interest. There are dangerous limits to the association to things as a restrictive practise of defining the self. One can reduce one's existence down to a few physical or mental affiliations; that is where the danger in 'belonging' lies. It rests in the comfort of homogeneity, because under its roof is so familiar yet so anti-personal. It offers itself up so easily with the "community of the

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<sup>280</sup> Michel Foucault, in Preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, by Deleuze and Guattari, (1977, p. xiii)

<sup>281</sup> (Virno, 2004, p. 34)

<sup>282</sup> (Pearlman, 2006, p. 44)



us,”<sup>283</sup> allowing for a protection with wall composed of ‘us’ and a roof of ‘universalized imaginaries’, all of it only compounded by the intensity of subscription that can be removed fluidly, at any second. While seeking comfort for ourselves is one thing, tying others into one’s own voice, effectively silencing others, while offering ‘help’. “[M]en fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation... actually *want[ing]* humiliation and slavery not only for others but for themselves.”<sup>284</sup> Remember, every dictator seems to feel as if he/she speaks as the voice of a certain people.

As should be evident by now, the professional martial arts are not a mind-control device, and it is finally the martial arts’ relation to complexity that lends its potential for expressions of multiplicity and its capacity to harbour the very oppression from which the arts would hope to potentiate aversion and escape.

If there is to be any self-association it should be to a *multiple*, because even in *oneness* the separability, the complexity, is what offers diverse support. Pearlman offers an integrative explanation of *oneness* within the concept of *yin-yang*, it reads “to refer to oneness without understanding the many is impossible.”<sup>285</sup> Surely what he was referring to was not the multitude explicitly, but from within the context of this project I would like to consider an exchange of the words ‘many’ for ‘multitude’ thus paraphrasing: to refer to oneness without understanding the multitude is impossible.

The map to self complexity and expression, when drawn out, including the values and the practise, bears an uncanny resemblance to the map that leads so swiftly to fascism, of the *roji* and the interior. What is needed is a solid understanding that it is not necessarily the method of practise that creates the outcome, it is the moment of interiority afforded by the virtual space that comes much

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<sup>283</sup> (Aalgaard, 2011, p. 99)

<sup>284</sup> (Deleuze, Guattari, 1977, p. 29)

<sup>285</sup> (Pearlman, 2006, p. 214)

closer to deciding an outcome. Therefore, it is not structure, nor is it anti-structure, the real problem lies in the virtual, where structure cannot be affirmed or denied, where there is only *affect*.

This entire project solidifies itself on the fundamental observation that we are not as endlessly manipulatable as one may think. But until we truly feel that, in the deepest part of every intelligence that we cloth our world in, we may remain slaves to each other and ourselves.

I close this work with a paragraph that has served me well. It was written by Bruce Lee, a man whose passion for martial arts was only matched by his unending desire to be 'free' from the interpretations that bind us.

There is a powerful craving in most of us to see ourselves as instruments in the hands of others and, thus, free ourselves from responsibility for acts which are prompted by our own questionable inclinations and impulses. Both the strong and the weak grasp at this alibi. The latter hide their malevolence under the virtue of obedience. The strong, too, claim absolution by proclaiming themselves the chosen instruments of a higher power – God, history, fate, nation, or humanity.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> (Lee, 1975, p. 205)

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