

# Martial Arts Politics Explained

*History, Culture and Comedy*



*Jonathan Bluestein*

This file contains sample chapters from  
Shifu Jonathan Bluestein's book,

# Martial Arts Politics Explained

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be reached out on Facebook, or by email:

[jonathan.bluestein@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.bluestein@gmail.com)



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## About the Author

Shifu Jonathan Bluestein (LLB), an Israeli Jew, is an accomplished scholar, martial arts teacher, author, healer, philosopher and linguist. He is the head of Blue Jade Martial Arts International. He has lived in several countries, visited dozens, was an infantryman, a police investigator, Hebrew teacher, a translator and even hosted a short television spot in his youth.



Shifu Bluestein has trained extensively and taught the arts of Xingyi Quan, Pigua Zhang, Jook Lum Southern Mantis, Bagua Zhang and Li Family Shaolin. An eclectic researcher and intellectual, he has published 9 books and over 100 articles, on topics ranging from socio-economic theories, Jungian Psychology, Oriental Histories, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Traditional Chinese Martial Arts. His books include, among others:

**‘Research of Martial Arts’** (2014CE), **‘The Martial Arts Teacher’** (2017CE Edition 1, 2020CE Edition 2), **‘Prosperism’** (2020CE) and **‘Exceptional Ideas About Humanity’** (2021CE) and **‘Shifu’s Writings to His Students’** (2024CE; Hebrew). Several more books shall be published by him in the years 2025-2026CE. Shifu Bluestein’s books and articles typically step outside the boundaries of accepted genres and norms, expressing ideas and concepts which other authors are afraid to discuss or even consider.

Striving to better martial arts literature in our time, Shifu Bluestein has been working tirelessly for years to deliver readers unique, useful, practical, and entertaining martial arts books. His works stand out with their novel approaches and exceptional interpretations for the traditional martial heritage of the Orient. Countless practitioners and teachers have thus far enjoyed these books, as is evident from the hundreds of positive reviews they have earned on Amazon-affiliated websites and elsewhere. For more information about Shifu Bluestein, his books and his teachings, please visit: [www.bluejadesociety.com](http://www.bluejadesociety.com)

Since the inception of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there had been but a few dedicated martial artists who engaged in writing quality works about exceptional skills and unique abilities, as well as the related cultures, philosophies, morals and histories. Shifu Bluestein is one of these people. His mission is to share with the world the tremendous depth of knowledge found in the martial arts in order to benefit humanity. He believes that through sharing we can all grow together, and continue to successfully develop the martial arts for the generations to come. This important mission is perhaps even more crucial and meaningful in this generation, as knowledge handed down from our martial ancestors has been rapidly disintegrating, and people have been shaping their arts into forms of cheap entertainment and light amusement, forgetting their roots.



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**Shifu Bluestein's teachers  
in the martial arts:**

Shifu Nitzan Oren

Master Zhou Jingxuan

Master Sapir Tal

Master Stephen Jackowicz

Master Brian R. Hall

**Shifu Bluestein's mentors  
in the martial arts:**

Itzik Cohen Sensei

Grand-Master Keith R.  
Kernspecht**Shifu Bluestein's teachers in  
Traditional Chinese Medicine:**

Nitzan Oren

Professor Stephen Jackowicz

**Shifu Bluestein's mentor in  
Traditional Chinese Medicine:**

Meir Glaser

Maayan Rasin

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# The Tigers



On the cover of this book, are featured tigers. This is a book about tigers, and concerns those who perceive themselves akin to such majestic felines. In Traditional Chinese Culture, the Tiger and the Dragon combined, often symbolize the Taiji Symbol. The Tiger is a Yin animal. It dwells near the earth, sleeps much of the day, lurks in the shadows, has a soft body and ambushes its prey. Yet within the Tiger's Yin, there is a powerful hidden Yang. When the Tiger pounces, it is a powerful and ferocious force, which annihilates every challenge in its path. The Dragon is a Yang animal. It takes to the skies, expresses its boundless energy to the utmost, presents its glory in the open for all to see, has a hard body, and contests its foe without concealment. Yet within the Dragon's Yang, there is a powerful hidden Yin. When the Dragon retreats, its can coil unto itself, and dive into the deepest lakes, or find shelter in the thickest clouds.

Politics in the martial arts, are often like the Tiger. They prowl behind the scenes, awaiting the right opportunity, and then erupt with onslaught and mayhem. The political combat amongst martial artists, can both physically and figuratively resemble, a fierce and aggressive struggle between tigers. Yet the wise tiger knows, how to merge into its surroundings. The sagacious tiger, can retain its territory without strife. May you be the tiger, whom your opponent does not know. May you be the tiger, who walks the path of the enlightened.



# Preface

The Traditional Martial Arts have always been glorified and portrayed as a noble endeavour, and an engagement worthy of civilized people. Indeed, when they live up to their ideal, this would be an accurate description. But there are also many dark aspects to martial arts practice, and a prominent one among those is the subject of **Politics**. Unless one is a hermit who lives in complete isolation from martial arts communities, then one is bound to, sooner or later, become involved in their related politics, or be affected by them indirectly.

Despite this being a truth known to all veteran practitioners, it would appear that there has yet to exist a single, encompassing book to address this complex topic, of Martial Arts Politics, from a practical and global point of view. I therefore sought, in the year 2023CE, to make accessible to the general society of practitioners, this manner of knowledge concerning martial arts politics, which is typically only studied and discussed in private conversations.

That this subject has been scarcely written about, is no coincidence. Even brave warriors, are nowadays afraid of expressing their honest opinions about such matters. The social repercussions of being rejected by one's community for violating political correctness, can have dire consequences for some. Furthermore, you must realize that there are many types of courage, and these are typically unequal within the character in a given individual. Bravery in combat is not akin to intellectual valor, and both are different to a willingness to make personal sacrifices for one's children. That people often fail to consider these varying types of bravery, is due to most languages being inefficient at distinguishing such psycho-cultural aspects of our



being. Thus, it happens that many wonder, why it is so that many knowledgeable martial artists, refrain from putting to print, parts of their inner treasures. Politics is often the answer. They are wary of the political and social ramifications of expressing their opinions, and revealing what they know; even when such knowledge, is by itself not political in nature.

Thankfully, I do not care for such considerations as much as others. This is not due exceptional fearlessness on my part. Rather, it is because as an Israeli Jew, I have been brought up in the tradition of **Hutspa** – Shameless Audacity. Additionally, the education I had received as I was growing up, made me eager to take a stand on important matters and causes, when it so happens that others do not come forward and volunteer. I feel now, that it is high time that a scholar and a teacher from within the martial arts community would a stand, and share with the greater society of practitioners, those things which are spoken about by all, and written about by none.

Herein within this tome, you will find more than a mere analysis of what politics in the martial arts are about. The text will also demonstrate and teach, how to navigate through them, in a manner that shall allow any practitioner a minimal amount of conflict, relative to their personal and social circumstances.

This book also features, several excellent chapters by seasoned practitioners and masters; kind contributors who have donated their point of view to this literary initiative of mine, at my request. This book additionally includes several chapters from two other best-selling work of mine, titled '**Research of Martial Arts**' (published 2014CE) and '**The Martial Arts Teacher 2**' (Published 2020CE). However, these chapters are not identical to the originals.

Rather, they have been adapted and extended, to fit the content, context and narrative of this newer work.

The earlier chapters of the book before you, are intended primarily for laypeople of the general public, and those practitioners who have less than 20 years of experience in the practice of martial arts. Yet their contents offer a fresh perspective, even for seasoned martial artists. The greater bulk of this tome, and especially the last two-thirds, may be enjoyed also, by veteran practitioners and teachers.

Many segments of this book are openly and intentionally controversial. They make for good entertainment, particularly when real-life stories about martial arts politics are told. I am also quite proud of this work of mine, being unashamedly antagonistic to the Woke cultural trends of our day and age.

Unlike Machiavelli's famous political work, 'The Prince', this book of mine is not intended as a manual for scheming and conniving. Rather, it is an instructional in navigating human relations, and a cautionary tale about the failures of virtue. Let respect for other practitioners and traditions be your guiding light, as you steer through the swamps that lay ahead.

# Introduction

The human being is a political animal. Martial Artists are no exception to that observation. But the circumstances and context which bring martial artists into political drama, are not necessarily the same as what we witness on the stages of parliaments and commercial companies. The martial arts are a 'culture within a culture'. Please allow me to elucidate.

Suppose one lives on the continent of North America, or that of Western Europe. Then it is most probable, that such a person, much like over 99.9% of people who reside there, partakes in what present humanity refers to as 'Western Civilization'. Within that Western Civilization, there are Nations, such as the the United States, Mexico, England, Germany, France, etc. Each of those Nations has its own culture, which is a reflection of Western Civilization, put through a unique lens of its own. Then amongst those who dwell in those Nations, People of different faiths have their own Sub-Cultures, within the main culture of the Nation, within the Main Civilization, and so forth.

Martial Arts are often the innermost 'unit' of a sub-culture. As such, they tend to be among the most nuanced of them all. This is because they merge all of the elements from the other sub-cultures, cultures and civilizations around them, and then commonly have additional influences from within their own special traditional practices.

For this reason, martial arts politics cannot be entirely understood in the same vein, as national or international politics. They arise from a world within a world, within a galaxy, within a universe, and embody many of the accumulating complexities of each system that they happen to belong to.

A true understanding of martial arts politics, is also strongly related to the psychology of the individuals who are involved in them, the sociology which defines their communities, and their individual sub-cultures. This book is meant to explore all of these aspects, and beyond.

Although this book is said to be about 'Politics', another way to put it would be to state that it concerns 'Factionalism'. The word 'Politics' refers to how people govern, organize, lead, manage, debate and gossip. But this is only a part of the overarching social story in the martial arts. 'Factionalism' refers to the interplay of how the numerous factions within the universe of martial arts, relate to one-another. In the martial arts, factions are often called 'Lineages', a topic which shall be thoroughly addressed in this book as well.

A case in point, regarding the nature of factions or lineages. Many martial arts feature practices that are similar, and sometimes identical. Among Okinawan, Japanese and Korean martial arts, a lot of them have kata (movement-forms) with identical or similar names, displaying identical or similar movements, which are all of the same origins. Despite of this, each faction or lineage would argue, that their variation or interpretation is "the best". This is the nature of factions and lineages. They often feel the need to justify what they do, by disparaging what the other factions are up to. Due to the literal *martial* inclinations of the practice, there is an unspoken and subconscious feeling, that the 'other' and myself can both have valid things to offer. It is because martial things are about conflicts, and conflicts ordinarily have winners and losers. All of this, and much more, shall be explored with incredible examples and stories, as the narrative of this book progresses.

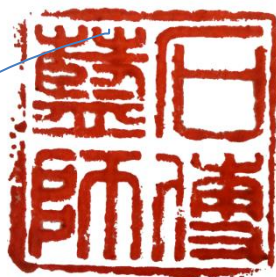
The book begins by introducing readers to the cultural scene of the martial arts. Where are they practiced? What types of institutions are these, and what are their unique social and political characteristics? After having established a common understanding of the latter, the book goes on to explore political themes in martial arts communities, and beyond. Eventually, along the journey, readers would be exposed to many incredible stories about political shenanigans in the martial arts, often told based on first-hand experiences.

Much as is the case with many of my other publications, this book features standalone chapters. This means that the experienced martial artist, could potentially open almost any chapter and enjoy its contents, even without having read the others. Nonetheless, it is my warm recommendation that this book be read from beginning to end in an orderly fashion. I believe that this choice would make for a far more interesting and nuanced reading experience.

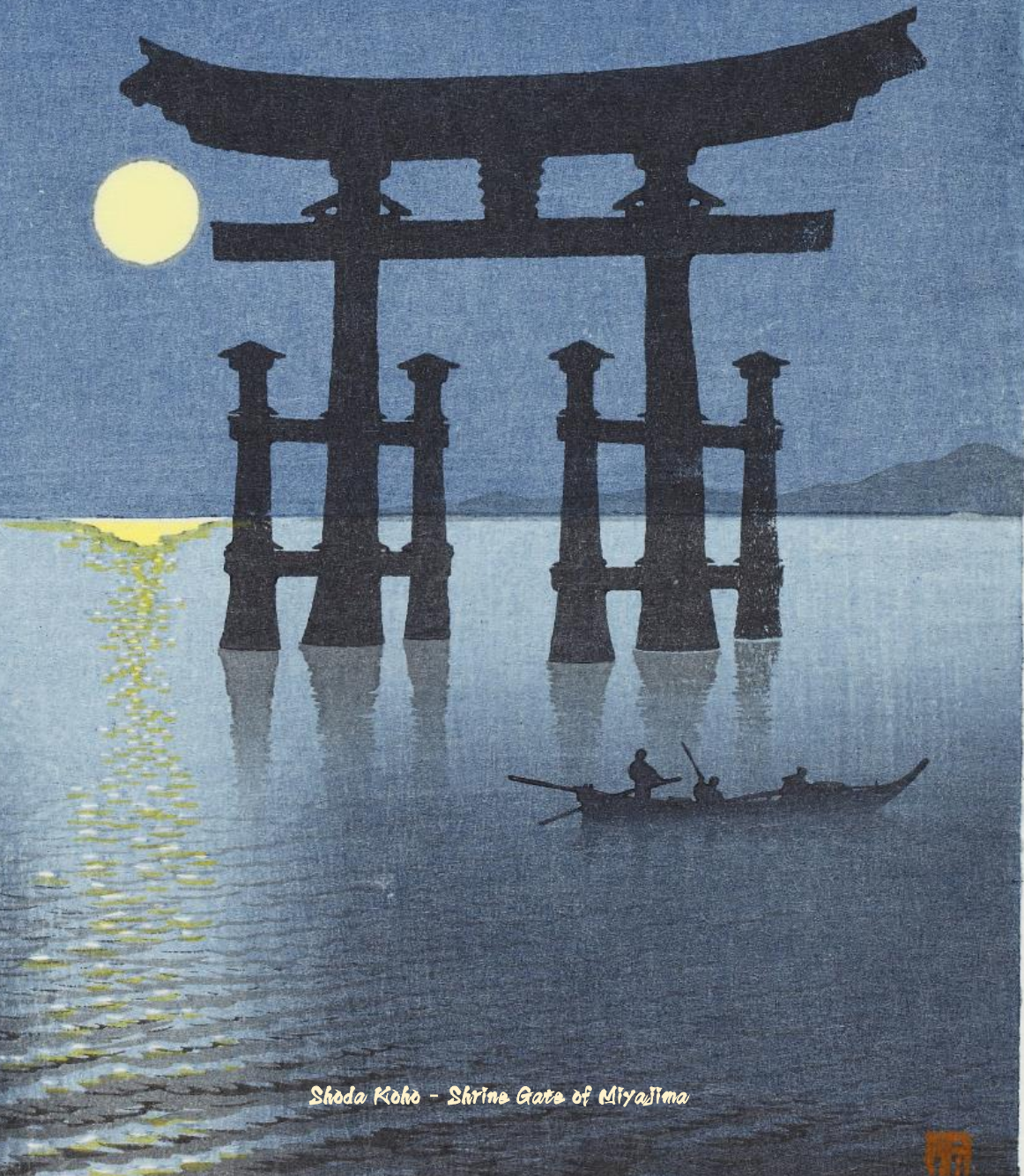
Those readers who are already versed in martial arts theory and literature, may consider only skimming through the first part of the book – ‘**Fundamental Knowledge About Politics and Culture**’. For practitioners with less than 5 years of training overall, it is recommended that you read everything solemnly, from beginning to end.

May you have a pleasant, interesting and educational reading experience!

Jonathan



*Fundamental Knowledge  
About Politics and Culture*



*Shoda Koko - Shrine Gate of Miyajima*





## More Than Meets the Eye

In the modern State of Israel, we have an obligatory service for men and women. I served my country for 3 years, primarily as a policeman, in the roles of an investigator and an interrogator. I did so with the Tel-Aviv Central Unit, a type of 'mid-grade elite force', similar to the American 'Special Homicide Units' and 'Crime Scene Investigation Units', combined. We oversaw all manner of severe criminal activities, from extortion and bank robberies to rape and murder, on a daily basis. Two decades later, I also served my country during the Iron Swords War, but that is a story for a different book.

I first arrived at the Tel-Aviv Central Police Unit, at 18 years of age. There, it quickly became evident to me, why the cultural sphere of criminals is called 'The Underworld'. For it was, truly, a parallel world to that of most civilians, which operates underneath the casual daily affairs, hidden from the view of those who are not involved with it. The world of criminals is an entire universe unto itself, full of colourful characters, drama, traditions, and a rich history. It is an endless and exciting show, whose plot changes daily, in the most unexpected of ways. It is often far more interesting to be directly engaged with this underworld, than watching even the most well-crafted of television series or films on the topic. No script-writer could transcend, what human ingenuity could come up with under the pressure of constant and imminent danger, and the prospects of grand financial enrichment within short periods of time.

It is also worth mentioning that criminals share, along with policemen, an intuitive understanding of violence. It is no wonder then, that many among both groups – criminals and policemen, practice the martial arts... whether in being a part of an orderly school, or simply as means of survival.

Then, one day, my service was finished. My full-time years-long commitment to my Nation, has unceremoniously reached its designated ending. Being without a desire to pursue a career in this shady business, I returned my firearm, handcuffs, badge and uniform. The next morning, the underworld vanished before my eyes, in an instant. Gone were the days of chasing bleak leads to locate a killer, rushing to a crime-scene in the middle of the night, or confronting tough mobsters in a windowless room. No longer was I reading intelligence reports with my breakfast, or skipping lunch to escort a famous felon to the penitentiary. I was that for a while, and then no longer. The quickness of it all caught me by surprise, and was quite stunning. Without my conscious knowledge, I had been addicted to the plot of this never-ending story, much like all of the other cops and criminals. The withdrawal from that obsession, was an uncomfortable experience. I could then finally comprehend, how and why it was, that so many policemen, upon retirement from the Force, opted to join the other side. Anything to dull that feeling... That lack of purpose. Once, they were the 'Spearheads of Justice', and then, powerless and ignorant within the span of a moment.

I was lucky, to have already begun my journey in the martial arts, a few years prior. To be in and with the Traditional Martial Arts, has kept me sane through many an ordeal, including that one I was just describing. With more time on my hands to train and research, I slowly discovered that the world of martial arts, was even more vast and extensive, than that of the Criminal Underworld, which I was previously so fascinated by. In sharing with the Underworld, the martial arts also kept their secrets; and to wholly fathom their complexity and nuance, one would have to be an insider.

Wherein you live in a city, then somewhere in your vicinity, there is probably a martial arts school. Actually, there are likely several of them around. Just ask, and you shall discover. These martial arts schools have their own 'Underworlds', or shall I call them,



'Innerworlds'. Tremendous and incredible worlds of content, so amazing as to defy imagination, and just as compelling as the Underworlds. The wonderful thing about those 'Martial Innerworlds' is, that unlike the Underworld, they can be accessed by laypeople, without excessive social violations. You too, can know and follow, on what goes on within them, how and why. Alas, the task of being able to describe even the Innerworld of one martial tradition, is so gargantuan in scope, that few people have attempted to write a book of that sort. To my knowledge, none have dared to go beyond this, and to describe the whole of martial arts political culture, within the scope of a single tome. But here it is, before your eyes. This book, the first of its kind.

Penetrating the world of martial arts political culture, requires that I help you gain some foundations, which most readers are missing. I would start, on the next page, by succinctly explaining why politics exist in the martial arts to begin with. This would be followed by a very brief description of how martial arts are categorized. Then, I would dedicate a chapter to the different common types of martial arts schools, and their unique inner cultures – political and otherwise. After that, there would be a dedicated chapter to common political themes in the martial arts.

Some seasoned martial artists of many decades, who are already familiar with such topics, may choose to skim through these first few chapters. But for most readers, I would recommend that you study the topic progressively and methodically. The deep comprehension you would gain, would then allow you to harvest many a tasty fruit, as you advance through the book. You can trust me when I tell you, that if you think that you have read the most incredible and shocking things about the arts, then there is still much more to reveal; and this book will only become more and more entertaining, as you go along.

## Why Politics, Anyway?

A book of this kind could have easily been 3000 pages long. But were I to explain to you, why politics exist in the martial arts, in the most concise manner possible – then this chapter is it. Why politics, anyway?

Imagine, a room full of men. Their heartrate is elevated. Their muscle-tone has increased in tense anticipation. They are under duress. Someone is yelling orders, or is at least very demanding of them to perform. Dominance is in the air. They are in a building which someone had to either buy or rent, not to mention the payments for the utilities and the interior design, as well as the advertising and insurance. Money comes into the picture too, then. There is a social pressure to excel, as no one wants to appear as a fool in the eyes of his peers. They all wear similar or identical clothing, and cannot speak much, and so, their actions would be what counts. While not many are skilled enough to instruct others, most imagine themselves to have had it easier, were they in the position of the teacher. Who shall attain such a position first, and when?... Such questions are not answered. The students look at one-another, and assess their relative position on the social ladder. People are either wearing some garments which denote a 'rank' or a 'degree', or otherwise brandish all manner of medals or trophies outside of the classes. How are these gotten, and by what means?... There are also pictures on the walls. These are the portraits of 'great people' from the past, current and former members of the school. Who would not have liked to be such a 'Hero', framed on the wall? Granted, it seems to students, that 'heroes do not clean toilets or sweep floors', which is what some of them would be taking turns doing, after the class is over.

Outside, in the real world, other challenges await. There might be a bully, with whom they need to get-even. There is perhaps a home, where one's family does not appreciate him. A job which one covets, or has recently lost. Hard times with members of the opposite sex. Alas, the prospects outside of the martial arts school, may not be too enticing or promising. But on the training mattresses? A whole different ball-game. There, actions count. There, hard work would nearly always be rewarded, eventually. There, they can be a person with self-respect, self-confidence, and Meaning. Mind you, people will kill for Meaning. Millions of graves have been dug, and many vultures fed, on the victims of those who threatened other people's quest for Meaning... irrespective of whichever name that 'Meaning' was called.

So you tell me, friend – how long do you think that such martial artists – folks like you and I, are going to last, without having created a political culture? My answer would be: no time at all. The politics are inherent to this world of martial arts. They have been there from before the martial arts were created, motivated their formation, and continue to haunt them like an unrelenting hungry ghost. There is no escaping of politics, for as long as a person desires to be a member of a social order. You can be a non-political entity, in a very small group of people, self-sustaining, far and away from the rest. That is sometimes possible. But if you are going to be a member of a school, even a medium-sized one, and certainly if organizations are involved, then congratulations – you are on the chess board. Being a play-piece as such, you may choose to participate, or not. But the board will shake, either way.

Karl Marx, a notorious heretic whom people love to hate, once defined the human animal as a unique creature, based on our drive to create. There are fish who can build nests. Whales communicate over long-distances. Apes can use sophisticated tools, and even teach such skills to their offspring. Various animals can do certain

things which humans can, and more. Yet the human can do nearly everything that the others can, thereby being special. More so unique, Marx noted, in that humans are creative by nature. We are able to create new things and realities, and we want to do this even without being told. This creative drive, in turn, also requires destruction. Much like the evil Marxism sought to destroy “the old cultures”, so do most humans in their everyday life, have that same destructive drive within them, so that they could generate things which are new.

The balance between creation and destruction, conservation and innovation, which are innate human abilities, is partly what defines all of human politics. The martial arts are the same, in that they too walk the balance between creation and destruction, conservation and innovation. But the martial arts are distinguished, in that their destructive drive, is stronger by default, than their creative one. The martial arts themselves are instruments of destruction, by their very definition. Their ability to teach one how to create, is something which only arose at a late stage of their evolution.

The famous Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, was a soldier in his youth. It is not a coincidence, that Socrates is attributed the quote: ***“It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable”***. Yet it was only after Socrates was done with the wrestling and wars, that his best thinking and instruction were manifested. It took thousands of years for traditional martial arts, to arrive at the level at which we could actively manufacture scholar-warriors, men of the sword and pen. To embody the Chinese idiom ‘Wénwǔ Shuāngxiū 文武雙修’ - Cultivating Both the Civil and the Martial. To produce those who exemplify studious merit combined with combative prowess, all in the same person. To be able to achieve this with great masses of people.



**In the picture:** 'The Death of Socrates', by Jacques-Louis David. Socrates was a martial artist and a philosopher, who died for what he believed in.

Then in light of all of those things I have mentioned, ought it surprise you, that the martial arts are so permeated with politics, as to fill-up a thick tome such as this one which you are holding? It should not come as a surprise at all. With their offering of Meaning, the social scenes and communal atmospheres they generate, and their innate destructive drive, which may lead to the creation of something new... With all of these, the martial arts are some of the most fertile grounds of political disputes to have ever been produced by mankind. Such things could be expressed as some of the utmost wrongs and offenses under the Sun. Yet, they also make for some very fine entertainment, and a wonderful subject for scholarly research.

Then dive in with me now, into this quirky world of martial arts politics. Let us begin the journey. Review the table on the next page, to gain a sense of how martial arts are situated within our human societies. Then, continue to learn about the different types of martial arts schools, and their unique characteristics.

## Magic Tricks and Silly Gimmicks

In combat, there is room for deception, and often even a need for it. For example – looking at the floor to make the opponent shift his gaze, a moment before striking him in the face; touching the opponent gently with one hand, while pulling him fiercely with another; or allowing the opponent past your defenses, to make him vulnerable from close-range. Numerous such methods and concepts may be used. Yet when you occupy yourself too much with ways for deceiving others, it slowly transforms you into a villainous and dishonest person. This is why the whole notion of using deception with things like magic tricks and silly gimmicks, is never the main instrument employed in the martial arts. It should not even amount to 1% of a given curriculum. Else, what is being practiced cannot be called ‘a martial art’ at all.

**In the picture:** ‘Moon at the Yamaki Mansion’ by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (月岡芳年), painted 1886CE. Woodblock number 27 from the series ‘One Hundred Aspects of the Moon’.



Charlatans who are obsessively engaged with magic tricks and silly gimmicks, have always been a part of the martial arts world. The use of magic tricks and silly gimmicks, does not necessarily indicate that the teacher is a clueless idiot who cannot fight, although it is commonly the case. The primary reason for teachers employing magic tricks and silly gimmicks, irrespective of their skill, is simply that these are methods for attracting students and convincing people that the demonstrator is an extraordinary person. It is a dishonourable way to make a living, and a mockery of all traditions.

In a demonstration, the purpose of using magic tricks and silly gimmicks, is to make either laypeople or students believe that you have 'special powers'. What types of 'special powers', you might ask? Believing that the teacher "could not be moved from his place", "could levitate in the air", "can make a person hop or bounce away at the slightest touch of his finger", and so on, and so forth. These 'fantastical things' prey on the innate wish of human beings to be mesmerized by that which they do not understand. Yet the whole premise is a con from the onset. These demonstrations have very clear and simple explanations to them, and often involve the willing or subconscious assistance of the participants. The deceiver knows that he is lying, and uses smooth speech and fanciful body-language to sway, much like an oily salesman. Such people are truly moronic, even from a practical point of view. For with such well-honed abilities to cheat others, they could have been far wealthier by selling real-estate or fake works of art.

A case in point: I remember how years ago, a student came to my class, excited about something he saw. My student watched a video of the infamous actor and sensei, Steven Seagal. In the video, Seagal was sitting on a chair, with his arms stretched sideways.

Several gullible Japanese students attempted to lift Seagal's arms, to no avail. Even though the arms seemed to not weight much, his students could not lift them.

Upon hearing this story from my own student, right then and there, I decided to demonstrate in class, that I could perform the same trick, which I had never learned or attempted before. I was able to effortlessly mimic what Seagal had done. I understood the basic premise. Although the student grabs your arm, he is not lifting the arm itself. There is a method to lower one's breath to the Dantian and connect the body in a such a way, that most of your weight leans into the arm, although you are still sitting erect. It is a tad difficult to explain in writing, but could be easily demonstrated via touch. One by one, the students attempted to lift my arms, and could not. But this was because they attempted the feat as Seagal's students had done, from inefficient positions and using the wrong body-mechanics for the task. I showed them how to align themselves better to counter my mechanics, and suddenly they were successful. I then also explained to the students, how I was able to fool them.

I then told my students: ***“You have just now seen, that the whole thing was a ruse; and for what purpose? What use was there for me, to waste time on this silly ‘magic trick’? It proved nothing! Yet had refrained from explaining things, they could have been led to believe, that I had “special powers”. Perhaps that was Seagal’s intention – I would not know”.***

Another famous ‘ability’ being repeated by these types of despicable characters, is that of being able to move people from afar, without touching them. I do know, that there are a handful of individuals around the world, who can actually do this. But none of those with the ability, which is based on a lifetime of training, would use such a thing as an instrument to advertise themselves



or market martial arts classes.

The Internet is full of videos, of this unique sub-type of tricksters, who claim to be able to move people from afar, without physical touch. There are also many videos of 'teachers' as such, who were challenged by fighters, and beaten in front of a camera, when their "special powers" did not work well enough to save them from incoming punches. Indeed, Telekinesis is not a traditional martial skill, but is being advertised as such by charlatans.

Sadly, the abundance of these charlatans, has given a bad name to many Traditional Martial Arts. What frequently happens is, that one such charlatan would have some measure of ability in a certain style. Usually, he would not excel at it, but exceptions exist. Then, this charlatan would neglect to actually demonstrate his style as a 'standard' martial art. He would instead offer classes, seminars and provocative videos, focusing on the magic tricks and silly gimmicks. When these charlatans have become a tad more well-known, they subsequently attract the negative attention of other martial artists, typically being members of Sports-Clubs. These other martial artists, whose approach to combat is more practical, would be annoyed by the charlatans. More so, they would see that sort of charlatanism as an opportunity to attack people who are obviously either delusional, or at least likely not as skilled at fighting as themselves. What would often follow is mutual bickering over the Internet, with the occasional physical challenges, which tend to end badly for the charlatans. But in this process, the challengers may begin to speak ill of the martial art to which the charlatans claims to belong, thereby indirectly tarnishing the good names and reputations of all people who are engaged in it. This has been a very common occasion with the arts of Taiji Quan and Aikido, unfortunately. I shall bring forth some notable stories and examples in later chapters.

It is not very difficult to detect martial arts charlatans, in my opinion. There is a very clear way to test whether a teacher is a charlatan. It works via asking and answering the following simple questions:

- ❶ If most techniques taught at a martial arts school are types of magic tricks or silly gimmicks, it is charlatanism.
- ❷ If most of the supposed combat abilities taught at a martial arts school rely on magic tricks or silly gimmicks for them to work, it is charlatanism.
- ❸ If the teacher primarily advertises his instruction by using magic tricks and silly gimmicks, it is charlatanism.
- ❹ If the teacher would not explain how his magic tricks and silly gimmicks work, and is not able to teach students the methods which would enable them to achieve the same or similar results – it is charlatanism.

Martial arts charlatan-teachers are often also said to teach ‘fake styles’. This refers to a situation wherein the entire curriculum being offered is made-up useless nonsense. Such examples are not too common nowadays. More often than not, the charlatan teacher is a person with *some* measure of skill and knowledge – which may vary greatly from one person another, who uses magic tricks and silly gimmicks to enhance his status and increase his earnings.

The phenomenon of magic tricks and silly gimmicks, as well as that of ‘fake martial arts’, shall be expanded upon and explored at a great length later in this book, in a chapter titled ‘**The Magical Hoppers**’.

## The Muscular Man and the Mysterious Style

The Traditional Chinese Martial Arts did not emerge out of a vacuum. They always have a history, even if it is sometimes unbeknownst to us. Although these martial arts have been practiced in China for thousands of years, none of their lineages has a documented historical narrative spanning more than a handful of centuries. The reason for this is, that the martial arts constantly change and evolve. In every generation, there are teachers who make changes. At times these are minor changes, but on occasion, the style is entirely transformed into something new. There are also, those styles which do not survive, and disappear into the ether. So it turns out, that no Chinese martial art is frozen in time. They all change, evolve, assimilate or vanish.

But all of the Traditional Chinese Martial Arts had a beginning. This initial appearance, is typically simply the continuation of a former style, of several of them. It is seldom the case, that a style came into being from nothing – created by a single genius, within a single generation. That is exceedingly rare, and even under such conditions, the genius usually relied on other styles to form his new approach. It is therefore easy for experts, to tell the charlatans from the rest. Because the charlatan who invents a new style which is without merit, his style would not bear the characteristics of other Traditional Chinese Martial Arts, despite claiming a lineage. At best, he would have copied from videos of other teachers whom he saw and is not affiliated with, which is an inferior manner of study.

Given those cultural understandings, for several years I caught notice of a certain Master Carpenter (surname) – a man who presents himself as a teacher of Traditional Chinese Martial Arts. Carpenter is a veteran teacher, who has taught for several decades in a central nation. He is a man of notable physical characteristics: tall, very muscular, with a stern demeanour, and an aura of a military leader. In fact, during his younger years, Master Carpenter's physical dimensions would have been compared with that of a successful amateur-bodybuilder during his off-season. A body this large, is uncommon amongst practitioners of the Traditional Chinese Martial Arts. Despite his imposing size, it is evident that the man could move with much flexibility, dexterity, softness and speed – qualities which are also unusual for someone of his girth.

Master Carpenter was old enough to be my father, or even grandfather back in the days when people married sooner. Since his youth, he introduced the arts he teaches as having been handed-down to him from a Chinese family. It was stated many a time, that their tradition is hundreds of years old. This claim, I ought to emphasize, can be perceived as a challenging one to make, given most of the Chinese styles do not have documentation for their lineage which goes back over 150-250 years. Yet Carpenter is said to have studied not just one style from that Chinese family, but several of them, as well as various Yoga-like meditative methods from other areas of East-Asia. Anyone who views Master Carpenter's videos and knows a thing or two, could discern that the man is skilled at his craft, and worthy of gaining instruction from. But when I examined his curriculum, it was difficult to point to a definite connection between his styles, and any known lineages of other Traditional Chinese Martial Arts. His main Shifu, disappeared without a trace. It seemed then, that either Carpenter, or his Shifu, may have invented their system, based on former

knowledge from other styles. Something was definitely peculiar about the external appearance of Carpenter's methods, as well as the manner in which they were taught and transmitted. On the other hand, I thought to myself: "Carpenter does not look like a charlatan. At most, he may have taken some liberty with certain historical facts. But I would be interested in investigating further about this character, so that I would not fall victim to strange tales and false proclamations".

Determined to uncover 'the Truth', I went and discussed the matter with my friend, Doctor Jerry Fleer, who has practiced similar martial arts for many decades himself. I was aware that Doctor Fleer had known Master Carpenter for many decades, and therefore, would likely be able to reveal the full extent of what went on behind the scenes. Previously, I had asked many practitioners about this, but all were either clueless, or avoided my questions. Fleer was an honest and direct individual, whom I trusted would convey an unbiased viewpoint. When we spoke, Fleer giggled at my pondering, in a manner suggesting he had been asked about Carpenter's teachings before. He then told me:

***"Indeed, there is a chance that Master Carpenter had inherited this system from a respectable Chinese family of many generations; and there is an equal chance, that he made it all up! But my young friend, why are you so eager to prove it either way? Can you not see the truth which is right before your eyes?"***

***After all, Carpenter has been practicing the arts since he was a boy. Of this are we not all in agreement? And is it not known, that he is gifted and skilled? Has he not established an exemplary school, well-managed for decades, and produced numerous excellent martial artists, people who are morally upright and upstanding? Also as we know, is it not true that he continues to develop his methods, and they become more effective with every passing year? If that is all***

*correct, then I believe you should reconsider the purpose and importance of your questions.*

*Furthermore... Have you given thought to the notion, of why Master Carpenter may have associated his teachings with a Chinese family and teacher, even if he had created them himself? Instead of considering this as an act of deceit, you could interpret it as an aspect of modesty: his unwillingness to claim himself as the founder of a system. Even if he invented all of this, we anyhow agree that this is an excellent system, thereby further accentuating Carpenter's modesty”.*

Upon hearing the wise words of Doctor Fleer, I could feel a lingering sense of shame. I was so quick and adamant in placing judgement on the factuality of someone's claims, that my willing eyes were blinded from seeing the humane circumstances that surrounded his life's work, and the motivations for his actions. This was an important reminder for me, that the personal truth we experience as people and martial artists, is forever dynamic and transforming. As goes the idiom: “only a fool does not change his mind”; and only a man who continues to study and absorb knowledge, can change his perspective on things. Whoever does not learn, his point of view shall forever remain fixated. Thanks to Master Carpenter and Doctor Fleer, I was able to become slightly wiser than I had been before. Therefore, my recommendation to readers would be this: when coming to examine the path of a person whom you do not know, view him first via a humane lens. This is true even for those who are real charlatans. But Master Carpenter is not one of them.

What is important is to stress, is that the traditional arts were not originally intended to be a decades-long path to success. They were created by people with an interest in quick results, no less than the sports-club coaches of our time. The arts that the ancestors practiced needed to work in real-life conditions, and one had to get good at them. But they were taught in the context of a family, or a tightly-knit community, in which quality instruction and time to train were abundant commodities. In this kind of setting, even a person who begins training at the ages of 25-35 will be a healthy and strong young man or woman when he or she reaches a deep level of understanding of their art. Let alone when people are taught from a younger age.

It therefore cannot be stated with certainty, how long it would take a person to study a traditional art's entire curriculum. Assuming there is the requisite of quality instruction, then the rest typically depends on the willingness of the student to invest in his or her training. Only then, if training is consistent, could estimates be roughly made, about the time it takes to learn an art.

# The Art They Never Knew

Grand-Master **Henry Poo Yee (1939-2018CE)** was my Shigong (teacher's teacher) in Jook Lum Southern Mantis. His mannerisms were always a contradiction between simplicity and mystery. His lifestyle, on the surface, was quite frugal. The majority of his time was spent training, teaching and healing patients. He lived in a plain house and wore modest clothes. His spoken English was broken and unsophisticated, and he hardly wrote anything down for his students. A man passing him by on the street, could have easily mistaken him for a newly-arrived Chinese immigrant to the United States, or a harmless eccentric grandpa. But his personal life was richer and far more intricate than people had imagined. He had been a true Master of a very complex martial art, holding unto secrets few people know even existed. He was also a skilled Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine, who got people out of wheelchairs with herbs, needles and qigong. Despite his strange manner of speaking, his intellect was quite sharp, and he was highly educated and well-traveled in all respects. He could be kind one moment and vicious the next, and his unique personality kept people on edge. His uncanny patterns were to him not a liability, but an asset.

The many contradictions to Master Henry's character, kept people guessing. Even students who had been with him for a long time, were often unsure of how well they knew the man. Being apparently very aware of the situation, Master Henry used it brilliantly to his advantage, and encouraged his students to maintain that image. He would for instance, tell a student one story, and to another student the same story with slightly modified facts, or from a different point of view. He sometimes did the same with the curriculum of his martial art. For a number of years he might practice a taulu one way, and then later change a few



movements here and there. Some of his students would be taught the original variation, and others the newer one. It would seem to me that he expected the students to struggle to piece together his stories and teachings. But though it was within their reach, many of them felt that only he knew better. At times this was the objective truth, and other times, the truth he wanted them to believe.

One thing Master Henry was particularly fond of, was telling his students: “***You have never seen my real Kung Fu!***”. How odd a thing to say. The outside observer would think this does not make any sense. What kind of martial art were the students seeing, then, if “***this was not his real kung fu***”? A fake version he was teaching them? A mockery of real teachings which he was withholding from them?... Quite a baffling statement it was.

But the longer students remained by Henry’s side, the more they came to realize what he had meant. This was his incoherent manner of conveying the idea, that there was more to the curriculum of his martial art than was publicly shown. With his skill far surpassing that of even his most veteran students, such a statement was considered legitimate and reasonable by most of them.

Yet Henry was relentless with his gaslighting. He kept repeating that sentence over and over for decades. “***You have never seen my real Kung Fu!***”. In the beginning, people were inclined to think that they would one day become ‘enter-the-gate’ students, gain access to secrets, and would then finally witness “the real Kung Fu”. But Master Henry kept taunting them with that sentence past their ‘enter-the-gate’ ceremony as well. Eventually he accepted a number of students as ‘disciples’, a level he considered above ‘enter-the-gate’ in his system, and still he would continue to utter that inexplicable sentence to them over and over again. “***You have never seen my real Kung Fu!***”.

Logically, that sentence did not make much sense. Neither was it

particularly convincing. But every time it was repeated, a figurative bucket of chill water was spilled over the students' heads. Over years and decades, all of these small batches of cooling liquid had formed among the students an entire lake of uncertainty. Could it be, truly, that even those who had spent 10, 20 or 30 years with the Master, have never seen his true art? The real roots and methods of his immense skill?



I was never a believer in that. I do not think he really held back from those students whom he trusted, and who had been with him for many years. But then again, I was not there when that lake of uncertainty was formed. In my opinion, there had been a few students of late Master Henry who managed to learn at least 85-90% of the all the material he himself knew, which is a respectable amount of material to be passed on by any teacher. But by the time Master Henry joined his ancestors, nearly all of his students were absolutely convinced, that they had never seen his 'Real Kung Fu', and no one could not sway them from this firmly-held belief of theirs.

Through this story and his actions, Master Henry could teach us two important socio-political methods for working with students long-term.

**Soft power accumulates slowly:** Even with a weak, ill-pronounced and unreliable message, Master Henry was able to subdue the minds of his students completely, over time. They came to believe his 'truth' without question, and this solidified his power immensely.

We teachers could use the same strategy, but with different, more positive ideas. At my Wuguan for example, I strongly promote the idea that we rise and fall as a community, and have strength in unity. This sort of belief I express to my students in class and outside of it, commonly more than once a week. When I first began teaching, convincing people of this was challenging, especially as everyone came from different backgrounds and education. But within several years, the message seeped deeply into their being. Students were beginning to put this moral philosophy into practice without the need for me to enforce it or even encourage them. The

longer I taught and kept repeating the message, the stronger it became.

**Students should be kept guessing:** I always tell my students that I will not keep secrets from them. That much is true. But this does not mean that everyone receives access for viewing all which the curriculum has to offer. Having been blessed with great teachers, and having studied and practiced for many years, I have a lot to teach. This means that much of what I know, the newer students had never seen. It can take a student who trains and sees me every day, for several hours a day, as much as 7 years to study all that I can teach. Those who come by twice a week, may require a far lengthier period of tutelage. This brings about the situation in which, the more advanced parts of the curriculum are not commonly taught.

This, I use to my advantage. I frequently pick and choose small bits of fascinating advanced materials, and teach just a tiny fraction of them to a class, only to withdraw them later, not showing them again for months or years. Or if these are too advanced for the students in a given class, I might just show them once or twice, and be restrained with sharing details and explanations about what I had demonstrated. I may be willing to elaborate a bit more if questioned in private, but will mostly keep to myself, if the student is not ready to learn what I have shown.

The students are then kept guessing. An aura of mystery is created. Stories and rumours are told. Ironically, when this is moderately and carefully executed, the community is strengthened. Now, they have more to aspire to, and reasons to work together to achieve their goals.

What is important to remember and consider, is that such social manipulations will mightily affect your public image, and the

direction that the school would be taking in the years to come. Therefore:

- ☯ When you plant an idea in the students' minds, make sure it is a positive and constructive one!
- ☯ In keeping the students guessing, have them also believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel – that they CAN, with time and effort, learn more, and perhaps even learn everything. That learning more is not dependent on personal favours.
- ☯ Though you might wish to become a riddle your students yearn to solve, be not a thing they feel they cannot grasp. While oozing mystery, you should also convey stability. The students need to feel and believe that despite being somewhat enigmatic to them, you are still with them and supportive of them.
- ☯ Encourage the students to work as a team in order to 'resolve mysteries' and fulfill the school's agendas. Otherwise, dirty politics will one day overcome the school, as each student will operate independently for his own benefit.

## Opportunities Skip a Locked Garden

The world is full of people who wonder: “Why is it that I never got my opportunities to do great things in my life and career?”. Honestly speaking, the answer is nearly always that such a person is himself to blame. How many people are in your neighbourhood? In your city? In your country? Even if a tiny fraction of these people were to be associated with you as martial arts students or partners in business, they could have made you rich, successful and perhaps even happier. But of these countless possibilities for action and interaction with people, one often manifests an amazingly small number of useful relationships. Why is that?

Well theoretically, if you could appeal to more people, that would be a good start. This is where things get complicated. We want to remain authentic, so there is only so much we are willing to change in who we are in order to look and sound like what other people want. Indeed, at the extremes, those martial artists who sell their soul for a profit, are lowly and unworthy. But there is another way, a simpler way, to attract other people and opportunities to you. This way can be pursued by means of changing one’s attitude, rather than one’s personality or behaviour. Changing our attitude can attract people to us on all walks of life. A proven technique for changing one’s attitude and attracting more people and possibilities, is adopting **a mentality of abundance**. Let us see how a good argument for this mentality of abundance was made in an ancient allegory, from the **Book of Mengzi** <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mengzi, Chapter 2: Liang Hui Wang (King Hui of Liang).

This scholar **Mengzi** (Mencius) whom I mentioned just now, was an intellectual successor of Kongzi (Confucius). Mengzi lived several generations after that sage-scholar, and studied with his grandson. Like his forerunner, Mengzi also traveled between the old Chinese Kingdoms, and sought to teach and inspire morality among their rulers and citizens. His exploits and teachings are in part recorded in the **Book of Mengzi**. The first two chapters of that book tell stories of the conversations Mengzi had with various kings. In their conversations, the sovereigns look to make their kingdoms more efficient and profitable, and encounter novel and unusual suggestions from Mengzi, which they did not expect.

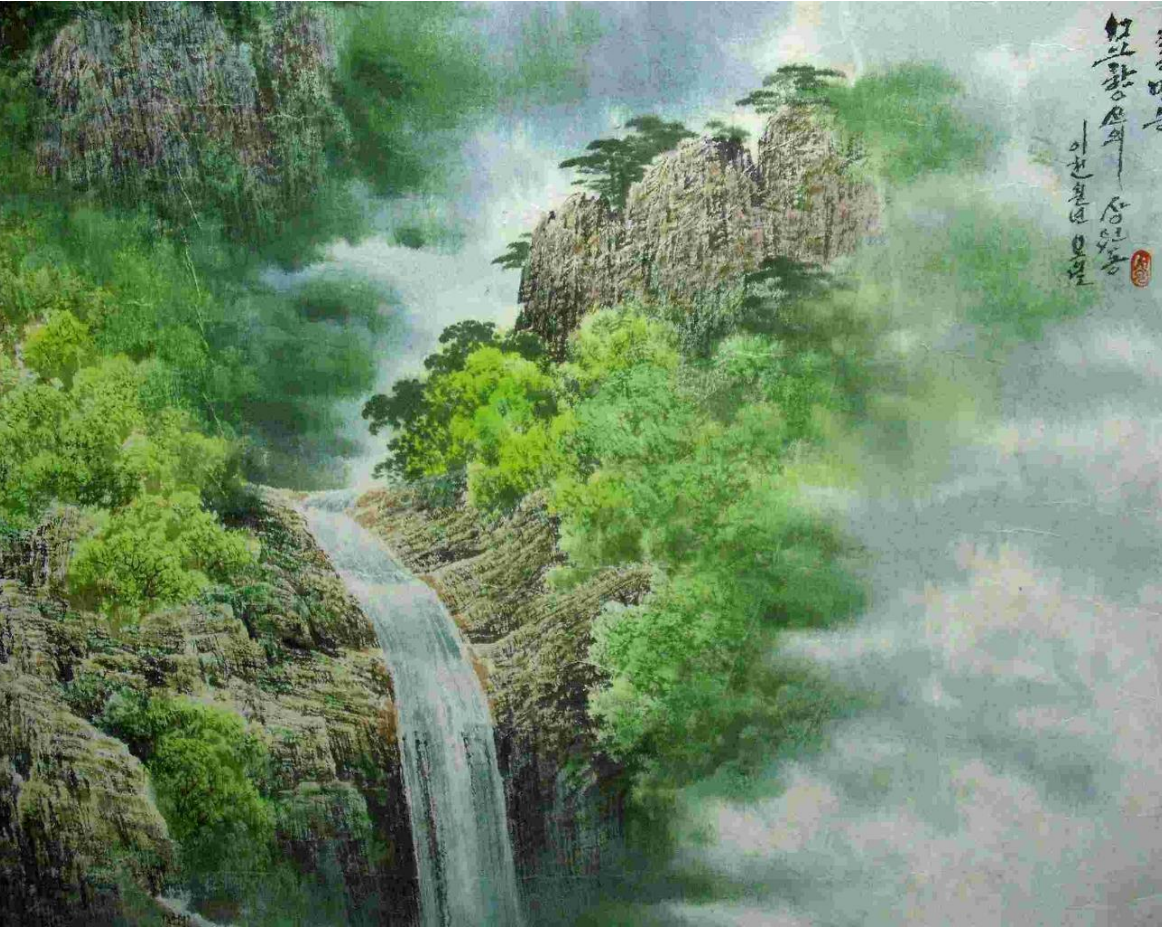
In one instance, Mengzi converses with his contemporary, King Xuan. Mengzi tells King Xuan of an ancient King, whose name was Wen. In his time, King Wen owned a giant park, of 35 square kilometers. Nonetheless, somehow, King Wen's people thought that park was 'small' for their leader to have. This baffles King Xuan. He tells Mengzi, that his own park is 'only' 20 square kilometers in size, yet his people think of it as 'large'. How come the people of King Wen thought of the larger park as being 'small', yet King Xuan people believe his park, which is objectively smaller, is somehow 'large'? After all, King Xuan would like his people to view him as a benevolent ruler, and not as someone who lives too lavishly.

Mengzi has a simple and clear explanation for this. He tells King Xuan, that the park of King Wen was indeed large in size, but entry was allowed for those citizens who wanted to cut grass or gather fuel wood for their own use. Also hosted there openly, were those who sought to catch pheasants and hares. Because King Wen willingly shared his park with the people, they thought of it as 'small' – as many were permitted entry and rights to its resources, or at least had the opportunity to claim such benefits. But what about King Xuan's park? When Mengzi entered King Xuan's kingdom, he was careful to find out what were the local customs, and what was forbidden. He learned that if someone was to hunt a deer in King Xuan's park, that person would have been treated and punished like someone who had murdered a



human being. Because King Xuan kept the park for himself, the people thought of it as ‘large’ – as it was reserved for the benefit of only a single individual and his family.

Thus far was the extended answer of Mengzi to King Xuan. I shall now elaborate more on this important message.



What King Xuan was lacking in, was the **mentality of abundance**. Instead of feeling that he had abundance, King Xuan suffered from a **scarcity mindset**. He felt as though, despite having this extensive



green terrain under his control, that he did not possess enough; or that somehow by sharing the park, he could lose it. He therefore acted like a miser with his resources. The result had been, that the people psychologically felt that his park was 'large', though it was physically smaller than that of a previous sovereign. It was also a lose-lose strategy, as he was left both anxious of the negative image of him this created among others, and unable to use the park he had for further growth. What is not stated but is hinted, is that this generated enemies and challenges for King Xuan, as the people must have been displeased by his miserly mannerisms. This is why he sought the advice of Mengzi – for he knew that this was a sign of troubles to come. Further, we should not neglect the observation, that had he shared his park in a similar fashion to King Wen <sup>2</sup>, then not only that area would have been thought of as 'small', but the people also would naturally have been more inclined to wish that their King's territory be expanded and for his power to grow, for it benefitted them as well.

Various martial arts teachers, and many other modern-day individuals, suffer from the exact same flaw, which was the bane of King Xuan and others in his time, thousands of years ago. All too often, we feel we have to keep too much of our resources to ourselves. Here I wish for you to consider all of those things which are not material resources like money and real-estate, the latter perhaps more relevant for the wealthy. Martial arts teachers, and readers of this book, have many other resources that they could share, like social connections, knowledge, love, food and ideas.

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<sup>2</sup> Take note that I am not here suggesting that everyone should open up their gardens to strangers under all circumstances. I am not a Communist. Be mindful of the details. Consider the people in this story were Kings. They had massive areas of land at their disposal, with these parks being just parts of their overall territories. Furthermore, their citizens paid them taxes. Under these conditions, sharing in the spirit of King Wen makes a whole lot of sense. One ought to share when he or she objectively have some abundance – in land, food, resources, money, love, connections or otherwise. Though it is often observed, that those most poor are sometimes more generous than others, which can result from greater empathy and understanding, or sometimes via subconsciously understanding there are strength and wisdom contained in the idea of 'investing in loss'.

You are probably a miser with these, too, compared with your potential for sharing. One of my most beneficial changes in life had come about, when I began to more openly share my social connections, knowledge and ideas with others, without fearing they may use them to undermine or supersede me.

Research has shown that among social mammals, the beta-males constantly compete, while the alpha-males are more generous and benevolent, on average and relative to the circumstances. Why? Because the beta-males have a scarcity mindset, while the alpha-males have an abundance mentality. The majority of martial arts teachers whom I have encountered, who were both successful and worthy, displayed this alpha-male quality of benevolence and generosity.

A truly enlightened sovereign of his kingdom – one who has rulership not only in name but also in spirit, can find it in his power to allow others into his park, without fear of loss. When this is undertaken, and you are truly and genuinely set out to offer from your resources to the appropriate people in a thoughtful and appropriate manner, then suddenly the myriad opportunities will present themselves. The right people will, in the process of months and years, discover that your park is open and inviting. Many of them will by these actions, appeal to you, and it would seem as if you have gone on an ever-growing ‘lucky streak’ in your life and career. But for this to happen, a park must be both cultivated, inviting and without unnecessary boundaries.



# The Crime of Creating Ignorance

Like most human beings growing old, martial arts also have the sad tendency of deteriorating in their quality over the decades. As a martial art is handed down through the generations, knowledge is always lost. A teacher cannot transmit every single thing he knows to his students, and those in turn are often not always willing or wise enough to try and grasp it all. Still, one can compensate. Lost understandings can be recovered, techniques can be reinvented, and principles rediscovered. We can also learn from other teachers, to complete that which we are missing. With enough effort put forth, we still prevail. There is still hope for the traditional martial arts if we have enough people who care for them, and are willing to make the efforts and sacrifices to preserve these traditions. Trouble begins, as in human relationships, with keeping secrets.

The habit of keeping secrets dates back to eras in human civilization when martial arts were used daily in life or death situations – either on the battlefield, or to protect oneself, one's family or one's property. At those turbulent times, the martial arts were the equivalent of secret military technology. Had you needed to cause someone serious harm, you would use this technology for that purpose. Because of this, keeping the martial arts secretive was justified and understandable, and this approach became widespread in many nations. At those times, knowing the insides of other martial arts was a matter of gaining the upper hand on a potential enemy – like having a video of a future contender is crucial for a boxing champion to prepare himself for competition in modern times. Outdoor fights would gather many spectators; some of which would not just come for the entertainment – they were there for literally collecting counter-intelligence. You also would not want anyone

learning the unique abilities developed within your martial art, only to have them used against you at some point.

Survival could also bear financial or honourary overtones. In not-so-ancient China, people from one martial arts school would often challenge people from other schools. The outcome could bring about life-changing consequences for the loser. Firstly, physically losing would mean 'losing face', which is of great insult and stigma in Chinese Traditional Culture. Secondly, the impact of losing face in this scenario often had the following implications: had the challenger lost, he would be expected to beg to become a student of the school that had beaten him, or leave in great shame. Had the school representatives lost, the school's headmaster would often leave in shame, with the winner having the option to take over the school and all of the students.

Today, we live in an era when there is no more need for sacred secrets, to be kept from one's own students. Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the traditional martial arts became almost completely obsolete as daily martial weapons. One no longer needs to train for decades to be able to kill someone with a wooden weapon, or empty handed, in an instant. Anyone interested in killing for any purpose could just purchase a gun at a local store. Anyone wishing to invest in self-defense could buy a taser. As these arts are no longer secrets that need to be kept to stay alive, and with the gradual rise of globalization, every single "secret" in the martial arts world became available to anyone dedicated enough to practice to the point he would be able to learn and utilize it. Some knowledge is still rare compared to others, but none is a true secret anymore because many people have it – whether 'many' happens to mean 10,000 or 100 people. Things that were once passed to a single person within a generation are nowadays known to thousands (and sometimes dozens of thousands) of serious teachers. In an age where people no longer dedicate their entire lives to the research of martial arts, keeping secrets only serves to hurt the conservational effort of traditional arts, of which their higher levels of practice are rapidly disappearing.

Although this practice (of keeping secrets) is becoming extinct, there are still teachers, mostly in the Orient, who insist on keeping secrets in the traditional manner.

One aspect of this line of thought can be justified – you would not want to teach deadly techniques to some hoodlum or potential murderer. Those types of students, however, do not tend to stick with martial arts long enough to learn such skills – purchasing a gun or a knife is much easier. Moreover, they could always find an alternative to learning such skills if they wanted to. Another reason for some teachers keeping secrets is the fear for their trademark skills. With the onset of widespread video, there were many known cases of deceitful individuals who copied fancy or impressive movements from the videos of great masters, subsequently claiming they were those masters' students, or belonged to their martial lineage. Fearful this might happen to them, some teachers refrain from showing aspects of their arts when filmed. They can even go as far as to alter their filmed performance, with movements done wrong on purpose and segments omitted, so anyone trying to copy them would reveal himself and his fraud had he tried to show his skills in public.

There is, though, a darker side to some teacher's habit of keeping secrets, which I call “*The Crime of Creating Ignorance*”. Traditionally, in China, there are two types of martial arts students – those who are considered “regular students”, and those who are private disciples – formally accepted into the lineage of the martial tradition through a ceremony called ‘Bai Shi’ or ‘Bai Men’ (“pay respect to your teacher” or “bow at the door” in Mandarin Chinese). These students are in turn called “indoor students”, or “those who have entered the door” – meaning they are accepted within the doors of the (martial art's) family's home – they become part of the family. Once a person is a formal disciple, he is customarily given instruction on everything within his martial art of choice – no secrets. That is not the case for those who are not accepted as such. These people are omitted from learning the essence of the martial arts, and are only allowed to ‘scratch the surface’, so to speak. At other instances, being a formal or informal disciple would not matter – if a teacher does not like student

for any reason, he would just refrain from teaching him important points, keeping him from attaining a good level of expertise.

All of this has grounding in reality, at least in the short term. Why teach someone ‘outside of your family’, who you do not necessarily trust, your ‘secret stuff’? Why bother teaching a lazy student the ‘good stuff’? It is all understandable. What has come about from those attitudes towards teaching in the long-term, though, is sometimes horrendous (and as with anything horrendous, it has to do with mathematics!).

Let us pause for a minute, and observe a short **fictional** allegory:

Master Jerry was famous worldwide as a great teacher of the martial arts. Jerry was not an old-school kind of guy – he did not think much of ‘initiation ceremonies’, and taught in modern-day America. Unbeknownst to his students, Jerry had a clear policy he kept to himself. He would not teach his whole art to lazy students who thought they were smarter than him. In fact, he hated lazy students so much, that he would purposely teach them some wrong principles and inaccurate techniques, so “they will never get it”. Two students stuck with Jerry for 30 years – Kramer and Newman. While Master Jerry liked Kramer a lot and taught him all he could, Newman was a lazy bastard who always thought he knew better, and thus Jerry made sure he did not fully understand the art, and had it the wrong way. After thirty years, Jerry passed away from illness, and the two veteran students started teaching separately. Kramer had named his martial art Jerry-dō (“The Way of Jerry”), after his beloved teacher. Newman, who did not really like Jerry and was just in for ‘stealing’ his art, called what he taught “Newman Kung Fu”.

Kramer always emphasized quality in his teachings, so he would only allow for two students to carry on and teach the tradition of Jerry-dō, and made sure this continued in the same fashion with their students, and so forth. There were 2 teachers of the second generation of Jerry-dō (Kramer's students). Four students in the third generation (Kramer's grand-students). It grew with each generation in the power

of 2, so the fifth generation had 32 people teaching Jerry-dō (not including past teachers).

Newman, on the other hand, was into making money, and allowed for 15 of his students to teach his crooked kung fu, and made sure each of them also qualified some 15 teachers on average, and so forth. Second generation of Newman Kung Fu included 15 teachers (Newman's students). **By the time Newman's Kung Fu had reached its fifth generation of teachers, over 750 thousand people were cluelessly teaching a martial art which a man named Jerry intentionally taught wrong to his student, Newman.**



This is the destructive nature of exponential growth. A poor judgment on a teacher's behalf that may have even been justified in the short-term, turned out to be a complete disaster, which has affected the lives of many people that the original Master would never even come to know. The teacher would have been much better off not teaching such a student anything at all, preventing him from a chance to spread ignorance. A teacher is liable for what he or she passes on to future generations. You choose who you teach, and what you teach those individuals. Unfortunately, many throughout history have put their own immediate desires for taking revenge on some students (or just keeping them as income when not intending to teach them seriously), before the horrible consequences such actions could bring to others (who might spend decades studying an intentionally-deformed style of martial arts). While the blame for spreading ignorance is first and foremost of the student himself, the teacher is guilty with the crime of creating that ignorance on purpose.

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