

## MARTIAL ARTS METAPHORS AND HYPNOSIS, CHAPTER 1

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This series of articles proposes that, in some circumstances, metaphors of personal integrity and systemic harmony derived from the Martial Arts can be included in hypnotic inductions to promote personal growth and peace. Before we begin this venture, let me point out that you do not need to be a martial artist to attain these insights or use these metaphors. Many of these ideas are common to all fields of human excellence and consciousness development. Nevertheless, there are extra philosophical colorings that derive from the personal and spiritual struggles that emanate from a combative model of conflict into confluence.

While these insights or lessons are not exclusive to martial arts experience, they are common to serious practitioners of these arts with 5 or more dedicated years of experience in dedicated physical practice and contemplative thought. It is possible to be a good fighter in the martial arts and avoid these lessons, but this limited technique-and-conquer mind-set is rare among the masters that go beyond the 2<sup>nd</sup> dan level. To the masters of the art await the treasures of consciousness and philosophy that make the practice of the art a meditation of daily living. But before we begin our journey together into this realm, perhaps we should best define our terms:

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. **MARTIAL ARTS** are skills of self-defence using primarily unarmed or minimally armed (weapon range less than 2 metres) strategies and skills. We are focusing mostly on those derived primarily from Japan, China, and The Orient for their practical effectiveness and especially for their spiritual foundations.
2. **HYPNOSIS** is the use of words in promoting states of trance or mental focus, including alpha and theta mindstates of inner-focused awareness.
3. **METAPHOR** is an indirect stating of a concept or principle using a story or image that compels the imagination of the listener into reframing a life situation.

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Martial arts experience and practice lead to hypnotic states in which metaphors for the reframing of daily living are compellingly attractive and adaptive. Following our outline, let's see how this unfolds.

## CREATING A CONTEXT OF OPEN-MINDED LEARNING

1. **Clearing the Mind.** All martial arts sessions begin with a ritual to set us apart from the world outside and resume a path of discovery of inner potential. Mu-Shin or Empty-mindedness is attained by a period of brief meditation at the beginning and end of every session. For about 2 minutes, all participants close their eyes, focus on their breathing, and clear extraneous thoughts to narrow their attention to the learning theme of the session.
2. **Beginner's Mind.** Clearing presuppositions and assumptions about the world and the nature of reality, the 10<sup>th</sup> degree black belt once again wears the white, or beginner's belt. This act of humility indicates the wisdom of beginning again with an open mind. You cannot learn Zen when your mind is filled with your own opinions, attitudes, and habits of thought. The true student, as well as the enlightened teacher or sensei or sifu, aspires to the ideal "Hear like an echo, see like a mirror." There are several stories that come to mind to express this concept.

The first has to do with an impatient American wealthy industrialist who came to Japan to learn the inner peace that arises from Zen philosophy. Repeatedly, he tried to gain the audience of the Zen master, only to be rebuffed. Eventually he was received by the Master, who insisted that they engage in the ritual Tea Ceremony reserved for such meetings of esteemed people. While the Master whisked the tea and rotated the brims of the ceremonial cups, then started pouring the tea, the visitor was almost scalded by the very hot tea overflowing from his cup onto his lap. Jumping up to his feet, the would-be Zen student said "What are you doing?"

The Master said: "You have come all these miles to learn about Zen. You are so full of your own ideas. Your cup of ideas is full! There is no room for fresh learning. Come back when you have emptied your cup. Then your lessons can begin!"

The second story describes the situation of a proud young fellow who arrived at a Zen monastery with a very beautifully carved ornate bowl that had been designed by his ancestors. The chief monk looked at this masterpiece of art and said, "Very pretty!" Then the Master shattered the bowl! He ordered the student: "Here is some glue. Glue the pieces back together. Then you will be ready to be a monk, with a proper and humble beggar's bowl. Now you can begin the work of enlightenment!" The preferred posture for learning is not that of ego or vanity; rather it is open, balanced, peaceful, and receptive.

If you think that these stories exist only in the world of Zen monasteries, consider this more contemporary scene. Have you ever washed your car in the spring when the snow is melting on the road? Notice that as you drive your spotlessly clean car down the road, you delicately avoid puddles of slush, and avoid the splashes of oncoming traffic. The painstaking care that you exercise almost always takes away from the joy of driving, until finally you get splashed. Then the spell of perfectionism and cleanliness is finally broken, the struggle is now resolved, and you resume the enjoyment of driving normally.

The lessons are clear. Let it go. Clear your plate. Stop trying to hold it together with the bonds of control. Create a quiet and curious space for learning. As the jazz musician said, "God exists in the space between the notes."

3. **Structure and Clarity of Roles.** Teacher –student, leader-follower, are useful roles in the learning process, and can be reversed as the student progresses beyond the master. The martial arts are hierarchically organized to facilitate the acceptance of the roles that enable the learning process.
  
4. **Social Contract of Mutual Respect.** Bowing Rituals prevail in most acts of engagement in the martial arts. When we enter the dojo or exercise hall, we always bow to announce our respect for an authority of shared knowledge and wisdom greater than our own. This practice arises from the architecture of temples where the roofs and doors were so low that they forced all people who entered to lower their heads, and act of humility and respect to a higher order than individual greatness and ego. Bowing to your opponent also occurs before and after each practice engagement with that partner. As you bow, in effect you are saying to your partner "If you ever wanted the perfect time to hit me with a cheap shot, now is the time because my head is bowed forward and vulnerable. But if we both come out of the bow without incident, we are making a contract of mutual respect, honor, and integrity. As mutual participants we are in skill opposed, in spirit united. Your body is respected as an extension of mine as we endeavor to master but not destroy. We are connected in a united ecosystem of passion and philosophy. Although we are engaged in a win-lose paradigm, the underlying social contract is win-win. We bow to a higher order of ethics and we bow to each other as its mutual adherents.

**Summary.** In this first article about the metaphors of the martial arts, we have focused on the creation of a context of clearing the mind to make space for learning and insight. We also observed roles and rituals of conduct to create a social learning contract of mutual respect and integrity. In subsequent articles we will expand these and other topics to illustrate these principles, and show their connection to the field of hypnotic phenomena. We will also extend these learnings to practical applications in hypnotherapy and counselling in general.

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