

JEET KUNE DO

BRUCE LEE

THREE SWORDSMEN SAT DOWN AT A TABLE IN A CROWDED JAPANESE INN AND BEGAN TO MAKE LOUD COMMENTS ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBOR, HOPING TO GOAD HIM INTO A DUEL. THE MASTER SEEMED TO TAKE NO NOTICE OF THEM, BUT WHEN THEIR REMARKS BECAME RUDER AND MORE POINTED, HE RAISED HIS CHOPSTICKS AND, IN QUICK SNIPS, EFFORTLESSLY CAUGHT FOUR FLIES WINGS. AS HE SLOWLY LAID DOWN THE CHOPSTICKS, THE THREE SWORDSMEN HURRIEDLY LEFT THE ROOM.

THE STORY ILLUSTRATES A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORIENTAL AND WESTERN THINKING. THE AVERAGE WESTERNER WOULD BE INTRIGUED BY SOMEONE'S ABILITY TO CATCH FLIES WITH CHOPSTICKS, AND WOULD PROBABLY SAY THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HOW GOOD HE IS IN COMBAT. BUT THE ORIENTAL WOULD REALIZE THAT A MAN WHO HAS ATTAINED SUCH COMPLETE MASTERY OF AN ART REVEALS HIS PRESENCE OF MIND IN EVERY ACTION. THE STATE OF WHOLENESS AND IMPERTURBABILITY DEMONSTRATED BY THE MASTER INDICATED HIS MASTERY OF SELF.

AND SO IT IS WITH MARTIAL ARTS. TO THE WESTERNER THE FINGER JABS, THE SIDE KICKS, AND THE BACK FIST, ETC, ARE TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE WHICH IS, INDEED, ONE OF THEIR FUNCTIONS. BUT THE ORIENTAL BELIEVES THAT THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF SUCH TOOLS IS REVEALED WHEN THEY ARE SELF-DISTRACTED AND DESTROY GREED, FEAR, ANGER AND FOLLY.

MANIPULATIVE SKILL IS NOT ORIENTAL'S GOAL. HE IS AIMING HIS KICKS AND BLOWS AT HIMSELF AND WHEN SUCCESSFUL, MAY EVEN SUCCEED IN KNOCKING HIMSELF OUT. AFTER YEARS OF TRAINING, HE HOPES TO ACHIEVE THAT VITAL LOOSENING AND EQUABILITY OF ALL POWERS WHICH IS WHAT THE THREE SWORDSMEN SAW IN THE MASTER.

IN EVERY DAY LIFE THE MIND IS CAPABLE OF MOVING FROM ONE THOUGHT OR OBJECT TO ANOTHER – "BEING" MIND INSTEAD OF "HAVING" MIND. HOWEVER, WHEN FACE TO FACE WITH AN OPPONENT IN A DEADLY CONTEST, THE MIND TENDS TO STICK AND LOSES IT MOBILITY. STICK ABILITY OR STOPPAGE IS A PROBLEM THAT HAUNTS EVERY MARTIAL ARTIST.

KWAN – IN (AVALOKITESVARA), THE GODDESS OF MERCY, IS SOMETIMES REPRESENTED WITH ONE THOUSAND ARMS, EACH HOLDING A DIFFERENT INSTRUMENT. IF HER MIND STOPS (999) WILL BE OF NO USE WHATEVER, IT IS ONLY BECAUSE OF HER MIND NOT STOPPING WITH THE USE OF ONE ARM, BUT MOVING FROM ONE INSTRUMENT TO ANOTHER, THAT ALL HER ARMS PROVE USEFUL WITH THE UTMOST DEGREE OF EFFICIENCY. THUS THE FIGURE IS MEANT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT, WHEN THE ULTIMATE TRUTH IS REALIZED EVEN AS MANY AS ONE THOUSAND ARMS ON ONE BODY MAY EACH BE SERVICE ABLE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

“PURPOSELESSNESS”, “EMPTY – MINDEDNESS” OR “NO ART” ARE FREQUENT TERMS USED IN THE ORIENT TO DENOTE THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT OF A MARTIAL ARTIST. ACCORDING TO ZEN, THE SPIRIT IS BY NATURE FORMLESS AND NO “ OBJECTS” ARE TO BE HARBORED IN IT. WHEN ANYTHING IS HARBORED THERE, PSYCHIC ENERGY IS DRAWN TOWARD IT, AND WHEN PSYCHIC ENERGY LOSES ITS BALANCE, ITS NATIVE ACTIVITY BECOMES CRAMPED AND IT NO LONGER FLOWS WITH THE STREAM, WHERE THE ENERGY IS TIPPED, THERE IS TOO MUCH OF IT IN ONE DIRECTION AND A SHORTAGE OF IT IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. WHERE THERE IS TOO MUCH ENERGY, IT OVERFLOWS AND CANNOT BE CONTROLLED. IN EITHER CASE, IT IS UNABLE TO COPE WITH EVER – CHANGING SITUATIONS. BUT WHEN THERE PREVAILS A STATE OF “PURPOSELESSNESS” (WHICH IS ALSO A STAGE OF FLUIDITY OR MINDLESSNESS) , THE SPIRIT HARBORS NOTHING IN IT, NOR IS IT TIPPED IN ONE DIRECTION; IT TRANSCENDS BOTH SUBJECT AND OBJECT; IT RESPONDS EMPTY – MINDEDLY TO WHATEVER IS HAPPENING.

TRUE MASTERY TRANSCENDS ANY PARTICULAR ART. IT STEMS FROM MASTERY OF ONESELF – THE ABILITY, DEVELOPED THROUGH SELF – DISCIPLINE, TO BE CALM, FULLY AWARE, AND COMPLETELY IN TUNE WITH ONESELF AND THE SURROUNDINGS. THEN, AND ONLY THEN, CAN A PERSON KNOW HIMSELF.

— BRUCE LEE