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Philosophy in Oriental Martial Arts and its Practical Relevance for Fight Application

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Real Fight Performance

Psychology

Philosophy

Physical Skills

...
Reading ≠ Applying Knowledge ≠ Belief

But: Believes, Views, Values

Assessment, Mind set, Actions

„Do not just read, memorize or imitate, but so that you realize the principle from within your own heart.“

- Musashi
Introduction

Effect of View: Examples

Pain / Risks / Hardship

Life in Society
Oriental Approach: Philosophy

(Philosophy) $\rightarrow$ Mind $\rightarrow$ Body

Historic literature

Key ideas

Martial Arts Practice
Musashi, M.  
1584-1645  
Japanese swordsman

Takuan, S.  
1573–1645  
Japanese Zen-Buddhist

Chozanshi, I.  
18th century  
Japanese samurai and intellectual

The Book of Five Rings

The Unfettered Mind

The Demon’s Sermon on the Martial Arts
Methods

Analyses

Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2000)
Paraphrasing, categorising
Number of mentions
Key ideas

- The Book of Five Rings
- The Unfettered Mind
- The Demon’s Sermon on the Martial Arts
1) Non-attachment of the mind *(immovable wisdom)*

2) Formlessness

3) Unpredictability
   - Adaptability
   - Spontaneity
   - Sense for beneficial actions

Ethical obstacles
Non-attachment and impermanence in Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path (Priest, 2013)

"Standing in front of a tree and spotting a red leaf, if your mind attaches to the one single red leaf, you will not see all the others."
- Takuan

Reactions:
No attachment to experiences and expectations
➡️ Feint attacks?

Actions:
No attachment to movement patterns
➡️ Formlessness in actions
“Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. Now, you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”

- Bruce Lee
Imitation, reproduction, representation
Attachment to ideas, concepts, styles, tools, solutions

Awareness on the situation, own position, requirements

Formlessness in body and mind
Unpredictable  Adaptable  Spontaneous  Appropriate

„You should not have a favorite weapon. To become over-familiar with one weapon is as much a fault as not knowing it sufficiently well.“ - Musashi

„As one relies on what the mind creates, [...] immediate actions will not be possible any more.“ - Chozanshi

„When in a fight to the death, one wants to employ all one's weapons to the utmost.“ - Musashi

No technique  No patterns

„Without technique, also a strong mind cannot put its functionality into proper effect.“ - Chozanshi
„He values humans lower than insects and does so without effort. He is not restricted by anything, he does not freeze, does not wait, does not retreat; he has no doubts, cannot be moved and faces an opponent without a single thought.“
- Chozanshi

„Setting up his whole mind like a mirror, the man who employs the martial arts will have no intention of discriminating right from wrong,“
- Takuan

„if he has fallen into evasive or retreating attitudes, we must crush him straight away, with no concern for his presence [...]. It is essential to crush him all at once.“
- Musashi
"He fights – I don't."
„Be indifferent to where you live“ - Musashi

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