

The Roots of Technical Mastery

Awareness, Harmony, Right Action

Part 3

Have you ever tried to work with an angry customer? Did you end up yelling back and feeling enraged by the whole experience? How did all that make you feel? How about the last time an inconsiderate driver stimulated your index finger? Have you ever tried simply yielding to the situation?



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No, I am not saying roll over and give in to any form of indignity that they throw your way, but yielding in an appropriate way that generates “right action”. We can respond to a person’s instantaneous burst of anger or aggression by yielding, controlling our breathing, moving out of the direct line of assault and applying motivational energy in the most efficient area. To yield is not to surrender and give in at the drop of a hat, it is to blend with the experience and select right action over automatic, emotional, fear based responses. The use of “right action” yields the best outcome for both parties involved. The angry customer will be dealt with in a calm, assertive, professional way. The big angry guy, who wants to punch your lights out, will not be hurt.

I can tell you all of this but you will have to test it yourself. You can test the application of the concept, first in the Dojo and then the real world to know if it is true for you. If enough people observe a concept to be true, that is to say, we become aware of natural law and can make sense of it, then we have the beginnings of a principle.

Many students of the arts first learn the physical practice of their individual style but the Sensei will often go beyond and teach the technique and the overarching principle. In this way, it engages the students mind along with other aspects of physical development. This is not to say that as students we learn the

principle right away, any more than we learn the physical form right away. It all takes time, practice and patience to move a principle from words that Sensei is saying into the core of who we are, a building block of our personal awareness. Once you own the internal understanding of the principle, you will be able to apply it to many diverse experiences such as a hip throw, a Kata, a public speaking engagement or the loss of a loved one. “Right action” is informed by a true understanding of principles that have been internalized through years of training, reflecting and awareness.

Right action is a spontaneous expression of your true nature, beyond the concern for your own ego. It is the action that comes from balanced emotions, breathing and thinking. Right action allows you to step away from a dangerous situation when appropriate and to step into a dangerous situation when warranted. Only you can make the call, and you bear the responsibility of your own actions. A true warrior has honed his physical, mental and emotional skills so that he can transcend the details of individual style or practice to fully engage Right Action at all times.

“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves”

Mohandas Gandhi

I wish each of you all the best on your personal journey through the arts and through life.

Sensei Paul Fox