

Managing Permanent Dynamism II

An Introspective Perspective

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Background

- 22 years in the martial art Tae Kwon Do
- Instructor for 18 years
- 3rd degree black belt
- A specific type of martial art and school
 - “Hard” style
 - Requires athleticism, flexibility, power and endurance
 - Enormously intense classes, physically, mentally, emotionally
 - Association with professional athletes
- Time spent studying Eastern thinking
 - Paradox in achieving mastery
 - Elusiveness of results
 - The need for internal mastery as a precedent for external mastery
 - A loose “structure” for patterns of conflict

The Three Phases of Growth

Phase description

- Phase 1: Novice
- Phase 2: Expert
- Phase 3: Master

- Trigram for 9th degree black belt



- One who has mastered three spheres: the divine, the worldly and the personal. When the world, the person and the heavens are unified and indistinguishable, the person can be considered a master

Example: Learning how to stretch

- In the martial arts, being flexible is critical. Developing flexibility is imperative. A key portion of this is relearning how to process proprioceptive input.
- Flexibility training has two components: physical (changing of muscle, tendon and ligaments) and mental (processing new bodily data)
- Stretching beyond your perceived limits can be scary
- All the following examples will share hypothetical self-talk – what people often think to themselves

Stretching: Mental Chatter

- Phase 1
 - “Wow. This really hurts.”
 - “I must resist this. The instructor is out of control.”
 - “OK. This is beyond serious. I am going to resist now. I gotta stop this pain.”
- Phase 2
 - “Let it hurt. It’s ok.”
 - “Enter the pain. Let me get inside it and experience more.”
 - “Wow. I did not know I could stretch this far.”
- Phase 3
 - “Hmmm. I’m not feeling any pain.”
 - “Not good.”
 - “I must be limiting my possibilities.”

Physical conditioning: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “I’m getting tired”
 - “When will this slow down?”
 - “I can’t move anymore. I’m slowing down.”
- Phase 2
 - “I’m getting tired.”
 - “How can I conserve or redistribute my energy and still keep the technique sharp?”
 - “I’m going to practice and improve my conditioning.”
- Phase 3
 - “I’m unconcerned about getting tired.”
 - “I’m going to spend an incredible amount of energy in a split second.”
 - “Let’s see if I can exhaust myself in 1 minute.”

Sparring: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “**Holy F#!#@ing Sh^%! I’m getting my ass kicked.**”
 - “I hope I never spar that black belt again.”
- Phase 2
 - “I’m going to study my opponent and prepare a strategy.”
 - “I’m practicing and preparing.”
- Phase 3
 - “I’m studying the full context and conditions surrounding myself and the opponent all the time, sometimes without being aware.”
 - “I am manipulating the key conditions of the context well in advance of any conflict and using others in the process.”

Teaching: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “They won’t listen. This is not a good batch of students.”
 - “The training progression given to me is all wrong.”
- Phase 2
 - “I am applying more effort each class.”
 - “I am getting results. My students are improving.”
- Phase 3
 - “I am applying more or less effort at the right time based on what I sense from the class.”
 - “Some students are leap-frogging the others, progressing very quickly.”

Getting corrected: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “No way. You are wrong! I was doing it just like you told me.”
- Phase 2
 - “OK. I’m on it.”
- Phase 3
 - “Too late. I already made the correction. In fact, I saw what you saw, plus some of what you didn’t see.”

Leadership style: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “I am learning and applying my instructor’s style.”
- Phase 2
 - “I am learning my own style and adjusting it.”
- Phase 3
 - “I am using the style the situation requires from me.”

Self-image: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “I’m obviously not as good as I thought I was.”
 - “I’m not capable of that.”
- Phase 2
 - “I will be stronger.”
 - “I will be as good as I need to be.”
 - “I will be capable of whatever I put my mind to.”
- Phase 3
 - “Hmmm. I did not know that. That is interesting.”
 - “I am weak here. Let’s explore.”
 - “Wow. I’m really not that good. Let’s try something totally different.”
 - “It doesn’t matter what I or others think. Keep exploring.”

Life choices: Mental chatter

- Phase 1
 - “This isn’t fun anymore. “
 - “I don’t think my instructor is right for me.”
 - “The terms of this ‘deal’ are not right.”
- Phase 2
 - “I’m going to persist.”
 - “I will learn from this instructor.”
 - “I can accept, for now, the terms of the ‘deal.’ ”
- Phase 3
 - “I am going to contribute.”
 - “The school is merely a laboratory for life.”
 - “The world will integrate me. All I have to do is listen and follow.”

Heroic moments

- Most cultures, especially Western cultures, are immersed in heroic stories, situations
- A heroic moment is obviously heroic
 - Winning a gold medal
 - Passing an exam
 - Getting promoted
 - Finishing a project
- We crave heroic moments
- We expect leaders to lead us to heroic moments
- As leaders, we instinctively seek heroic moments
- However – heroic moments lead us astray

Quiet moments

- Quiet moments usually surround the heroic conflict, struggle or challenge.
- If leadership is about shepherding change for advantage while minimizing loss, leaders should be just as willing to avoid heroic moments as crave them
- Quiet moments are all the interactions preceding the heroic moment
 - Countless details, discussions, interactions, relationships, technical details
- The quiet moments setup the heroic moments
- In self-defense, we stress winning without fighting, since fighting is risky and life-threatening. We stress subduing an opponent with minimal force
 - Knowing the terrain you're in, being alert to features in your surroundings that will be useful. Quickly assessing opponents, knowing their behavior patterns before hand, altering your behavior patterns to alter theirs, pulling opponents into difficult ground, knowing how to exploit their physical and mental weaknesses, assessing why you are even approaching a conflict situation and considering options, using friends and innocent bystanders cleverly, knowing yourself well
 - Being creative with and receptive to all factors of the full environment as far in advance of the moment of conflict. Removing fear through superior knowledge.
- Management of the full context around the central conflict provides the greatest advantage in the central conflict, *if the central conflict does not dissipate by then!*

Patterns for managing conflict

- Look for what you cannot see.
 - What is getting done for which you cannot see a cause?
- Look for a well respected person that you don't feel deserves respect
 - What do others see that you do not?
- Watch how people respond to novelty
 - Watch first and second reactions
- Start with results and work backwards to causes
- Look for decisions you don't understand coming from people who you respect or who have achieved things
 - Watch out for the good golfer with the bad swing
- Look for people/teams making multiple decisions in a short time across different dimensions
- Find a common theme that combines or explains apparently unlinked phenomenon
 - Seek the “patterns” above the “patterns”
 - Extend your time frame forwards and backwards
 - Adopt multiple perspectives

Lessons from the martial arts

- Understand the power of transformation and non-linear progress
- Understand the power of an individual connecting to a strong source of energy
- Understand that conflict, pain and suffering are necessary antecedents for new skills and learning
 - The only question is in what context do conflict, pain and suffering occur? A real self-defense situation or in a safer environment like the dojang? The more time spent in comprehensive simulation, the less suffering in real situations
- Understand that joyful persistence over a very long period of time is the most critical trait needed for mastery
 - Joy in the quiet moments, day to day, fuels mastery over the heroic. This is how tough skills get learned.
- Great skill in difficult technique is actually lots of smaller, more basic skills attended to with perfection.
 - Heroic technique is created from many very non-heroic basic, simple things, practiced endlessly, seeking perfection
 - To become a black belt, one has to become a white belt all over again
- Confidence can be learned
 - It requires a continuous cycle of challenge->success over time

The paradox of perfection

- In the martial arts, we often pursue execution of what we hold in our minds eye to be absolutely perfect technique
- This is impossible, because no one is perfect
- The better you get, the more you realize how much there is to improve to achieve perfection
- People have two responses to this paradox:
 - This is crazy. I can't live with being so far from perfection
 - That's ok. I can live both with my imperfection and my desire to have perfect technique
- Since martial arts are physical, the slow erosion of the body magnifies this dilemma
 - As you get older you understand more, but your physical weaknesses become even more apparent
 - The sooner you can understand this paradox, the sooner you will master the martial arts
- “To have wisdom in youth is like walking with gods”

The paradox of nonconformity

- Self defense is ultimately an act of nonconformity
 - The martial artist *will not be dominated*
- The path to nonconformity is through conformity
 - The skills needed to ensure nonconformity require a great deal of adherence to specific techniques, approaches, interaction styles, mores, ritual
 - The student submits to the instructor completely
 - The instructor submits their best instruction to the student
 - Trust binds the two together
 - Mutual and total conformity leaves no room for passive or non-conscious resistance
 - The superb physical and self-development skills gathered in this unusual relationship enables more freedom from those human failings that cause unnecessary suffering and loss
 - Mastery through disciplined conformity generates freedom to act unattached to or even somewhat unconcerned about anything that wishes to dominate you

The end result

- This is an ideal. Our job is to get as close as we can
 - To be indomitable. Fearless. In mastery of the fighting situation
 - To have unshakeable confidence
 - To have incredible persistence
 - To master numerous details
 - To be fluid in reacting and thinking, free from personal and situational encumbrances
 - To be inscrutable, formless and changing, when needed
 - To have great self insight, know yourself better than anyone
 - To have insight into human nature, better than anyone
 - To know you will win before you fight
 - To know you will succeed before you start
- We win without fighting. We succeed without effort
 - Since knowledge and preparation “bend” events ahead of the heroic moment, nothing heroic is required to achieve what is sought
 - Water flows to the lowest point with no effort required

Lessons from Gettysburg

Questions?