

## WHAT IS THE ART OF MARTIAL ARTS?

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We live today in a time where almost every single aspect of our existence is either directly or indirectly conditioned by technology. Moreover, according to many thinkers, the technology dictates the direction in which civilization will develop. Nowadays, man is following the dictate of technology, and not vice versa. Such a situation inevitably leads to a slow imposing of hard frames on thing most humane &ndash; the spontaneity and creativity as a feature of wondering. This &ldquo;wondering&rdquo;, which is being lost even among the children, is the main instigator of the co-existence between man and the mystery of being, which is discovered, layer by layer, through the wondering and amazement. The ecstasy of discovery is primarily shaped through the &ldquo;phenomenon&rdquo; that we refer to as art. Everything else is just &ldquo;utilitarization&rdquo; and adaptation of the original insight to the daily needs. In order for a man to create a work of art, he must be inspire-d (as in-spirit-ed). We see here that words inspiration and respiration (root - spirit) are of the same origin, same root, which in turn awakes the thought that a man who creates needs to be inspired, i.e. spiritual. This leads us to recognizing some order. Breath&hellip;insight&hellip;materialization or shaping of &ldquo;that something&rdquo;, a phenomenon. That something, which is being unfolded has its hidden side. There is no other way&hellip;it would be the murder of the mystery of being. This dance between the concealed and unfolded is expressed (and is only possible) in art. A work of art is unlimited in its interpretations and bears inexhaustible messages and guidelines for each new generation. For example, an old, bent wheel-hub or an old broken battery radio might be witnesses of recent past, but have no use today (besides recycling), unlike Michelangelo&rsquo;s David or Shakespeare&rsquo;s Hamlet, which does not cease to educate upcoming generations. This is just scratching the surface, as one might add the Bible, various music composers etc. While reading this, someone might ask &ldquo;what does it have to do with martial arts?&rdquo;

If we accept the art segment of the martial, then we need to ask not where, but how is the art present there. I will attempt to give a short (and direct) answer to that question. In individual being (as opposed to persona). A man is not given, but rather &ldquo;sketched&rdquo;. If I can put it roughly, given is an animal body, with all its urges, instincts and so on. What is sketched is a man as a being of love. Someone who is transformed&hellip;or even better being transformed&hellip; someone who is overcoming his or hers mindless urges and is redirecting own energy towards the refining and modeling of one&rsquo;s personality (in my jargon, as an Orthodox Christian, it would be called &ldquo;Christ-likeness&rdquo;). The context of practicing martial arts (Systema) opens up a possibility for some kind of corporal confession, by working out in the community with other participants. Quicker than anywhere else, we are able to perceive plethora of emotions that permeate our body, from anger, through sorrow to happiness&hellip; When we are winning a sparring session, we are celebrating (while the other is maybe angry or sad), sometimes we get scared from someone stronger or more ruthless. Sometimes we strive for a revenge&hellip;to hurt someone on purpose&hellip;and sometimes we retreat (we run away from the whole situation). Sometimes, the states are emerging that we haven&rsquo;t been aware of. There is at the same time the mindless nature of the entire thing, but also material to work with. Like painter has his colors and canvas and sculptor has stone, so we have our body (as the foundation of Being &ndash; "body as the temple for the soul&rdquo;) to work with. To make it possible at all, we need to have a right framework, which means a different relation than the competitive one. What constitutes a man is his relation with others. Without others, which also means without the community, we do not exist as people. The relation with others is what shapes my identity&hellip;through interaction with others I am shaped, as an individual and a Personality. In the interaction and caring for each other we grow, become enriched and develop as individuals and as the community. Through the constant competition, what we get is the illusion of power&hellip;in plain language, we loot it from the defeated&hellip;until one day we get looted ourselves&hellip;our power is temporary and short-lived, like a drug. We go through emotional and physical hell to preserve the state&hellip;we close ourselves in our own fortresses, made of muscular armor, and there we dwell alone in the spiritual darkness. There is no light without empathy and care for other. Only an open door or window will let fresh air or light into someone&rsquo;s home. In case of man, it is the openness for the &ldquo;other&rdquo;, who is my other &ldquo;I&rdquo;. Fighting is always fighting with oneself. In a way, it means overcoming one&rsquo;s own fears and weakness. The other is there to help us, and not to defeat us. The only thing that needs to be defeated is our weakness and fears that are impeding us from being a new body &ndash; a body of light and love. The art in martial endeavor is the &ldquo;art of transformation&rdquo; from mindless into minded, through the terror of facing oneself with the help of other. Today, in the world of pragmatism and measuring, we often have the case of martial arts straying from the reality, i.e. avoiding that face-off. Under the excuse of &ldquo;tradition&rdquo;, they are hiding before the challenge of reality. On the other side, we have a pure utilitarian approach, which is deprived of humane, and becomes a purpose in itself, where the humane becomes sacrificed (of turning a man into a machine). The encounter of a man with reality in himself and around himself, all that within a community that provides support to overcome weakness and transform into spiritual, Christ-like&hellip;maybe that is a direction to follow. The greatest warrior of all times had defeated and brought down himself and not others&hellip;for the sake of us all.

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