

THE WAY OF ARTISTRY & GRACE

BY COLIN REEVE

The following extract has been taken from the book, *The Way of Artistry & Grace* by Colin Reeve, and is in essence the book's foreword.

The Way of Karate

The way of Karate is a personal journey, the starting point often being self protection, uncovering on the way self deception on the path leading to self perfection. The practice of Karate-do continually confronts us with our potential and self-imposed limits, asking students to take responsibility for their lives, to hold a purpose and to live their lives on purpose. Asking them to make the choice between being magnificent or ordinary. The practice of Karate-do has a wonderful way of letting us know we have this choice.

In the West the practice of Karate-do often begins as a leisure time activity taken up as a means of getting fit, and learning to defend oneself and one's family. These motives are admirable and can be fulfilled by the regular practice of Karate.

The practice of Karate-do however has a bigger purpose: it teaches us the skills - physical, mental and emotional - which will allow us to live a fulfilling and prosperous life.

In a traditional Japanese setting the student generally has a different and deeper understanding of what the practice of Karate-do means. They think carefully before committing to study, they search carefully for a teacher and the teacher would consider carefully the application of the student to practice.

In the West we don't take these initial steps too seriously, we are introduced to

it as a pastime or we stumble into it. However, Karate-do sneaks up on you, asks you to do a little more, to think a little deeper, to give more of yourself and to get more from yourself. It touches something deep inside that lets you know 'this is important'.

It is too easy in this fast paced and impatient world to reduce our lives to a series of tasks. We can bounce along the surface of our lives looking to complete more and more tasks, having more and more experiences, which in turn become less and less valuable. We can reduce the pleasure of a walk in the park or the joy of our families to a demand on our time or simply something else to complete on an ongoing to-do list.

The practice of karate-do encourages us to live in and enjoy the present. To do this we first need to uncover what's really important to us and pay exquisite attention to those things.

To check your health a doctor would take your pulse, which would give valuable information as to the condition of your body. Where would you look to take your life's pulse? What would a

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fulfilling life be for you? What has to be right and in order, so you know that your life is in balance and you are being fulfilled?

To practice Karate-do as a 'pleasure time' activity is to deny oneself the opportunity of personal growth, and become disconnected from the real power of the art. Continued practice will require students to look deep inside themselves as they search for the resources to keep moving along the path. It will not always be a pleasure to do this as there will be many obstacles to overcome. These obstacles, however, are not there to prevent access, but to promote growth.

The student who only continues practicing while it is a pleasure will soon be diverted and find reasons to stop.

The practice of Karate-do is a continuous journey in search of truth. It is a process of cutting away the

superfluous and the superficial in order to grow and enrich our own internally generated map of reality, and move it closer to reality.

In our lives, we will have many different experiences, some good, some bad. All offer valuable learning. It is how we perceive, judge and respond to these experiences that determines our future, not the experience itself.

From these experiences, we develop our own internal map of reality, judgements about how life is or how it should be. We go on to project this map on the outside, our mind through deletion, distortion and generalisation conspires to confirm it. This modified information, like a Cul-de-Sac, curves back into us and we believe it to be a true reflection of the world, thereby keeping us the same, even when it may be appropriate or desirable to change.

Karate-do offers both an experience of fulfilment and a means to fulfilment, however, fulfilment is not necessarily the absence of discomfort or pain. Indeed, inner peace is often accompanied by or the result of an external struggle. The Master may give the students permission to practice; but the students must give themselves permission to succeed.

Continued and determined practice of Karate-do is indeed a 'hero's journey', travelled on the inside and manifested on the outside. When taken seriously, it fosters spiritual growth, wisdom, fidelity and courage.

'A Moment of Truth', this statement is part of our lives; we may have used it on many occasions. In old Japan a 'moment of truth' would have been when one Samurai faced another in a life or death situation. In modern times it may be an arctic explorer, a lone sailor or a

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mountaineer alone with the mountain. At such moments we are stripped of our collection of life's trivia, we have no use for old animosities or judgements. There is no room for finger pointing or eloquent excuses, we are alone with ourselves and even the opponent or obstacle has become a mirror, in which, if we choose to look, we can see our real self. We are, at least, for a moment, free to see the truth. Space opens and with it the possibility for new learning and new perceptions, about self and life.

The practice of Karate-do subtly offers us many of these moments, it pushes us to the line between existence and excellence, forcing us to bump up against ourselves. Faced with the choice we choose either to learn and step forward, or fall back to the comfortable and the familiar. Being tested in everyday life may no longer mean life or death as in feudal times, but nevertheless, how you choose to deal with these moments will determine the quality of your living or dying.

Before crossing a river it may be prudent to look for the shallows. To cross through life constantly looking for the shallows may take one away from what is truly important.

"Budo is a divine path established by God, that leads to truth, goodness and beauty; it is a spiritual path reflecting the unlimited, absolute nature of the universe and the ultimate grand design of creation."

(Morihei Ueshiba)

The journey to mastery is a unique journey. One of its most curious features is that the distance from wherever you are now, to mastery, remains the same. This appears to be true no matter how long or diligently you practice, therefore the student needs to learn to enjoy the present and be patient as the future will come to them. If the practice is honest, the learning will be revealed when the student is ready.

The practitioner can restrict their success in the practice of Karate-do, as in life, by focussing their attention on their body or their life as they are now. With these as the centre; they begin with beliefs about their physical limitations, environmental constraints or personal history rather than a vision of what could be. In the imagination there are no constraints, no self-imposed restrictions. The student therefore needs to develop the skills that will allow the body and the mind to learn and adapt to the vision, rather than adapt the vision to fit the body.

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."
(Goethe)

The student will also need to uncover and maintain a strong sense of their mission and develop discernment in line with it. A mission is a sense of purpose and a source of meaningful action. It awakens us to possibilities and opportunities previously unseen. It unifies our values, beliefs and behaviours, it guides us through our lives, it is what we live to achieve our vision and as such should be at the heart of all decision making.

Mission provides the meaning, the passion and the excitement to fuel our lives. It is not, and should not be thought of as just a bigger objective. It exists at a different level to objectives. You don't invent your mission, it comes with you, you uncover it from within. In this respect the practice of Karate-do can act as a gateway to mission.

"Champions aren't made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them, a desire, a dream, a vision."

(Muhammad Ali)

Clarity of vision, a vibrant mission and a

deep understanding of their core values will ensure that the student can negotiate safely the obstacles and diversions ahead.

All along the route there will be many seductive diversions. The glorification of style over substance is one of the more dangerous of these.

Karate is Karate, history is history. When a historian from England meets a historian from Egypt, they may work together to study history using their combined skills and knowledge in their search for understanding and truth. They do not need to discuss how they were taught. This would be a conversation of style over substance, a conversation leading them nowhere and achieving nothing of their purpose. So often we see the triumph of style over substance, in religion, in politics, in business and in the media. In invading our lives it demeans and impoverishes us.

Karate teachers should always be aware that professionalism can lead to the promotion of style over substance. True mastery and leadership emerge from the good thinking and the heart of the teacher. They cannot be achieved through labels, badges or the colour of a gi. Instructors who mistakenly use these approaches could be inserting a thin edge of a wedge, which will insidiously creep forward, influencing the values and behaviours of future generations and could ultimately destroy the beauty that is Karate-do.

"Style, like sheer silk, too often hides eczema."

(Albert Camus)

Karate-do asks the question 'How do I know what I know and is what I know true?' Not the question 'Which colour gi looks best or attracts the most members?' Karate should not be confused with the name of the organisation that administers its affairs, nor the grades in a grading system.

Karate is a martial art, Karate-do is the way that art leads to human development. Karate is Karate. It has no other name.

One way to describe the practice of Karate-do is 'truth in action'. The source of verbal explanation can be either the imagination or memory and these are delivered through skilled manipulation of the tongue. The source of physical demonstration, however, is practice. This requires the use of the whole body and at that point we witness truth in action.

"The artist must be in his work as God is in creation, invisible and all-powerful; his presence should be felt everywhere, but he should never be seen."

(Gustave Flaubert)

For the answer to be valuable and congruent (*pertinent*), questions being asked of the student or the master must be answered physically. They should call upon their bodies to perform the answer. Anything less than that should be considered a rumour (unsubstantiated).

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'Let me demonstrate what I mean; for my lips have lied.' *"The significance of this statement is that it suggests technique is 'truth in action'."*

(Donn F. Draeger)

In the context of the practice of Karate, the above statement about technique is clearly true. In the practice of Karate-do it remains true but it becomes larger and harder to achieve as the statement changes from 'technique is truth in action', to 'one's life is truth in action'.

The student needs to look out for and question the repeated patterns of thinking and behaviours that have been displayed throughout their lives and ask themselves: "if I continue to run these patterns into the future will I achieve my dream?" or will the dream become a hallucination separated from everyday life by incongruent behaviour, mistaken or inappropriate values?

The practice of Karate-do is there to help the practitioner avoid becoming locked into an internally generated model of the world that prevents them moving towards their vision.

"The most pervasive paradox of the human condition which we see is that the processes which allow us to survive, grow, change and experience joy are the same processes which allow us to maintain an impoverished model of the world."

(Grinder and Bandler)

There are great Masters in all Martial Arts. They display their mastery through a multitude of techniques, techniques that to the lay observer would appear to be quite different. In its execution, Aikido looks different to Karate; Karate looks different to Kendo and so on. The astute observer knows, however, that





the secrets of the arts will not be found in the comparison of the techniques.

We must look beyond the external manifestation to the core of the art. What do these Masters have in common? What are they doing on the inside that creates the conditions that enable the techniques to work on the outside?

The following pages outline the six principles that I have been fortunate enough to discover during my journey of exploration. They have been found as a result of relentless practice, and observation of practice. I have seen these principles in and have learnt them from Masters and students. I have seen them in great leaders of industry and great followers, in mothers and in families.

The reader of these notes and the student should be aware that (unlike these notes), the principles are not revealed to the practitioner in a neat and ordered fashion. They are not only connected but interwoven, and each principle contains the others, which makes them inseparable. Touch one and they all are affected.

They come at you in clusters and sometimes one at a time. They can come after hours of diligent and demanding practice and sometimes when you least expect them. The intensity of understanding will also vary as the principles exist on many levels. You can therefore never really get to the bottom of them. One year you think a principle is clear and you have it, and the next year you look back and laugh at your naivety.

‘So often we see the triumph of style over substance, in religion, in politics, in business and in the media. In invading our lives it demeans and impoverishes us.’

The principles all need to be worked on. You may dream about them, but you will not master them in your dreams, you can read about them in these notes, but you can not learn them by reading. Learning will have taken place when they have become resident (*embedded*) in the muscles and when they are present in the everyday spontaneous behaviour of the student. Mastery will follow as the practitioner moves along the path from ‘knowing’ through to ‘doing’ and then to ‘being’.

I believe these principles are essential to mastery in any field of endeavour, they are not limited to, or learnt solely from the practice of Karate-do. However, the practice of Karate-do is an exquisite way of drawing our attention to them and making them accessible to anyone who is bold enough to see them.

The names I have assigned to these principles are not important, they do not need to be protected. They are merely labels that I have found useful in my endeavour to understand and teach the principles.

I would hope that the students of Karate-do would treat these principles as work in progress and continually seek to understand, develop and update them as they progress through their own adventure.

Through the practice of The Six Principles we are awakened to our potential. We remove fear from our lives and give ourselves permission to succeed, living the lives we want to live.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us. We ask ourselves, “Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?”

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of god. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking, so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do. We are born to make manifest the glory of god that is within us. It is not in some of us; it is in everyone. As we make our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

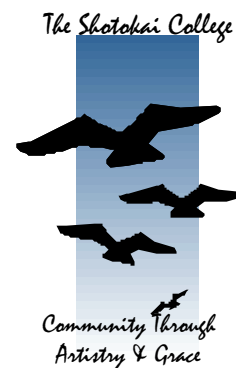
(Marianne Williamson)

Copies of the book are available from...

www.shotokaicollege.com

www.raconsultancy.com

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