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Your Martial Arts Resources: Improving your art and your game

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The Tao of Both Sides: In with the yin and yang thing

I always found this perspective of either/or very stiffening and very alien.

It seems like to be “common knowledge” that you either have to do a “proper” martial art dojo and not do it as a commercial school; or you can do a commercial venture and be total McDojo and lose all that is good, strong and traditional in the martial art.

Another view is that you can produce and maintain good fighters, but you can not at the same time cater for tradition, high moral standards, equality and everything else that many teachers believe is at the core of any martial art worth it's name as an art.

Really? Is that so?

And yet, if you look at some of the people, schools and activities out there, you may begin to think this has to be true.

There are unfortunately a large (and seemingly growing) number of McDojo/Dojang where you can buy a black belt and where all that counts is “show me the money!”.

And I have seen many great fighters who are totally lost in themselves all the time (not just before a fight, something which is a natural and logical must for many), and who have no respect for other people, other peoples interests or opinions what so ever. It's a constant “Me-Myself-I”.

“A dojo? Bah, as long as it suites me, it's ok. I'm a fighter!”

Aristotle (the old guy from Greece) as well as our equally old friend Buddha spoke about the Middle Path – Aristotle, I believe, spoke about the way of the golden middle. This is sort of a balance between extremes, an ethical an moral outlook on life. (Simplistic you say...? :-)

Now, bring this into your martial art school...

Does it mean that everything has to be “noconflict, up the yin-yang, middle-of-the-road, no elite thinking here boy, let us all be friends, drink herbal tea and hold hands!”?

Does it mean that you can not have a solid business and produce great fighters or quality students at the same time?

Does this mean that you can not have fighters who are also part of a team – great role models with a good moral standard and concern for other people?

As I see it, this either/or thinking is a very limited one! And it has been proven time and time again that it is quite possible to do both. Yes Grasshopper, you can have two thoughts at the same time!

You can have a healthy, moderen martial arts business and great students and fighters too! You can have truly great, dedicated and rock-hard fighters that notice things outside their own tiny “Me-Myself-I” world!



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The Tao of Both Sides: In with the yin and yang thing, continued

You don't need a dirty, run-down, sweaty gym to produce “real” fighters, or no more than a handful of students to supply really top-quality instruction and attention to detail. Sure, it is one option, but not the only one!

If you are into the mindset of middle of the road or the blinders of either/or I urge you to look around! Better yet, why don't you visit one of the living proofs that it can all come together quite nicely.

If you ever go to Toronto, Canada, then drop by Northern Karate School (www.northernkarate.com) and kyoshi Cezar Borkowski. You will see such openness, friendliness, quality and quantity that you will be forever a believer in the “Tao of Both Sides”!

And how do you get there, you say? To Toronto? Oh... to the “Both Sides”?

You need a leader with a clear vision, talent, super guidance, stamina, friendliness, quality, skills, time, energy, leadership qualities and momentum.

Then you need a group of people to follow the leader! That's it basically.

Well I didn't say it was easy. Simple and easy are two very different things...

The “Tao of Both Sides” works everywhere: Boxing, MMA, Karate, Aikido, Jiu-Jitsu, Kung-Fu or Tai-Chi.

It's not in the art – its in the mind and the people who mind!

Torbjørn Arntsen is a 5. dan in Ju Jitsu and the leader of Ju Jitsu Norway. He's been teaching martial arts for more than 25 years. A member of World Kobudo Federation “Hall of Fame” who runs a business in the field of institutional and corporate security and conflict management.