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## **Waiting For The Buddha Will Kill Your Art** by David M. Valadez

It is easy to make room for one's own subjective position by dismissing all others as irrelevant or as ignorant. By claiming a special status to one's own discipline, or one's own art, one can often feel justified in sidelining all other points of view as "talking about something else." Such an action however is seldom a process of valid reasoning.

Hence, I do not believe that "classical" Budo can claim any special interest in needing and/or wanting a student who can "empty their cup." In fact, I do not believe that this is a special ground belonging only to martial arts training – any martial art. The need for a student's capacity to be receptive to incoming information is present in any discipline, particularly those where learning is set to work within a paradigm involving a mentor, or mentor-like figure.

Certainly then, within nearly all forms of Budo, both "old" and "new," the trait of *nyunanshin* (trans. malleable heart/mind) is desired – desired to the point of having it feel needed – or even having it gain a sense of the "mandatory." "Classical" Budo is not in extra "need" here regarding this matter. "Modern" Budo is not afforded more luxury in making use of time to mold and/or to cultivate this trait, etc. The martial arts have no monopoly over this concept. Asia is neither the birthplace nor the area that specializes in this idea. *Nyunanshin* is something the world over is in both short supply of and in great need of gaining. In addition, it has always been like this and probably always will be like this. The social fact that some dojo of "modern" Budo have opened themselves up to more democratic means of transmission, while some dojo of "classical" Budo have taken upon themselves the immense task of historical preservation, does not take away from the fact of, "Whenever you are being mentored, *nyunanshin* is needed."

Rather than wishing for a *deshi* to come in with no exposure to history, rather than hoping for people who have no opinions and/or by nature opt to keep their opinions silent, rather than hoping for a student who does not harbor superficial interests because he/she is without reference to harbor anything deeper, rather than hoping for a student that has already reconciled all his/her ego issues, an instructor, "classical" or "new," should seek to drop the utopia of "the student who is ready to learn." Instructors, serious about transmission (whatever the field), drop the dream of the "perfect student," and face the fact that part of learning is always going to be about learning how to learn – learning how to learn is always going to be about cultivation non-attachment (i.e. the capacity to empty one's cup).

*Nyunanshin* at its heart is about the cultivation of non-attachment. Non-attachment is a trait of the cultivated spirit. It is not something we are born with. Nor do we come to stumble across it through the

various ins and outs of our lives. Budo, “old” and “new,” has long set itself, in its borrowings from Buddhism, to cultivate non-attachment. This it has done, among other reasons, because spiritual maturity is as marked by non-attachment as accurate transmission is marked by spiritual maturity. Thus, Budo, “old” and “new,” should be as interested in cultivating non-attachment as it is in the cultivation of the accurate transmission of tactical architectures.

In expecting non-attachment in a student from the onset, a teacher has therein departed from one of the longest held and most established aspects of Budo training. As an instructor works to “preserve” and “transmit” the technical aspects of his/her art, an instructor should also work to preserve and transmit an art’s given methods of cultivating non-attachment. Thus, in my opinion, a Budo instructor (whatever the art) is addressing the needs of his/her art, addressing the history of his/her art, and is addressing the preservation of his/her art more fully by equally applying his/her efforts toward both teaching and toward helping others learn how to learn. This I suggest in stark contrast to hoping that a Buddha or a near-Buddha walks in through your dojo door – which is one way of making teaching a lot easier but also one way of making sure your art does not survive intact (i.e. missing its methods of cultivating non-attachment), or survive at all, into the next era.

If you wait for the Buddha to show up before you actually start teaching, it will kill your art.