



David M. Valadez
Senshin Center
Dojocho

Awareness and Consideration
by David M. Valadez

Deshi: Sensei, it is said that there is link between Budo and living a moral life. Can you say more on that connection? It is hard to understand how learning to slay another man can lead to or be related to learning how to get along with another man.

Sensei: The paradox is only a superficial one.

Deshi: What is at a deeper level then?

Sensei: For the mind that has gained a sense of non-attachment in a spontaneous combative situation, should that mind be nourished by a potent spiritual system, virtues like Love, Integrity, Honor, Courage, and Patience will blossom forth in every action that mind partakes of.

Deshi: How is that so?

Sensei: At the heart of Love, Integrity, Honor, Courage, and Patience lies selflessness – a non-attachment to one's sense of self. This same non-attachment lies at the heart of tactical spontaneity. In a martial setting, non-attachment to self is utilized to remain in the current moment – the only moment from which one can gain victory. In Love, non-attachment to self allows for the necessary sense of sacrifice upon which Love is grounded. In Integrity, non-attachment to self allows for the necessary sense of Truth – which is greater than our own ego - upon which Integrity is grounded. In Honor, non-attachment to self allows for the necessary sense of consistency upon which Honor is grounded. In Courage, non-attachment to self allows for the necessary sense of fearlessness upon which Courage is grounded. And in Patience, non-attachment to self allows for the necessary sense of Time's infinite nature – where individual moments can become meaningless from a given perspective – upon which Patience is grounded. It is like this with all the human virtues that are at the heart of both the spiritual life and the moral life.

Deshi: Can I work on Love then and come to martial spontaneity?

Sensei: This would be like building the penthouse before the ground floor. You can build the “penthouse” first, as in a pre-fabricated construct, but it does not become the penthouse until it is placed at the top of the building.

Deshi: Does that mean then that Love is not truly Love until we can manifest it within a violent encounter?

Sensei: This is one way of looking at how non-attachment to self relates to both Love and martial spontaneity.

Deshi: Is there something not so superficial such that all things appear as paradox, but not so deep that we are building penthouses at the ground floor because we have yet to experience martial spontaneity?

Sensei: Awareness could be such a thing. In Awareness, which we seek to cultivate on the mat at all times, we have another bridge across the apparent paradox. When we are aware in terms of our combat art, we are said to be martial. When we are aware in our interpersonal relationships we are said to be considerate. Consideration is at the heart of the moral virtue of Compassion.

Deshi: Budo then is a practical means of cultivating the self – a real hands-on process whereby the core of the human being is brought from one moral or spiritual plateau to another one. Whereas other traditions may preach of Compassion, Budo seeks to see, note, and cultivate that which is at the heart of Compassion – Consideration – by seeking to see, note, and cultivate that which is at the heart of Consideration – Awareness.

Sensei: This is correct.

Deshi: Looking at things now, I see that it may be easier to see, note, and cultivate Awareness in us from within a martial setting than from within an interpersonal relationship where moral or virtuous interaction is expected.

Sensei: How?

Deshi: The need for Awareness is so obvious within a martial setting. Hence, its absence is so easily noted. An absence that is easily noted is an absence that is easily remedied.

Sensei: This is correct.

Deshi: In an interpersonal relationship, the lack of Awareness that we may be practicing is in most cases not immediately felt. The consequences of such an action are often left unnoticed. In that way, it appears to most of us that we do not require such Awareness in order to get along with others, or worse, that we feel we possess such Awareness when in fact we do not.

Sensei: Yes, the consequences of Awareness' absence are of so small a nature, but no less real, that they can enter the hearts and minds of those we are relating to – so as to come to plant seeds of rage, hate, fear, anger, jealousy, envy, disgust, etc., that will only blossom later. Only then will we come to experience them, but by then we will be hard-pressed to see ourselves as playing a major role in the overall gardening process.

Deshi: If we cannot practice and cultivate Awareness within a martial setting, where the need is so great and the consequences are so obvious, it seems unlikely that we will be “inspired” enough to act with Awareness outside of this type of setting. It is as you always say, “If we can’t do it at this level, where it is the easiest, then we cannot do it at another level when it is more difficult.” “This is as easy as it is going to get.”

Sensei: And, if not then, then where?

Deshi: “If not then, then where?” I understand, that is the doorway of the paradox, isn’t it? If I cannot choose Life at the moment of Death, then where can I? Correct?

Sensei: This is correct.