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## **Faith, Discipline, and Humility**

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There is a dilemma to training. On the one hand, there are the elements one needs in order to progress – the acquiring of details that continue to be more advanced in relation to each other. On the other hand, there is the beginner-training environment that one must inevitably pass through but that is void of any practical need for the elements that mark progression. In the beginner-training environment, in order to address learning curves, training is so toned down that the details of techniques are often absent of their reason for being. For example, we often strike relatively slow in beginner-training environments. Strikes that are thrown slowly can be dealt with in just about any way. One can stay on the Line of Attack and block. One can clear the Line of Attack and parry. One can do any combination of either. One can even do different or contradictory things for the exact same situation. Regardless of what one does, when one does it, and why one does it, tactical success is usually guaranteed in beginner-training environments due to the lack of ample force and/or energy. This remains true whether the prescribed tactical elements are executed well or poorly.

Because of the nature of the beginner-training environment, nearly anything is tactically viable, and as a result, the martially valid cannot be clearly demarcated from the martially delusional. There is no true practical need to develop correct form because of the levity of the beginner-training environment. In contrast, a less idealized training environment not only demarcates clearly the differences between blocking, parrying, clearing the Line of Attack, etc., it also marks clearly the distinction between right and wrong technique. Good and poor forms are delineated via the need to do things correctly at the risk of failing completely. This fact increases in its significance in proportion to the addition of force and/or energy in one's training environment.

Though the need for tactical validity in less idealized training environments brings clarity to our training, such a need does not fulfill the whole of the learning process. Tactical need, for the most part, can only refine form. It can only take us from poor form to good form. It cannot take us from no form to good form. Thus, we cannot settle the dilemma simply by only utilizing less idealized training environments. Beginning-training environments, or environments that have been idealized for the sake of introducing new elements, will always be a part of training because of their higher capacity to offer alternative responses or actions in the face of habitual ones. Moreover, when there is no form to refine, less idealized training environments tend to favor the production of poor form. This occurs because training environments that are less idealized tend to reinforce habits at a rate only slightly less than the capacity for refinement. For example, when facing the intensity of more aggressive attacks, the no form of leaning or turning away from the attacker (i.e. a habitual response the beginner student often brings with them into the dojo) will tend to be repeated time and time again as the training is continued and as the intensity is maintained and/or increased. As a result, only this type of “untrained” response is being

cultivated further through repetition. Good form will not manifest itself though this type of training because its chance for repetitive reinforcement is outweighed by the beginner's pre-training habit to lean and/or turn away when being attacked.

How does one then reconcile the beginner-training environments through which form is introduced with the less idealized training environments needed to refine one's technique? How do you learn correct form via a situation that does not require it so that you can refine it later in situations where not having correct form will mean total failure? The solution is age old: One must practice faith in one's teacher. One must have the discipline to not waiver in that faith. One must have the humility to survive the doubts that come from not being exposed to the whole picture all at once. Faith, Discipline, and Humility, these are the bases of being a deshi. So central are these elements to the learning process that if, for example, one cannot have faith in one's teacher, one should seek another teacher under which he/she can practice such a virtue. The same is true for discipline and humility. Armed with these bases, a deshi can come to fill the void of practical need in beginner-training environments with the instruction of one's teacher. That is to say, when a deshi can practice faith, discipline, and humility, the need for correct form can be adequately substituted by the need to follow a teacher's instruction in beginner-training environments. In this way, the step from beginner-training environments to less idealized environments meant to refine one's tactics becomes a relatively small one.