

# Warrior Scholar / Warrior Priest Ethos

PRACTICE  
DISCIPLINE  
CULTIVATE  
STRENGTH  
EMBRACE THE  
WARRIOR-SCHOLAR  
ETHOS



# **The Warrior-Scholar Ideal Revisited: New Essays On An Old Vision**

by [Jack Kerwick](#) (Author), [Al Ridenhour](#) (Author)

I am one of its two authors. The other is retired USMC Lieutenant-Colonel Al Ridenhour, a veteran of multiple tours of duty and dozens of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ridenhour is also a lifelong martial artist and the founder of Warrior Flow Combatives, a system of self-defense in which I am a Senior-Instructor.

As its subtitle clarifies, the point of the book is to acquaint readers with the vision of the Warrior-Scholar, a trans-historical, cross-cultural ideal of manhood that has largely been lost to the contemporary West. This Warrior-Scholar is distinguished on account of his perfection of both the intellectual and soldierly virtues: He is as well-read, as sober and curious a thinker, as he is a peerless combatant.

One will not find wanting thinkers of one sort or another who have advocated on behalf of this ideal over the centuries. Thucydides, a general in the very Peloponnesian wars whose history he was the first to compose, has been credited with allegedly having said that “a society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.”

It is, however, to 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan that we must turn to find the paradigmatic champion of the Warrior-Scholar ideal, to the renowned samurai, Miyamoto Musashi.

Musashi, the victor of over 60 duels and a tireless soldier on the battlefield to boot, opened his own martial art school at the age of 30 and began to write his reflections on the “martial science.” Among his insights is that “the warrior’s is the twofold Way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both.”

In other words, the true martial artist, the Warrior, should be as well versed in the arts of culture as he is in the art of war: “Polish your wisdom; learn public

justice, distinguish between good and evil, study the ways of different arts one by one." Musashi himself practiced calligraphy, sculpting, and painting.

In another place, he was even more to the point: "Become acquainted with every art."

The present condition of discourse, such as it is, over sex and gender roles, is undeniably complex. What few have considered, however, is that while the term "toxic masculinity" is indeed a rhetorical weapon wielded by ideologues to advance their political interests, it is a mistake to think, as many do think, that it is *only* a political talking point. "Toxic masculinity," while inescapably, and by design, imprecise as a label, nevertheless connotes a real phenomenon.

Long before something called "feminism" emerged onto the scene, the Warrior-Scholar ideal, as an ideal of manhood, *disintegrated*.

Consequently, in the popular cultural imagination, males were expected to either become "tough guys" or "wonks."

Severed from its scholarly counterpart, the Warrior ideal gives way to the Tough Guy. Conversely, the Scholarly ideal is replaced by the Wonk.

The Tough Guy lacks the virtues of the head. And because he has no share in the intellectual virtues, he lacks as well the excellences of the heart, the character, the will, to stay the course in times of crisis. The Tough Guy's is a penchant for *recklessness*, which Aristotle identified as a vice that can often be confused with courage. Yet recklessness is a character deficiency precisely because the reckless person, lacking discernment, is a fool; he knows not what to fear, when to fear it, and to what extent he should fear it.

The Wonk's physical ineptitude limits his intellectual horizons, for flaccidity of the flesh translates into flaccidity of the mind. Devoid as he is of the Warrior's spirit, the Wonk lacks the courage to be the "gadfly" to the Powers-That-Be that Socrates prided himself on being. Instead, he takes the course of least resistance and becomes a *lapdog*, an apologist for prevailing orthodoxies.

It is in vain that one searches for any originality, creativity, or daring in the Wonk.

*The Warrior-Scholar Ideal Revisited* is our attempt to initiate the process of restoring this lost ideal of manhood, of belying the mind-body dualism that had to take flight when the excellences of the Warrior were disjoined from those of the Scholar.

Interestingly, though, the Warrior-Scholar ideal, while remaining an ideal of manhood, is not only such an ideal, as it can be embodied by women no less than men. Nor, as some may be inclined to think, is this a concession on our part to current political dogmas: Plato himself contended for the inclusion of women among the guardian class of his ideal Republic.

To be sure, given the demonstrable, and demonstrably substantial, differences in physical strength and ability between them and their male counterparts, few females are going to defeat males in a “fight” (whether in a ring or on the streets). That being said, since being a warrior is not a matter of being a tough guy, and since being a warrior is a matter of possessing the skill and the will to achieve victory in *mortal* combat, a properly trained woman, like a properly trained man, can indeed neutralize, by whatever the means, the physical advantages of male attackers.

In other words, critically injuring, maiming, and killing a human predator—to a *properly trained* individual—is actually a *less* formidable task than that of beating an opponent.

Those public figures known for being “conservative” or “libertarian” repeatedly lament government paternalism and what they deem as attacks on masculinity and personal agency. While they tend to advocate on behalf of the Second Amendment, the military, and the police, seldom, if ever, can they be counted upon to call upon citizens to assume responsibility for their own protection by taking up training in a martial art. Indeed, it’s difficult to avoid the inference that they are as beholden to the very “Statism” that they decry as are their political opponents.

In calling for a resurrection of the Warrior-Scholar ideal, we most definitely are not calling upon citizens to join the military or law enforcement. Rather, it is

our hope that individuals, *today*, will begin to make themselves into warriors in their everyday lives through training in a martial art (preferably the art in which we ourselves train). We return once more to Musashi, who declared that the “true science of martial arts means practicing them in such a way that they will be useful at any time, and to teach them in such a way that they will be useful in all things.” And we are most definitely not calling on citizens to enroll in college in order to become scholars.

Psychologically, intellectually, and physically, in mind, body, and soul, we’re inviting people to transform themselves—*for themselves*.

[\*The Warrior-Scholar Ideal Revisited: New Essays on an Old Vision\*](#) promises to supply the framework within which those who are interested in accepting the invitation can begin to *reframe* their own self-conceptions, and can begin seeing their own lives in terms of the odyssey of self-discovery and self-creation upon which they will embark.

# MARTIAL ARTS and SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY



## **Philosophical Principles in Martial Arts**

Zen and the Warrior's Path: Many martial arts philosophies are rooted in Zen Buddhism, which emphasizes the importance of meditation and mindfulness as pathways to enlightenment...

# The Philosophy of Martial Arts: Mindfulness and Meditation

Martial arts, often celebrated for their physical prowess and combative techniques, offer a deeply spiritual and philosophical dimension that goes beyond the dojo. The practice of martial arts isn't merely about striking, grappling, or navigating physical challenges; it's also a journey into the depths of one's mind, body, and spirit. At the heart of this journey lies the interplay between mindfulness and meditation—essential components that have shaped martial arts practices for centuries. Join us as we delve into the philosophy of martial arts through the lenses of mindfulness and meditation.

## The essence of mindfulness in martial arts

Mindfulness, the practice of being fully present in the moment, is a cornerstone of martial arts. It trains practitioners to maintain acute awareness of their surroundings, their opponent's movements, and their own body's responses.

### Staying present: the power of now

In martial arts, every second counts, and being present can be the difference between victory and defeat. Mindfulness in martial arts teaches students to let go of distractions and focus entirely on the present moment. This state of heightened awareness is not only vital for executing techniques successfully but also for anticipating an opponent's next move.

### Enhancing situational awareness

Martial artists are constantly taught to be aware of their environment, their own physical state, and their opponent's intentions. Mindfulness practices

help enhance this situational awareness, allowing practitioners to respond more quickly and effectively. Whether you're practicing karate or Brazilian jiu-jitsu, the ability to maintain a calm, focused mind under pressure is essential.

## Emotional resilience and control

The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond physical awareness. It also fosters emotional resilience and control, crucial in high-stress situations. By training the mind to stay centered and composed, martial artists learn to manage their emotions, whether it's fear, anger, or frustration. This level-headedness is invaluable, not just in the dojo, but also in daily life.

# The role of meditation in martial arts

Meditation in martial arts serves as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual realms. It's a practice that cultivates inner peace, focus, and discipline.

## Focus and concentration

Meditation is known for improving focus and concentration—attributes that are indispensable in martial arts. Regular meditation trains the mind to quieten distractions and maintain intense focus, whether during practice or in actual combat.

## Developing inner peace

Many martial arts, such as Tai Chi and Aikido, emphasise harmony and balance. Meditation supports this philosophy by promoting inner peace and tranquillity. This inner calm can have profound effects on a martial artist's performance, helping them to move with grace and confidence.

## Connection between mind and body

Meditation also strengthens the connection between the mind and body. By engaging in meditation practices, martial artists enhance their body awareness, ensuring that their movements are not only swift but also precise and efficient. The mind-body connection is central to achieving peak performance in any martial art.

## Philosophical principles in martial arts

The principles of mindfulness and meditation are deeply interwoven with the philosophical foundations of martial arts. Understanding these principles can enrich your practice and provide a more holistic approach to martial arts.

### Zen and the warrior's path

Many martial arts philosophies are rooted in Zen Buddhism, which emphasizes the importance of meditation and mindfulness as pathways to enlightenment. The warrior's path in martial arts is not solely about physical combat but also about the cultivation of the spirit. Zen teachings encourage practitioners to pursue self-mastery, inner peace, and a deep understanding of their own nature.

### The concept of 'Mushin'

'Mushin' translates to 'no-mind' and is a concept widely embraced in martial arts. It refers to a state of mental clarity and ego-less awareness, where the practitioner acts intuitively and spontaneously. Achieving Mushin requires rigorous mental training and the regular practice of mindfulness and meditation. In this state, the mind is free from distractions, allowing for seamless and fluid movements, whether in practice or combat.

### Bushido: the way of the warrior

Bushido, the code of the samurai, is another philosophical system that underpins many martial arts practices. It encompasses virtues like honor,

respect, and courage. Meditation and mindfulness are integral to living by the Bushido code, providing the mental fortitude to uphold these values in both martial and everyday contexts.

# Integrating mindfulness and meditation into your martial arts practice

To truly benefit from the philosophy of martial arts, it's essential to integrate mindfulness and meditation into your training regimen.

## Regular meditation practice

Start with a few minutes of meditation each day. Find a quiet space, sit comfortably, and focus on your breath. Over time, you can extend the duration of your practice and explore different meditation techniques, such as guided visualizations or body scans.

## Mindful training sessions

Incorporate mindfulness into your training sessions by paying close attention to your movements, breath, and physical sensations. Commit to being fully present during practice, whether you're performing drills, sparring, or simply stretching.

## Breathing techniques

Breathing is a fundamental aspect of both mindfulness and meditation. Practice deep, controlled breathing exercises to enhance your focus and calm your mind. Techniques like diaphragmatic breathing or pranayama can be particularly beneficial.

## Reflection and self-awareness

After each training session, take a few moments to reflect on your performance, emotions, and progress. This reflection fosters self-awareness and helps you identify areas for improvement, both physically and mentally.

## Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between mindfulness and meditation in martial arts?

Mindfulness involves maintaining present-moment awareness and focus, both during and outside of training. Meditation, on the other hand, typically refers to specific practices designed to cultivate this awareness and focus. Both are complementary and essential for achieving mental clarity and composure in martial arts.

How can meditation improve my martial arts performance?

Meditation enhances your ability to focus, reduces stress, and strengthens the mind-body connection. These benefits translate into improved precision, speed, and control in your martial arts practice.

Are there specific meditation techniques for martial artists?

Yes, certain meditation techniques are particularly beneficial for martial artists. These include Zen meditation (Zazen), mindfulness meditation, and visualization techniques, where practitioners mentally rehearse their movements and techniques.

Can mindfulness help in competitions?

Absolutely. Mindfulness trains you to stay focused on the present moment, enhancing your ability to react swiftly and effectively. It also helps manage competition-related stress and anxiety, allowing you to perform at your best.

Is it necessary to follow a particular philosophy to practice martial arts?

While many martial arts are deeply intertwined with specific philosophies, it's not mandatory to adhere strictly to these beliefs. However, understanding and integrating elements of these philosophies, such as mindfulness and meditation, can greatly enrich your practice and personal growth.

## Summary

Exploring the philosophy of martial arts reveals a rich tapestry where physical, mental, and spiritual elements are seamlessly interwoven. Mindfulness and meditation are not mere adjuncts but central to the practice, fostering greater awareness, emotional control, and a profound mind-body connection. By integrating these practices into your martial arts journey, you open yourself up to a deeper, more holistic understanding of what it means to be both a warrior and a sage. Embrace mindfulness and meditation to enhance your martial arts practice and enrich your life's broader tapestry.

# The Spiritual Dimensions of the Martial Arts

*He who wishes to live a martial art, rather than just practice it on a physical level, must also train his consciousness to attain self-discipline so, at last, his conscious mind will merge into an identity with the very principle of life itself.* – Maurice Zalle

Amongst the usual loud and predictable offerings at the Australian cinema box office last summer, the Hollywood movie *The Last Samurai* emerged as an interesting alternative for many curious movie-goers. We were presented with a unique perspective on the cultural interaction between East and West. The film deals almost exclusively with the philosophical, spiritual, and martial differences between Japan and America, and presents in grand form the figure of the Samurai, and the way his martial practice has a powerful spiritual dimension to which the West cannot relate.

The traditional practice of Martial Arts is now experiencing a renaissance of sorts, and this is largely due to the fact many people are realizing the existence of the esoteric spiritual components behind widely known styles. The Arts are no longer considered remnants of old cultures, but valid and effective methods of achieving spiritual growth. The Martial Arts were actually formulated for this purpose all along.

## A Spiritual Heritage

In 475, the Indian monk Bodhidharma arrived in Southern China. On his arrival he moved to the Huan province where he spent nine years in meditation, facing the rock wall of a cave. When the monk emerged from his retreat, he stumbled across a small mountain temple approximately one mile away called Shaolin. Bodhidharma was shocked to see the terrible physical condition of the monks of the Shaolin Temple who practiced long-term meditation exercises which, while making them spiritually strong, totally destroyed their physical health.

Bodhidharma created an exercise regime for the monks involving physical techniques that were efficient in strengthening the body, and eventually, could be used to defend oneself from the inevitable traveling thieves and gangs prominent in the area at the time. The latter benefit was a simple side benefit of the practice. The former was the main objective. The primary concern was always maintaining the physical strength of the monks for the purpose of meditation. These physical exercises developed into what we now know as Martial Arts.

Amongst the myriad of contemporary options for developing the spirit, the Martial Arts remains one of the oldest and most universally effective systems for teaching internal ideas that awaken the spiritual dimension in all parts of life.

### The Physical Path To Enlightenment

The true value in studying Martial Arts lies not in the learning of the technique or system itself but in the acquisition of particular internal qualities that are developed through the learning process. The physical exercises are concrete examples of abstract philosophical principles. Footwork systems teach the student about the qualities of energy, ebb and flow, and both creative and destructive potential. Handwork patterns teach the student about balance, dynamics, and the intuition of the natural spirit.

The actions of blocking, deflecting, striking, breaking, and throwing all contain concepts that can be applied to the human spirit. Then in combat, we unite these concepts and in the process discover our own nature which is forced to emerge under extreme stress and pressure.

One is never rattled as much as when under attack. In this act, one's mental is tested and one emerges with a new view of themselves and in many cases, a view of their true self. This is a first step to self-realization.

The legendary Japanese swordsman, Myamoto Musashi, found that the more he looked for proficiency and efficiency in his training, the more he looked for proficiency and efficiency in all things. He began to look for a deeper purpose in everything that he did.

When farming, he took land made useless by yearly floods and turned it into productive land by building his dikes and fields in the shape of the natural water flow. The farmers built a shrine in his honor for his concepts and prayed at that shrine daily. He found that every part of his life affected every other part of his life and he began to look for spirituality in every part of his life.

Combat places great demands on the capacities of the warrior. Such demands act as powerful learning situations for self-discovery and self-confrontation.

## Confronting Death

*To defeat a thousand enemies is good, but the Samurai who defeats himself is the greatest of warriors.*

Perhaps the first and most important of these is the confrontation with death. Throughout life we are sporadically confronted with death, be it through family, television, or literature. In the modern world, we are very familiar with death, but rarely if ever are we confronted with the prospect of our personal demise. But when it does arrive it most likely will be a sudden, irrevocable, and inconvenient event from which we learn nothing. The martial artist does not ignore or wait for death but walks right up to it.

In the Martial Arts, death is a constant presence. The whole activity revolves around it. Attack, defense, and counter-attack are all performed as if a true life-or-death situation were involved. With proficiency, the vigor of the actions increases and, if one is using weapons, one may employ, for instance, a 'live' (naked) sword instead of a bamboo or wooden sword – all of which make the situation genuinely dangerous. The practitioner confronts death and makes peace with it in the knowledge it is inevitable. With this understanding, there exists no more fear, and the martial artist is now truly free.

All spiritual systems set up a confrontation with death, for confronting death is perhaps the most important element of spirituality. The basic preparatory practices of Buddhism involve the recognition that one's life is

short and one may die tomorrow. In the Chod rite of Tibet, practitioners visit a graveyard at night (where the corpses are left exposed to the elements and scavengers) and invite the demons to come and take them. Christians and Muslims invite the Almighty to take their souls at any time.

The fear of death is the greatest obstacle for the martial artist. This fear has a quality of rigidity, paralysis, or loss of control; one may freeze with terror, or one may panic and react blindly and irrationally. Such reactions, intruding at the crucial moment in combat, will spell death, even for the technically accomplished fighter.

But freedom from this incapacitating fear releases great powers. There is a story of a Master of the Japanese Tea Ceremony from the province of Tasa – a man of no martial skill yet of great meditative and spiritual accomplishment. He accidentally gave offense to a high-ranking Samurai and was challenged to a duel.

He went to the local Zen Master to seek advice. The Zen Master told him frankly that he had little chance of surviving the encounter, but that he could ensure an honorable death by treating the combat as he would the formal ritual of the Tea Ceremony. He should compose his mind, paying no attention to the petty chattering of thoughts of life and death. He should grasp the sword straightforwardly, as he would the ladle in the Tea Ceremony; and with the same precision and concentration of mind with which he would pour the boiling water onto the tea, he should step forward, with no thought of the consequence, and strike his opponent down in one blow.

The Tea Master prepared himself accordingly, abandoning all fear of death. When the morning of the duel arrived, the Samurai, encountering the total poise and fearlessness of his opponent, was so shaken that he promptly begged forgiveness and called off the fight.

The recognition and mental triumph over death is the martial artist's greatest power, in that he will focus on the fact he has little time and hence lets his acts flow accordingly. Each act is your last battle on Earth, and only

with this philosophy will your acts have their rightful power. Otherwise, they will be, for as long as you live, the acts of a timid man.

In the words of a Samurai legend, “Being timid is fine if you are to be immortal, but if you are going to die, there is no time for timidity, simply because timidity makes you cling to something that exists only in your thoughts.” It soothes you while everything is at a lull, but then the awesome, mysterious world will open its mouth for you, as it will open for every one of us, and then you will realize your sure ways were not sure at all. Being timid prevents us from examining and exploiting our lot as men.

## Mastery of Energy

To the martial artist, Energy manifests within each individual as spirit, spirit manifests in each individual as mind. This Energy or “Chi” as it is known in China, or “Ki” in Japan, permeates everything, and hence is both the martial artist’s strongest connection to his enemy as well as his strongest weapon against his enemy.

The mastery of this energy is a central element of all traditional forms of Martial Arts practice. Two widely recognized expressions of this ideal are the Chinese art of Tai Chi Chuan and the Japanese art of Aikido.

Tai Chi Chuan integrates many elements of Chinese culture such as philosophy and religion, medicine, and military practice. It draws its inspiration for movement heavily from the philosophy of yin and yang. It incorporates the theory of the Five Elements of Cosmology and the principles of the Bagua (“Eight Trigrams”) together with motion, creating a continuous flow of movement that reflects the ideas behind these ideologies.

The Yin-Yang symbol, which is often linked with Tai Chi Chuan, represents the interaction of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are shown in equal amounts, yet the Yin portion of the Yin-Yang contains a small amount of Yang, and the Yang portion is an equally small amount of Yin.

The ancient Chinese saw the universe as a vast unity with every part of it being related to and dependent on every other part. Within this unity, there is continual change in an endless cycle between two partners, the Yin (feminine, dark, soft, yielding) and the Yang (masculine, hard, aggressive).

The universe is entirely made from these two forms of energy and for all things to progress harmoniously, the forces of Yin and yang must constantly interact with each other. While doing so, each must evolve, over some time, into its opposite, just as day gradually turns to night. For this reason, everything that seems to be Yin contains some Yang, and all that is Yang also contains some Yin, without which change would not be possible. (Chen Lei)

From this view of existence and energy, the style of Tai Chi Chuan was constructed. It is a perfect physical expression of the Yin-Yang philosophy and operates within the same parameters and limitations.

While other martial styles are violently fast and rigid, Tai Chi is slow and controlled, with techniques that flow endlessly into one another. Just as Yin-Yang energy maintains a continual flow, so does the Tai Chi form. There is no rigid stop-start, only a controlled natural mimic of energy. This is why Tai Chi is often seen as one of the most graceful and peaceful Martial Arts. Just as energy is circular in flow, all Tai Chi footwork is circular in direction, and just as energy is a natural phenomenon, the Tai Chi defense postures are always in a natural form, not rigid, boxing-like military stances.

The effective practice of Tai Chi relies on a pure and deep understanding of the Yin-Yang/ Tai Chi view of Chi and the universe. Without this spiritual dimension to the art, the student is not practicing Tai Chi, they are simply performing empty movements of little significance to themselves or the world around them.

Another art dealing with the dynamics of energy was founded by Ueshiba Morihei in 1942. The Japanese art of Aikido was considered a continuation of the Samurai Arts and borrows much of its spiritual dimension and expression from Bushido (The Way of the Samurai), particularly its use of

traditional sword practices. It is a relatively contemporary system and much a continuation of Japanese values and culture as it is a cultivation of philosophy and spirit.

The meaning of Aikido is literally the “artful path of discovery of gathering Ki”. Ki is the Japanese translation of Chi and shares an identical definition. It is suggested that Ki was “born” at the same instant as the rest of the universe and that we are all born from the Ki of the universe. All living organisms have equal access to Ki, and it will course through our system if we allow it. Daily Aikido practice is primarily directed at maintaining a balanced state physically and emotionally and practicing ways to cultivate this energy.

Like Tai Chi, Aikido is a physical expression of this way of seeing the world. As a result, it has no attack form, because attacking an opponent would be like attacking a family member or damaging the flow of Universal Ki energy sustaining the world. Once again, because Ki moves constantly, so does the martial artist, with all of Aikido’s footwork occurring in circular patterns. Aikido also places great attention on the balance aspect of energy and hence has created an awareness of balance essential to its maneuvers. The main techniques of the style involve particular throwing and wrestling patterns that are precisely dependent on the perfect balance of its practitioner.

In Aikido like all Martial Arts, physical and emotional balance is codependent. Physical balance helps to engender emotional balance. An understanding of the nature of our spirit will help the practitioner create an effective alignment of thought and action. When every aspect of the individual is aligned, the individual is better able to adapt and change.

## Spirituality and the Samurai

The Way of Zen perpetuates the earliest Buddhist traditions. It signifies the perfect natural state of enlightenment. Zen cannot be rationalized, only experienced, lived, and realized. Unattainable through concrete thought and analysis, the Way of Zen is found through meditational practice engaging both mind and body. Zen may be considered a unique expression

of the Mahayana Buddhism. It originated in the northern regions of India and later moved to China and then Japan where it became a strong influence from around 1190 CE onwards. It exerted such an influence that up until a few years ago, it would have been difficult to find a person of noble Japanese origins who had not been exposed to Zen philosophy.

Zen offers an interesting perspective in the world of Martial Arts and spirituality, because it becomes hard to see where the spiritual philosophy ends, and the martial practice begins. While most Martial Arts philosophies are a building process supplying us with tools and understanding, the experience of Zen is a destructive process, in the strict sense that it removes things from our lives that keep us from enlightenment. Zen's liberation comes in absolute autonomy. There are no gods, no denominations, and no higher authority. It is necessary to abandon all crutches and proceed forward with no assistance.

The role of Zen in the Samurai society is amazingly complex. It sustained the warrior spirit in two ways: Morally, because Zen is a system which teaches the individual not to look back once the course is decided; and philosophically, because Zen treats life and death indifferently.

The classic text, Hagakure or "Hidden by Leaves" attributed to the Samurai Yamamoto Tsunetomo, states that, "The Way of the Samurai is found in death" and goes on to say that the Samurai is powerful because his mind is no longer attached to life and death. The Samurai will "conquer immortality by dying without hesitations." Great deeds are accomplished when one attains the Zen state of "no-mindedness."

It is through this Zen state of "no mind" that swordplay becomes not an act of killing but an instrument of spiritual self-discipline. The individual, the sword, and the target become one. The blade moves by itself under the influence of the target without any individual decision, always finding a perfect blow. The acknowledgment of mastery of the sword is also the acknowledgment of a higher degree of Zen spirituality. The "no-mind" is one of the most influential Zen concepts to mix with the Samurai psyche.

A mind unconscious of itself is a mind that is not at all disturbed by effects of any kind. It is the original mind and not the delusive one that is chock-full of effects. It is always flowing; it never halts; nor does it turn solid. It fills the whole body, pervading every part of the body. It is never like a stone or a piece of wood. If it should find a resting place anywhere, it is not a mind-of-no-mind. A no-mind will keep nothing in it. It is thus called mushin. (G.R. Parulski)

This “empty-mindedness” applies to all creative activities, such as dancing and swordplay. The mind flows freely from one object to another stopping at no single concern. In this process, the mind is free and fulfills every function required of it. When the mind stops at a single thought, it loses its freedom. It cannot hear, it cannot see, even when sound enters the ears or light flashes before the eyes. Every mind has the nature of Buddha, and every person is already liberated beyond birth and death. They must only realize this fact. Zen seeks to promote this realization, the gradual process of which is referred to as Satori. The consequence of Satori is a completely new way of seeing the world and one’s place within it. According to Zen, liberation should not be looked for in the next world, for this is the next world and is already liberated. We are already at our goal, yet we cannot realize it.

Zen does not require involvement in speculation, sacred texts, or writings, and every theory is valid only as an indication of the Way. Originally a secret doctrine, passed on by the Buddha to his disciple Mahakassapa, Zen itself arose as a reaction against the fantastic and shallow rituals of traditional Hinduism, and while seeming quite loose in form, it operates on a base of severe self-discipline which appealed to the Samurai. Far removed from the harsh ascetic practices of its contemporary systems, the discipline of Zen involves a more subtle and inward form operating on four levels.

The first is the mastery of external objects, in particular the reactions that emanate from them. The student must understand that every time a yearning leads him toward something, he is not in control of the external object, but rather the object is in control of him. “He who loves a liquor,

deceived himself in thinking that he is drinking the liquor; the truth is, the liquor is drinking him.” (Hagakure)

The second stage sees the student master the physical body. Often at this level, martial training accompanies spiritual growth as an initiatory counterpart. It is here that legends grew of superhuman Samurai and masters who could withstand the extremes of heat and cold, and break trees and stone with their bare hands. The Samurai exerts dominion over his body and mastery of his mental functioning.

Imagine your own body as something other than yourselves. If it cries, quiet it right away, as a strict mother does with her child. If it is capricious, control it as a rider does his horse, through the bridle. If it is sick, administer medicines to it, just as a doctor does with a patient. If it disobeys you, punish it, as a teacher does with a pupil. (Hagakure)

The third stage involves controlling personal emotions and establishing an inner equilibrium. Through meditational practices, the student confronts every fear and excitement in an effort to “bring the heart under control.”

The fourth stage is the rejection of the Ego, and the most difficult. The heart of the philosophy promotes a higher form of spontaneity, freedom, and calmness in action. Traditional arts have originated in the East as a response and execution of this mental state. Many of these arts were developed as a means of achieving Zen awareness. While the majority are martial in nature, the Zen element extends to the art of drama, the tea ceremony, flower arranging, and painting. Mastery in any of these arts cannot be achieved without the inner enlightenment and transformative power of Zen.

Generally Zen does not promote the hermit-like existence found in legend, but rather asks that the practitioner lives in the world with a Zen state of consciousness which should be permanent and permeate every experience and activity. The student will labor with his mind and body until they have reached the extreme limit of all natural faculties, and eventually achieve Satori. The student is only supposed to spend the training period in Zen

monasteries, and once they have achieved Satori, the student returns to the world, choosing a way of life that fits their needs.

Martial Arts systems are all united in the fact they demand the practitioner to readjust their lifestyle. Aside from being an intellectual and physical pursuit, true practice arises in the expression of Art throughout one's daily life and thought. Attending a Martial Arts class once a week will not only release the enormous transformative potential of this avenue, but it will start you on an ancient path that has affected lives for centuries. Like all spiritual endeavors, it requires commitment and patience.

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# Exploring the Philosophy Behind Martial Arts

The grandeur of martial arts extends well beyond the physical feats that often capture our imagination.

As we get into the rich tapestry of this ancient practice, we uncover layers of intricate beliefs, historical narratives, and a deep-seated philosophy that binds the mind and body into a single, harmonious entity.

Kung Fu, for instance, isn't solely a method of self-preservation against physical threats. Embedded within its core is a profound journey of self-discovery and spiritual development.

The art's lineage can be traced to the venerable Shaolin Monastery, where martial techniques were intimately entwined with Buddhist teachings, fostering a rounded approach to personal and communal betterment.

The Shaolin monks exemplified a balance between vigorous physical training and spiritual introspection. Their practices weren't just about mastering fighting techniques but imbibing a deeper sense of purpose and inner alignment.

This synthesis propelled Kung Fu into a form of living philosophy. A practitioner learns that each movement is more than just an exercise; it's a manifestation of mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual harmony.

The lessons drawn from such a dynamic practice remain as relevant today as they were centuries ago, shedding light on how an ancient tradition can inform and enhance modern living.

Consider the way martial arts disciplines like judo and karate from Japan embrace the ethos of honor and what they teach about resilience and respect.

The journey of mastering these arts cultivates an environment where mental and moral qualities evolve in synergy with physical skills.

The idea is to shape not just a formidable fighter but an individual of admirable character, offering a blueprint for navigating life's challenges with integrity and honor.

## **The Historical and Cultural Foundations of Martial Arts**

When examining the historical and cultural foundations of martial arts, it is essential to appreciate their complex origins and how they are deeply interwoven with the philosophies and customs of various societies.

Kung fu, for example, traces its beginnings back to ancient China, where it was not just a means of self-defense but a way to cultivate discipline, respect, and spiritual harmony.

The legendary Shaolin Monastery, often heralded as one of the birthplaces of kung fu, symbolizes how Buddhist principles and martial prowess combined to create something enriching and impactful. Similarly, Japanese martial arts such as judo and karate emerged from concepts of honor, respect, and the Bushido code, emphasizing not merely physical strength but the importance of mental and moral fortitude.

Beyond its physical application, many practitioners view martial arts as a combination of cultural heritage and personal evolution. Bruce Lee, a martial arts icon, elevated these practices beyond mere combat. His integration of philosophy into martial arts training showcased its potential as a comprehensive lifestyle approach.

Through his revolutionary art, Jeet Kune Do, Bruce Lee emphasized adaptability and self-expression, arguing that martial arts should not be rigid but rather a fluid form of personal growth. You see, the real contribution of figures like Bruce Lee is their ability to harness the cultural elements of martial arts and breathe new life into them without losing their essence.

These cultural layers add a transcendent quality to training, allowing martial arts to serve as a pathway toward greater self-awareness and societal knowledge.

Martial arts encompass far more than physical techniques or strategized combat; they represent a holistic practice that integrates mind, body, and spirit. Practicing kung fu, for instance, involves mastering complex movements that require not only physical agility but also mental clarity and emotional balance.

By immersing yourself in martial arts, you start on a journey that fosters personal and spiritual development. It is not simply about acquiring the ability to defend yourself but about cultivating virtues such as patience, humility, and perseverance. The rituals and philosophies ingrained in martial arts training help you to internalize broader life lessons, transforming each practice session into an opportunity for self-reflection and growth.

Over time, this holistic approach can bring about a deeper sense of inner peace and fulfillment, reminding you that the ultimate goal of martial arts is to achieve harmony with oneself and the world around you.

## **The Spiritual and Philosophical Dimensions**

The spiritual side of martial arts becomes evident when we get into practices like Tai Chi, which seamlessly blend physical movement with meditative principles.

Originating as a martial art, Tai Chi is often practiced today for its therapeutic benefits, focusing on slow, deliberate movements coupled with deep, mindful breathing.

This synergy of body and mind underscores a fundamental aspect of martial arts philosophy: the pursuit of inner peace. Engaging in such practices allows you to step back from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, encouraging a deeper connection with your inner self.

As you move through the flowing sequences, you begin to quiet your mind, releasing stress and fostering a sense of tranquility. This meditative state is something that extends beyond the training hall and into your daily life, helping you remain centered and balanced amidst life's challenges.

Moreover, martial arts philosophy often promotes the concept of enlightenment, which can be seen in disciplines influenced by Zen Buddhism, like Kendo and Aikido. In Kendo, the 'way of the sword' becomes a metaphorical journey toward spiritual awakening. The rigorous, repetitive training helps practitioners attain a higher state of awareness, transcending the physical act of wielding a sword.

Similarly, Aikido, which means 'the way of harmony with the spirit,' emphasizes blending with an opponent's movements rather than clashing against them. This philosophy encourages you to approach conflict not with aggression, but with a harmonious, reconciliatory mindset.

Through consistent practice, you learn to apply these principles in everyday interactions, leading to more peaceful, constructive relationships. These martial arts thus serve as vehicles for self-discovery, enabling you to understand deeper truths about yourself and your place in the world.

Adopting martial arts as a lifelong practice involves continuous self-reflection and personal growth. The philosophy behind martial arts is not static; it evolves with you, adapting to the changes and experiences that shape your life's journey.

For instance, as you advance in rank, the challenges grow not just physically but also mentally and spiritually. The discipline and perseverance required to overcome these hurdles teach invaluable life lessons about resilience and determination. With the emphasis on balance—both literally and figuratively, it instills in you a sense of moderation and mindfulness. Martial arts training encourages you to find a balance between strength and softness, effort and ease, action and stillness. This balance is not merely a physical skill but a guiding principle that influences every aspect of your life, contributing to overall well-being and a richer, more fulfilling existence.

## **Practical Applications and Personal Growth**

Through the lens of *personal growth in martial arts*, one can appreciate how the philosophical teachings of martial arts seamlessly apply to modern life and individual self-improvement. Engaging in martial arts training invites you to step onto a path that blends rigorous physical discipline with profound mental and ethical development.

By practicing martial arts, you are not merely honing your combat skills but nurturing key values such as discipline and resilience.

Take, for example, a dedicated martial artist who wakes up at dawn daily to practice kata, the structured forms used in many martial arts disciplines. This routine requires more than just physical endurance. It demands unwavering commitment and mental fortitude, traits that naturally spill over into other areas of life. The discipline cultivated in morning training sessions can enhance your ability to focus at work, manage stress, and tackle life's challenges with a level head.

Resilience, a cornerstone of *martial arts training*, is often forged in the fire of repeated failure and continuous striving.

When practitioners engage in sparring and facing an opponent, they swiftly learn that losing a match is not the end but an opportunity for growth.

You learn to fall and rise again, insightful of each experience. Anecdotes abound from martial artists who faced multiple defeats in tournaments only to come back stronger and more adept. This resilience is not limited to the dojo or training hall.

One practitioner might recount a time when the tenacity developed in martial arts empowered them to overcome a significant personal or professional setback. Instead of succumbing to defeat, they applied the lesson learned on the mats to persevere, showing how the philosophy of martial arts translates into real-world grit and determination.

Moreover, the moral elements embedded within martial arts practices are beneficial to character development. Martial arts are not just about physical prowess or skill acquisition; they are intrinsically linked to ethical conduct and communal responsibility. The code of conduct often integral to martial arts—respect for instructors and peers, fair play, humility in victory, and grace in defeat—fosters a sense of moral obligation. In a *martial arts community*, practitioners learn the significance of mutual respect and compassion.

For example, during belt ceremonies in many dojos, higher-ranked students may be tasked with mentoring beginners. This mentoring dynamic strengthens community bonds and instills a sense of duty and care towards others. Indeed, these moral principles championed by martial arts training help you develop into a well-rounded individual, capable of contributing positively to society at large.

By internalizing these values, martial artists evolve not just in their fighting technique but in their overall human character. Thus, martial arts transcend the boundaries of physical training and emerge as a profound and enriching journey toward holistic personal growth.

When you begin to appreciate martial arts as a microcosm of life itself, the training becomes more than just learning punches, kicks, and forms. It becomes a medium through which you can understand the rhythm of existence and the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit.

Deepening your engagement with these ancient practices often means seeking comprehensive resources that cater not only to techniques but also to the rich philosophical context that underpins them.

**Bushido** is more than a code of war: it is a philosophy of life that defines how a samurai should live, act, and serve. With roots stretching back centuries, Bushido represents a set of values encompassing discipline, honor, loyalty, courage, and benevolence—principles that guided the samurai in their actions in both times of peace and conflict. These values not only shaped the spirit and character of the samurai but also influenced Japanese culture at large, creating an ethic of life that persists in Japan and the contemporary world.

Although Bushido was born in the context of war, its teachings transcend the battlefield. This philosophy continues to offer practical and meaningful lessons for everyday life, reminding us of the importance of responsibility, integrity, and harmony between our actions and our convictions. We will explore the seven fundamental pillars of Bushido and how these principles, which once guided the samurai, find relevance in the modern world, offering a path to self-realization and purpose.

# The Core Values of Bushido and Their Application in Everyday Life

## **Righteousness (Gi): Living with Justice and Equity**

It is the ability to act in accordance with what is morally just and right. For the samurai, being upright means acting justly, keeping one's word, and respecting one's values without hesitation. In modern life, uprightness involves making ethical decisions, even when they are unpopular or difficult. This principle teaches us to always act with consistency between our words and actions, allowing us to live with an integrity that inspires trust and respect in others.

**Real-life example:** A leader who acts with integrity chooses not to compromise his company's values for short-term gains. This person chooses to be transparent and maintain ethics, even when faced with external pressures. This integrity inspires loyalty and respect in his employees, customers, and business partners, establishing an organizational culture based on trust and honesty.

## **Courage (Yu): Facing Fear and Overcoming Challenges**

Courage goes beyond physical bravery in war; it is the willingness to act with integrity, facing difficult decisions and situations that may cause fear. This value invites us to take risks and stand up for what is right, even when doing so entails personal sacrifice. In modern life, courage gives us the strength to change course, face our fears, and overcome obstacles in our personal and professional lives.

**Real-life example:** A professional who decides to quit his secure job to follow his passion and start his own business shows courage. Although this involves considerable risk, this person is confident in his ability to face challenges and is committed to overcoming fears that may arise on the path to his purpose.

### **Benevolence (Jin): Helping and Supporting Others**

In Bushido, it represents the ability to act with compassion and empathy, especially towards the most vulnerable. The true strength of the samurai lies in his ability to protect and help, not in imposing his will on others. This value is applied to our daily lives in the willingness to care for and support those around us, promoting harmonious and altruistic coexistence.

**Real-life example:** During a crisis or natural disaster, those who act benevolently help those affected, donating their time, resources, or skills to aid recovery. In a professional context, a boss who cares about the well-being of his or her employees during difficult times demonstrates benevolence, putting the well-being of others above financial gain.

### **Respect (Rei): Practicing Dignity and Courtesy**

It is one of the essential virtues in Bushido, as it helps the samurai to recognize the inherent value in all people, regardless of their position or ability. In modern life, respect manifests itself in courtesy, humility and the recognition of the rights and opinions of others, values fundamental to harmony and social collaboration.

**Real-life example:** At work, a leader who actively listens to his or her employees, acknowledging their opinions and points of view,

practices respect. In personal relationships, respecting the opinions and boundaries of others, and avoiding derogatory attitudes, demonstrates respect, and fosters relationships of trust and harmony.

### **Honesty and Sincerity (Makoto): Being Authentic and Transparent**

It is one of the most important pillars of Bushido, as it allows the samurai to act without deceit or falsehood. In today's context, being honest means being transparent and sincere in our relationships and commitments, fostering trust and authenticity in all our interactions.

**Real life example:** A manager who is honest about the difficulties facing the company and who admits his mistakes acts honestly and earns the respect of his team. In everyday life, someone who is honest and consistent with his words and actions generates an atmosphere of trust in his relationships, strengthening ties with those around him.

### **Honor (Meiyo): Maintaining Personal Integrity**

It is the core of Bushido and the most sacred value for the samurai. Living with honor means acting in a dignified and responsible manner, respecting our principles, and maintaining integrity in all situations. This value remains vital in modern life, as honor is the foundation of our reputation and our ability to act for a higher purpose.

**Real life example:** A professional who keeps his commitments despite difficulties, or who rejects unethical behavior, lives with honor. In their personal life, someone who strives to always act in

accordance with his values, without giving in to social pressure, shows an honor that makes him an example of consistency and self-respect.

### **Loyalty (Chu): Commitment and Devotion to a Cause**

It is the unconditional dedication of the samurai to his lord and his community. In modern life, loyalty is manifested in devotion to the people, ideals, and projects in which we believe, committing ourselves to them, and facing adversity with them.

**Real life example:** An employee who stays with a company during difficult times, helping to overcome crises and supporting his colleagues, shows loyalty. In family relationships, loyalty is shown by being present and engaged in times of need, and providing unconditional support.

## **The Spiritual Dimension of the Warrior's Path**

Bushido is also a spiritual philosophy that teaches the samurai to control their desires, fears, and distractions. Through meditation and constant training, the samurai seek to achieve a state of inner peace, a crucial skill in combat and in their daily lives. The practice of **Zen meditation** and the study of philosophy allows him to act with serenity and concentration, characteristics that help him make balanced decisions.

This spiritual approach is applicable to modern life, where meditation and self-discipline can help us manage stress and maintain a clear mind amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Practicing concentration and self-control allows people to make conscious decisions and stay calm in times of pressure.

**Example in modern life:** A doctor who practices meditation to mentally prepare himself before complex surgeries develops an ability to stay focused and calm in moments of high pressure. In daily life, someone facing emotional conflict finds meditation a tool to understand his emotions and solve problems with objectivity and serenity.

## **Bushido in Modern Life: Values that Inspire Success and Well-Being**

Although the modern context is very different from feudal Japan, Bushido values remain a powerful guide to developing character and finding deep purpose. In business, many leaders embrace Bushido principles by fostering a culture of respect, integrity, and responsibility. In personal life, this philosophy provides a framework for growth, resilience, and overcoming difficulties. Bushido is a reminder of the importance of acting with a greater purpose, cultivating strong relationships, and facing challenges with dignity. In a world where ethics and authenticity are increasingly important, samurai philosophy is a source of inspiration for those who seek to live coherently and respect their principles.

**Example in the company:** In an organization that fosters Bushido values, employees are encouraged to work as a team, act ethically, and value loyalty to the company. This environment creates an organizational culture of integrity, in which each member strives to contribute to collective success, always acting responsibly and respectfully.

**Example in personal life:** A person facing loss can find solace in the Bushido principles of honor and loyalty. This dedication to

living with integrity helps them overcome grief, transforming difficulty into an opportunity for growth. By remembering and honoring the legacy of their loved ones, they can find the strength to move forward and act in a way that reflects the values they hold most dear.

**Application in education:** Bushido is also a valuable tool in the educational field, teaching students the importance of discipline, respect, and perseverance. A teacher who applies the values of Bushido inspires his students to act responsibly, to respect their peers, and to take on their studies as a commitment to their growth and the common good.

**Reflection in daily life:** In everyday life, Bushido invites us to reflect on our values and the way we face challenges. Living with a sense of purpose, always acting with honesty and dedication, allows us to build a meaningful life and establish relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

The philosophy of Bushido offers a path to personal excellence and inner peace in times of conflict and calm. It reminds us that true strength lies in our ability to act with integrity, in our willingness to learn, and in our commitment to others. Although times have changed, the principles of Bushido remain a source of inspiration, inviting us to live with purpose and dignity, approaching life with a spirit of honor and a sense of responsibility toward those around us.

# Physical Philosophy: Martial Arts as Embodied Wisdom

## Abstract

While defining martial arts is not a prerequisite to philosophizing about them, such a definition is desirable, helping us resolve disputes about the status of hard cases. At one extreme, Martínková and Parry argue that martial arts are distinguished from both close combat (as unsystematic) and combat sports (as competitive), and from warrior arts (as lethal) and martial paths (as spiritual). At the other extreme, mixed martial arts pundits and Bruce Lee speak of combat sports generally as martial arts. I argue that the fine-grained taxonomy proposed by Martínková and Parry can be usefully supplemented by a broader definition, specifically the following: martial arts are systematic fighting styles and practices as ways of embodying wisdom. A possible difficulty here is that such views face the charge of overemphasizing the “philosophical” aspect of martial arts. My definition can, however, avoid this apparent problem. If martial arts essentially aim to embody wisdom, this applies no less to the (strategic) practical wisdom of *The Art of War* than to the (ethical) practical wisdom of the *Tao Te Ching*. In an extended sense, then, any systematic fighting style, including combat sports, may count as a martial art insofar as it embodies wisdom by improving practical fighting skills.;

## 1. Introduction

Martial arts present something of a problem to the sports philosopher. On the one hand, theorists such as Barry Allen [1] insist on an absolute distinction between the two activities: “The major difference between martial arts and sport is that martial arts have an external value independent of practice, as instruments of

violence” (p. 245)<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, various martial arts such as karate have competitions with all the earmarks of sport, and certain activities—both taekwondo and judo, notably—are modern martial arts that have become Olympic sports. It may be unclear how we should understand tai chi vis-à-vis martial arts classification <sup>[2]</sup> (p. 9n2) or fighting systems such as Krav Maga. In the prominent subculture of mixed martial arts, it is more or less assumed that all combat sports—at least those allowed in the “mix”—including boxing and wrestling are, in fact, martial arts. Though many martial arts traditionalists, in step with Allen’s perspective <sup>[1]</sup>, would reject this equivalence, Bruce Lee, one of the forerunners of mixed martial arts, agrees that “[t]he martial arts include boxing” <sup>[3]</sup> (p. 7).

In this regard, Martínková and Parry <sup>[4]</sup> have proposed a useful classification system for what they call “martial activities”, which includes martial arts among related practices, and provides a theoretical basis for sorting out some of the difficulties abovementioned and others. I argue that Martínková and Parry’s fine-grained taxonomy may be usefully supplemented by a broader definition of martial arts. My definition is that martial arts are systematic fighting styles and practices as ways of embodying wisdom. One possible difficulty here is that theories such as Martínková and Parry’s along with mine face the charge of overemphasizing the “philosophical” aspect of martial arts <sup>[5]</sup> (p. 145). However, my definition can handle this apparent difficulty. If martial arts essentially aim to embody wisdom, this applies no less to the (strategic) practical wisdom of *The Art of War* than to the (ethical) practical wisdom of the *Tao Te Ching*. In an extended reading of my definition, any systematic fighting style, including combat sports, may count as a martial art insofar as it embodies wisdom by improving practical fighting skills.

## 2. Against Anti-Essentialism

In earlier eras in philosophy, one would not be pressed to justify offering a theoretical definition, because, since Plato’s time at least,

grasping the essence of such categories had been deemed a central task of philosophy, and theoretical definitions held promise of expressing that knowledge of essences. More recently, however, largely under the influence of the later Wittgenstein [6], there has been deep skepticism about such efforts, even though Wittgenstein himself was less opposed to theoretical definitions than is often supposed. Notwithstanding, the anti-essentialist suspicions inspired by Wittgenstein are (1) that adequate theoretical definitions of such terms are not possible; (2) that adequate theoretical definitions of such terms are not necessary; and (3) that adequate theoretical definitions of such terms are not helpful. I will address each of these concerns.

First, I admit that adequate theoretical definitions of key terms are unnecessary for doing substantive philosophy. In the anthology *Philosophy and the Martial Arts: Engagement* [2], for instance, editors Priest and Young are clear: “One important philosophical question about the martial arts is how to characterize them. This is a hard and non-trivial question. Should Tai Chi be included? Should war-gaming? But we do not need to address [that hard question] here. We will finesse it by sticking to some paradigm cases”. Sticking to paradigm cases, in this view, relieves the burden of characterizing the general term through means such as a working or theoretical definition. However, note that certain questions of scope, such as whether tai chi belongs in or outside the martial arts category, are left unanswered. Therefore, although definitions are unnecessary for carrying out some theoretical projects, that does not mean that they are not necessary or at least useful for doing other work, such as helping to decide the scope and limits of the relevant category.

In addressing skepticism about both the possibility and the utility of adequate theoretical definitions of such terms, I point to the illustrative case of Bernard Suits’s classic definition of games [7]: “To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs ... using only means permitted by the rules ... where the rules prohibit more in favor of less efficient means... and where the

rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity” (pp. 54–55). It is interesting to note that this is precisely the example of games that Wittgenstein uses to illustrate the alleged indefinability of certain general terms [6] (§§ 55–56). What is notable here is not that Suits necessarily refutes Wittgenstein, but rather that in the wake of Wittgenstein-inspired resistance to theoretical definitions, Suits proposed a definition of games that has become standard in the philosophy of sports literature. It is not that there are no critics of Suits, but rather that this definition is plausible, and the question of its theoretical adequacy remains a subject of ongoing attention in the sport philosophy literature. It is not simply dismissed on anti-essentialist grounds. Either way, the theory is a useful foundation for addressing various problems in the field, such as the question of whether video games can count as sports [8].

By analogy, I conclude that the attempt to provide a theoretical definition of martial arts is not necessarily misguided and may in fact yield important results. In particular, besides understanding what lies at the heart of martial arts, I am interested in resolving the potential martial arts status of the following cases, which are hard cases in the absence of such a general characterization:

1. Tai chi. The movements of this meditative practice are derived from martial arts, and it is indeed sometimes practiced as a martial art; in its most common form, however, it does not seem to be one.
2. Krav Maga, Russian system, and other fighting and combat systems. These are systematic fighting styles that seem to have the earmarks of martial arts (e.g., black belts in Krav Maga) yet are often excluded from the martial arts class.
3. Boxing (and other Western combat sports). Such sports are often held to be different from martial arts yet somehow exist in the same arena, as in mixed martial arts and unrestricted fighting.

4. Taekwondo (and judo). Where many intuitions suggest that an activity may count either as a martial art or a combat sport but not both, taekwondo and judo seem to fall into both categories.

5. Sport versions of traditional martial arts such as karate are similar to taekwondo and judo, except that there may be more controversy about whether they are appropriate expressions of their respective arts.

6. Corrupt or “dark” arts. If we consider especially fictional examples—such as the Cobra Kai dojo in *The Karate Kid* or the Sith in *Star Wars*—it is unclear whether these count as genuine if immoral martial arts or false because they are immoral.

One of the desiderata of a theoretical definition of martial arts, or any other systematic categorization, for that matter, is to help us sort out such cases, hopefully in a way that is both intuitive and theoretically sound.

### 3. Martial Categories

As a first step to addressing these hard cases, consider Martínková and Parry’s account of martial categories, in which various “martial activities” are distinguished by purpose [4] (pp. 148–155). This classification scheme comprises five main categories and six minor categories, though I will only focus on the former:

- *Close combat* has a primarily practical purpose as learned by law enforcement and military personnel, focusing on useful techniques for exercising physical control and lethal force. Given this pragmatic purpose, there need be no systematicity of technique or moral purpose involved [4] (pp. 148–150).
- *Warrior arts* have a primarily ethical purpose. The arts practiced by the samurai in medieval Japan, though similar to close combat, require a systematic approach to fighting as a means of exercising virtue and upholding honor in particular, as required by the *Bushido* code [4] (pp. 150–151).

- *Martial arts* have as a primary purpose that of self-cultivation. Disciplined study of a particular tradition, such as karate, focuses on self-discipline as a means of self-realization. Skills may be useful for self-defense but are mostly unarmed and non-lethal [4] (pp. 151–153).
- *Martial paths* have a primarily spiritual purpose. Think here of the Shaolin monk practicing kung fu as a means of spiritual development. The fighting style here is a means for the further meditative practice of Zen Buddhism, a useful but perhaps not strictly necessary means to that end [4] (pp. 153–154).
- *Combat sports* have a primarily competitive purpose. Here we find boxing, wrestling, and fencing, as well as sports versions of more “traditional” martial arts such as fencing, taekwondo, judo, sport karate, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu, among others, along with the hybrid sport of mixed martial arts [4] (pp. 154–155).

This classification scheme has much to recommend, especially when considering activities in which there is an evident single primary purpose. In particular, Martínková and Parry’s account helps us reach a verdict on many of our hard cases above. Tai chi, for instance, does not even make the list of major martial activities but is rather classified as “martial therapy” and relegated to the list of minor martial activities [4] (p. 156). By implication, fighting systems such as Krav Maga, despite having certain trappings of martial arts or warrior arts, remain in the close combat category. Boxing and other Western combat sports shunt neatly into the martial sports category, along with sports versions of Asian martial arts from Olympic taekwondo to sport karate, in contrast to more traditional practices and aspects of such practices less focused on competition. Morally corrupt instances of genuine martial arts or independent immoral practices resembling martial arts or warrior arts will fall at best into one of the two combat categories: combat sport or close combat. Thus, Cobra Kai and the Sith religion are

not genuine martial or warrior arts but instances of combat sport and close combat, respectively.

To sum up, then, Martínková and Parry's account straightforwardly excludes all the hard cases from the martial arts class, which suggests that it might be too narrow in failing to capture certain nuances. However intuitive many of their verdicts may be, Martínková and Parry's system leaves some key questions unanswered. Tai chi in its best-known form may count as a kind of martial therapy, but does this mean that it should not be practiced as a martial art or that, when it is, it is "weaponized" martial therapy? That seems to get things backward in that the therapeutic practice is derived from the fighting practice rather than vice versa. As for fighting systems such as Krav Maga, it seems too quick to simply slot them into the close combat category. Are we reluctant to call these martial arts because of a bias toward fighting styles originating in the Far East? What of the formal similarities between "martial art" and "combat sport" versions of karate, or the fact that some forms of taekwondo and judo seem to count equally as combat sports and martial arts in Martínková and Parry's narrow sense? Finally, are there not important commonalities between warrior arts, martial paths, and martial arts—and potentially also combat sports and close combat—apart from being different kinds of nominally "martial" activities?

#### **4. Martial Arts Defined**

To answer some of these questions and begin to motivate my definition of martial arts, let us suppose that Martínková and Parry are right to exclude both close combat and combat sports generally from the martial arts class. Focusing on warrior arts, martial arts in the narrow sense, and martial paths, there are several common threads worth noting. First, as fighting styles, all three are systematic. They are not simply a piecemeal collection of techniques but are meant to be holistic approaches to fighting, both internally coherent and comprehensive in scope. Indeed, the lack

of systematicity in varieties of close combat and combat sports provides an important reason to distinguish these activities from martial arts. To be clear, the point is not that close combat and combat sports cannot be approached systematically. Indeed, they often are, especially at high levels. However, as types of activity, they need not be approached systematically, which is a key point of distinction between them and warrior arts, martial arts, and martial paths as distinguished by Martínková and Parry. Even a systematic approach to training for fighting in close combat and combat sports fails to imply a systematic approach *to* fighting in those domains.

Consider a samurai warrior, a modern karateka, and a Shaolin monk as respective exemplars of warrior arts, martial arts, and martial paths in Martínková and Parry's sense. Along with systematic approaches to fighting, all three exhibit elements of a particular style, and stress the importance of specific practices. Along with learning the physical techniques of the relevant way of fighting, certain other activities will often be considered important parts of the practice: choreographed movement patterns (e.g., kata), general physical conditioning, sparring, meditation (often concomitant with physical practice), among others. Finally, note that the samurai, karateka, and monk all seek to embody something significant through the discipline of their practice: for the samurai virtue, honor in particular; for the karateka, self-realization, and self-understanding; for the monk, a Zen state of "no-mind" on the path to enlightenment (satori). These examples admittedly have a degree of artificial separation. Zen Buddhism influenced the samurai, karateka may be as interested in exhibiting virtue, etc. The point, however, is that even when these types are considered separately, there is an important further commonality because virtue, self-understanding, and "no-mind" exhibit different types of wisdom.

My proposal draws on the elements identified above, defining martial arts in a broad sense that includes Martínková and Parry's narrow sense of martial arts along with what they consider to be

not strictly martial arts but rather warrior arts and martial paths. My definition is that martial arts are systematic fighting styles and practices as ways of embodying wisdom. Since one may participate in close combat and combat sports without practicing them systematically or as ways of embodying wisdom, as general types, they will not be counted as martial arts. (As I discuss in the next section, however, in some cases, they may in fact so count.) This definition also respects the intuition, grounded in the commonalities mentioned above, that some ethical warriors and those who seek enlightenment through martial practice may be no less deserving of the label “martial artist” than those we may find more paradigmatic in the current cultural climate.

One of the strengths of this proposal is that it coheres with other extant research on martial arts. If martial arts at their best contribute to psychological well-being, as argued for instance by Croom [10], Allen [11], and Young [12], this may be accounted for at least in part because of their broad purpose of embodying wisdom, even if perspectives vary widely on questions either of what constitutes wisdom or the best way to realize it through the discipline(s) of martial arts [13]. It respects the distinction between a martial art as a *do* (way) over and above a *jitsu* (technique) [13,14], that there is, in other words, a crucial philosophical element in the martial arts [13,15], whether aspects of Confucian courtesy, Daoist wu-wei (“no-action”), or Zen Buddhist “no-mind”, and so forth. Indeed, the technique of the *jitsu* is meant to embody the wisdom of the *do*. The proposal also respects the intuition that an approach to fighting technique proper to the martial arts is systematic, disciplined, and in a palpable sense, an art form, an outlet for true creative self-expression for the martial artist [3].

In addition to such theoretical consilience, further support for my proposal may be found in principled and, I believe, largely intuitive interpretations of the hard cases under discussion. Where tai chi is not practiced as a fighting style it is not a martial art; however, where it is, it is. Fighting systems, as such, will not count as martial arts unless they can be shown to embody wisdom in

some as-yet unspecified sense, likewise systematic approaches to combat sports. There is little reason to deny certain forms of taekwondo and judo as both martial arts and combat sports, especially where sparring in training and competition is held to be a crucial part of the practice. Whether sport versions of martial arts such as karate are deemed legitimate applications or illegitimate degradations of the art will depend on the internal decision making within those respective practices by those empowered to do so by the institutions overseeing them. As for corrupt or “dark” arts, their martial art status will remain unclear until we can decide whether their teachings constitute some form of wisdom, however twisted, merely pragmatic, or even immoral it might be. Is a corrupt philosophy still a philosophy? This deep and in some ways paradoxical question will be addressed below in response to a serious potential objection to my definition.

## **5. Objection and Reply**

Despite Allen’s view that sports, in general, are, in contrast to the martial arts, useless in the real world [11] (p. 132), this does not seem to apply in cases of combat sports such as boxing that have real-world utility as fighting techniques. This point presages a significant objection to theories such as Martínková and Parry’s and mine distinguishing martial arts from combat sports. As Moenig [5] puts it, such “superficial classifications, distinctions, and attitudes are likely the results of an inadequate understanding of the nature and history of martial arts and combat. In reality, any activity that serves to improve battle or fighting skills is, by definition, a form of ‘martial art’” (p. 145, citing [16]). This claim may be seen as polemical and somewhat hyperbolic. Learning one single effective technique will improve one’s fighting skills but falls well short of a general and systematic approach required of even a fighting system let alone a martial art. By itself, of course, this complaint does not block the attack.

To appreciate the objection from another angle, consider Jigoro Kano's [14] contrast between judo and "the jujutsu of the past, which was only a martial art" (p. 74). From this perspective, which respects the *do/jutsu* distinction, the *do* is presented not as necessary for martial arthood but supererogatory, above and beyond the technical *jutsu* presumed to count as sufficient. Another way to frame the objection, therefore, is as a charge of misguided thinking that martial arts require anything beyond an effective, systematic approach to fighting. We may champion martial arts that do more, as Kano does with judo, but that—so the objection goes—is more than martial arts require.

My definition of martial arts as a way of embodying wisdom certainly suggests a narrow reading that would exclude fighting systems and combat sports from the martial arts class. However, to put my reply succinctly, if martial arts aim to embody wisdom, this applies no less to the (strategic) practical wisdom of *The Art of War* than to the (ethical) practical wisdom of the *Tao Te Ching*. Take the principle "No first strike" [17] (p. 160) or "Win by not fighting", which one finds both in the *Tao Te Ching* [18] and *The Art of War* [19]. These principles blend prudential and ethical thinking in such a way that it is hard to disentangle the two. It is precisely this sort of wise counsel that is inherent in what we think of as martial arts. This is not to say that martial arts wisdom is necessarily practical (*phronesis*) as opposed to theoretical (*sophia*). A Zen Buddhist's or Daoist's understanding of themselves or nature as embodied in martial arts has both theoretical and practical dimensions. However, the wisdom embodied in martial arts, or "the philosophy of martial arts", as Lloyd puts it, "may have nothing to do with morality at all" [15] (p. 84). We may balk at the notion that "even at their most modern and most brutal martial arts are still forms of spiritual asceticism" [15] (p. 84). But if such discipline falls short of what we should call spirituality, that does not mean that it fails to count as a genuine philosophy of fighting, however pragmatic its focus and amoral its status. An amoral philosophy is still a philosophy, dark wisdom is still wisdom.

In an extended reading of my definition, then, any systematic fighting style—including combat sports and fighting systems may count as a martial art insofar as it embodies wisdom by improving practical fighting skills. The implication is not that close combat and combat sports generally count as martial arts, however. First, one can engage in close combat and combat sports, and prepare for such engagement, without doing so systematically. Boxers, for instance, maybe bruisers rather than approaching the sweet science “scientifically”, as Muhammad Ali claimed to have done. Likewise, there will be some combat sports the practical utility of which is fairly minimal in today’s society. Fencing is an example here, since it is no longer customary, as in times past, to walk around armed with a sword. Just how effective a putative martial art is in improving practical fighting skills will remain an empirical matter and one no doubt that will continue to generate significant controversy.

## **6. Conclusions**

I have argued that martial arts should be defined as systematic fighting styles and practices as ways of embodying wisdom. This definition complements Martínková and Parry’s limited category of martial arts and broadens it to include what they consider warrior arts and martial paths. In response to the potential objection that such definitions of martial arts are too demanding, that systematic fighting styles are sufficient for martial arts status, I have argued that an extended reading of my definition avoids this objection, and, in particular, that the purpose of embodying wisdom applies no less to the practical (strategic) wisdom of a systematic *jitsu* than to the practical (ethical) wisdom of a *do*. This definitional flexibility is a theoretical strength rather than a weakness. On both the basic and extended readings of my proposed definition, the resulting verdicts on hard cases are both intuitive and principled. We may be right to prefer the narrow reading, just as we should prefer that kind of martial art. However, a “merely” systematic approach to fighting—

whether in close combat or combat sport—can be assimilated appropriately into the martial arts class even if it disappoints our hopes for what martial arts should be. A martial art stripped of such higher wisdom has its own meta-philosophy about what wisdom remains on a practical level when stripped for battle. However, perhaps the crucial issue is not categorical but qualitative. The quality of a martial art will depend on the quality of the wisdom it embodies.

## Unlocking the Wisdom: Exploring the Philosophy Behind Martial Arts Training

Martial arts are often perceived solely as a physical endeavor—a way to learn self-defense, get fit, or compete. However, beneath the surface of martial arts, especially **karate**, lies a deep philosophy and rich history that can enrich practitioners' minds and spirits. In this article, we will embark on a journey to uncover the essential philosophical principles that underpin martial arts training, emphasizing how they can benefit your personal growth, discipline, and overall well-being.

### The Roots of Martial Arts Philosophy

To truly appreciate the philosophy of martial arts, one must look back at the origins of these ancient practices. Most martial arts, including **karate**, stem from a rich blend of history, culture, and philosophy. The teachings often derive from Eastern philosophies, where the body, mind, and spirit are considered interconnected. Let's delve into some key philosophical aspects of martial arts:

### Harmony and Balance

At the core of martial arts philosophy is the concept of harmony and balance. Practitioners learn to find equilibrium not only in their movements but also in their lives. Through training in **karate**, students discover the importance of maintaining

balance in all aspects of their lives, be it emotional, mental, or physical. This harmony contributes to a more peaceful and fulfilling existence.

## **Discipline and Respect**

Discipline is a cornerstone of martial arts training. The rigorous routines, sparring sessions, and katas (formalized sequences of movements) require dedication and consistency. Students learn to respect their instructor, fellow students, and even their opponents. This respect builds a sense of community and shared purpose, which is vital in any martial arts dojo. The teachings in **karate** focus on developing resilience and commitment to continue even when faced with challenges.

## **Self-Discovery and Personal Growth**

Martial arts serve as a profound path for self-discovery. As you train in **karate**, you confront your fears, limitations, and insecurities. Each belt you earn symbolizes not just your technical prowess, but your personal development and the lessons learned along the way. This journey can lead to increased self-awareness, self-confidence, and an overall better understanding of oneself.

## **The Importance of Mindfulness in Martial Arts**

Mindfulness plays a significant role in martial arts training, emphasizing the importance of being present in the moment. During training, practitioners are urged to focus entirely on their movements, breathing, and the energy they project. This focus enhances performance and mental clarity, allowing martial artists to absorb techniques more effectively. Here's how mindfulness integrates into the practice of **karate**:

### **The Breath**

In **karate** and many other martial arts, breath control is paramount. You learn to synchronize your breathing with your movements; inhale to gather energy and exhale to release it. This practice not only improves your physical abilities but also fosters a heightened state of awareness and concentration. By focusing on your breath, you can calm your mind and reduce stress.

### **Visualization Techniques**

Another essential mindfulness technique in martial arts is visualization. Students often visualize executing their techniques flawlessly or envisioning themselves

succeeding during a tournament. This mental rehearsal enhances confidence and prepares practitioners for real-world scenarios, making it a vital component of training in **karate**.

## **The Warrior's Mindset**

Martial arts philosophy cultivates what is often referred to as the "warrior's mindset." This mentality promotes resilience, courage, and the ability to face challenges head-on. Here are some key elements that mark the warrior's mindset in **karate**:

### **Embracing Challenges**

A foundational aspect of the warrior's mindset is the acceptance of challenges as opportunities for growth. In **karate**, students learn that each setback—be it a difficult technique, a tough opponent, or even a failed competition—serves as a lesson and a step toward improvement. This perspective fosters resilience and determination, essential traits for both martial artists and individuals in everyday life.

### **The Power of Perseverance**

Training in **karate** demands perseverance. There are no shortcuts to mastering the craft; each technique requires time, effort, and patience. By pushing through adversity and maintaining a tenacious spirit, practitioners can channel this perseverance into all areas of their lives, whether in personal pursuits or professional endeavors.

## **The Ethical Framework of Martial Arts**

Martial arts are not solely about physical skills; they also encompass a strong ethical framework designed to guide practitioners' conduct both in and out of the dojo. Here's a look at some ethical principles associated with martial arts:

### **Integrity and Honesty**

Being honest with oneself and others is a fundamental principle in martial arts. Practitioners are taught to assess their skills truthfully, remain grounded in reality, and uphold the highest standards of personal integrity. This honesty fosters trust and deepens relationships within the martial arts community.

## **The Duty to Protect**

Another critical aspect of martial arts ethics is the responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Students of **karate** learn that their skills should not be used for malicious intent; instead, they should champion justice, use their trains wisely, and help others when needed. This commitment to protection fosters a sense of nobility and honor in the practice.

## **The Role of Meditation and Spirituality**

Meditation and spirituality are deeply entrenched in martial arts philosophy. For many practitioners, mental and spiritual components are as important as physical training. Below are how these aspects manifest in martial arts:

### **Meditative Practices**

Meditation serves as a means to enhance mental focus and emotional regulation. Many martial arts schools incorporate meditation into their training programs, teaching students to cultivate a strong connection between the body and mind. Regular meditation can lead to improved concentration, better control of emotions, and a greater sense of peace.

### **Spiritual Growth**

The philosophy of martial arts encourages spiritual growth by urging practitioners to explore their beliefs, values, and purpose. This exploration contributes to a holistic sense of well-being, helping individuals lead more balanced and fulfilling lives. For those practicing **karate**, aligning physical prowess with spiritual insight creates a well-rounded martial artist.

### **Building a Community of Practitioners**

One of the most beautiful facets of training in martial arts, particularly **karate**, is the sense of belonging to a community. This tight-knit environment offers support, camaraderie, and shared experiences. Here's how the community aspect enhances martial arts training:

### **Support and Encouragement**

In a dojo, students share their struggles, victories, and personal journeys. This support system creates an environment where individuals can thrive both as martial

artists and as people. The encouragement from fellow practitioners fosters motivation and persistence, which can be particularly valuable during tough training periods.

### **Sharing Knowledge and Skills**

Martial arts communities thrive on the exchange of techniques and experiences. More advanced practitioners often take younger students under their wing, sharing knowledge and fostering growth. This collaboration not only enhances skill development but also strengthens the bonds between students, creating a family-like atmosphere.

### **The Enduring Legacy of Martial Arts Philosophy**

The philosophy behind martial arts, especially in disciplines like **karate**, transcends the dojo. It permeates every aspect of life, enabling individuals to lead lives marked by discipline, respect, and resilience. As one embarks on their martial arts journey, the teachings learned extend far beyond physical techniques and self-defense. Instead, they empower practitioners to face life's challenges with courage, maintain their integrity, and cultivate a balanced existence.

### **What Lies Ahead: Your Path to Mastery**

The journey of mastering martial arts is a personal and profound one. As you continue your exploration into the philosophy behind your training, remember that every kick, punch, and kata is an opportunity for personal growth. Embrace the teachings of **karate** and dive deeply into understanding your mind, body, and spirit. Challenge yourself, uphold the code of ethics, and contribute to your martial arts community. The path to mastery is filled with wisdom, and every step brings you closer to becoming not just a skilled martial artist but a better person.

# Why Does Taoism Influence Martial Arts Philosophy?

Like a river effortlessly carving its path through the landscape, Taoism seamlessly blends with martial arts philosophy, encouraging you to explore how living in harmony with nature and oneself enhances your martial arts practice.

This ancient philosophy, with its deep-rooted principles of balance, flexibility, and flow, mirrors the physical and mental discipline required in martial arts. It's no wonder the Yin and Yang symbol has become synonymous with martial arts schools worldwide.

But how exactly do Taoist concepts like Qi flow and the importance of soft over hard techniques shape the modern martial artist?

## Historical Connections

The historical roots of martial arts philosophy deeply intertwine with Taoism's principles, shaping the evolution of martial techniques through its emphasis on harmony and balance.



You'll find that Taoist monks at the Shaolin Temple were pivotal in integrating these Taoist beliefs of harmony with nature into their martial practices. This not only influenced the physical aspects but also the mental and spiritual dimensions of martial arts.

The concept of Qi, or internal energy, plays a crucial role, with Taoism providing a profound foundation for martial artists to enhance their abilities by fostering balance and flow.

The philosophy underscores the importance of soft techniques and inner strength, steering practitioners towards a path where mind, body, and spirit aren't seen as separate entities but as interconnected aspects of a whole, harmoniously aligned with the natural world.

# Principles of Balance

Taoism's emphasis on the equilibrium between Yin and Yang energies significantly shapes a martial artist's journey toward achieving harmony in both technique and mindset. This balance is not merely a philosophical ideal but a practical guide.

It helps you harmonize your physical movements with your mental focus, enhancing your [effectiveness in martial arts](#). Training under Taoist principles, you're taught to find

## Yin (Receptive)

Inner calm

Adaptability

Fluidity

## Yang (Active)

Dynamic movement

Strength

Precision

equilibrium in your techniques and overall approach.

Understanding and implementing these principles of balance fosters adaptability and fluidity, crucial for responding to dynamic situations effectively. This Taoist-inspired balance elevates martial arts beyond mere physical combat to a disciplined art form rooted in deep philosophical traditions.

## Fluid Combat Techniques



Building on the principles of balance, fluid [combat techniques](#) in Taoist-influenced martial arts enable you to adapt and respond with ease in combat situations. Taoism's emphasis on soft techniques against harsh force enhances your efficiency in overcoming opponents.

This philosophy leverages the concept of Wu Wei, advocating for effortless action by utilizing an adversary's momentum to your advantage.

Mastery in these arts involves focusing on circular movements and flowing transitions, which are pivotal in maintaining harmony and balance during combat. By integrating Taoist principles, you learn to meld strength with gentleness.

This approach not only offers a strategic edge in physical engagements but also aligns with the overarching goal of

achieving balance and harmony, hallmark traits of Taoist philosophy in martial arts.

## Mental and Spiritual Growth



Martial arts, under the influence of Taoist philosophy, prioritize mental clarity and spiritual growth through dedicated practices like meditation and Qi cultivation. You're guided to develop a strong mind-body connection, enhancing performance and self-awareness. Taoism's principles foster mindfulness, resilience, and self-discipline, vital for your mental and spiritual journey.

Key Aspect	Description	Benefit
<b>Mind-Body Connection</b>	Enhances performance through self-awareness	Improved self-awareness
<b>Mindfulness</b>	Promotes presence and concentration	Increased mental clarity
<b>Qi Cultivation</b>	Harnessing inner energy for focus and balance	Emotional balance & spiritual growth

This structured approach encourages you to cultivate patience, humility, and compassion, achieving inner peace and resilience for holistic growth.

## **Taoism in Modern Practice**

In contemporary martial arts practice, Taoist principles are frequently integrated to deepen mental focus and spiritual awareness. This modern practice leverages Taoism's foundational concepts, such as harmony, balance, and the natural flow of energy, to enhance both physical and mental training.

By embracing the duality and interconnectivity of Yin and Yang, martial artists achieve a holistic approach to their discipline, ensuring that their physical prowess is matched by inner strength and mindfulness.

Moreover, the integration of Taoist practices promotes a heightened level of self-awareness and spiritual depth. This philosophical underpinning not only enriches the martial artist's skill set but also fosters a deeper connection to the essence of martial arts.

Through Taoism, practitioners in the modern era find a path to balance and energy flow that elevates their discipline beyond mere physicality.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Taoism significantly shapes martial arts philosophy through its historical roots and principles that emphasize balance, harmony, and the interplay of opposing forces.

By integrating Taoist concepts such as Yin and Yang, [breath control](#), and Qi flow, martial arts not only enhance physical prowess but also foster mental and spiritual growth.

These practices encourage a holistic approach to combat and self-improvement, reflecting Taoism's deep impact on the martial arts ethos even in contemporary practice.

# 5 Ways to Be a 21st Century Warrior-Scholar

## Honed Body and Mind

The general idea of perfecting both body and mind appears to be about as old as time itself and can be found in a wide variety of advanced cultures. The Greek philosophers would often talk about the need for physical fitness to have a fit mind as well, in several Asian cultures the idea of the warrior monk appears, and even in recent years “strong body, strong mind” is a slogan you’ll see on inspirational posters and gym badges.

As someone who has aspired to this general notion my entire life but finds very few monasteries and sword duels in 21st-century America, I have attempted to learn all I can from the past and apply it to our modern age. And in the spirit of sharing wisdom, I’d like to highlight the most important aspects of living such a life. These fundamental principles apply to any age, any kind of person from any walk of life, anywhere in the world. It’s all about an approach to *how* to live, *how* to behave, *how* to think, not “you must do these exact things exactly as people hundreds or thousands of years ago did them.” Because, as I said, you don’t find many sword duels these days. But there **are** lots of gyms and sports and other ways of honing and perfecting your physical

fitness. You can apply the same core lessons of the ideal to modern life, and that's what I hope to share with you here.

So, here are what, in my experience, are the most important aspects of living the life of a warrior-scholar in the modern age. I feel they can be broken down into the following 5 major points.

1: Perfection of the body. Don't simply strive to be fit, be as fit and physically skilled as you possibly can push yourself. And then beyond.

2: Perfection of the mind. Don't simply be intelligent or intellectually skilled, learn all you can, push the limits of your knowledge, and create whole new fields of study. Keep pushing until you can't push any further... and then keep on pushing.

3: Self-discipline and self-reliance. Being able to rely on yourself is far more valuable than you'd think.

4: Honor. Integrity, trustworthiness, being reliable, keeping your word, all are simple things that go a long, long way to building truly lasting relationships and having a more profound impact on your world.

5: Finding the balance between having a furious passion with laser-like focus and also having broad interests without spreading yourself too thin.

Now, to briefly expand upon these. First, perfection of the body. To get personal for a second, I will share that I have done martial arts effectively my entire life. However, I don't think everyone, or even very many people at all, needs to practice martial arts. However again, the lessons of perfecting yourself pushing yourself beyond the limits, and discovering whole new levels beyond what you thought possible, apply to any sort of fitness. So, for martial arts, you don't want to just want to be fast, you want to be so fast they can't even see you move. And then faster. And faster. Get as fast as humanly possible and then break through that wall and do *even better*. But as I said, it doesn't have to be martial arts. If your thing is, say, basketball, that's fine too! Take dribbling the ball. You don't just learn to dribble for a few seconds, you learn to dribble for as long as you can. And then go beyond. Hours. Days. With both hands, behind your back, between your legs, whatever. Keep finding a plateau of maximum achievement and then plow through it. Constantly keep pushing and improving. The whole real underlying point here is that *you are never done improving. That is **not a thing***. There is always a new challenge, always someone better than you. Beat them. Improve yourself infinitely. Make it a part of who you are.

This may sound a bit silly, but. Make it a part of who you are. A perfect example I can draw from my own life was when I first began studying martial arts, the first six months, three hours a day, all they taught me was how to walk properly. Which at the time, I thought was ridiculous. But I did it, and much to my amazement, it affected everything else,

not just in martial arts, but in my life. I rarely slip on ice or stub a toe or anything like that, because I have made it a part of who I am to always be aware of where my feet are, and how my weight is distributed. It became a part of me. And every single step I take is building off those founding principles and improving myself a little bit every time. And, again, there will never be a maximum.

Now, I can hear some of you readers thinking something like “But does that mean I have to be those weirdos who go to the gym 15 times a week and eat so much protein they look like The Hulk?” No, not necessarily. If both strength and power are not your goals, then that’s fine. You should have some muscle tone as part of being healthy, but, if you’re not the sort to bulk up, that’s fine. I’m not a soccer player, so I have no interest in perfecting my long-distance kicking of a ball. It has no bearing on my life. But for the soccer player, A: that’s part of their job and thus affects their career and well-being, and B: it still is exercise, cardio, enhancing their breathing, heart rate, metabolism, all that good stuff. So, you find what works for you, what goals you have for your body, and make that aspect of your body *the best freaking body on the planet*.

Pretty much the same lecture applies to the mind, which is especially apropos since the notion of mind and body being intimately connected is central to the warrior-scholar lifestyle. Find what intellectual pursuits you want to pursue, be it computer coding, drawing, being a historian, an engineer, whatever, and *study the crap out of it*. Study

until there is nothing left to study, then find new ways to study it. Improve it, enhance it, add to it, then study that. Then repeat. Really the point to both improving the body and mind topics is never, *ever* should you say, “good enough.” There is no such thing as good enough anymore. There is ALWAYS room for improvement. My sifu (martial arts teacher) loved to quote this article from the late 19th century where the head of the US Patent Office considered closing it because he was convinced everything worth inventing had already been made. ...Considering how you’re reading this, you can see that man was *wildly incorrect*. There is ALWAYS room for improvement. ALWAYS a new project, ALWAYS someone better than you. Beat them. Then someone else will beat you. Then beat them, too. And so on. Never stop, and never think you are good enough. You might be fantastic, truly, and be proud of yourself! ...but you could be better. So, make it happen.

And note, don’t take this as negative: it isn’t. If you accomplish wonderful things, then that’s wonderful! Be happy and proud! Do more. And then more. And then more. And then... you get the idea. There is no such thing as being done, as being good enough, as being the best. There is ALWAYS a new level to aspire to, both physically and mentally.

Now, point 3: Self-discipline. This one ties in rather neatly with the following, honor, similar to how 1 and 2 tied together. Self-discipline and self-reliance are key skills to have. And in brief, here’s why. For as

much as I'm going to go on to talk about being reliable to others being a virtue in the next chunk, the sad fact is that, well, most people aren't. Most people are unreliable, are liars, are lazy, are cheaters, whatever. So while it is good to assume people will live up to their word, and you don't want to be overly paranoid or distrustful, knowing that you can fall back on yourself if the worst happens and still handle your problems? That is extremely important. I will again take an example from my own life, but one I hope is more broadly applicable to people. Medical knowledge. Having some basic first aid knowledge and understanding of how things work has saved my life on numerous occasions, and even the lives of others. Ideally, when an emergency happens, you can call paramedics, get to a hospital, etc. That's exactly why those services exist. And of course, doctors and EMTs, etc. know more than I do about medicine. BUT. Having enough foundational knowledge to know how to clean my cut so it doesn't get infected, how to wrap a sprained ankle, how to make a splint, and what over-the-counter drugs can help with the everyday ills of life, that saves unholy amounts of money for unnecessary doctor's visits and just makes life all-round easier. This can apply to a lot of things, and again sadly it is not always possible. I can't heal a bullet wound, but I can make sure it stays clean until real professionals can attend to the problem. Similarly, if you're working on, say, a project for work and your artist falls through on meeting the deadline for making a logo, that's bad. And you don't have any art skills to speak of. But I'm sure with an hour of googling and a bit of effort, you can at least whip up a rough draft in something as simple as MS Paint. It's not ideal, but you can rely on

yourself. Self-reliance is about not being helpless. You may not be super helpful, but you won't be helpless.

Self-discipline ties into this with having self-control. Going back to kung fu again for a moment, there is this great quote I burned into my mind: The boat that floats in water also sinks in it. This applies to SO many things, but I'll just give a couple of quick examples, so you get the idea. It's not about living like a drill sergeant, it's about self-control. Want to go have a few drinks with your buddies after work? Sure! Have a few. But don't get blackout drunk and get a DUI. Have self-control. Have self-discipline to be able to stop yourself. The inverse is also true. Having self-discipline to stick to promises, deadlines, and other obligations is fundamental to being a good person. And as I said, it ties neatly into the next topic: Honor.

Honor. Since I covered a lot of this in the previous segment, I'll be brief, but, truly having a sense of honor and integrity and sticking to them is fundamental to being a good warrior-scholar. This should be more or less self-explanatory but since I've met more people than I could count who don't seem to get this concept, I'll do my best here: Consistently proving over and over that your word is true, that when you say you'll do something you'll do it, consistently showing that other people can rely on you, that you won't betray someone for your gain at their expense, these may hurt in the short term, but have massive long term payoffs. For example, it may feel good right now to blow off helping your buddy move and instead go to that party, which is way

more fun. But a year or two from now, when you want to move, he's going to remember you didn't help him, and blow off helping you move too. Or consider this: who would you rather hire, the person who consistently makes deadlines and keeps their promises or the person who blows off work early to go to a party with buddies and doesn't show up on time or finish projects within a deadline? It's a pretty easy choice, right? And who would you rather date, a lying cheater or a loyal lover? I don't personally believe in Karma as a sort of supernatural force of the universe, but broadly speaking, its effects are obvious.

Be a crappy person, get crappy results. Be an honorable person and get honorable results. And, yes, this often is more difficult. But, well, life is hard. It just is. But I can promise you that the self-satisfaction of knowing you're a good person and can sleep at night feels much better than any one-night-stand cheating session ever will.

And, finally, the ability to find a balance in your life between obsessive intense focus and broad appeal. This one is a bit tricky, and truthfully one I think I and most people struggle the most with. Because as with the first two points of trying your absolute ass off to be the best, that requires extreme obsessive focus and determination, not getting distracted away from it. And that is a good thing! But, let's be honest, nobody wants to be friends with the person who only has one thing in their life. Yes, it is absolutely vital to be the best in the world at your 'thing' (whatever that thing may be) but to have no other interests, hobbies, whatever, of any kind? Makes you rather one-dimensional.

From what I've read of people like Musashi, and from conversations with hundreds of people over the years, the general best advice I've heard boils down to allocating resources. You know, you can devote 80% of your life to being the best of the best at x thing, but do also make time to explore other interests, other aspects of life. The trick is not to get **too** sidetracked on side projects. And really, that ties back into self-discipline again, being able to stay on track of the important things, but also allow yourself to loosen up enough to have some fun and expand your horizons.

So, there. 5 fundamental points of how to apply the lifestyle of the warrior-scholar to modern 21st century life. It doesn't have to be sword fights and monastic meditation; it can be soccer and computer coding. But the core principles of: Constantly improving body and mind, consistently having honor and self-control, and being able to incorporate all these things into your life while adding variety too... These are a great foundation upon which to build a happier, healthier and more successful life.

Good luck to you all. I hope I have helped. Just remember: Never give up. My best friend loves to quote this observation that anyone is about 6 months of genuine effort away from being in the top 10–20% of the world at any given skill. It's just that most people give up before that. You can do it. You just have to **MAKE** it happen.

Life is, broadly speaking, hard. It just is. Life is an effort. But that's okay. Don't be afraid of effort. Because as good as lounging around feels now, you wouldn't believe how awesome real success and pride at your own accomplishments feels.

And to finish with what my father likes to say: "Don't let it be a good day, MAKE it a good day."

# A Day in the Life of a Digital Warrior Scholar: Balancing Studies, Fitness, and Entrepreneurship

Welcome to the lifestyle of a ***Digital Warrior Scholar***: a dedicated pursuit of excellence that covers intellect, physique, and enterprise. We're inspired by the Renaissance Men of old, but we've adapted their philosophy for the modern age. We need more than just to earn degrees; we constantly seek to learn and expand our knowledge, taking on entrepreneurial challenges in the digital realm as we progress.

What does a regular day look like for us? It starts with an early rise, followed by an invigorating workout session. Our diet consists of nutritious meals packed with macro and micronutrients that fuel our bodies. A big part of our day involves furthering our business goals while improving our intellect by learning a new language or acquiring creative skills. Each of these activities are integral components that make up the ***Digital Warrior Scholar*** lifestyle.

In our journey, academic pursuits are highly valued. With the help of digital tools and online resources, we remain students of life. Let me share a bit of my personal journey. As a STEM major, the challenge was not only to deal with calculus and scientific principles but also to engage the creative side of my brain while designing ads for a client.

This was an endeavor that stimulated both logic and creativity. This balance has opened up opportunities for innovation and growth.

Physical fitness is a vital component of our lives. It's not just about maintaining an impressive physique but also about honing mental resilience. Currently, I'm trying out powerlifting programs, and the sense of vitality it brings is unmatched. Overcoming fitness hurdles has taught me the significance of nutrition and breaking self-imposed limitations.

The '**Digital**' in ***Digital Warrior Scholar*** signifies our quest to leverage technology and create online businesses. As a digital marketing entrepreneur, I customize strategies to cater to my client's unique needs. The pursuit of these business goals often means sacrificing social outings. Still, the journey toward building an online empire is a rewarding one.

Time management and setting clear goals are paramount to juggling our pursuits. This means creating detailed checklists and sticking to a well-planned schedule.

The path to becoming a ***Digital Warrior Scholar*** isn't always smooth. However, accepting the digital age's fast-paced and often multi-directional currents, embracing failures, and continuously learning and adapting has proven rewarding. The lifestyle has boosted

my social and personal life and provided a steady passive income stream that is paving the way to financial freedom.

The *Digital Warrior Scholar* lifestyle is about a harmonious fusion of academics, fitness, and entrepreneurship. The journey might be challenging, but the personal fulfillment and respect gained from others make it worthwhile.

# The Virtue of Temperance: Insights from Stoicism and Bushido

by Donavon L Riley

In a world often characterized by excess and indulgence, the virtues of temperance and self-control stand as time-tested pillars of strength, offering a path to balance and inner peace. Both the Stoics and the samurai who followed the code of Bushido understood the profound significance of temperance in the pursuit of a virtuous life. So, we will explore their teachings, to understand the role of temperance in shaping good character and righteous conduct.

## **The Art of Self-Mastery**

The Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, wrote that, “No person has the power to have everything they want, but it is in their power not to want what they don’t have, and to cheerfully put to good use what they do have.”

Stoicism, with its emphasis on rationality and virtue, places temperance at the forefront of self-mastery. To the Stoics, temperance is the art of restraining desires and impulses, a potent means of achieving tranquility and wisdom. It's not about denying oneself pleasure but about cultivating the discipline to enjoy life in moderation.

Seneca, another notable Stoic, urged that "we must resist the inborn appetites" and that "self-control, that is, the motive which resists passions, must be brought into play against pleasures." In essence, the Stoics recognized that the pursuit of wisdom requires the ability to navigate the storms of desire with a steady hand.

### **The Way of the Warrior's Control**

On the other side of the world, over fourteen hundred years after Epictetus died, Miyamoto Musashi wrote that, "It is not the moon that makes a man a lunatic, but the man himself that makes himself a lunatic."

So even though they were separated by geography and time, the code of Bushido, followed by the samurai, mirrors Stoicism's emphasis on temperance. In the Bushido ethos, self-control is not only a virtue but also a path to mastery. It is the way of the warrior restraining his impulses, to channel his energy, and to act with precision and purpose.

Miyamoto Musashi, the legendary swordsman, understood the importance of self-control. His words, "It is not the moon that makes a man a lunatic," remind us that external circumstances do not dictate our behavior; it's our own mastery of self that determines our actions. In the world of the samurai, like that of the Stoics, temperance was a mark of honor and strength.

Both Stoicism and Bushido recognize that temperance is not a sign of weakness but a demonstration of strength and wisdom. It's the ability to withstand the allure of excess and to maintain a virtuous equilibrium

As Seneca, the Roman Stoic, declared, “So, in life, you must make yourself a judge of pleasures and an arbiter of desires.” This is echoed in the Bushido principle of self-control, where the warrior becomes a judge of his own actions, guided by the principles of honor and virtue.

So then, how do we apply these principles to our lives in a practical way?

### **Practical Strategies: Embracing Temperance**

- **Mindful Awareness:** Cultivate mindful awareness of your desires and impulses. Recognize when you’re tempted to excess and pause to assess whether it aligns with your principles.
- **Discipline Through Practice:** Practice self-discipline as you would a martial art. Train yourself to resist immediate gratification and choose actions that align with your values.
- **Virtuous Role Models:** Seek inspiration from virtuous role models, whether it’s a Stoic philosopher like Epictetus or a samurai like Miyamoto Musashi. Learn from their examples of self-control.
- **Contemplation of Consequences:** Before succumbing to impulse, contemplate the consequences of your actions. Consider whether they lead you toward a virtuous life or away from it.
- **Inner Strength:** Recognize that true strength lies in mastering oneself. Embrace the Stoic and Bushido ethos that temperance is a mark of honor and courage.

In the union of Stoicism and Bushido, we find a resounding message: temperance is the cornerstone of virtue and self-mastery. It is the art of restraining desires, the discipline of a virtuous life, and the path to inner peace. As we navigate a world teeming with excess and temptation, let us take seriously the wisdom of these ancient philosophies, drawing inspiration from

Stoic philosophers and the principles of Bushido, to put to good use the virtue of temperance and forge a path of honor, wisdom, and strength.

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## The Code of the Warrior: Ideals of Warrior Cultures Throughout History

Shannon E. French, Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence

You have all heard the recent news story about a Marine who may have shot an unarmed, wounded Iraqi insurgent. The question being asked is: was this war or murder? The distinction between a warrior and a murderer is not a trivial one. For those whose calling is the profession of arms – for you – understanding this distinction is essential.

Murder is an act that is cross-culturally condemned. Whatever their other points of discord, the major religions of the world agree in the determination that murder (variously defined) is wrong. Unfortunately, the fact that we abhor murder produces a disturbing tension for those who are asked to fight wars. When you are trained for war, you are given a mandate by your society to take lives. But you must learn to take only certain lives in certain ways, at certain times, and for certain reasons. Otherwise, you may become indistinguishable from a murderer and suddenly

find yourself condemned by the very society you have sacrificed so much to serve.

Warrior cultures throughout history and from diverse regions around the globe have constructed codes of behavior, based on that culture's image of the ideal warrior. These codes have not always been written down or literally codified into a set of explicit rules. A code can be hidden in the lines of epic poems or implied by descriptions of mythic heroes. One way or another, it is carefully conveyed to each succeeding generation of warriors. These codes tend to be quite demanding. They are often closely linked to a culture's religious beliefs and can be connected to elaborate (and frequently death-defying or excruciatingly painful) rituals and rites of passage, such as the Sun Dance ritual performed by Native Americans of the Plains Tribes or the Corridor of Death that separated disciples from the masters among the Chinese warrior monks of Shaolin.

In many cases, this code of honor seems to hold the warrior to a higher ethical standard than that required for an ordinary citizen within the general population of the society the warrior serves. But the code is not imposed from the outside. The warriors themselves police strict adherence to these standards, with violators being shamed, ostracized, or even killed by their peers. In the Roman legions, a man who fell asleep while he was supposed to be on watch, allowing an enemy to penetrate the camp, could

expect to be stoned to death by the members of his own cohort.

The code of the warrior not only defines how warriors should interact with their own warrior comrades, but also how they should treat other members of their society, their enemies, and the people they conquer. The code restrains the warrior. It sets boundaries on acceptable behavior. It distinguishes honorable acts from shameful acts. Achilles must seek vengeance for the death of his friend Patroclus, yet when his rage drives him to mistreat the corpse of his arch-nemesis, he angers the gods. Under the codes of chivalry, a medieval knight has to offer mercy to any knight who yields to him in battle. In feudal Japan, samurai are not permitted to approach their opponent's using stealth but rather are required to declare themselves openly before engaging in combat.

But why do warriors need a code that ties their hands and limits their options. Why should a warrior culture want to restrict the actions of its members and require them to commit to lofty ideals? Might not such restraints cripple their effectiveness as warriors?

What's wrong with, "All's fair in love and war?" Isn't winning all that matters? Why should any warrior be burdened with concerns about honor and shame?

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required for an ordinary citizen within the general population of the society the warrior serves.

In fact, there are many reasons to maintain warrior's codes. The most obvious is to protect innocent lives. There has never been a war in which innocents did not die, even with warrior codes in place. When there are no codes at all, innocents – those least able to defend themselves - become easy targets for atrocity. War is hellish enough without at least any attempt to limit its scope. When the concepts of guilt and innocence become too complicated to apply, we rely instead on the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Not all rules of war, however, relate to protection of those not directly involved in the conflict. Some limits how warriors can treat other warriors, such as rules about what weapons or tactics of war may be used, as well as those about the handling of surrenders, POWs, and the enemy wounded and dead. Many arguments in favor of such rules are based on the notion of reciprocity with the enemy.

We hope that if we treat our enemy's troops well, our troops will receive equally good treatment. Or perhaps more often than not, we fear that if we fail to treat our enemy's troops well, our troops will surely become the objects of retaliation. Yet this tit-for-tat rationale is disturbingly conditional. If reciprocity is our only motive for urging our warriors to show restraint, it will quickly dissolve whenever we fight enemies who do not share our

ideas of what is honorable in war.

The disciplined Romans were caught off-guard by the ferocious shock troops of the Celtic and Germanic tribesmen and responded with unspeakable brutality. The British were horrified when they first faced the hit-and-hide tactics of the colonial American militia, and some responded by punishing civilians with torture and death. When white settlers moved west; they confronted native tribes who considered stealth an honorable warrior skill and did not always recognize the combatant/noncombatant distinction, while white settlers did not shrink from using biological weapons or attempting genocide against the native peoples. The Japanese claimed to be appalled by Chinese-derived ninja tactics of espionage and assassination yet exercised no restraint in terrorizing their Asian neighbors.

The past offers a clear warning of the danger when fighting an enemy with different values for violating one's values. When both sides in a conflict abandon all restraint, another casualty is the hope for peace. When atrocities escalate and conflicts devolve into personal hatred, cycles of violence can span generations. If each side's violations are answered by reprisals, bringing both sides to the table to discuss terms to end the conflict becomes more and more difficult.

Even warring parties who do not care about the the prospect of peace may yet be concerned enough about international opinion to exercise some restraint in their

conduct of war. This potentially restraining principle is once again conditional. Not all belligerents will care about international opinion and some will think that they can hide their actions from scrutiny. And even those nations that do concern themselves with their international images may not effectively translate that concern into appropriate leadership and discipline of the soldiers who represent them.

Within democratic nations, domestic opinion can also be a factor in encouraging warriors to exercise restraint. If public support of a conflict is required in order to sustain funding for it and if that public support depends on the perception that the war is being conducted in an honorable manner, then domestic opinion may encourage strict observation of the conduct of war rules. On the other hand, concern about domestic opinion may do no more than inspire cover-ups of any actions by members of the military that might be condemned by the general public.

If reciprocity is our only motive for urging our warriors to show restraint, it will quickly dissolve whenever we fight enemies who do not share our ideas of what is honorable in war.

All of the reasons for the restraint I have mentioned thus far are in a sense external to our warriors themselves. The most compelling reason for warriors to accept restraint

may be the internal moral damage they risk if they fail to do so and the serious psychological damage they may suffer. The nature of the warrior's calling places him or her in peculiar moral peril.

The power to kill with impunity and possibly even to dominate entire foreign cultures could certainly corrupt character and promote hubris. Warriors need the restraint of a warrior's code to keep them from losing their humanity and their ability to enjoy a life worth living outside the realm of combat.

In the introduction to his valuable analysis of Vietnam veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay stresses the importance of "understanding... the specific nature of catastrophic war experiences that not only cause lifelong disabling psychiatric symptoms but can ruin good character."

Shay has conducted countless personal interviews and therapy sessions with American combat veterans. His work has led him to the conclusion that the most severe cases of post-traumatic stress is the result of wartime experiences that are not simply violent, but involve what Shay terms the "betrayal of 'what's right.'"

Veterans who believe that they were directly or indirectly party to immoral or dishonorable behavior (perpetrated

by themselves, their comrades, or their commanders) have the hardest time reclaiming their lives after the war is over. Such men may be tortured by persistent nightmares, may have trouble discerning a safe environment from a threatening one, may not be able to trust their friends, neighbors, family members, or government, and many have problems with alcohol, drugs, child or spousal abuse, depression, and suicidal tendencies. As Shay sorrowfully concludes, “The painful paradox is that fighting for one’s country can render one unfit to be its citizen.”

Warriors need a way to distinguish what they must do out of a sense of duty from what a serial killer does for the sheer sadistic pleasure of it. Their actions, like those of serial killers, set them apart from the rest of society. Warriors, however, are not sociopaths. They respect the values of the society in which they were raised and which they are prepared to die to protect.

It is therefore imperative for them to conduct themselves in such a way that they will be honored and esteemed by their communities, not reviled and rejected by them. They want to be seen as proud defenders and representatives of what is best about their culture: as heroes, not “baby killers.”

In a sense, the nature of the warrior’s profession puts him or her at a higher risk for moral corruption than most other occupations because it involves exerting power in matters of life and death. Warriors exercise the power to

take or save lives, order others to take or save lives, and lead or send others to their deaths. If they take this awesome responsibility too lightly – if they lose sight of the moral significance of their actions – they risk losing their humanity and their ability to flourish in human society.

In his powerful work, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman illuminates the process by which those in war and those training for war attempts to achieve emotional distance from their enemies. The practice of dehumanizing the enemy through the use of abusive or euphemistic language is a common and effective tool for increasing aggression and breaking down inhibitions against killing.

Yet this process can be taken too far. If there is excessive dehumanization of the enemy—if warriors genuinely come to believe, deep down, that their enemies are somehow less than human—the result is often lingering psychological trauma.

## THE CODE OF THE WARRIOR

When both sides in a conflict abandon all restraint, another casualty is the hope for peace. The interviewees had never truly achieved emotional distance from their former foes. Interestingly, these men seemed to be better off for having held on to their respect for the humanity of their enemies. They expressed admiration for Vietnamese culture. Some had even married Vietnamese women. Most

significantly, they appeared to be leading happy and productive post-war lives. In contrast, those who persisted in viewing the Vietnamese as “less than animals” were unable to leave the war behind them.

Dr. Shay describes an intimate connection between the psychological health of the veteran and the respect he feels for those he fought. Shay stresses how important it is to the warrior to have the conviction that he participated in an honorable endeavor. Dr. Shay writes:

“Restoring honor to the enemy is an essential step in recovery from combat PTSD. While other things are obviously needed as well, the veteran’s self-respect never fully recovers so long as he is unable to see the enemy as worthy. In the words of one of our patients, a war against subhuman vermin “ has no honor.”

He notes that this is true either in victory or defeat. Shay finds echoes of these ideas in the words of World War II veteran J. Glenn Gray from Gray’s modern classic on the experience of war, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. Gray brings home the agony of the warrior who has become incapable of honoring his enemies and thus is unable to find redemption himself. Gray writes:

“The ugliness of a war against an enemy conceived to be subhuman can hardly be exaggerated. There is an unredeemed quality to battle experienced under these conditions, which blunts all senses and perceptions. Traditional appeals of war are corroded by the demands

of a war of extermination, where conventional rules no longer apply. For all its inhumanity, war is a profoundly human institution.... This image of the enemy as a beast lessens even the satisfaction in destruction, for there is no proper regard for the worth of the object destroyed.... The joys of comradeship, keenness of perception, and sensual delights [are] lessened.... No aesthetic reconciliation with one's fate as a warrior [is] likely because no moral [reconciliation is] possible.”

By setting standards of behavior for themselves, accepting certain restraints, and even “honoring their enemies,” warriors can create a lifeline that will allow them to pull themselves out of the hell of war and reintegrate themselves into their society, should they survive to see peace restored. A warrior's code may cover everything from the treatment of prisoners of war to oath keeping to table etiquette, but its primary purpose is to grant nobility to the warriors' profession.

This allows warriors to retain both their self-respect and the respect of those they guard. Nor is it just “boots on the ground” front-line and special forces troops who need the protection of a warrior's code.

Every warrior sent into combat risks moral damage. Men and women who fight from a distance – who drop bombs or shoot missiles from planes or ships or submarines – are also in danger of losing their humanity. What threatens them is the very ease by which they can take lives. As

technology separates individuals from the results of their actions, it cheats them of the chance to absorb and reckon with the enormity of what they have done. Killing fellow human beings, even for the noblest cause, should never feel like nothing more than a game played using the latest advances in virtual reality.

In his book *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond*, international journalist and scholar Michael Nor is it just “boots on the ground” front line and special forces troops who need the protection of a warrior’s code. Every warrior sent into combat risks moral damage.

Ignatieff airs his concerns about the morality of asymmetric conflicts in which one side is able to inflict large numbers of casualties from afar without putting its own forces at much risk (for example, by relying primarily on long-range precision weapons and high-altitude air assaults). In such a mismatched fight, it may be easy for those fighting on the superior side fails to appreciate the true costs of the war, since they are not forced to witness the death and destruction first-hand. Distance warriors may not feel the moral weight of what they do. Ignatiev warns modern warriors against the “moral danger” they face if they allow themselves to become too detached from the reality of war.

He writes:

Virtual reality is seductive. ...We see war as a surgical scalpel and not a bloodstained sword. In so doing we mis-describe ourselves as we mis-describe the instruments of

death. We need to stay away from such fables of self-righteous invulnerability. Only then can we get our hands dirty. Only then can we do what is right.

Warriors who dehumanize their enemies by equating them with blips on a computer screen may find the sense that they are part of an honorable undertaking far too fragile to sustain. Just as societies have an obligation to treat their warriors as ends in themselves, it is important for warriors to show a similar kind of respect for the inherent worth and dignity of their opponents. Even long-distance warriors can achieve this by acknowledging that some of the “targets” they destroy are in fact human beings, not just empty statistics. The further war evolves away from armies of declared and uniformed combatants lining up across an open field, the more need for strict codes of discrimination and proportionality.

The morality of benefiting from technological advances that make it possible to kill at a greater distance has made proponents of ethical warfare nervous for centuries. Pope Urban II in 1097 outlawed the use of one of the earliest instruments of death-at-a-distance, the crossbow. In 1139 Pope Innocent II went even further, threatening anyone who used the crossbow with ex-communication and condemning the weapon as, “hateful to God and unfit to be used among Christians.”

It is precisely this suspicion of technology-enhanced distance warfare – the idea that it is somehow less

honorable or brave than the up-close-and-personal combat of the traditional battlefield – that may have led some modern warriors to go to even greater lengths to identify themselves with a demanding warrior’s code. From the first use of aerial combat, fighter pilots have self-consciously compared themselves not to foot soldiers with crossbows but to knights on horseback. They have adopted the ideals, and even the language, of chivalry.

One of these knights of the air was Sir Hugh C.T. Dowding, a fighter pilot for the Royal Air Force in World War I and strategist for the Battle of Britain in World War II. Dowding was passionately committed to maintaining the nobility of his vocation. An incident from the First World War illustrates this plainly. Dowding’s squadron brought down a German aircraft. He was then appalled to see the pilot and crewman shot while climbing out of their wrecked plane by ground troops. In an attempt to redeem what he saw as soiled British honor, Dowding gathered up the personal effects of the two dead Germans and dropped them behind enemy lines along with a note saying exactly where their bodies were buried.

There was no law or international convention that required Major Dowding to go to such lengths. It was his own warrior’s code that prompted him to act.

## THE CODE OF THE WARRIOR

The further war evolves away from armies of declared and uniformed combatants lining up across an open field, the more need for strict codes of discrimination and proportionality. There must be things that honorable warriors simply do not do, regardless of the provocation.

Similar sentiments were behind a story I heard from an older gentleman who approached me after I spoke about the warrior's code at a Kiwanis Club meeting in Reisterstown, Maryland. This man, whom I will call "Dan," told me that he had been a fighter pilot in World War II in the Pacific Theater. Near the end of the war, he was commanding a squadron over Tokyo. They flew a mission near a crowded train station, where hundreds of people were desperately pushing to climb aboard trains that could take them away from the besieged city. Acting against direct orders, one member of the squadron broke formation, flew down, and strafed some of the helpless Japanese civilians.

When they returned from this mission, no one in the squadron would speak to the pilot who had murdered the non-combatants. Tears filled Dan's eyes as he told me the conclusion of this sixty-year-old story: "We were all so ashamed of what he had done. He had shamed the entire squadron. He was killed in an engagement two days later. And, God help us, we were glad."

Warriors who retain the capacity to feel shame have not yet lost their hold onto their humanity. In Homer's Iliad, we know that the great Achilles has crossed the line and surrendered his humanity to war when he abuses the body of his noble opponent, Prince Hector of Troy. The god Apollo describes Achilles, the former warrior, turned killer:

His twisted mind is set on what he wants,  
As vague as a lion bristling with pride,  
Attacking men's focus to make himself a feast.  
Achilles has lost all pity and has no shame left.  
Shame sometimes hurts men, but it helps them, too.  
... But this man? After he kills Hector,  
He ties him behind his chariot  
And drags him around his dear fiend's tomb.  
Does this make him a better or nobler man?  
He should fear our wrath, good as he may be,  
For he defiles the dumb earth in his rage.

When Achilles desecrates the body of Hector by dragging it behind his chariot, it is clear that Achilles has been damaged by war. Something has died inside him. He can no longer honor his enemy, so he no longer has honor himself. As Apollo says, he has lost all sense of shame. The truth of Apollo's accusation highlights the wisdom of one of the edicts found in the Bushido code of the Japanese samurai: "A sense of shame will uphold justice."

Legend has it that when a Spartan mother sent her son to war she would say to him, "Come back with your shield

or on it.” If a warrior came back without his shield, it meant that he had laid it down in order to break ranks and run from battle. He was supposed to use his shield to protect the man next to him in formation, so to abandon his shield was not only to be a coward but also to break faith with his comrades. To come back on his shield was to be carried back mortally wounded or dead.

Thus, the adage meant that the young warrior should fight bravely, maintain his martial discipline, and return with his honor intact: “Death before dishonor.”

The warriors’ mothers who spoke this line were not heartless monsters—far from it. It was spoken from great love. They wanted their children to return with their sense of self-respect still with them, feeling justifiably proud of how they had performed under pressure, not tortured and destroyed by guilt and shame. To come back with their shields was to come back still feeling like warriors, not like cowards or murderers.

Today, throughout history, the warriors’ code is the shield that guards their humanity. Modern warriors must balance the physical risks of combat against the moral risks. And they may face enemies who will try to use their values Today, as, throughout history, the warriors’ code is the shield that guards their humanity and their commitment to a code against them.

Is it worse to come home on your shield or to come home without it? It is a question you must answer for yourself.

But I will leave you with the words of Seneca, a Roman Stoic: [I will never let concern for my] flesh drive me to fear, never to a role that is unworthy of a good man.

I will not allow any wound to penetrate through the body to the real me. My body is that part of me that can be injured; but within this fragile dwelling-place lives a soul that is free.

## References

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## **A REJECTION OF THE NEED FOR WARRIOR SCHOLARS?**

by Bernd Horn

Intuitively, virtually no one would argue that more education is a bad thing. In fact, most would agree that, as a philosophical concept, the more education one has, the richer one is as a person.<sup>1</sup> However, the moment resources or cost enter the equation, the value of education to individuals often changes. Nowhere is this more evident than in the military, where fiscal pressures inevitably prompt 'innovative ideas' that often revolve around cutting professional development, specifically, education. Moreover, these same pressures consistently elicit queries with regard to the value of education, specifically undergraduate and graduate degrees, to the military. Questions such as, "Do all officers need degrees?" and "What is the military requirement for graduate degrees?" are frequently 'floated' as a precursor to potential program cuts.

Although the military has historically been an anti-intellectual institution, such discourse seems incredulous, considering the contemporary operating environment (COE), which, if anything,

will become even more complex in the future. Globalization and persistent conflict, as well as the proliferation of cheap, accessible technology, challenge the conventional understanding of conflict. Moreover, hybrid threats that include diverse combinations of irregular, terrorist, criminal, and conventional forces employed asymmetrically, all operating within populated centres in a variety of culturally diverse environments, are just some of the challenges that have added complexity to conflict. In order to be effective in this environment, military professionals must be adaptive and agile in both thought and action, as well as adept at critical thinking and sound reasoning - all benefits of education. In short, militaries require warrior scholars who are capable of operating in the complex battlespace of today and tomorrow.

### **Warrior Scholar**

A number of challenges generated in the 1990s forced the CF to examine its anti-intellectual culture and make necessary changes to increase the importance of education to the Canadian profession of arms. In fact, reforms included: ministerial direction that all officers must hold a recognized undergraduate degree; the CDS appointment of a Special Advisor to the Office of the CDS for Professional Development; the creation of a Canadian military journal to allow a forum for professional discourse; the creation of a Canadian 'war college' course; and the establishment of a Canadian Defence Academy to provide a centre of excellence for CF professional development, to name a few of the initiatives. In sum, all were indications that the CF apparently recognized its anti-intellectualism and its failure to ensure its personnel received the required education to complement their professional training.

Unfortunately, the long war in Afghanistan, and a return to more fiscally challenging times have resurrected old attitudes. This reality begs the question once again, "Can, or should, a soldier also be scholar?" The apparent predilection for anti-intellectualism

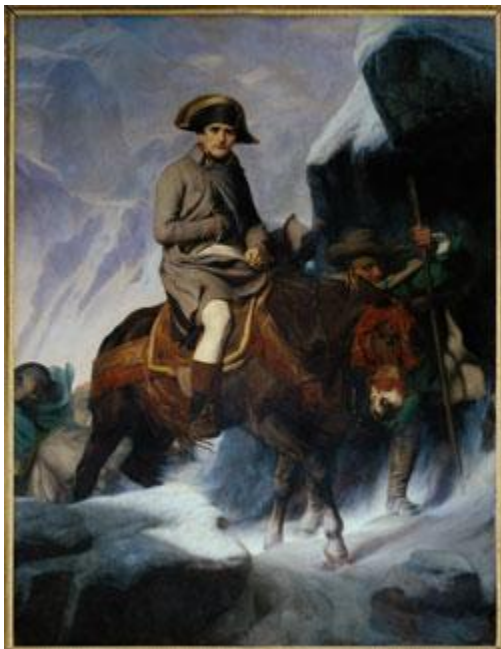
in the military, and time and resource constraints aside, there is an intuitive understanding why the military mind would focus on training and experience rather than education. After all, education is not tangible. Unlike training, where quantifiable improvements in behaviour can be physically seen, for instance, marksmanship scores or proficiency in drills, education is less evident in tangible form. It deals with creativity, critical thinking, and reasoning.<sup>2</sup> These qualities are not always outwardly observable.

In the Canadian Forces, there still appears to be a lack of understanding of the difference between training and education. The traditional stress on training, that is "... a predictable response to a predictable situation," is often confused with or considered synonymous with education, defined by Professor Ron Haycock as, "... the reasoned response to an unpredictable situation - critical thinking in the face of the unknown."<sup>3</sup> Because of the CF's excellent training regime and its current success on operations in Afghanistan, it is easy to be lulled into a perception that the institution's educational needs are quite adequately looked after. What is overlooked, at great peril, is that the prescribed application of ideas and methods, as well as drills and checklists, have a purpose and functional utility, but this methodology is no longer, if, in fact it ever was, enough to equip leaders to cope with and function in the complex post-modern world.

Simply put, "... education," according to Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) Professor David Last, a former artillery senior officer, "... is the shaping of the mind."<sup>4</sup> Education assists in our reasoning ability, which, in turn, is critical in responding to unanticipated circumstances. After all, as the adage goes, you train for certainty and you educate for uncertainty. This is crucial to soldiers and senior NCOs, and particularly, to officers.

Equally important is the need to understand, and ability to place, the CF's ultimate purpose and its operations within the context of

the larger whole and the society it serves. The French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had already recognized in the 19th Century that: "Tactics, evolutions, artillery and engineer sciences can be learned from a manual, like geometry; but the knowledge of the higher conduct of war can only be acquired by studying the history of wars and battles of great generals and by one's own experience." He understood: "There are no terse and precise rules at all."<sup>5</sup> In the end, neither the CF, nor any of its components, exists in and of themselves.<sup>6</sup>



Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY/ART212640.

*Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*, by Paul Delaroche, 1848.

The requirement to comprehend 'the larger picture' cannot be overstated.<sup>7</sup> "Professional officers," asserts Professor Last, "are managers of violence." He further explains:

*Their professional education must allow them to understand it. Violence has always been a part of the interconnected human conditions that we label war, conflict, and peace. In the complex world of today and tomorrow, our understanding of these conditions needs to be more comprehensive than in the past. This*

*is more important than technology, doctrine, and strategy, because all are subservient to purpose. There is no purpose without understanding. The officer's understanding must match that of society - otherwise he or she cannot serve it.*<sup>8</sup>

This societal connection has another, equally important dimension. The Canadian military ethos demands that the CF remain rooted in Canadian society and reflect its most important values and attitudes. In this regard, it is critical to understand that, as Ambassador Paul Heinbecker points out: "... we are an extensively educated people."<sup>9</sup> Of the 33 most industrialized economies surveyed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada ranked second behind Russia (Japan was third, and the US, fourth) in the percentage of the population that has attained at least a university or college-level education. The CF must remain very reflective of this leading edge sector of Canadian society if it is to retain the trust, confidence and respect necessary to maintain the essential support of all Canadian citizens.

In addition, the importance of education to the military profession, particularly in the post-modern world, should be self-evident, especially in light of the series of crises that the CF endured during the cataclysmic decade of the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, this was recognized as early as 1969, by then-CDS General Jean Victor Allard. "It matters little," he wrote, "whether the Forces have their present manpower strength and financial budget, or half of them, or double them; without a properly educated, effectively trained professional officer corps, the Forces would, in the future, be doomed at best to mediocrity, and at the worst, to disaster."<sup>11</sup>



CFJIC REP68-758.

General Jean Victor Allard as Chief of the Defence Staff.

Intuitively, a professional soldier is better prepared to face the unknown challenges of the ambiguous, complex, and uncertain battlespace by having a broad knowledge of theories that act as a guide to discretionary judgment, rather than a narrow ability in only some of the practical applications of the profession of arms. As one expert concluded: "Strategic effectiveness will increasingly be based on the capacity to think like a networked enemy. Therefore, the military strategist needs to understand a complex environment and a diverse range of interests, actors and issues while retaining the capacity to "simplify, focus, decide, and execute."<sup>12</sup> Retired American Major-General Robert H. Scales underlined the need for education vice training when he commented: "This new era of war requires soldiers equipped with exceptional cultural awareness and an intuitive sense for the nature and character of war."<sup>13</sup>

The need for education in today's complex security environment is repeatedly stressed by practitioners, who, through the experience with respect to the chaos of conflict, clearly understand that education, rooted in critical thinking, problem

solving, and analytical research, better prepares individuals to think, as well as cope, with problems and situations that are unexpected. Education assists individuals to not only *embrace* change, but adapt to and anticipate change. More importantly, it instils the attitude and the ability to constantly learn from one's environment, and to prepare, as well as to react, accordingly. Colonel John Boyd stripped it down to its simplest form. He asserted, "Machines don't fight wars. Terrain doesn't fight wars. Humans fight wars." To that end, he concluded: "You must get in the minds of the humans. That's where the battles are won."<sup>14</sup>

And, education is the domain of the human mind. Sir Michael Howard wrote:

*...academic studies can provide the knowledge, insight, and the analytic skills which provide the necessary basis, first for reasoned discussion, and then for action. They provide a forum, and breed the qualities, which enable the student, the teacher, the politician, the civil servant, the moral philosopher, and not least the soldier to reach a common understanding of the problems which confront them, even if inevitably there is disagreement about the solutions. This dialogue is what civilization is all about. Without it societies dissolve.*<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, and closer to home, Dr. John Cowan, the former Principal of RMCC, reinforced the necessity of education in relation to the military. "Today, when a young officer may be called upon to be a skilled leader, a technical expert, a diplomat, a warrior, and even an interpreter and an aid expert all at once," he insisted, "... there is no question that good training is not enough. Skills are not enough." He added, "The job calls for judgement, that odd distillate of education, the thing which is left when the memorized facts have either fled or been smoothed into a point of view, the thing that cannot be taught directly, but which must be learned. Without the mature judgement which

flows from education, we fall back on reflexes, which are damned fine things for handling known challenges, but which are manifestly unreliable when faced with new ones."<sup>16</sup>

Needless to say, as Cowan affirms, there will always be new challenges. This was reinforced by Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie, a former deputy commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. "Individuals were sent home [from Afghanistan]," revealed Leslie. "Immaturity and the inability to actually think outside the box made them ineffective ... What they tried to do was bring their usually very limited experience from somewhere else and apply it the same way that it had been done somewhere else and that didn't work ... each mission has got its own unique drivers, cultural conditions, local nuances, relationships with your other allies or other combatants."<sup>17</sup>

Leslie's observation is indisputable. Until recently, the common complaint of any deploying body was that they were prepared for the last deployment, and not the situation that they currently faced. But, as the saying goes, 'you don't know what you don't know.' Therefore, a culture absorbed solely by *experience*, whether gained in the former decades with reliance upon the 4 CMBG experience of preparing to beat back the Soviet hordes at the Fulda Gap in Germany; or, more currently, on the Afghanistan experience of fighting the elusive Taliban in Kandahar Province, is oblivious to the *value*, if not the *necessity*, of higher education.



DND photo AR2010-0177-34 by Sergeant Daren Kraus.  
General David Petraeus.

However, General David Petraeus, accomplished soldier and veteran of years of combat in Iraq, and currently the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, supports the need for greater education, particularly graduate studies for senior officers. He affirms "... that a stint at graduate school takes military officers out of their intellectual comfort zones." Petraeus believes: "Such experiences are critical to the development of the flexible, adaptable, creative thinkers who are so important to operations in places like Iraq and Afghanistan."<sup>18</sup> He explains that "... through such schooling our officers are often surprised to discover just how diverse and divergent views can be. We only thought we knew the contours of debate on a given subject."<sup>19</sup> Petraeus concluded that graduate studies "... provide a fair amount of general intellectual capital and often provide specific skills and knowledge on which an officer may draw during his or her career."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he argued: "... [that] graduate school inevitably helps U.S. military officers improve their critical thinking skills."<sup>21</sup>

And so, if experience once again becomes the primary discriminator for advancement, and higher education is again deemed inconsequential, the CF will return to a system where

emphasis is placed upon progression in a series of key appointments and geographic postings, most notably Afghanistan. As such, successful completion of these tours once again becomes perceived as sufficient to prepare an individual for the next higher rank and responsibilities.

Unfortunately, this type of myopic outlook and inward focused mind-set fails to see the inherent flaw of this model. Experience in itself is valuable and irreplaceable. But it is also constrained by time, geography, and memory. One person's experience, particularly at a specific time and place, does not necessarily represent the knowledge or abilities that are needed for an institution to advance into the future. Moreover, the perspective from a shell-hole, turret, or command post is very limited. Service needs become defined in and of themselves without being rooted in their proper societal context. But, most of all, a system that values experience as the only true arbitrator of reality suffers from human arrogance and frailty. "We see," wrote Major Seiberg in the mid-1930s, "that the Spanish Civil War has up to now demonstrated nothing really new, and also that men only regard experience as valid when it is their own experience. Otherwise, it would not be possible for the same errors that led to failure in the Great War to be repeated."<sup>22</sup> Simply put, those who refuse to open their minds are doomed to suffer the limitations of their narrow, restricted, and outdated beliefs.

The truth in this condemnation of professional development, based almost exclusively upon the experiential paradigm, settled home in the 1990s. "Undeniably," wrote General J.M.G. Baril, as Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), "... the 1990s represented the first strong test of the contemporary CF Officer Corps and we found that part of it was broken." He concluded, "Experience in and of itself was not enough."<sup>23</sup> He later acknowledged: "... [that] over the past 10 years ... we constantly found ourselves thrown into the unknown. Complex, ambiguous and politically charged operations tested our leadership and confronted us with

ethical dilemmas.” Baril further conceded, “... here at home we were slow to understand and adapt to the large-scale societal changes associated with the end of the Cold War and therefore were not prepared for these demands.”<sup>24</sup>



CFJIC 1151-IMG0074.

General Maurice Baril as Chief of the Defence Staff.

Quite simply, the warning previously articulated by General Allard well over two decades earlier had gone unheeded. As a result, his prophecy came to pass. The predicament was aptly summarized by a former army commander, Lieutenant-General M.K. Jeffery. He believed, “... the lack of intellectual discipline in the past has got us where we are today [1990s]. If we don’t change we will die.” He added: “The longer we resist it, the harder we make it on someone else.”<sup>25</sup> One former CDS insisted: “Officers need to have the right mindset to change and evolve the profession.” He added, “... knowledge must be valued as a key ingredient to our growth as individuals and as a profession.”<sup>26</sup> After all, as General

Petraeus correctly identified, "The most powerful tool any soldier carries is not his weapon but his mind."<sup>27</sup>

In the end, every member of the profession of arms must guard against slipping back into old mindsets, and must ensure that they are ready to meet the challenges that face them, not only today, but also into the future. So, can a warrior also be a scholar? The answer is definitely 'yes.' The many tenets of scholarship, namely precision, detailed research, communications, breadth of knowledge, placement events in a proper economic, political, and social context, the drawing of conclusions and trying to discern themes from that, committing them to paper, and then articulating them so that others can understand the argument put forward and learn from it, are all skills that are necessary for a soldier.

Equally important, this type of study provide vicarious experience. As already articulated, experience is seen as sacrosanct, and great emphasis is rightfully placed upon it. But, due to real life limitations, experience is often constrained by time and place. Scholarship, on the other hand, allows its virtual experience to be timeless and to cover a wider breadth of activity and circumstance. It provides soldiers with a greater repertoire of scenarios, possible solutions, and context from which to draw.

The warrior scholar also contributes to academics by providing an intangible element to the understanding of past events. The plight of the soldier, the confusion, desperation, fatigue, fear, and loneliness ..., in short, Clausewitz's friction that is experienced at every level adds to the comprehension of past events. Those who have experienced it firsthand can understand and possibly offer a more accurate interpretation of historical events by being able to draw upon their own experiences. Conversely, the study of the past, and a scholarly analysis of why things went wrong may assist the warrior in trying to mitigate a repetition by using

intellectual skill to control, correct, or manage as many of those faults as possible.

Furthermore, education arms the warrior with the ability to deal with the ambiguity and complexity that our soldiers face in the battlespace of today and tomorrow. Beyond the practical there is also the intangible. That is to say, a greater breadth of knowledge, tolerance to alternate interpretations and ideas, a comfort with critical debate and discussion, the honing of analytical skills, as well as the exposure to complete new bodies of literature and thought that expand the mind make the warrior that much more capable. In the words of General Petraeus: "The future of the U.S. military requires that we be competent warfighters, but we cannot be competent warfighters unless we are as intelligent and mentally tough as we are aggressive and physically rugged."<sup>28</sup> It is no different for the Canadian Forces.

Perhaps Henry Kissinger captured the theme best, especially for operational and strategic commanders and leaders, by using the 'book' as a symbol of a broad and comprehensive education:

*We have entered a time of total change in human consciousness of how people look at the world. Reading books requires you to form concepts, to train your mind to relationships. You have to come to grips with who you are. A leader [emphasis added] needs these qualities. But now we are tempted to learn from fragments of facts. A book is a large intellectual construction. You can't hold it all in your mind easily or at once. You have to struggle mentally to internalize it. Now there is no need to internalize because each fact can instantly be called up again on a computer. There is no context, no motive. Information is not knowledge. People are becoming researchers not readers, they float on the surface. This new thinking erases context. It disaggregates everything. All this makes strategic thinking [emphasis added] about world order nearly impossible to achieve.*<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, is the warrior scholar an irreconcilable divide? Absolutely not. Unfortunately, these two entities have for too long remained divided, when, in fact, they should be fused in order to strengthen both disciplines.



DND photo IS2010-3023-06 by Corporal Shilo Adamson.

Colonel Bernd Horn, OMM, MSM, CD, PhD, is the Chief of Staff Strategic Education and Training Programs at the Canadian Defence Academy. He is also an Adjunct Professor of History at the Royal Military College of Canada.

## Notes

1. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Bill Bentley on this article. His input made it a more complete work.
2. "Creativity is critical requirement for adaptation. We need creativity because: When things change and new information comes into existence, it's no longer possible to solve current problems with yesterday's solutions. Over and over again, people are finding out that what worked two years ago won't work today. This gives them a choice. They can either bemoan the fact that things aren't as easy as they used to be, or they can use their creative abilities to find new answers, new solutions, and new ideas." Richard King, "How Stupid are We?" in *Australian Army Journal* (Summer 2009), p. 186.
3. Dr. Ronald Haycock, former Dean of Arts, Royal Military College (RMC), "Clio and Mars in Canada: The Need for Military Education," presentation to the Canadian Club, Kingston, Ontario, 11 November 1999.

4. Major David Last, "Educating Officers: Post Modern Professionals to Control and Prevent Violence," in *Contemporary Issues in Officership: A Canadian Perspective*, Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn (ed.), (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2000), p. 26.
5. Quoted in Murray Simons, *Professional Military Learning. Next Generation PME in the New Zealand Defence Force* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2004), p. 43.
6. This is why the US military believes, "... [that] successful operational adaptability depends upon educating and developing leaders, training soldiers, and building cohesive teams who are prepared to execute decentralized operations in and among populations in coordination with Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational (JIIMP) partners." United States of America, Department of the Army, *The Army Learning Concepts for 2015*. [DRAFT], 20 April 2010, p. 2.
7. Brigadier-General (ret'd) Don McNamara asserted that advanced-military professional education is required "... to get people to think in two ways. One, to think strategically so that they're not commanding a ship anymore, they're commanding a force, and that is a mindset that is not easy for a lot of people to change. The second thing is that they are now thinking in terms of dealing at the highest national levels and not at the level of an individual military formation. These are two major changes that are not easy for people to assume without getting some experience before they actually have to assume it." Don Macnamara, in John Wood (ed.), *Talking Heads Talking Arms: No Life Jackets* (Toronto: Breakout Educational Network, 2003), p. 155.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
9. Paul Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Playbook for Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2010), p. 23.
10. For details on the 'decade of darkness,' see Bernd Horn and Bill Bentley, "The Road to Transformation: Ascending from the Decade of Darkness," in R.W. Walker (ed.), *Institutional Leadership in the Canadian Force: Contemporary Issues* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2007), pp. 1-25; or Bernd Horn and Bill Bentley, "The Road to Transformation. Ascending from the Decade of Darkness," in *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Autumn 2007, pp. 33-44.
11. Department of National Defence, *Report on the Officer Development Board* (Rowley Report), Ottawa: March 1969, p. v.
12. Colonel Roger Noble, "Beyond Cultural Awareness: Anthropology as an Aid to the Formulation and Execution of Military Strategy in the Twenty-First Century," in *Australian Army Journal*, (Winter 2009), p. 67.
13. Emily Spencer, *Solving the People Puzzle: Cultural Intelligence and Special Operations Forces* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), p. 115.

14. Colonel John R. Boyd , (USAF ret'd), cited in Major Jason Hayes, "Preparing Our Soldiers for Operations within Complex Human Terrain Environments," in *Australian Army Journal*, (Winter 2009), p. 104.
15. Michael Howard, *The Causes of War* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 83. Major-General, the Honourable W.A. Griesbach, stated: "Since wars cannot be arranged in order to merely to train officers, it follows that, after a long period of peace , the officers of an army must get their military education from reading and study." "Military Study: Notes of a Lecture," in *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, October 1931, p. 19.
16. Dr. John Scott Cowan, RMC Convocation Address, 4 October 1999, Kingston, Ontario. See also Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes. The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 233-237.
17. Spencer, p. 72.
18. David H. Petraeus, "To PhD or not to PhD..." in *The American Interest* (July/August 2007), p. 16.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 18. Petraeus further insists: "This is a very valuable experience in and of itself for those of us in uniform who will work and live in other cultures overseas. If the range of views within our own country is greater than we supposed, that can only help prepare officers for an even wider range beyond our shores."
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
22. Major Sieberg, "Tank or Anti-Tank? Does the Spanish War Show Which is Superior?" Translation of an article appearing in the *Militar-Wochenblatt* of 11 February 1938, National Archives, MG 31, G6, Vol. 9, File: Articles, Papers, Speeches – U.
23. Baril, p. 140.
24. Canada, *Canadian Officership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Officership 2020). Strategic Guidance for the Canadian Forces Officer Corps and the Officer Professional Development System (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2001), Foreword, p. iii.*
25. General Maurice Baril, covering letter, "Canadian Officership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Officership 2020) Launch Implementation, 2 May 2001, p. 3.
26. Lieutenant-General M.K. Jeffery, address to the Commanding Officers Course 2001, 21 June 2001, Fort Frontenac, Kingston, Ontario.
27. Petraeus, p. 16.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

29. Quoted in Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft and World Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 298.

## **The Warrior Priest Mindset: A Necessary Dichotomy for God's Chosen Knights**

by [Drew Graffia](#) (Author)

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Through the ages, there have been few heroes as adored as the medieval Knights! With a prayer in his heart and a sword in his hand, it is easy to see why this ultimate WARRIOR-PRIEST has stood the test of time. The Warrior-Priest Mindset unveils the inherent dual nature of every believer. Like Jesus, we must all be the LION and the LAMB.

You Will Discover:

The prophecies of the Dual Messiahs (The Suffering Servant and The Conquering King)

Yahweh's Code of Chivalry when using Self-Defense.

The mysterious and vile Order of the Tinkling Cymbal.

How we may be acting as Counterfeit Crusaders instead of Warrior-Priests.

How many of our biblical heroes were, in fact, Warrior-Priests?

How the Bible is the greatest knight's tale ever written and how Jesus is the ULTIMATE DRAGON SLAYER!

# WARRIOR PRIEST

## The Myths Behind Bushido

### **I. Introduction to Bushido**

Bushido, often translated as “the way of the warrior,” is a code of conduct associated with the samurai class of feudal Japan. This ethical framework guided the behavior and decision-making of samurai, emphasizing virtues such as honor, loyalty, and discipline. Historically, Bushido was not merely a set of rules but a way of life that dictated the samurai’s relationship with their lords, peers, and society at large.

The importance of Bushido in samurai culture cannot be overstated. It served as a moral compass, influencing everything from battlefield conduct to personal relationships. The principles of Bushido shaped the samurai’s identity and their role in Japanese society, cementing their status as noble warriors dedicated to their lords and ideals.

### **II. The Origins of Bushido**

The roots of Bushido can be traced back to the historical emergence of the samurai class in Japan during the late Heian period (794-1185). Initially, the samurai were warriors hired by landowners for protection and military service. Over time, they evolved into a distinct social class that held significant power and influence.

The development of Bushido was significantly influenced by various philosophical and religious traditions, notably Zen Buddhism and Confucianism. Zen Buddhism introduced concepts of mindfulness, self-discipline, and the acceptance of death, which resonated deeply with the samurai’s lifestyle. Meanwhile, Confucianism emphasized moral integrity, respect for hierarchy, and the importance of loyalty, further shaping the ethical framework of Bushido.

### III. Core Principles of Bushido

The core principles of Bushido are often summarized by the seven virtues that embody the samurai spirit. These virtues are:

- **Rectitude (Gi):** The unwavering ability to make the right choice in any situation.
- **Courage (Yū):** The mental and moral strength to confront fear and adversity.
- **Benevolence (Jin):** Compassion and kindness toward others, especially the weak.
- **Respect (Rei):** Politeness and honor in dealings with others, reflecting the samurai's noble status.
- **Honesty (Makoto):** Truthfulness and integrity in thoughts, words, and deeds.
- **Honor (Meiyo):** The sense of personal dignity and reputation that drives samurai behavior.
- **Loyalty (Chūgi):** The steadfast commitment to one's lord, family, and comrades.

These principles were not only ideals to aspire to; they shaped samurai behavior and influenced the broader society. Adherence to these virtues cultivated a sense of community and integrity among the samurai and their followers.

### IV. Myths and Misconceptions about Samurai

The image of the samurai has been romanticized in popular culture, leading to several myths and misconceptions. Common stereotypes include:

- **All samurai were noble and honorable:** While many samurai adhered to Bushido, there were also those who acted treacherously or out of self-interest.
- **Samurai were invincible warriors:** The romantic tales often exaggerate their skills, overlooking the reality of their limitations and the brutality of warfare.
- **Bushido was a uniform code:** In truth, interpretations of Bushido varied widely across different regions and periods, reflecting local customs and individual beliefs.

The romanticized image of the samurai often contrasts sharply with the historical reality. Many samurai faced moral dilemmas and internal conflicts,

and their lives were marked by the same complexities and contradictions found in any social class.

## V. Legendary Samurai and Their Impact on Bushido

Throughout Japanese history, several legendary samurai have left an indelible mark on the ideals of Bushido. Notable figures include:

- **Miyamoto Musashi:** A renowned swordsman and philosopher, Musashi wrote “The Book of Five Rings,” which delves into strategy, tactics, and the martial arts, embodying the essence of Bushido.
- **Minamoto no Yoshitsune:** A heroic figure in the Genpei War, Yoshitsune is celebrated for his bravery and tactical genius, symbolizing the virtues of loyalty and honor.

These figures not only exemplified the principles of Bushido in their lives but also contributed to the cultural narrative surrounding the samurai, reinforcing the values that defined this warrior class.

## VI. Bushido in Literature and Folklore

The representation of Bushido in Japanese literature and folklore is profound. Classic works, such as “The Tale of the Heike,” explore themes of loyalty, honor, and the transient nature of life, reflecting the samurai’s worldview. This epic recounts the rise and fall of the Taira clan and the samurai’s struggles during the Genpei War, illustrating the ideals of Bushido at play.

Moreover, Bushido’s influence extends into modern storytelling, appearing in various forms of media, including:

- **Film:** Movies like “The Last Samurai” and Akira Kurosawa’s “Seven Samurai” depict the samurai ethos and the struggles of maintaining honor in changing times.
- **Anime:** Series such as “Rurouni Kenshin” explore the life of a samurai grappling with his past and the principles of Bushido.
- **Manga:** Works like “Vagabond,” which chronicles Musashi’s life, delve into the philosophical aspects of the samurai’s journey.

These narratives not only entertain but also perpetuate the ideals of Bushido, ensuring that its legacy endures in contemporary culture.

## **VII. The Evolution of Bushido in Modern Japan**

In modern Japan, the interpretation of Bushido has evolved significantly. While the essence of loyalty, honor, and integrity remains, contemporary society has redefined these values to fit a democratic and globalized context.

Today, Bushido is often viewed through a lens that emphasizes:

- **Personal development:** The virtues of Bushido encourage individuals to pursue self-improvement and ethical living.
- **Corporate ethics:** Many Japanese businesses adopt Bushido principles to foster loyalty and respect within the workplace.
- **Global perspectives:** As Japan engages in international relations, Bushido is reinterpreted to reflect values of peace and cooperation.

Thus, Bushido continues to impact modern Japanese values and ethics, adapting to the needs and realities of contemporary life.

## **VIII. Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of Bushido**

The legacy of Bushido endures as a powerful testament to the ideals of the samurai. While myths and romanticized tales often overshadow the complexities of their lives, the core principles of Bushido remain relevant today.

As society continues to grapple with issues of honor, loyalty, and integrity, the lessons of Bushido provide valuable insights into personal and collective conduct. The enduring fascination with the samurai reflects our ongoing quest for meaning and virtue in a rapidly changing world, ensuring that the spirit of Bushido lives on in the hearts and minds of people around the globe.

# **Bushido: The Way of the Warrior**

武士道

## **Bushido Values for the Modern World**

*“Bushido, samurai code of ethics, prepares each of us to see what is important in life.*

*It is truly the foundation for being a great human being.”*

*~Patsy Surh O’Connell*

*founder/president – Asia Pacific Cultural Center*

Bushido, the way of the warrior, is the code which the samurai warriors of ancient Japan followed. It was a code of conduct that permeated all aspects of the warriors’ lives. It developed their character and eventually became a guide in moral and practical instruction. Bushido was the Japanese code of chivalry outlining the personal, social, and professional standards of conduct for the samurai.

The principles of the code of bushido includes:

- Courage - *Yuuki*
- Integrity - *Gi*
- Benevolence - *Jin*
- Respect - *Rei*
- Honesty - *Makoto*
- Honor - *Meiyo*
- Loyalty - *Chuugi*

The samurai warriors of ancient Japan dedicated their lives to uphold the principles of bushido. Seven principles, seven words can be summed up in the expression, “Do the right thing all the time.”

“A samurai was essentially a man of action.” ~ Inazo Nitobe  
*Bushido, The Soul of Japan*

The Code of Bushido developed great warriors great who also lived by a moral code of ethics. This code shaped the nation of Japan. The samurai simultaneously became poets, scholars, teachers, artists and even participated in the tea ceremony. They disciplined their bodies, minds, and souls by utilizing both left and right brain resulting in extremely well-rounded individuals.

The world witnessed the character of the Japanese people after the Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, and they were astonished. The Japanese cooperated and helped each other in their time of need. Rather than looting and stealing, over 70 million dollars were returned to the authorities within the first six months after the disaster, a witness of the Bushido legacy.

We can all respond to life’s difficulties utilizing the Code of Bushido. There is a saying which states, “You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” Imagine a world where everyone responded using the principles of Bushido in their personal and professional lives! In my email newsletters, I present and discuss the seven bushido principles to assist in your daily lives. It is one thing to have knowledge, but practical applications can change our world; *Sharpen Your Sword and Let the Journey Begin!*

## The Christian Warrior – Lessons from Bushido

Not long ago I heard a sermon on peace. It was given as part of a series leading up to Christmas. It was, of course, appropriate for the Christmas season. It would have been hard to deal with the Christmas Story and skip Luke 2:14's – "Peace on Earth...". Nevertheless, it got me thinking about "peace on earth," and what Jesus had to say on the topic. My mind drifted off to Matthew and Jesus' words about division:

<sup>34</sup> *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn*

*"a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—*

<sup>36</sup> *a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'*

<sup>37</sup> *"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:34-39*

I fear we often overlook these verses in our zeal to be Evangelical.

Jesus came to make Peace between God and man. We can find plenty of evidence of that in the Scriptures. Interestingly, He also came to bring strife and division among people. Those who are not prepared for or otherwise reject their peculiar struggle are not worthy of Christ. They will "lose" their life. It is not certain how complete this loss might be, but it certainly means that our lives, our families, and our culture will be diminished. We could again become enemies of God if we have failed to become the loyal Christian Warrior.

In my opinion, the sickness that we see in American culture is an extension of the sickness that is at the core of American Christianity. We have become soft in the sense that we sit around seeking comfort while waiting for the end. We prefer to do this in our "safe" environments of big Church worship productions, concerts, family gatherings, and the like. But our comfort-seeking is not that far away from the dropout culture of drugs and alcohol. The culture that we abhor is only a different, perhaps more

honest, expression of an inability to deal with things as they appear to be – without purpose or meaning. We are at the root of the loss and despair of our culture because we are not dedicated to winning the struggle that Christ demands of us. It is time to wake up and take our proportional responsibility in this mess.

Paul described this struggle in military terms:

*<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:11-12*

When Paul wrote this he was not telling us that we need to read our Bibles and hold fast to its teachings inside our Christian enclaves. That was not Paul's point at all. He meant exactly what it sounds like. We need to prepare ourselves for war. A taking of the conflict into the Enemy's camp. It is a war that will never end until Christ's Kingdom comes. Again, anyone not prepared for this war is not worthy of Christ and WILL experience serious negative consequences.

One of the biggest problems in Christendom is our ignorance of the warrior mentality. We have hundreds of years of emasculating dribble clouding our thinking. For generations the Christian Church has preached a Gospel of pacifism, other-worldliness and do-nothing-ism. In the early days of American Christianity we had men and women of action. They were decidedly anti-establishmentarianists who were disgusted by the disconnectedness of the established Church. It was not worthy of them (see Hebrews 11:38). They grabbed their Bibles and headed to the Frontier to create a new place. We are their heirs, but we may have lost their fervor and courage. It is time to rekindle that. We need to re-capture the warrior mentality.

In an effort to do that, I will break with Christian tradition and go to the code of *bushido* – also known as “The Code of the *Samurai*.”

I do this for a couple of reasons. Strangely, it was along this path that I came to the Truth. As a teenager, I was deeply engaged in Judo and this code. My relatives in the Baptist tradition were aghast. Personally, I found this path very fortunate. I believe it gave me a perspective into the Jesus that generations of handwringing had obscured from many modern Christians. The Western view of Jesus comes from Plato, Augustine,

Aquinas, Pope Gregory I, Pope Gregory XIII, and others who have taken neo-Platonic Greek ideas and incorporated them into our thinking and traditions. Our traditions are so steeped in this mindset that only with great effort can we think outside of that context. We read our Bibles as if it were written by Plato. He didn't write it, and most of the Biblical authors were not influenced by Plato (John and Paul being possible exceptions). Plato and the Greek thinkers rejected the body and anything worldly as being inherently sinful. They broke with the Eastern notion that everything – Body, Soul, and Spirit – are connected. Until Pope John XXIII, the Catholic Church (the primary keeper of Western Christian thought throughout most of history), was decidedly anti-Jewish and anti-Eastern. There was an Eastern Church, but it had been destroyed by Islam and Confucianism or driven behind the thick veil of the Cyrillic languages such as Bulgarian and Russian.

Jewish philosophy sits at the crossroads of Greek and Eastern thought. The Jews did not make the great distinction between the secular and the holy that these Greek thinkers did. By denying the connection of all things, the Western Church lost much of the meaning of Christ's teachings about how to live in the world. Many in the Western Church became monks, ascetics, Bible scholars, and general do-nothings. They contemplated the "mysteries" while allowing poverty, injustice, wickedness, and war to flourish. Many of their "heroes of the faith" were noted for sitting on the top of poles. When they engaged in worldly issues it was often on the side of their Church establishment or in defense of a silly doctrinal issue like a phrase in the Common Book of Prayer. We are the inheritors of this "tradition." We get all wound up about Trinitarianism but have little to say about sexual immorality, looting, murders in south Chicago, misappropriation of Social Security funds, lies by public officials, and the like. These are connected to us every bit as much as dispensationalism. If we think that God has dismissed His commitment to Justice and Holiness for our sakes, we have a rude awakening in store for us.

We have been disengaged for so long that we do not know how to "fight the good fight" (see 2 Timothy 4:7). We cannot go to our traditions or teachings on this matter because we have hundreds of years of nonsense on the subject. When we do go to war, we do so as amateurs. We bungle and blunder because we do not have proper instruction on how to fight. We often find ourselves waiting too long to engage, staying engaged too long, getting out too early, embracing foes and deserting friends, often failing to come to a positive resolution to the conflict. We are driven by

multiple emotions ranging from debilitating fear to dehumanizing rage. Since we do not have in our tradition good teaching on conflict, let us turn to an analogy just like Paul did. Let us turn to the East and examine *bushido* – not to become Zen Buddhists, but to understand more clearly the teachings of Christ. We will find in the virtues of *bushido* much common ground with the teachings of Old Testament Prophets and Jesus.

Let us use the Seven Virtues of *bushido* as an outline. These are:

- Righteousness
- Courage
- Benevolence
- Respect
- Sincerity
- Honor
- Loyalty

### **Righteousness:**

It is interesting that at the top of the list is Righteousness. Certainly that would be at the top of any list for a Christian Warrior. It is certainly a theme of Christian teaching:

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew 5:6*

*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. Proverbs 14:34*

*The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them. Proverbs 20:7*

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33*

We have managed to somehow interpret Righteousness as right thinking and lost the notion that it is right living. This would never do in *bushido*. Being Eastern in its foundation, there is no split between thinking and doing. There is certainly no tradition of thinking rather than doing. In fact, there is a strong suspicion that thinking too much can actually get in the way of proper doing. In *bushido* repetition and practice is a way of life. A doing until it becomes “natural.” This is a willful, active, and persistent attack on the “old man” (used in KJV) described by Paul:

<sup>8</sup> *But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Colossians 3:8-11 (NIV)*

In *bushido*, Righteousness reaches everything. There is a “right way” for the simplest of activities. It is the way of both gentleness and power. It is a maximization of good effect with a minimization of effort, cost, and negative impact. There is a “right way” to tie your shoes, go around a traffic circle, place your order at McDonald’s, greet a friend, correct a colleague, fire a pistol, read a passage of Scripture, conduct a dinner, run an experiment, dress your child, sharpen a sword, write a contract, sing a song, honor your marriage, serve your country and pass from this life to the next. In all these things there is a way to bring the most honor and good while minimizing negative impacts for others. In *bushido* it is a requirement to not only **learn** but also to **do** “the right way.” This means mental and physical practice until the “right way” is done without thinking, without hesitating, and without failing.

It is here that American Christians completely fail. We are sloppy and haphazard in almost everything. We don’t signal in the traffic circle. We don’t wait until we know what we want to order before we jump in line. We don’t take our music home and learn our choir part as well as we can. We don’t agonize over a computer program, a contract, or a congressional bill until we have it “right.” We are like everyone else, grabbing for all we can get, demanding to be served while making everyone else wait on us. We take the most we can, as fast as we can, and return the absolute minimum required of us, while externalizing as much of the cost as we can get away with. We cling desperately to life, often spending all we have and demanding that others spend whatever it takes, to extend our earthly life just a few months. This **is** the American Way. It is not the Way of the Christian Warrior. His path leaves not a trace but the Good done in all things.

Teach your children to embrace the Way of Righteousness.

### **Courage:**

I'm not sure what most Americans would say if we asked them, "What is courage?" I'm not sure if we would get much of an answer at all. If, however, we asked someone like the reluctant warrior Captain Richard Winters, we might actually learn something. In the truly courageous, we see a quiet, gentle power that ignores pain and danger for the greater good. It is not a thought or an expression but more of an acting out of an inner being. It is not the audacious who conquer before a crowd whom we should admire. Rather, our hero should be the gentle one who does what is right in the face of intimidation and threat when no one is looking and no medals will be given. It is motivated by Love and not by hope of gain or even fear of loss. The gentle one is courageous because that is what it takes to be genuine and true. Tao Te Ching expresses this kind of courage:

*"One of courage, with audacity, will die. One of courage, but gentle, spares death. From these two kinds of courage arise harm and benefit."*

The Christian Warrior has every reason to be one of gentle courage:

*The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1*

*<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:*

*"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*

*<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:35-39*

*<sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13*

Not only do we have the promise of Final Victory, we have a whole host of examples. These include all the Saints who have gone before (see

Hebrews Chapter 11 and Chapter 12:1-3). We also have the example of the Christ:

*<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” <sup>37</sup> He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”*

*<sup>39</sup> Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Matthew 26:36:39*

Jesus, the Man, persisted even though His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. He knew what was coming but He did not shrink from it.

In the recent past, there was within American culture something of a truce between the forces of Progressivism and Christianity. That is now past. There is now a state of war, and we need to act accordingly. It will require tremendous courage – the kind that keeps up gentle pressure motivated by Love. We should be seeing Christians especially Christian leaders going to jail because they will not conform to “political correctness” anymore. We should be courageously agitating for justice and morality. We should be seeing lawsuits, demonstrations, boycotts, and rallies like we have never seen before. We should be vocal and persistent in our opposition to abortion, homosexuality, anti-faith teaching in schools, high jacking the political system to play Robin Hood, destruction of the justice system’s ability to punish wrongdoing, falsehoods in advertising and politics, exploitation of the poor and disenfranchised, sex trafficking, promotion and exploitation of drug use and a whole host of other social, political and justice issues. This should be in addition to some of the more obvious Evangelical activities such as witnessing at work, at school, on the street and in foreign countries. Christians should be everywhere, affecting society and individuals in countless ways. We should be the salt that not only flavors and preserves the culture, but stings the eyes.

Naturally, a question arises, “Are Christians engaged in changing society and individuals as they should, and if not, why not?” First, let me say that Christians are not and have not been engaged as they should. If they were engaged there would be a lot more conflict over issues than we have seen. It is pretty clear that American Christians have become fat and lazy. But, have they become cowards? I am not so sure about that. There

still seems to be a willingness for American Christians to take risks and even face pain and privation, but I question priorities. We still hear stories of American Christians putting up with a lot of pain and suffering to get a good job, win the Super Bowl, or become famous actors. It seems to me that what we lack is mindset and motivation. I'm not sure we know what it means to be a great Christian.

We do not celebrate the "heroes" of the Faith. I think we are somewhat embarrassed to do so, and that is a real shame. I think we especially do a disservice to our young men. Young men are often looking for a quest to join – a place to put in a heroic effort. We do not provide that. We preach love, peace and joy. That may capture the heart of females, but that hardly excites the male of the species. Where is the courageous effort that leads to success and meaning? Young men leave our churches in droves to join sports teams, businesses, the military, academia, gangs, terrorist groups, and a host of social networks that engage them in efforts that promise success and meaning. Our poor girls are left with a much-diminished gene pool that has a disproportionate number of losers. Our families continue to lose economic and political stature and Christianity becomes more and more marginalized. Until we reverse this, Christianity will continue to shrink in both size and influence in Western culture.

Our preachers and teachers are largely responsible for this general degradation of Christian verve. They are not driven by courage, nor have they been for many generations. Without courage, the Christian is frozen by the terror of potential loss. When that happens, there arises a bunker mentality and it is not long before all is lost.

Teach your children to be Courageous in defense of right.

### **Benevolence:**

This may be another virtue of *bushido* that comes as a surprise. The ideal *samurai* was to have what he needed but no more. Excess wealth was considered more of a burden than a sin. The question was, "Why be burdened with too much?" Giving to the poor and needy was an efficient way to maintain a life of simple happiness. It derives from the Buddhist notion that unhappiness comes from striving for temporal things, but that is not the only place we see this concept. We actually see this in Jesus in the often misinterpreted verse:

<sup>36</sup> *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Mark 8:36*

We often torture this verse into something super-theological when it is actually very earthy, practical, and Eastern. Why lose everything of value striving to gain that which you cannot keep? We are to go through life with an open hand – receiving and giving with equal enthusiasm.

In some ways, American Christians excel in this area. There is nowhere on earth – and perhaps even in the history of the earth – where a group of people give so freely of their time and their money. This is not just on an absolute basis, but even on a percentage of income, GDP, disposable income, or almost any other ratio basis one could name. An interesting corollary to this is that the benevolent are not the rich among us. It is the middle class and even the poor. The rich may give a lot of money, but they are nowhere close in ratio terms to the giving of the middle class and the poor.

Hence, it would be disingenuous to characterize American Christians as miserly. This is not the case. But have we really found the Peace of Benevolence? It would be unwise to not give money and possessions their correct value and let them be the just reward for the right effort, but have we freed ourselves from striving for things or do we enslave ourselves to our possessions? This is always a danger, especially to those who have much. Let us continue in Benevolence, and take care that we do not get lost in striving for more.

And finally, Benevolence must be driven by Love. Giving as an enabling of wrong is not benevolence at all. When benevolence becomes long-term charity it is debilitating and enslaving. There are always those who have suffered loss from exogenous events. These are to be the objects of our Benevolence. Those who would live off of the benevolence of others are thieves who steal from those who are true victims of misfortune. They should not be enabled to do this wrong any more than we should allow thieves to break into our neighbor's house.

Teach your children to give with joy, striving for good and not for things.

### **Respect:**

The virtue of Respect is quintessential *bushido* and quite foreign to us. We respect almost nothing and are probably becoming less respectful of people, things, and ideas as time goes on. Respect is associated with a positive feeling toward external ideas, cultures, persons, and things that have value – even when they are foreign or contrary to our ideas. An example might be giving Islam and Mohammed respect even when you

disagree with many of the basic tenets. It is a recognition that many good people follow this path with good intent and a fervor that can and does yield positive consequences. Having a positive feeling toward devout Muslims would be an example of giving Respect.

It is important to note that Respect is a genuine positive feeling and not just a tolerance. In truth, there is hardly anything like tolerance in *bushido*. If something is clearly wrong, it is to be combatted with a furor that can be shocking. If there is good in it, then it is to be Respected. Respect, as we see in *bushido*, comes from a true humility that understands that I am not totally good and cannot expect you to be totally good. We are fellow sojourners finding our way. If I may help you on your path, then I will do it because I respect your striving for what it is. Even if life casts us as bitter enemies unto death, I will Respect you for all the good that is there. I will give my enemy a proper Muslim, Hindu, or Sioux burial even if I do not think such ceremonies have any meaning. A true story that still brings tears to my eyes is about a dear atheist friend who made sure that his dear Christian wife had a decidedly Christian funeral. He hated every minute of it, but would not shrink from paying Respect to his wife.

In a similar way, we should Respect things. Although I am not an Inerrant, I will not write in my Bible or place other books on top of it. I want to show Respect for it and for those who give it great reverence. I will not speak disrespectfully of the Qur'an or the Bhagavad Gita out of Respect for those who have sincerely chosen them as their guide. I did not allow my children to run around and scream in the Church out of Respect for those who consider the building a peculiar place that is Holy Ground.

Again, Respect does not mean agreement. It does not mean acceptance. It does not make everyone my brother or even my friend. It does, however, leave open friendliness, acceptance, and agreement among those who might otherwise be bitter foes. It leaves open to us with a higher sense of community. It also leaves us open to the workings of God through strange and unanticipated ways:

<sup>2</sup> *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2*

We struggle a bit to find many examples of Respect as meant by *bushido* in the New Testament. Often Jesus was criticizing the Jewish leaders for their exploitation of the poor and disenfranchised. He was incensed by the way the temple system was being used to rob them of their money, their

legacy, and their future. Paul spent much of his time criticizing Church leaders for going only to the Jews and failing to respect the needs of all people to hear the Gospel. Hence, the themes of the New Testament are more often about justice and egalitarianism than they are about Respect. Nevertheless, we still see a call for the respecting of persons:

*<sup>17</sup>Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 1 Peter 2:17*

*<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15-16*

*<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.*

*<sup>9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Ephesians 6:5-9*

*<sup>8</sup> In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 1 Timothy 3:8*

Because these references are not frequent, they are easily missed. Because American Culture is individual-centered, we allow American Culture to drive our philosophy and it cares toward narcissism. This should never be the case. We need to refocus our attention on the ancient wisdom of Respect while we reject its counterfeit – tolerance.

Teach your children to Respect persons, ideas, and things of value while rejecting the notion of tolerating evil.

### **Sincerity:**

This is a difficult concept for the Western mind, but one that is dealt with abundantly in Scripture. It is akin to truthfulness but carries the added idea of no admixture of deceit or double-mindedness. It is a congruence of what

is avowed with that which is within. If Jesus was anything, He was sincere. What He claimed, He aimed to fulfill – unto death, even death on a Cross. Paul deals with the topic throughout Romans 12, but especially in verses 9 through 18:

*<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

*<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

*<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:9-18*

Paul is arguing here that all we are should be completely motivated by Love. For Love to be a true motivator, it must be “sincere” rather than feigned. It must work its way out in many different acts and attitudes. If we do not see Love working its way in us, then it is not a sincere tenant of Faith. It is a false claim.

In Western thought, sincerity has some very negative connotations. This comes largely from how easily it is feigned by flowery words and ostentatious acts. We also find it very difficult to verify the inner heart. We have come to be very skeptical of anyone who speaks sincerely. We have been taught to search out and expose all hypocrisy. In fact, we have come to replace sincerity with the twisted notion of “be yourself.” Rather than risk being called a hypocrite, we lower our standards and call “good” whatever “is.” If we are drunk, let’s just be a good drunk. If we’re going to have a party, let’s make it an orgy. This would never do in *bushido* and it is not acceptable to Christ. We should hold to the highest of standards for ourselves and strive to meet them. It is from this striving for Sincerity that we see the self-discipline of Eastern Culture. It is a lack of Sincerity that we often see as hypocrisy.

Of course, setting high standards sets us up for falling short. So what? God will never accept the alternative of our calling whatever is as being good:

*<sup>12</sup> There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12*

God's requirement for perfection and our inability to provide that is **exactly** where courage and forgiveness come into play. We should have the courage to admit our failures. It is then and only then that Christ can provide the forgiveness needed to span the gap between who we are and His perfect standard. It is in this way, and only this way, that we can be sure that our persistence in self-discipline will eventually succeed:

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16*

Sometimes this is just too hard for us. Sometimes we just get lazy and become undisciplined. Unfortunately, Sincerity is not something that is optional for us. Jesus described it simply as purity of the heart. He expects us to hold to His high standard of moral and ethical purity and make our speech and actions conform to that standard. His simply states:

*<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Matthew 6:8*

Those who are not Sincere will **never** see God. They will remain in their lost and hopeless state, now and forever.

Teach your children to be sincere in their dedication to the high standards of Christ.

### **Honor:**

This is certainly one of the most difficult virtues for Westerners. We associate it with *seppuku* (ritual suicide) and "honor killings." We see it attacked in Pop Culture and the Press frequently. We rarely use the term in modern speech, but it and similar words were widely used by the Founding Fathers, classical writers, and the early Church Fathers. Honor or dishonor appears in some 190 verses in the Bible. It is applied to God,

the King, and individual men in a wide variety of contexts and examples in the Scripture. It has only recently – perhaps the last 50 years – fallen into disuse.

Honor can mean “give respect to” or “demonstrate respect for.” This would apply in the case of the command:

<sup>12</sup> *“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12*

It would also apply in the many verses where we are to demonstrate honor for God in our actions:

<sup>9</sup> *Honor the Lord with your wealth,  
with the firstfruits of all your crops;*

<sup>10</sup> *then your barns will be filled to overflowing,  
and your vats will brim over with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10*

<sup>18</sup>*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20*

These are all valid uses of the term honor as a verb but do not get to the meaning of Honor as a noun. As a noun, Honor is closer to something like reputation, but even that does not get to the meaning as we see it used in the Bible, and classical literature and certainly not as meant in *bushido*. Honor is the sum of the moral character possessed by a person or assemblage of persons. It is an internalized, moral worth that is to be nurtured, guarded, and protected. It is that which commands Respect from others of moral discernment.

It is something totally foreign to us because we have abandoned almost all vestiges of “honor society.” This is a society that depends on an internalized, moral code of conduct as the normative force in social interaction. In an honor society, the “code of honor” is the “law of the land.” This is an alternative social construct to “modern societies.” Modern cultures are generally cultures of law. The difference in perspective is huge. Law-based cultures deal with things that are legal and not legal. That is to say, things that are or are not permitted or banned by the law. That law is often a written law, but it could be a set of historical legal

opinions. Rewards and punishments are also codified in some way. These laws and prohibitions are worked out in various, often complex processes involving courts, tribunals, juries, etc. Wrongdoing is considered *malum prohibitum* with little moral or ethical connotation attached to the act. Punishments tend to be proportional to the perceived severity of the “crime.”

In the case of honor cultures, moral precepts are to be held by individuals. Social interactions are to be regulated by this internalized, moral code. The “legal system” is usually very simple, and often informal. Often the “system” is little more than a panel of “judges” or the “elders” of the community. Acts that come to be considered wrong by the community are viewed as *malum in se* and a severe breach of this internalized code. Strongly negative moral and ethical connotations are attached to these acts. The perpetrator is often judged as “wicked,” and even unworthy of continued participation in the community. Punishments tend to be severe.

It is in honor cultures that the concept of Honor as a noun begins to make sense. The internal, moral code is crucial to social function and the basis for judging ethics and morality. It also becomes paramount to protect the reputation of the individual lest he or she find themselves cast out into the desert or stoned to death by the community. Hence, acts for testing or “proving honor” are common in such cultures. This is the context of Honor in *bushido*.

When we review the teachings and ministry of Jesus we find an Old Testament Prophet condemning both of these cultural extremes. Jesus rails against the hypocrisy of the law-based culture espoused by the Pharisees with merciless sarcasm. The strain to meet the letter of many laws while systematically stealing from widows and orphans. In an even more dramatic way, His trial and execution expose the honor culture of the Sadducees and Herodians as a complete farce. Clearly Jesus had more sympathy for the internalized moral code of an honor culture, but that is not what the Temple/Palace System had become. It was a debauchery, devoid of any moral or ethical compass. He condemned the Temple and promised to destroy it.

The Honor that Jesus spoke of was the very presence of Holy God in the hearts of men. When, at the end, Jesus prayed for all Believers He said:

*<sup>20</sup>My prayer is not for them [the Apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup>that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. John 17:20-22*

We have within us the very Glory of God the Father through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, sent by God at the request of the Son. This is the Honor that we are called upon to defend and uphold with the same fervor that the *samurai* defended his Honor and the Honor of his lord. When speaking of dishonorable acts, the Apostle Paul uses the analogy of a temple:

*<sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the member of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup>But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in Spirit. <sup>16</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:15-20*

We are called to the defense of this Honor even beyond the call of the *samurai*. If things went badly for the *samurai*, if he failed to defend his Honor or his lord's Honor, he was to end his life. We are not allowed such an easy out. The defense of God's Honor transcends death. We are to defend God's Honor even beyond our failures, our pain and our suffering. We are to defend His Honor in this life until He relieves us of this charge by calling us to Himself. We are to take to heart the example of Job:

*<sup>7</sup> So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup> Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.*

*<sup>9</sup> His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

<sup>10</sup> He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

*In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Job 2:7-10*

Teach your children to Honor God in all their ways by staying true to Him until released by Him in death.

### **Loyalty:**

“Loyalty” is actually a fairly new English word dating from around the 1500’s. It derives from words referring to “the king.” The most direct meaning is devotion to the king or the government. Hence, in modern thought, this word is closely associated with patriotism. Nevertheless, the concept is quite old and much broader. It appears often in Eastern culture and the Bible. The context is devotion to a person, a concept, or a commitment. In religious circles, including Christianity, it means devotion to God.

For several decades during and after World War II, the term loyalty had a very negative connotation in American Culture. The loyalty that the Japanese gave to their Emperor and that the Germans gave to their *Fuhrer* disgusted Americans. The notion was further damaged by the debacle of Vietnam in the 1960’s. Such examples of loyalty showed how destructive misplaced or exploited loyalties could be.

More recently the concept of loyalty has made a resurgence. Beginning around 1980, the broader concept of sincere devotion has become more popular. There are probably many drivers of this, but included in them must be:

- Martin Luther King – In spite of considerable cause to criticize American Culture, Dr. King, his family, and his close associates remained devoted to the American experiment. He viewed the Civil Rights Movement as a fulfillment of or improvement rather than a break with American Culture.
- Ronald Reagan & Tip O’Neal – This classic dual between two political giants highlighted how two, quite different political views can be subordinated to a greater good by a fierce loyalty to a common cause – the success of the nation and the cause of Freedom.
- Margaret Thatcher & Tony Blair – America standing by Great Britain in the Falkland War and Great Britain standing by America in the Gulf Wars were great demonstrations of loyalty.

The concept of Loyalty in *bushido* is closely associated with Sincerity. The *samurai* is to be devoted to *bushido* and his lord. Loyalty implies action without regard for consequences. It is motivated by complete Sincerity.

We have seen the many actions and attitudes that should be motivated by Devotion to God in Romans 12 (quoted above). Devotion to God is a theme that recurs throughout the Bible. One of the best-known of these is the *schema* and the corollary to it:

*<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4-5*

The call to Devotion to God appears throughout the Bible. We are also called to Devotion to the Work and People of the Church:

*<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42:47*

Conceptually, the difficulty for Christians is not Loyalty or Devotion to God and the Church. The conceptual problem arises when there are competing loyalties. What are we to do when the civil law tells us one thing and our conscience tells us another? The simple answer is, "God is your first priority." We see precedent for primary and even exclusive Devotion to God in Scripture:

*<sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Matthew 6:24*

*<sup>8</sup> A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. James 1:8 (KJV)*

While true, formulating this as a simple answer is not very helpful. The dilemma does not just vanish. We are also called to loyalty to civil authorities:

*<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. Mark 12:17*

*<sup>1</sup>Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1-2*

Our devotion to God brings with it a moral agency that requires us to sort out the priorities of our loyalty. We should be found loyal to our families, our Church, our employers, our neighbors, and our nation. These all must be worked out under and because of our overarching loyalty to God. There are no simple formulations that get us off the hook of moral agency. Anyone who believes or teaches that this is a simple matter is naive. We cannot, for example, use Romans 13:1-2 to justify dropping the Zyklon B or refusing to hire a minority. There is a tension in this matter that we should not attempt to dismiss. It is precisely this tension that has brought Christians and the Cause of Christ into the great struggles for mercy and justice. It has often been Christians who have led the struggles against exploitation, injustice, and misery. In the end, it is all about God for:

*<sup>15</sup> Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;  
they are regarded as dust on the scales;  
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.*

*<sup>16</sup> Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,  
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.*

*<sup>17</sup> Before him all the nations are as nothing;  
they are regarded by him as worthless  
and less than nothing.*

*<sup>18</sup> With whom, then, will you compare God?  
To what image will you liken him?*

*<sup>19</sup> As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold  
and fashions silver chains for it.*

*<sup>20</sup> A person too poor to present such an offering  
selects wood that will not rot;  
they look for a skilled worker  
to set up an idol that will not topple.*

<sup>21</sup> *Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?*  
<sup>22</sup> *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.  
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*  
<sup>23</sup> *He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.*  
<sup>24</sup> *No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. Isaiah 40:15-24*

Our loyalties must include justice and mercy. We must be engaged in the sweaty, smelly, dangerous, and wonderfully awful world, where things are not clear and loyalties can be divided. Nevertheless, our beings must remain strangely detached from the world and the things of the world. Jesus talks about this in John 17:

<sup>13</sup> *"I am coming to you[the Father] now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. John 17:13-18*

We are called upon to use the Power of Truth – the Holy Spirit – to assist us in this engagement. We must not shrink from such engagements but rush to embrace them and overcome them.

Teach your children to be both Loyal and discerning in their Loyalties.

### **Conclusion to the Matter:**

Life is a struggle. It is so by its very nature. There's hardly anything peaceful about it. Sadly, there is not a single flower that has the same chance of survival. To deny this is foolishness. Furthermore, we are called to fully engage in the struggle that is life. We are not allowed to join the

monastery or the Christian ghetto. Christians who are unwilling to engage in that struggle to the End, however bitter that might be, are not worthy of Him. This is hardly some pleasant devotional thought. It demands virtues that were top-of-the-mind for the *samurai* but which we rarely think about. We are called to engage, even if we believe the struggle to be doomed. It is not about winning as the world might view it. It is about engaging, influencing, and convincing. It is about Saving the Remnant while time remains. It is about meaning in an otherwise meaningless chaos.

We as Christians have little in common with Zen Buddhism or Shintoism which is the religious foundation of *bushido*. Nevertheless, we can learn much from those who have struggled to maintain their essentially peaceful religious virtues in the middle of a chaotic world of constant war. We may not seek exactly the same end, but their engagement and thinking can draw us into a deeper appreciation of the real issues. We should learn how to engage in a chaotic world without losing our inner Peace – our Peace with God. We should become mature warriors who know how to “fight the good fight.” That is to say, how to engage in conflict without losing the battle because we have destroyed all for which we struggle. We must develop through study and practice the ability to Sincerely and Courageously engage in battle while maintaining our Righteousness, our Benevolence, and our Respect for others. In all this we must be motivated, driven, and guided by an uncompromising Loyalty and Devotion to the Glory and Honor of our Savior who taught us to pray:

<sup>9</sup>*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup>your kingdom come,  
your will be done,*

*on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:9-10*

## A Class of Warrior-Priests

The Levites were not just priests—they were warrior-priests.<sup>[2]</sup> Their priestly origin is based on *righteous violence*. But God put the violent nature of the Levites to good use. Not only would the priests among them slaughter animals regularly for sacrifice, but also all the Levites would guard the Tabernacle/temple and the cities of refuge. Yahweh ordained and scattered the Levites throughout Israel to guard His worship.

All of this points to Christ, the true Warrior-Priest, who not only became a sacrifice for sin but who guards God's temple of worship (the new heavens and earth) from intruders, namely those who reject Christ in unbelief. At the final judgment, Jesus will slaughter all who refused to worship Him (Revelation 19:11-21). As the Levites scattered throughout Israel, the Lord Jesus should serve as a warning and lead us all to the proper worship of Yahweh.

Christ has also redeemed His people to be a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:19; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exodus 19:6) and so join Him in reigning and guarding God's glory and honor. Like the Levites, Yahweh Himself is our inheritance in this life and not the land of Canaan. And like the Levites, Christians have been scattered to proclaim God's Word and guard His worship—until the day when Christ returns and welcomes all of us, the Levites included, into the new heavens and earth.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Sometimes the Bible uses language that seems to identify the Levites as “priests” (e.g. Joshua 18:7). However, only Aaron and his descendants were priests, and only they offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle (Exodus 28–29; Leviticus 8–10). The rest of the Levites assisted the priests (Numbers 3:5-9). This distinction is particularly clear in the story of Korah's rebellion, as Korah was a Levite who coveted the role of the priests (Numbers 16:8-10). While there is a technical distinction between the priests and Levites, it is also useful to speak of all the Levites as “priests” because they all had a special role in guarding and serving at the Tabernacle and later temple.

[2] “Whether a third aspect of the priest’s functions or whether a consequence of the first two, we must recognize the military duty of priests. Consistent with the functions of temple priests in surrounding religions, the Israelite priest guarded the Tabernacle or temple of God through the threat of arms. Any who transgressed the manifested holiness of God’s presence was to be slain (Numbers 1:53; cf. Exodus 32:25-28).” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (eds. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman), p. 663.

# Japanese Samurai Code: Bushido and Warrior Ethos

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### The Origins and Evolution of Bushido: Understanding the Historical Context

The [Japanese Samurai Code](#), known as Bushido, is a set of principles and values that guided the conduct of samurai warriors in feudal Japan. To truly understand the significance of Bushido, it is essential to delve into its origins and evolution, as well as the historical context in which it emerged.

The roots of Bushido can be traced back to the Kamakura period (1185–1333), a time of political instability and constant warfare in Japan. During this period, the samurai class emerged as the ruling elite, and their role as warriors became increasingly important. As a result, a code of conduct was

developed to regulate their behavior and instill a sense of honor and loyalty.

However, it was not until the 17th century, during the Edo period (1603-1868), that Bushido truly took shape and became a defining characteristic of the samurai class. The Edo period was marked by relative peace and stability, as the Tokugawa shogunate centralized power and enforced strict social hierarchies. With the absence of constant warfare, the samurai found themselves in a new role as administrators and bureaucrats, rather than solely warriors.

This shift in societal roles led to a reevaluation of the samurai's purpose and identity. They sought to uphold their warrior ethos and maintain their status as the elite class. As a result, Bushido evolved to encompass not only martial skills but also moral and intellectual virtues. The samurai were expected to embody qualities such as loyalty, honor, self-discipline, and a deep sense of duty.

The influence of Confucianism and Zen Buddhism played a significant role in shaping the moral and ethical aspects of Bushido. Confucian teachings emphasized the importance of filial piety, respect for authority, and the cultivation of personal virtues. Zen Buddhism, on the other hand, emphasized mindfulness, self-control, and the pursuit of enlightenment. These philosophies provided a spiritual foundation for the samurai's code of conduct.

The historical context in which Bushido emerged also had a profound impact on its development. The samurai class was

deeply entrenched in a hierarchical society, with the emperor at the top and the commoners at the bottom. This social structure reinforced the samurai's sense of duty and obligation towards their superiors and the state.

Furthermore, the constant threat of warfare and the ever-present possibility of death on the battlefield shaped the samurai's mindset. They had to be prepared to sacrifice their lives for their lord and uphold their honor at all costs. This mentality fostered a strong sense of loyalty and a willingness to endure hardship and adversity.

In conclusion, the origins and evolution of Bushido are deeply intertwined with the historical context in which it emerged. The Kamakura and Edo periods provided the backdrop for the development of this code of conduct, as the samurai sought to define their role in society and uphold their warrior ethos. Influenced by Confucianism and Zen Buddhism, Bushido encompassed not only martial skills but also moral and intellectual virtues. The hierarchical social structure and the constant threat of warfare further shaped the samurai's mindset and their commitment to honor and loyalty. Understanding the historical context is crucial to comprehending the significance of Bushido and its enduring legacy in Japanese [culture](#).

## The Seven Virtues of Bushido: Exploring the Core Principles of Samurai Ethics

The Japanese Samurai Code, also known as Bushido, is a set of ethical principles that guided the behavior and actions of the samurai warriors in feudal Japan. These principles were deeply ingrained in the samurai culture and played a crucial role in shaping their identity as warriors. In this article, we will explore the seven virtues of Bushido and delve into the core principles of samurai ethics.

The first virtue of Bushido is Rectitude, which emphasizes the importance of moral integrity and doing what is right. Samurai warriors were expected to uphold a strong sense of justice and act with honesty and fairness in all aspects of their lives. This virtue served as the foundation for the other principles of Bushido.

Next, we have Courage, which is perhaps the most well-known virtue associated with samurai warriors. Courage in Bushido is not just about physical bravery in battle, but also about having the strength to face challenges and adversity with determination and resilience. Samurai warriors were trained to overcome fear and to act decisively in the face of danger.

Benevolence is another key virtue of Bushido. Samurai warriors were expected to show compassion and kindness towards others, especially those who were weaker or less fortunate. They were taught to protect and serve their

communities, and to use their skills and abilities for the greater good.

Respect is a fundamental principle in Japanese culture, and it is no different in Bushido. Samurai warriors were taught to show respect to their superiors, their peers, and even their enemies. This virtue emphasized the importance of humility and recognizing the value and worth of others.

Honor is a virtue that is deeply intertwined with the samurai code. Samurai warriors were expected to uphold their honor at all costs, even if it meant sacrificing their own lives. They were taught to be loyal to their lord and to their comrades, and to always act in a way that brought honor to themselves and their families.

The next virtue of Bushido is Honesty. Samurai warriors were expected to be truthful and sincere in their words and actions. Deception and dishonesty were seen as dishonorable and were not tolerated. This virtue emphasized the importance of maintaining one's integrity and being trustworthy.

Finally, we have Loyalty, which is perhaps the most cherished virtue in Bushido. Samurai warriors were expected to be fiercely loyal to their lord and to their clan. They were willing to lay down their lives in service to their lord and to protect their honor. Loyalty was seen as the ultimate expression of samurai identity and was highly valued.

In conclusion, the seven virtues of Bushido provide a glimpse into the core principles of samurai ethics. These virtues

shaped the behavior and actions of samurai warriors and guided them in their quest for honor and righteousness. The Japanese Samurai Code continues to be admired and respected today for its emphasis on moral integrity, courage, benevolence, respect, honor, honesty, and loyalty. It serves as a reminder of the noble ideals that the samurai warriors upheld and the legacy they left behind.

Samurai Training and Discipline: Unveiling the Rigorous Path to Mastery

Samurai Training and Discipline: Unveiling the Rigorous Path to Mastery

The path of a samurai was not an easy one. It required years of rigorous training and unwavering discipline. The samurai code, known as Bushido, governed every aspect of a warrior's life, shaping their character and guiding their actions. In this article, we will delve into the world of samurai training and explore the demanding journey that led to mastery.

From a young age, aspiring samurai were sent to live with a master, known as a sensei, who would become their mentor and guide. The training began with the basics – learning how to hold a sword, how to move with grace and precision, and how to maintain a strong stance. These fundamental skills formed the foundation upon which all other techniques would be built.

But physical prowess alone was not enough. The samurai also had to cultivate a strong mind and spirit. Meditation and

mental exercises were an integral part of their training, helping them develop focus, discipline, and a calm demeanor in the face of adversity. The samurai were taught to control their emotions, to remain composed even in the heat of battle.

The training was not limited to the martial arts. The samurai were also expected to be well-versed in the arts and literature. They studied poetry, calligraphy, and tea ceremonies, as these pursuits were seen as essential for cultivating a refined and cultured character. The samurai were not just warriors; they were also scholars and artists.

The path to mastery was long and arduous. The samurai underwent grueling physical training, enduring hours of practice each day. They engaged in intense sparring sessions, honing their skills and testing their limits. The sensei pushed them to their breaking point, demanding nothing less than perfection.

But it wasn't just physical training that the samurai had to endure. They also had to adhere to a strict code of conduct, known as Bushido. This code dictated how they should behave in every aspect of their lives – from how they treated their superiors and subordinates to how they conducted themselves in battle. Honor, loyalty, and integrity were the cornerstones of Bushido.

The samurai were expected to live by these principles, even in the face of death. They were taught that it was better to die with honor than to live in shame. This mindset instilled in them

a sense of fearlessness and unwavering resolve. They were willing to sacrifice their lives for their lord, their family, and their code.

The training and discipline of the samurai were not just about becoming skilled warriors. It was about shaping their character and instilling in them a sense of duty and responsibility. The samurai were not just protectors of their lord; they were also guardians of the people. They were expected to serve with compassion and humility, always putting the needs of others before their own.

In conclusion, the path to becoming a samurai was not for the faint of heart. It required years of rigorous training, unwavering discipline, and a commitment to living by the principles of Bushido. The samurai were not just warriors; they were also scholars, artists, and guardians of the people. Their training and discipline shaped their character and guided their actions, making them the epitome of honor, loyalty, and integrity. The legacy of the samurai lives on, reminding us of the importance of discipline, duty, and the pursuit of mastery in all aspects of life.

## Bushido in Modern Times: Examining the Influence and Legacy of the Samurai Code

The Japanese Samurai Code, known as Bushido, has a rich history that dates back to ancient times. It was a set of principles and values that guided the behavior and actions of the samurai warriors. While the samurai class no longer exists

in modern Japan, the influence and legacy of Bushido can still be seen in various aspects of Japanese society.

One of the most prominent ways in which Bushido has influenced modern Japan is through its impact on the country's martial arts. Many of the martial arts practiced in Japan today, such as kendo and judo, have their roots in the samurai tradition. These martial arts not only teach self-defense techniques but also instill the values of discipline, honor, and respect that were central to Bushido.

In addition to martial arts, the influence of Bushido can also be seen in the corporate culture of modern Japan. The samurai code emphasized loyalty, duty, and a strong work ethic, values that are still highly regarded in Japanese society. Japanese companies often prioritize the collective over the individual and place a strong emphasis on teamwork and harmony within the workplace. This can be traced back to the ideals of Bushido, which emphasized the importance of serving one's lord and putting the needs of the group above personal desires.

Furthermore, the influence of Bushido can also be seen in the strong sense of honor and integrity that is valued in Japanese society. The samurai were expected to uphold a strict moral code and to act with honor and integrity in all aspects of their lives. This emphasis on honor and integrity has carried over into modern Japan, where honesty and trustworthiness are highly valued traits. This can be seen in the low crime rates and high levels of social trust that are characteristic of Japanese society.

Another area where the influence of Bushido can be seen is in the education system of Japan. The samurai were not only skilled warriors but also well-educated individuals who valued knowledge and intellectual pursuits. This emphasis on education and intellectual development is still present in modern Japan, where education is highly valued and students are expected to work hard and strive for excellence. The rigorous education system in Japan is a reflection of the ideals of Bushido, which emphasizes the importance of self-improvement and the pursuit of knowledge.

In conclusion, the influence and legacy of the Japanese Samurai Code, Bushido, can still be seen in various aspects of modern Japanese society. From martial arts to corporate culture, from the strong sense of honor and integrity to the emphasis on education, the ideals of Bushido continue to shape and influence the values and behaviors of the Japanese people. While the samurai class may no longer exist, the spirit of Bushido lives on, reminding us of the timeless wisdom and virtues that guided the samurai warriors of ancient Japan.

# **The Timeless Path of the Warrior: Exploring the Concept of Bushido**

## **Introduction**

In the heart of feudal Japan, amidst the clashing of swords and the solemn oaths of loyalty, emerged a code of conduct so profound that its influence transcends the boundaries of time and geography. This code, known as Bushido, which literally translates to “the way of the warrior,” is not merely a set of rules for combat but a comprehensive philosophy that has shaped the ethos of Japan and captured the imagination of the world. While the age of samurais may have faded into the annals of history, the principles of Bushido continue to echo in the halls of modern society, offering timeless lessons on honor, courage, and integrity.

Bushido is often romanticized as the noble path of the samurai, yet its essence penetrates much deeper, weaving itself into the fabric of everyday life and guiding individuals, irrespective of their background, in their pursuit of righteousness and personal excellence. In today’s fast-paced and often tumultuous world, the ancient wisdom of Bushido provides a beacon of light for those seeking to navigate the complexities of life with grace and fortitude.

This exploration into the concept of Bushido will take us on a journey back to its origins, through the evolution of its principles, and into the heart of its enduring legacy. As we delve into the history, the core values, and the modern interpretation of Bushido, we uncover not just the soul of the samurai but a philosophy that champions the virtues of loyalty, respect, and ethical living in any era. Join us as we unravel the timeless path of the warrior and discover how the ancient code of Bushido can inspire a new generation to lead lives of purpose and dignity.

## **The Origins and Historical Development of Bushido**

The roots of Bushido stretch deep into the soil of feudal Japan, a period marked by fierce warriors, feudal lords, and a society organized around the principles of

honor, loyalty, and duty. The concept of Bushido, or “the way of the warrior,” did not emerge from a single source or doctrine but evolved over centuries, influenced by Japan’s unique blend of religions, philosophies, and the exigencies of samurai life.

## **The Early Foundations**

In the early days, the samurai were essentially warriors for hire, bound by the simple code of serving their feudal lords with martial prowess and unquestioning loyalty. However, as the samurai class rose in prominence and power, especially during the Kamakura period (1185–1333), there was a shift towards formalizing a more comprehensive ethical code. This period marked the beginning of Bushido as a distinct philosophy, heavily influenced by the teachings of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism.

Zen Buddhism introduced concepts of meditation, intuition, and spontaneity, which helped samurai to face death with stoic composure and live in the present. Confucianism contributed to Bushido’s emphasis on loyalty, filial piety, and the importance of relationships within a hierarchical society. Shintoism, the indigenous spirituality of Japan, infused Bushido with a deep sense of respect for nature, purity, and the emperor.

## **The Codification in the Edo Period**

The Edo period (1603–1868) witnessed the transformation of the samurai from warriors to bureaucrats, as Japan’s unification under the [Tokugawa shogunate](#) led to an era of relative peace. This shift necessitated a reevaluation of the samurai’s role in society, leading to the formal codification of Bushido. Scholars and samurai alike began to write extensively on the subject, distilling the essence of Bushido into a set of virtues that emphasized moral behavior, self-discipline, and ethical conduct.

It was during this time that Bushido truly became the soul of Japan, influencing not just the warrior class but society as a whole. The principles of Bushido were taught in schools, preached by scholars, and became the ideal standard of conduct for all Japanese, regardless of class.

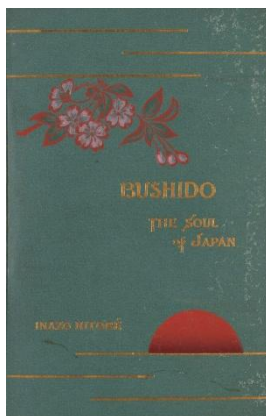
## The Meiji Restoration and Beyond

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 marked a significant turning point for Japan and Bushido. As the country opened up to Western influences and began to modernize, the samurai class was officially abolished. However, instead of fading into obscurity, the ethos of Bushido was adapted to serve the needs of a modernizing Japan. It became a tool for nationalistic propaganda, encouraging loyalty to the emperor and self-sacrifice for the country.

In the 20th century, Bushido faced criticism for its role in militarism, particularly during World War II. However, in the post-war era, there has been a reevaluation of Bushido's values, separating them from their wartime misappropriations and reinterpreting them in a modern context. Today, Bushido continues to influence Japanese culture, business practices, and martial arts, serving as a link to the past and a guide for personal conduct in the present.

## The Complex Interpretations of Bushido in Nitobe's and Tsunetomo's Seminal Works

As we explore the evolution of Bushido, it's important to critically assess the contributions of two pivotal texts that have significantly influenced both Japanese and international understanding of the samurai code: Inazo Nitobe's "Bushido: The Soul of Japan" and Yamamoto Tsunetomo's "Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai."



Front cover of *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (Philadelphia: Leeds & Biddle, 1900) by Inazō Nitobe (1862-1933)

## **Inazo Nitobe's Interpretation**

Inazo Nitobe wrote “*Bushido: The Soul of Japan*” in 1900, at a time when Japan was undergoing rapid modernization and westernization. Educated in the West, Nitobe aimed to bridge cultural gaps by presenting Bushido in terms familiar to his Western audience. He drew parallels between the samurai ethos and Western chivalric and Christian virtues. While his efforts helped raise global awareness and appreciation for Japanese culture, critics argue that his portrayal may have westernized and idealized Bushido, potentially distorting its historical and cultural accuracy. Nitobe’s interpretation emphasizes more abstract, philosophical virtues like benevolence and justice, which, while central to Bushido, are intertwined with more complex, sometimes harsher realities of the samurai life that Nitobe tends to downplay.

## **Yamamoto Tsunetomo's Perspective**

Yamamoto Tsunetomo authored “*Hagakure*,” which was compiled in the early 18th century but remained obscure until the 20th century. Tsunetomo’s work is often seen as a reactionary response to the peaceful Tokugawa era, during which samurai were more bureaucrats than warriors. “*Hagakure*” is noted for its extreme views, particularly its emphasis on death and loyalty—advocating that the way of the samurai is found in death and that a samurai’s chief loyalty is to his lord, even over family ties. This perspective does not necessarily represent the broader or more nuanced understanding of Bushido practiced during other periods or by other samurai. Tsunetomo’s focus on loyalty and death can be seen as an over-emphasis, likely reflective of his personal disillusionment and idealism rather than a universal samurai code.

## **The Need for a Balanced View**

These works, while offering valuable insights into the samurai ethos, should be read with an understanding of their authors’ contexts and biases. Nitobe and Tsunetomo shaped Bushido’s global image, but their interpretations may not fully encompass the diversity of samurai experiences and ethical practices. As

such, they should be considered as part of a broader exploration that includes a variety of sources and perspectives. This approach allows for a more comprehensive and historically grounded understanding of Bushido, appreciating its complexities beyond the romanticized or philosophical portrayals.

## **The Core Principles of Bushido**

Bushido, the samurai code of ethics, is rooted in seven fundamental virtues. These principles guided the samurai in their conduct, shaping their decisions and lifestyles. Even in modern times, these virtues offer a framework for personal development and integrity.

### **Rectitude or Justice (義, Gi)**

Rectitude is the firm foundation upon which the entire structure of Bushido is built. It demands a robust sense of moral righteousness and the courage to act upon it. For the samurai, making the right decision, especially when faced with ethical dilemmas, was paramount. This virtue emphasizes the importance of making decisions that are morally sound, not just legally or socially acceptable.

### **Courage (勇, Yu)**

Courage in the context of Bushido goes beyond mere bravery in battle. It encompasses the resilience to stand by one's principles and decisions, even in the face of adversity or temptation. True courage involves acting rightly even when it might lead to personal loss or hardship, demonstrating moral fortitude as well as physical bravery.

### **Benevolence or Mercy (仁, Jin)**

The power wielded by the samurai came with the responsibility to show kindness and compassion towards others. Benevolence dictates that true strength must be balanced with gentleness. It encouraged the samurai to cultivate empathy and care for the welfare of others, reflecting a deep respect for life.

## **Politeness (礼, Rei)**

Politeness in Bushido is not mere etiquette but stems from a genuine respect for the feelings and well-being of others. It's about conducting oneself in a manner that honors the dignity of everyone one interacts with. This principle ensured that social interactions were conducted smoothly and without unnecessary conflict.

## **Honesty and Sincerity (誠, Makoto)**

For the samurai, one's word was their bond. Honesty and sincerity were valued above material wealth and social standing. Bushido dictates that true warriors should speak and act with sincerity, ensuring their actions always match their words. This virtue fosters trust and integrity within society.

## **Honor (名誉, Meiyo)**

Honor is the quality that ensures a samurai's actions and beliefs are aligned with a moral code. It is the pursuit of an ethical life that, once lost, cannot be regained by any means. Honor in Bushido serves as a critical internal compass, guiding individuals to live lives that are not only respectful to themselves but also to society at large.

## **Loyalty (忠義, Chugi)**

Unwavering loyalty to one's lord or principles was a defining characteristic of the samurai. In modern interpretations, this virtue emphasizes the importance of loyalty to one's personal and professional commitments. It advocates for dedication and fidelity in relationships, work, and community engagements.

## **The Cultural Impact of Bushido in Japan**

Bushido, more than a mere warrior code, has left an indelible mark on Japanese culture. Its influence extends beyond the battlefield, infiltrating the arts, governance, education, and societal norms, thereby shaping the national character of Japan.

The person on the left has a yumi (Japanese bow), the one in the center has a [katana](#) and the one on the right carries a yari (straight-headed spear).

### **Shaping the Samurai Class**

Initially, Bushido served as the ethical guideline for the samurai, Japan's warrior class. It not only dictated how they engaged in combat but also how they conducted themselves in peace. The virtues of loyalty, honor, and discipline were not just ideals but practical necessities in maintaining order and hierarchy within the feudal system. As the samurai class evolved, these values became synonymous with their identity, influencing their decision-making, lifestyle, and even their approach to death, as seen in the ritual of seppuku (ritual suicide) for preserving honor.

### **Influence on Japanese Society**

The principles of Bushido were not confined to the samurai but were aspirational for the broader Japanese society. They influenced various aspects of daily life, including business practices, education, and interpersonal relationships. For example, the emphasis on loyalty and duty is mirrored in the lifelong commitment many Japanese employees show to their companies. Similarly, the value placed on politeness and respect is evident in the meticulous manners and etiquette observed in Japan, from traditional tea ceremonies to the bowing greeting.

### **Ethical Norms and Governance**

Bushido principles also informed the ethical standards and governance practices in Japan. The emphasis on loyalty and service to a higher cause was co-opted by the state, especially during periods of national consolidation and

expansion, to foster a sense of national unity and sacrifice. During the Meiji Restoration and leading up to World War II, the government promoted Bushido as a way to inspire dedication to the emperor and the country, blending traditional values with modern nationalist sentiment.

## **Arts and Literature**

The ethos of Bushido has been a rich source of inspiration for Japanese arts and literature. Traditional forms such as Kabuki theater, Noh drama, and Haiku poetry frequently explore themes of honor, sacrifice, and the fleeting nature of life, reflecting the influence of Bushido. In modern times, this inspiration continues in manga, anime, and film, where samurai stories often serve as allegories for contemporary dilemmas, highlighting the timeless appeal of Bushido's virtues.

## **Modern Interpretations and Challenges**

While Bushido's traditional context has changed, its principles continue to resonate in contemporary Japan. The modern interpretation of Bushido emphasizes personal integrity, respect for others, and social responsibility. However, this has not been without its challenges, as the rigid expectations of loyalty and honor can sometimes lead to societal pressures and conformity. Despite these challenges, Bushido remains a powerful symbol of Japanese cultural identity, offering lessons in resilience, ethics, and the pursuit of excellence.

The cultural impact of Bushido in Japan is profound and enduring. It has shaped the nation's ethos, influencing everything from governance and social norms to arts and education. As Japan navigates the complexities of the modern world, the timeless principles of Bushido continue to offer guidance and inspiration, testament to the enduring legacy of the way of the warrior.

## **Bushido in the Modern World**

The ancient samurai code of Bushido, with its emphasis on honor, integrity, and loyalty, may seem a relic of the past. However, its core principles have found new life and relevance in the modern world, influencing various spheres of life,

from business practices and leadership to personal conduct and international relations.

## **Ethical Leadership and Business Practices**

In the realm of business, the principles of Bushido have been likened to a moral compass, guiding leaders towards ethical decision-making and integrity. The virtues of honesty, respect, and loyalty are not only foundational to building trust within organizations but also in establishing lasting relationships with clients and stakeholders. Companies, particularly in Japan, often emphasize the importance of these values in their corporate culture, aspiring to a level of service and commitment that reflects the samurai's dedication to their lord.

## **Martial Arts and Personal Discipline**

Bushido's influence is most directly seen in the practice of traditional Japanese martial arts, such as Kendo, Judo, and Aikido. These arts do not merely teach physical techniques but embody the spirit of Bushido, emphasizing self-improvement, respect for opponents, and the pursuit of harmony. Practitioners learn to apply the principles of Bushido in their daily lives, fostering a sense of discipline, focus, and ethical conduct.

## **Education and Character Building**

The virtues of Bushido, such as perseverance, courage, and respect, have been incorporated into educational programs worldwide. These values are seen as essential in character building, helping students develop a strong moral foundation and a sense of social responsibility. By teaching young people to face challenges with courage and integrity, educators hope to prepare them for the complexities of the modern world.

## **Global Influence and Cultural Exchange**

Bushido's appeal extends beyond Japan, influencing Western perceptions of honor and valor. The samurai's dedication to their code of conduct has inspired countless works of literature, film, and philosophy, reflecting a universal quest for meaning and ethical living. Additionally, the principles of Bushido have

found resonance in various cultural contexts, encouraging a cross-cultural exchange of ideas on leadership, ethics, and personal development.

## **Challenges and Criticisms**

While Bushido's principles offer valuable insights, their application in the modern world is not without challenges. Critics argue that certain aspects of Bushido, such as extreme loyalty and self-sacrifice, may lead to conformity and suppress individuality. Furthermore, the romanticization of the samurai past can sometimes obscure the more complex realities of feudal Japan. As such, a contemporary interpretation of Bushido requires a balanced approach, one that honors the tradition's virtues while adapting them to the needs and values of today's society.

The enduring relevance of Bushido in the modern world underscores the timeless nature of its virtues. As society continues to evolve, the principles of Bushido offer a framework for ethical conduct and personal excellence, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary challenges. By embracing the spirit of Bushido, individuals and organizations can navigate the complexities of the 21st century with integrity and honor, proving that the way of the warrior is as relevant now as it was centuries ago.

## **The Practice of Bushido Today**

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the ancient code of Bushido offers a beacon of ethical guidance, advocating for a life led with honor, integrity, and a deep sense of duty. The practice of Bushido today is not about emulating the exact lifestyle of the samurai but about integrating its core principles into our daily lives in a meaningful way.

## **Personal Development and Integrity**

At its heart, Bushido champions the continuous pursuit of self-improvement and personal integrity. Individuals can embody this by setting high standards for their actions and decisions, striving for honesty and sincerity in their interactions, and committing to lifelong learning and self-discipline. Practicing Bushido means actively working towards becoming the best version of oneself,

not for external accolades but for the satisfaction of knowing one has lived true to their principles.

## **Ethical Decision-Making**

In a world where ethical dilemmas are increasingly complex, the principles of Bushido provide a moral compass. Whether in professional settings, personal relationships, or civic duties, applying virtues such as rectitude, courage, and loyalty can guide individuals towards making decisions that are not only beneficial in the short term but also honorable and sustainable in the long run.

## **Leadership and Service**

Bushido's emphasis on loyalty, duty, and service offers profound lessons for leadership. Leaders practicing Bushido-inspired leadership are characterized by their dedication to their team or organization's welfare, prioritizing collective goals over personal gain, and demonstrating fairness and compassion in their decision-making. Such leaders inspire trust and loyalty, fostering environments where everyone is encouraged to rise to their highest potential.

## **Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

Bushido encourages a sense of responsibility towards one's community and society at large. Practicing Bushido today can involve engaging in volunteer work, advocating for social justice, and contributing to the welfare of others. By embodying the principle of benevolence, individuals can make a tangible impact on their communities, demonstrating that strength and honor come not from power or status but from the ability to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

## **Challenges and Adaptations**

Adopting Bushido in modern life is not without its challenges, requiring a thoughtful adaptation of its principles to fit contemporary values and lifestyles. For instance, the samurai's unwavering loyalty to their lord may translate today into a balanced loyalty to one's principles, family, and community, recognizing that blind loyalty can sometimes lead to ethical conflicts. Similarly, the practice

of self-control and discipline must be balanced with self-care and an understanding of personal limitations.

## **Conclusion**

The journey through the concept of Bushido, from its origins to its contemporary application, reveals the profound depth and relevance of this ancient code. The samurai may no longer walk among us, but the essence of their way — the way of the warrior — continues to inspire and guide individuals across the globe. The core principles of Bushido, including rectitude, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honor, loyalty, and self-control, serve as pillars upon which we can build lives marked by ethical clarity and personal integrity.

In a world where ethical ambiguities often cloud our judgment, the clarity offered by Bushido's virtues is invaluable. These principles encourage us to look within and strive for a standard of conduct that elevates not only our own lives but also the lives of those around us. By embodying the spirit of Bushido, we commit to a path of continuous improvement, ethical decision-making, and service to others, fostering a society that values honor and dignity above all.

The practice of Bushido today, adapted to the nuances of modern life, challenges us to navigate the complexities of the 21st century with courage and moral fortitude. It reminds us that true strength lies not in power or success but in our ability to live according to our deepest values, even in the face of adversity. As we integrate the principles of Bushido into our daily lives, we honor the legacy of the samurai by contributing to a world that champions justice, compassion, and integrity.

In conclusion, the timeless path of the warrior, as outlined by the concept of Bushido, continues to offer a powerful framework for living a life of purpose and dignity. As we move forward, may we draw inspiration from the ancient virtues of Bushido, adapting them to our individual journeys and the collective challenges of our time. In doing so, we not only pay homage to the samurai's enduring legacy but also pave the way for a future where honor, integrity, and ethical conduct are the hallmarks of our society.

This exploration of Bushido, spanning its historical roots, core principles, cultural impact, modern relevance, and practical application, underscores its significance not as a relic of the past but as a living philosophy. Bushido's enduring appeal lies in its capacity to inspire a life of honor and integrity, offering a path forward for anyone seeking to navigate the complexities of life with courage and ethical clarity.

To deepen your understanding of Bushido and explore its applications and influences further, the following resources offer a wealth of information. From historical texts that provide insight into the samurai ethos to contemporary works that examine Bushido's relevance in modern life, these resources are invaluable for anyone looking to dive deeper into the way of the warrior.



## **The Way of the Warrior: Samurai Philosophy and Honor**

### **The Virtues of the Samurai in The Way of the Warrior**

Bushido is more than a code of war: it is a philosophy of life that defines how a samurai should live, act, and serve. With roots stretching back centuries, Bushido represents a set of values encompassing discipline, honor, loyalty, courage, and benevolence—principles that guided the samurai in their actions in both times of peace and conflict. These values not only shaped the spirit and character of the samurai but also influenced Japanese culture at large, creating an ethic of life that persists in Japan and the contemporary world.

Although Bushido was born in the context of war, its teachings transcend the battlefield. This philosophy continues to offer practical and meaningful lessons for everyday life, reminding us of the importance of responsibility, integrity, and harmony between our actions and our convictions. We will explore the seven

fundamental pillars of Bushido and how these principles, which once guided the samurai, find relevance in the modern world, offering a path to self-realization and purpose.

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### **The Core Values of Bushido and Their Application in Everyday Life** **Righteousness (Gi): Living with Justice and Equity**

La **rectitude** is the ability to act according to what is morally just and right. For the samurai, being upright means acting justly, keeping one's word, and respecting one's values without hesitation. In modern life, uprightness involves making ethical decisions, even when they are unpopular or difficult. This principle teaches us to always act with consistency between our words and actions, allowing us to live with an integrity that inspires trust and respect in others.

**Real-life example:** A leader who acts with integrity chooses not to compromise his company's values for short-term gains. This person chooses to be transparent and maintain ethics, even when faced with external pressures. This integrity inspires loyalty and respect in his employees, customers, and business partners, establishing an organizational culture based on trust and honesty.

### **Courage (Yu): Facing Fear and Overcoming Challenges**

Courage goes beyond physical bravery in war; it is the willingness to act with integrity, facing difficult decisions and situations that may cause fear. This value invites us to take risks and stand up for what is right, even when doing so entails

personal sacrifice. In modern life, courage gives us the strength to change course, face our fears, and overcome obstacles in our personal and professional lives.

**Real-life example:** A professional who decides to quit his secure job to follow his passion and start his own business shows courage. Although this involves considerable risk, this person is confident in his ability to face challenges and is committed to overcoming fears that may arise on the path to his purpose.

### **Benevolence (Jin): Helping and Supporting Others**

Bushido represents the ability to act with compassion and empathy, especially towards the most vulnerable. The true strength of the samurai lies in his ability to protect and help, not in imposing his will on others. This value is applied to our daily lives in the willingness to care for and support those around us, promoting harmonious and altruistic coexistence.

**Real-life example:** During a crisis or natural disaster, those who act benevolently help those affected, donating their time, resources, or skills to aid recovery. In a professional context, a boss who cares about the well-being of his or her employees during difficult times demonstrates benevolence, putting the well-being of others above financial gain.

### **Respect (Rei): Practicing Dignity and Courtesy**

It is one of the essential virtues in Bushido, as it helps the samurai to recognize the inherent value in all people, regardless of their position or ability. In modern life, respect manifests itself in courtesy, humility and the recognition of the rights and opinions of others, values fundamental to harmony and social collaboration.

**Real-life example:** At work, a leader who actively listens to his or her employees, acknowledging their opinions and points of view, practices respect. In personal relationships, respecting the opinions and boundaries of others, and avoiding derogatory attitudes, demonstrates respect, and fosters relationships of trust and harmony.

### **Honesty and Sincerity (Makoto): Being Authentic and Transparent**

It is one of the most important pillars of Bushido, as it allows the samurai to act without deceit or falsehood. In today's context, being honest means being transparent and sincere in our relationships and commitments, fostering trust and authenticity in all our interactions.

**Real-life example:** A manager who is honest about the difficulties facing the company and who admits his mistakes acts honestly and earns the respect of his team. In everyday life, someone who is honest and consistent with his words and actions generates an atmosphere of trust in his relationships, strengthening ties with those around him.

### **Honor (Meiyo): Maintaining Personal Integrity**

It is the core of Bushido and the most sacred value for the samurai. Living with honor means acting in a dignified and responsible manner, respecting our principles, and maintaining integrity in all situations. This value remains vital in modern life, as honor is the foundation of our reputation and our ability to act for a higher purpose.

**Real-life example:** A professional who keeps his commitments despite difficulties, or who rejects unethical behavior, lives with honor. In their personal life, someone who strives to always act following his values, without giving in to social pressure, shows an honor that makes him an example of consistency and self-respect.

### **Loyalty (Chu): Commitment and Devotion to a Cause**

It is the unconditional dedication of the samurai to his lord and his community. In modern life, loyalty is manifested in devotion to the people, ideals, and projects in which we believe, committing ourselves to them, and facing adversity with them.

**Real-life example:** An employee who stays with a company during difficult times, helping to overcome crises and supporting his colleagues, shows loyalty. In family relationships, loyalty is shown by being present and engaged in times of need, and providing unconditional support.

## **The Spiritual Dimension of the Warrior's Path**

Bushido is also a spiritual philosophy that teaches the samurai to control their desires, fears, and distractions. Through meditation and constant training, the samurai seek to achieve a state of inner peace, a crucial skill in combat and in their daily lives. The practice of **Zen meditation** and the study of philosophy allows him to act with serenity and concentration, characteristics that help him make balanced decisions.

This spiritual approach applies to modern life, where meditation and self-discipline can help us manage stress and maintain a clear mind amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Practicing concentration and self-control allows people to make conscious decisions and stay calm in times of pressure.

**Example in modern life:** A doctor who practices meditation to mentally prepare himself before complex surgeries develops an ability to stay focused and calm in moments of high pressure. In daily life, someone facing emotional conflict finds meditation a tool to understand his emotions and solve problems with objectivity and serenity.

## **Bushido in Modern Life: Values that Inspire Success and Well-Being**

Although the modern context is very different from feudal Japan, Bushido values remain a powerful guide to developing character and finding deep purpose. In business, many leaders embrace Bushido principles by fostering a culture of respect, integrity, and responsibility. In personal life, this philosophy provides a framework for growth, resilience, and overcoming difficulties.

Bushido is a reminder of the importance of acting with a greater purpose, cultivating strong relationships, and facing challenges with dignity. In a world where ethics and authenticity are increasingly important, samurai philosophy is a source of inspiration for those who seek to live coherently and respect their principles.

**Example in the company:** In an organization that fosters Bushido values, employees are encouraged to work as a team, act ethically, and value loyalty to the company. This environment creates an organizational culture of integrity, in which each member strives to contribute to collective success, always acting responsibly and respectfully.

**Example in personal life:** A person facing loss can find solace in the Bushido principles of honor and loyalty. This dedication to living with integrity helps them overcome grief, transforming difficulty into an opportunity for growth. By remembering and honoring the legacy of their loved ones, they can find the strength to move forward and act in a way that reflects the values they hold most dear.

**Application in education:** Bushido is also a valuable tool in the educational field, teaching students the importance of discipline, respect, and perseverance. A teacher who applies the values of Bushido inspires his students to act responsibly, to respect their peers, and to take on their studies as a commitment to their growth and the common good.

**Reflection in daily life:** In everyday life, Bushido invites us to reflect on our values and the way we face challenges. Living with a sense of purpose, always acting with honesty and dedication, allows us to build a meaningful life and establish relationships based on mutual respect and trust. The philosophy of Bushido offers a path to personal excellence and inner peace in times of conflict and calm. It reminds us that true strength lies in our ability to act with integrity, in our willingness to learn, and in our commitment to others. Although times have changed, the principles of Bushido remain a source of inspiration, inviting us to live with purpose and dignity, approaching life with a spirit of honor and a sense of responsibility toward those around us.

**Author: Kazeiro**

## THE ACADEMIC PLATFORM



*Cultural & Area Studies, Ethics, Religion & Philosophy*

# BUSHIDO: THE WAY OF DEATH

In Part 12 of his “Death in the Japanese Tradition” monograph, Professor Stuart D. B. Picken explains the apparent influence of the mentality of *bushido*, the way of the warrior, on Japanese attitudes towards death.

## 1. Romanticist Tendencies in Japanese Culture

Having observed how death in Japanese society became institutionalized through Buddhism taking control of the death system, a control it maintains still, we may now turn our attention to another strand of death’s multiple images in Japanese culture. This concerns how suicide was manipulated through the principles of feudal loyalty and later, by modern militarism, to be the supreme proof of loyalty and devotion to duty. This discussion takes in the concepts of *Bushido*, the values of Confucianism and

neo-Confucianism, as well as the ideals of the neo-*samurai* that devastated Asia and brought Japan to complete humiliation and atomic destruction.

**“There developed from feudal times, an image of death as glorious, that came to be manipulated in the interests first of centralized state control and later, of Imperial expansionism.”**

The central argument is very simple. There developed from feudal times, an image of death as glorious, that came to be manipulated in the interests first of centralized state control and later, of Imperial expansionism. While the purely military form of suicide has almost vanished, influences are still felt in Japan's unique varieties of suicide, especially when viewed against their social context. Such influences may be seen in the mentality of the Japanese Red Army terrorists whose willingness to die made them far more effective than those terrorists who may be persuaded to surrender in the face of overwhelming odds. They may be seen too, in those meaningless and random acts of violence that occur in Japan from time to time when some crazed being, perhaps with a history of mental illness, fantasizes that he is purifying society of some ill, and kills an innocent bystander. The sarin gas attack in Tokyo by members of the OM Shinri-kyo sect is probably a mixture of both. These will be discussed in more detail in the context of terrorism.

**“death (especially by suicide) is still heavily romanticized and beautified”**

Those influences are also at work in popular culture, from television dramas, where a trained eye can tell as the plot proceeds, who in the story should commit suicide at the end, to the *manga*, which Western observers mistakenly see as comic books. While many of these have a 'macho' image or a strain of rightist ideology, death (especially by suicide) is still heavily romanticized and beautified.

I remember attending an updated version of what was originally a *bunraku* play by the Edo dramatist, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) in the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. It was in modern Japanese, with appropriate music. The staging and props were excellent, the *shitamachi* (downtown) atmosphere was captured perfectly. Edo was alive again! The whole audience felt it. The drama progressed through the

usual predictable stages of an impossible love between a geisha and a samurai. Neither of them could be content with a mere liaison and there was nowhere in society to which they could escape.

The climax was reached when, at the final meeting, they decided to commit *shinju* (the classic, dual love suicide). After their final act of love and their last embrace, the samurai strangled his lover with one of the *obi*, or cords, from the girdle of her kimono. He wept, drew his sword, and sliced his jugular vein whereupon a great fountain of blood sprayed up and tinged the snow on the stage with a beautiful pink.

The effect was well-produced and very effective. The audience rose to cheer and clap as the actor concluded his performance. Around me were people with tears in their eyes whispering, "Beautiful!" "Magnificent!" as the complete and final scene lay before them. Only one or two foreigners seemed surprised. I confess to having felt somewhat emotional, partly in response to the play. It was difficult not to have a feeling of sympathy for the hero and heroine and the nobility of their tragic end. I was moved, however, by the response of the audience as well. The year was 1981.

Japanese tastes in popular drama had not changed in three hundred years! Such events may seem anachronistic or eccentric, but they serve to remind the observer that while the externals of contemporary Japan betoken a modernized industrial nation, the *kokoro*, the heart of tradition, survives to a much greater extent than most people are often willing to admit. In his *Mirror, Jewel and Sword*, published in 1973, eleven years after his death, Kurt Singer states the point as a broad cultural characterization: "Able to show great bravery, bordering sometimes on madness, he (the Japanese) does not like to endure long hardship and adversity. Unlike the Russian, he prefers suicide to silent despair."

Singer's portrait of Japanese life, although written in the 1930s, is still relevant in its perceptiveness. (Singer, Kurt, *Mirror, Jewel and Sword* Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981 p. 30). It also has a persuasive ring of modernity about it, from the way in which he uncannily foresaw some of the manifestations of the Pacific War, through a deep grasp of the metaphysics underlying the Japanese view of life. Some of these should emerge in the following pages.

The tendency has not died out either. Japanese who endure long hours of work, unpleasant assignments, and the necessity to work away from home, *tanshin funin* as they are called, frequently romanticize their circumstances in order either to draw comfort for themselves or to add special significance to their life and activities. The mechanisms of the mind at work are in any case identical to those of the past. The past takes us back to the tradition of *bushido*, the way of the warrior.

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## 2. *Bushido*: Origins and Development

*Bushido*, the way of the *bushi*, is a term that describes the behavior of a class of professional warriors that emerged from the provinces of Japan during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Within a hundred years, they had become the ruling elite of Japan and they remained so until 1868. (Varley, H. Paul *The Samurai* London: Pelican Books, 1970 p.44 ff; Storry, Richard *The Way of the Samurai* London: Orbis Publishing House, 1978, p.19 ff). In a broader sense, *bushido* may also refer to the ancient military spirit of the Japanese people, which manifested, itself even in the military costumes of some Haniwa figurines and which indeed may be deeply rooted in Japanese social psychology.

The real era of the warrior, the *bushi*, was from the 10th century until the beginning of the Tokugawa age, in the early 1600s. During the relatively peaceful Edo age, the *bushi* was a professional warrior with no battles to fight, although street fights were not uncommon, as the expression '*Kaji to kenka wa Edo no hana*' "fires and fights are the flowers of Edo" suggests. (It is hard to resist the comparison with the somewhat less glorious 'Flowers of Edinburgh' of the same early 18th century period. This was the name given to the stench that rose from the streets caused by the emptying of bedpans from house windows. It shows how far apart cultures can be in their imagery.

It was however, during the Edo period that the spirit of the warrior was peacefully distilled throughout society, integrated into education and made the lifestyle of a people who were schooled in the virtues of feudal loyalty

and the idea of dying, if necessary, for that ideal. It was that experience that prepared the nation for the Meiji era.

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### 3. The Philosophy of *Bushido*

The code of *bushido* was a code of ethics for a feudal society. It was a class ethic designed to distinguish the warrior class from the ordinary people. It was never intended to be the foundation of a social ethic in a modern nation-state. However, a transition was made from traditional *bushido* to popularized *bushido* from the samurai to the neo-samurai mentality, to strengthen loyalty to the Imperial system. The final version of the neo-samurai code is the *senjinkun*.

The Imperial Rescript to the Army issued in 1882 was the first public statement of the ideology. The Imperial Army's Code of Conduct, issued by General Tojo in 1941 is usually taken as the document explicitly calling for what the Americans labeled *banzai* attacks by the *kamikaze* pilots.

However, what General Tojo commended, keeping one's name pure rather than surviving in disgrace, has a history that goes back to the feudal era. It is to the traditional form of that code I should now like to turn, to the philosophy of *bushi* itself. The term 'philosophy of *bushi*' is not used without justification. The most exact translation would be 'the way of the warrior'. The notion of way (*do*) however, has many philosophical overtones that ought not to be neglected. Consider first its use in other contexts.

In ancient times, Japan had no way of describing its folk religion, its ethics or traditions of religious belief enshrined in its mythology and in the ritual worship of the *kami*. When Buddhism arrived in Japan during the seventh century, in the Nara period, two expressions were coined to distinguish between the indigenous tradition and the newly imported one. One was *butsudo* (the way of Buddha) and the other one was *shindo* (usually pronounced shinto: the way of the *kami*). The Chinese character for *do* is also pronounced *michi*, and it is the regular word for a road or track through fields. Its use in earlier Chinese thought provides its fuller philosophical background. The Chinese philosophical school known

as *Daoism* has as its central concept *dao*, represented by the same Chinese character as is pronounced *do* in Japanese. (*Daoism* is associated with the work of Lao Tzu whose work the Tao Te Ching remains the classic exposition of the doctrine. For an English rendering of the text see: D.C. Lan Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching London: Penguin, 1963).

The term *dao* had probably as versatile a range of meanings as did the Greek concept of *logos*- (translated as 'word' in St. John's Gospel St John 1:1 "In the beginning was the word - Logos"). In fact, the Chinese New Testament uses the term *dao* to translate *logos*. The tradition of Confucianism, mentioned earlier, spoke of the Way of Heaven. Again, the term used was *do*. The distinction of 'ways' was intended to convey a difference in system and outlook, which western minds would regard as philosophical, theological or ethical. In the case of Japanese thought, these particular distinctions are difficult to draw with any degree of finality, but all three aspects are implied. The idea was that of a system of belief that offered answers to general questions about humanity and the world, and of a set of disciplines or practices, which follow from these. Therefore, to speak of *bushido* as the 'philosophy of the warrior' is not to use the term philosophy in the loose sense in which people speak of a 'philosophy of life'. It is to use the exact equivalent, however loosely worked out, of a highly influential philosophical position.

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#### 4. The Ethics of *Bushido*: the *Hagakure*

The most famous single text of *bushido* is the volume usually called the *Hagakure*. It is also known popularly as the *Nabeshima Rongo* (Saga of the Nabeshima Clan) and was written around 1716. (Selections in English are published under the title *Hagakure*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1979, tr. William Scott Wilson).

In this document, we find the early statement:

*"Bushido to wa shinu koto to mitsuketari"*

This is not easy to render into English, but essentially it means that the philosophy of the warrior is a philosophy of dying. That is the conclusion of the man who uttered the sentence. How should that conclusion be interpreted? Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, Furukawa

Tesshi, who assisted Professor Watsuji Tetsuro in producing a new edition of the *Hagakure* during World War II takes as the starting point of his interpretation of the dictum, the words *shinu-koto*, which may be rendered a situation calling for death. (See article by Furukawa Tasshi “The Individual in Japanese Ethics” ed. Moore *The Japanese Mind* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, University of Hawaii 1967) p.228 ff.) Furukawa argues, and I think on good grounds, that this was taken as an injunction to act with ‘purity and simplicity in the spiritual sense’, to act with unmediated directness and total spontaneity, given the duty to act at all.

His arguments are derived from the *Hagakure*’s criticism of the vendetta-type situation described in the saga of the forty-seven loyal retainers of Ako, or that of the Soga brothers, while exalting the bloody incident of the Nagasaki Brawl of 29 December 1700, as the ultimate demonstration of the samurai ideal. The contrast between these two sagas is extremely important if one is to grasp the full significance of what *bushido* taught.

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### **Criticism of the Incident of the 47 *Ronin***

Both incidents are well-known events in Japanese history. The revenge of the forty-seven loyal retainers (*ronin*) of Ako who avenged the wrongs done to their lord, Baron Ako, took years to complete. A famous Kabuki play, known as *Chushingura*, was written about the saga. The narrative of the Soga brothers tells of a vendetta in which they avenged their father who had been murdered by one of his relatives. This act of revenge required a total of seventeen years to bring to completion.

In an apparent criticism of this time lag, the *Hagakure* declares: “The right way of avenging is to strike at the enemy without delay or hesitation, even in the danger of being killed by him. In this case, it is no disgrace at all to be killed by the object of one’s vengeance. It would be disgraceful, however, not to strike at once, thus losing forever the opportunity of vengeance in the vain hope of accomplishing one’s purpose satisfactorily. While one hesitates to fight against heavy odds, time is wasted and the opportunity passes away never to return, and the project of vengeance is given up for good. One has only to cast oneself at one’s enemies, no matter how heavy the odds, with an unflinching determination

to exterminate them all. *That determined act alone will place the glory of success in one's hands.*" (*Hagakure op.cit* p.29 ff Ch. 1)

That closing sentence, to which we shall return later, is the founding charter of the later creed of rightists in pre-war Japan, and echoes of it are still to be heard. "Not theory" they vehemently declared, "but pure action" is the instrument of Japan's salvation. (See Ivan Morris's work on right-wing movements in post-war Japan: *Nationalism and the Right Wing: A Study in Post-War Trends* (Oxford: University Press, 1960). This type of thinking gave a powerful impetus to the belief that suicide, as an act of loyalty, would achieve ends that more regular and constitutional forms of behavior could not.

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## The Ideal of the Nagasaki Brawl of 1700

The Nagasaki Brawl fulfills the requirements of the above specification as an act of 'pure and simple' response to duty. It began in the most trivial way. Two samurai, walking down a slushy street in Nagasaki passed a city official and his manservant. The servant shouted insults at them for splashing him with muddy snow and in indignant reprisal, the samurai kicked the man down and gave him a vicious beating. Later that night, the servant and some of his friends went to the residence of the two samurai, beat them without mercy, and humiliated them by robbing them of their swords. Battered and helpless, they were unable to defend themselves, but soon after they were joined, by about fifteen other samurai who had heard the commotion. Immediately, and without any further thought, the two injured men and their friends went to the home of the official and his servant, where they engaged in a bloody reprisal, killing a large number of people, including the two original opponents. Thereafter, having satiated their thirst for revenge, they disemboweled themselves en masse, bringing the entire incident to a 'glorious' end.

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## The Virtue of Unreflective Loyalty

Whatever else may be meant by 'pure and simple', it appears to refer to a course of action that is swift, decisive, final, and free of moral speculation or any possible comeback. In an earlier chapter, it was stressed that loyalty had to be demonstrated by action. The type of act that loyalty demanded may now be seen very clearly. The principle of obedience and the virtue of loyalty, once willingly embraced, carried with them, when warranted by the situation, the dutiful requirement of the 'pure and simple' act, the *shinu koto*.

The principle of obedience to the ideal of loyalty is so firmly implanted that from the feeling of outrage to the completion of the act of revenge, the mediation of any intellectual process would only be a hindrance. This is substantiated under such circumstances by the language normally used to describe the behavior of samurai. A term often used is *mushaburi*, which means powers, gallantry, or bravery. It also has the nuance of a warrior quaking with excitement. In other words, what makes bravery a virtue is not the moral quality, but the emotional spontaneity involved. The verbal form, *mashaburitsuku*, meaning to tremble with excitement, or to reach the point where one's impulses have taken complete control, is also the verb used to describe how a *bushi* should enter a fight. The concept of *shinu koto* has emotional as well as moral content. This concept also involved not simply a willingness to die, but an attitude of instant response to duty that implied almost dying to oneself in a religious sense. It is here that the very precarious position of the individual in Japanese ethics is seen, as well as the source of the continued tendency, to stress wider loyalty above individual rights despite the processes of 'democratization' even after 1945. A few further quotations from the *Hagakure* should amplify the above points:

"*Bushido* is a single straight way to death, practicing over and over again every day and night how to die a *samurai's* death on every possible occasion and every possible cause...Readiness to die at the call of one's duty

should be kept ever fresh and alive by repeating the vow every day and every moment.” *Hagakure* op.cit. p.30, Ch. 1)

“When one equally repeats his vow to die at any moment at the call of his duty every morning and every evening, one can act freely in Bushido at a moment's notice, thus fulfilling his duties as a feudal vassal without a flaw, even to the very last moment of his life.” (*Hagakure* op.cit. pp. 17-18, Ch. 1)

These appear to be two essential characteristics of the actions for which *bushido* is called. Firstly, they are actions that are the natural outcome of the principle of obedience and are therefore ‘pure’ in intention. Secondly, they are performed without any reflection whatsoever upon consequences, and are to that extent ‘simple’, being uncomplicated by reflection. Western moralists might prefer to call this an expression of behavior rather than a reflective course of action. Nevertheless, it is the only type of action consistent with the spirit of *bushido*.

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### Zen Nihilism and *Bushido*

It is worth noting in passing, that the philosophy of the *bushi* was closely allied to, and supported by, Zen Buddhism, which the samurai found particularly conducive to the state of mind required to perform their duties. Indeed, before battle, they often celebrated the ritual of the tea ceremony, originally a Zen institution, in much the same way that Christian knights received the last rites of the Church before battle, or even before a tournament. The difference was that the purpose of performing the tea ceremony was to empty the mind of thoughts, arguments, or contradictions that might stand in the way of a spontaneous and glorious end. The central notions of *Zen* included the denial of the reality of ‘self’ and the importance of *ku*, that is, ‘nothingness’ or ‘no self’. (For a philosophical discussion see Nishida Kitaro *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness* tr. Robert Shinzinger – Ford, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1951).

Such notions are nihilistic, and while values like loyalty and obedience appear to belong to a more positive moral framework, the *raison d’etre* of the code of the *bushi*, apart from obvious political advantages to a select few, is extremely hard to uncover. However, whether or not Zen’s part was significant, the alliance between *bushido* and Zen Buddhism is a facet of Japanese cultural history that bears further examination. Zen’s general

connection with the martial arts (the link no doubt going back to the days of encounter in China between Buddhism and Taoism) seems quite out of character in Buddhist philosophy. Nevertheless, it did exist and remains another part of the ritual trappings of suicide in the Japanese tradition. It should be remembered also that, as pointed out earlier, most 'executions' by *seppuku* took place in Buddhist temples that subscribed to the values of the *bushi*.

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## Feudalism Japanese and Western

The connection between suicide and the military tradition in Japan is beyond doubt. It is exemplified in the classics of the tradition of the warrior, supported by the religion closest to his way of life and it is laid before him in the great deeds of the past. While the values of *Bushido* were exploited in the militarism of the Meiji-Showa period, it would be completely wrong to say that they have entirely vanished. Lingering feudalism has remained detectable in many areas of modern Japanese life. But before passing to the modern period, we can make a simple and illuminating comparison between the principal themes of the literature of the Japanese and European feudal ages. Parallels have been drawn between the feudal ages of Japan and those of the West, seeking to demonstrate their similarities. Doubtless, there were some, but as always, of more interest than the similarities are the contrasts.

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## The Romanticization of Death Versus the Romanticization of Women

Consider the position of women, whose role was seen by both civilizations as the production of pure-blood heirs to the estates. They were therefore subjected to careful scrutiny of their ancestry, health, and moral responsibility. Infidelity was severely punished. However, while in Japan the position of women declined dramatically compared to what it had been in the Heian period, the ideal of womanhood emerged as a romantic motif of Western chivalry. In Europe, far from being totally degraded, they often became the object of a cult of adoration. Indeed, some of the epic Western themes are based on the romanticization of women and ideal womanhood.

In contrast, Japanese literature of the age dealt not with the romanticization of women, but with the romanticization of death. This is the major point of contrast. (The *Hagakure* already referred to is one of the first examples of the point. Tsuda Sokichi *An Enquiry into the Japanese Mind as Mirrored in Literature* (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1970) Western stories of devoted friendship, of Damon and Pythias, Achilles and Patroclus, or David and Jonathan, find their counterpart in the samurai tradition. The romantic female figures that tower in Western history because of the passions they inspired – Helen of Troy, the face that launched a thousand ships, Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, who died because of Mark Antony, and the mysterious Queen of Sheba whom Solomon revered, were women whose like are not found in Japanese history.

Indeed, if accounts of samurai life are accurate, there was little room in the mentality of the samurai for women of any kind. The samurai may have had a wife. He may have had a sweetheart. But he had also a feudal master who called for the deepest loyalty and devotion from him, the giving of which met that any passion he might have felt towards women was subordinated.

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## Suicide Versus Surrender

Of course, death is a risk run by the warrior in any civilization and fame rests on victory, which cannot be attained without risk. Death is the ultimate risk and, therefore, the warrior must always be prepared to face death.

**“But while this held true in both forms of civilization, the Japanese warrior saw death in a different light from his Western counterpart. For the Western knight, death was the ultimate form of defeat.”**

But while this held true in both forms of civilization, the Japanese warrior saw death in a different light from his Western counterpart. For the Western knight, death was the ultimate form of defeat. Legitimate and

proper surrender was therefore possible. Even the captivity of a king such as Richard the Lionheart of England was no shame. His rescue from the clutches of Leopold was an act out of which ballads (and movies) have been made. The Japanese knight saw things differently. Captivity may have meant hideous suffering and humiliation. On the other hand, death, if bravely faced in the name of one's lord, might result in a reward. Provided one was seen to be courageous and loyal, whether one lived or died made little difference. The family would be protected by the lord and the family name would survive. This kind of thinking led to that new conception of death best exemplified in the *Hagakure*. Japanese samurai saw their lives as being of little consequence and so they were prepared to die out of loyalty to the lord they served.

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## Contrasting Values on Love and Death

If the eternal theme of the West were summed up in the film title 'Love Story', then there is no romantic story in Japanese culture to match in popularity the story of the forty-seven *Ronin* who avenged their master's death and then committed *seppuku*. Stories of revenge are not popular in the West since the vengeful spirit itself is not respected.

**“Love relationships of any kind were considered dangerous. They were regarded as a distraction that endangered the proper performance of duty.”**

As a passing comment, one wonders if the pattern of many contemporary Japanese marriages does not reflect the sternness of that ethos. Businessmen who spend long periods away from home demonstrate a devotion to the company or organization and are probably sublimating their natural impulses. An estimated 200,000 company employees in Japan live apart from their families as *tanshin funin*. The samurai might also have had dalliances with courtesans, but the rule was obeyed, that such relationships were ephemeral. Love relationships of any kind were considered dangerous. They were regarded as a distraction that endangered the proper performance of duty. To be in love with someone or to form a romantic liaison of any kind was to create a *giri-ninjo*, (duty versus human feeling) crisis of unmanageable proportions. (Minamoto

Ryoen *Giri to Ninjo* (Tokyo: Chuo Koran-sha, 1969). The *Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, make precisely this point. In not a few cases, such liaisons ended in double suicide. Women were classified either as mothers and wives or as entertainers who provided a few moments of physical pleasure.

**“the vast number of bars staffed by hostesses does suggest that the entertainer role is still very much alive”**

While I am not suggesting that the average Japanese prefers the company of a courtesan to that of his wife, the vast number of bars staffed by hostesses does suggest that the entertainer role is still very much alive. Sex tours abroad by company employees have an image, which matches that of an army unit going behind the lines to a pleasure spot. When the Japanese Self-Defence forces first ventured abroad since the end of World War II, on a United Nations Peace-keeping mission, the press reported and played up the issue of whether or not they should carry condoms with them. The illustration here became a sensitive issue when Korean women in particular claimed compensation from the Japanese government for forced prostitution during World War II when they were recruited involuntarily and compelled to act as ‘comfort women’ for the Japanese Imperial army. The allegation had been denied for years, but the discovery and subsequent release in 1991 of sensitive documents verified the practice and called for the Tokyo government to make wide-ranging apologies to neighboring governments and to the individuals concerned. The matter went to the Japanese courts later in 1991.

**“At any rate, the role of women in Japan is worth pondering in relation also to the slow progress of women’s rights.”**

At any rate, the role of women in Japan is worth pondering in relation also to the slow progress of women’s rights. The spirit of women may have been affected by what the Romans called the *dura virum nutrix*: the mentality of the matronly woman who sees her role as that of a severe nurse of men. I can recollect a young American who married a student of mine being told by his prospective Japanese father-in-law: “If you tire of your wife, go to a professional woman. Otherwise you may have trouble”. He didn’t listen to the advice and he did have trouble, unfortunately. Perhaps it is not only

Japanese women who need to be liberated from their neo-samurai mentality.

The *samurai* view of death was enriched by the other root of Japanese thought, namely the influence of Chinese Confucianism. Shinto saw death as natural, and Buddhism added a cosmic background to explain it in metaphysical terms. The social role of death was added to by the Confucian element in Japanese feudal society and is the cultural root of many instances of death and suicide in modern Japan. It was the complex combination of *bushido* and Confucianism that provided the basis of the modern militaristic ideology of the nation from 1868 to 1945 that brought it to grief and near annihilation.

Image | [Katsushika Hokusai](#)

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This is Part 12 of Professor Stuart D. B. Picken's serialized monograph, "Death in the Japanese Tradition: A Study in Cultural Evolution and Transformation".

# The Complete Guide to Bushido: The Samurai Code of Honor

In the rich tapestry of Japan's history, the samurai emerge as figures of immense discipline, valor, and honor. These elite warriors, who once served as the military nobility of medieval and early-modern Japan, have left an indelible mark on the world with their profound principles and way of life. Central to their existence was Bushido, the ethical code of conduct that not only defined their actions on the battlefield but also shaped their everyday lives. This "Way of the Warrior" encompasses virtues such as loyalty, courage, and honor, principles that continue to resonate with people across the globe, even in the modern era.

Bushido, which literally translates to "the way of the warrior," guided samurai in both their martial pursuits and personal conduct. It was an unwritten code, an intrinsic part of the samurai's being, passed down through generations. This code emphasized virtues like righteousness, bravery, and respect, ensuring that a samurai's life was lived with purpose and integrity. More than just a set of rules for combat, Bushido was a comprehensive philosophy that



influenced various aspects of culture and art, from calligraphy and tea ceremonies to the disciplined practice of martial arts.

In today's fast-paced and often tumultuous world, the principles of Bushido still offer valuable lessons on living a life of honor, discipline, and ethical conduct. Its emphasis on loyalty, respect, and perseverance can inspire individuals to lead more fulfilling lives, make morally sound decisions, and maintain integrity in the face of challenges. As we delve into the complete guide of Bushido, we explore not only the historical context and core tenets of this revered code but also its enduring relevance in contemporary society. Join us on this journey to uncover the timeless wisdom of the samurai and the ways in which the spirit of Bushido can illuminate our paths today.

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## Historical Context of Bushido



### **The Birth of Bushido: Tracing Its Roots in Feudal Japan**

Long before Bushido became known as the samurai's guiding philosophy, its roots were taking shape in the rich soil of Japan's feudal era. This period, characterized by powerful warlords (daimyo), sprawling castles, and a society deeply divided by class, set the stage for the emergence of Bushido, the Way of the Warrior.

Feudal Japan, spanning from the 12th to the 19th century, was a time of constant warfare and political upheaval. It was during this era that the samurai class rose to prominence, serving as the military arm of the daimyo and the shogunate, Japan's military government. The samurai were not just warriors; they were also expected to be stewards of culture, art, and philosophy. This dual expectation laid the groundwork for the development of a comprehensive ethical code that would guide their lives both on and off the battlefield.

The origins of Bushido can be traced back to the combination of indigenous Shinto beliefs, with their emphasis on purity and loyalty to the emperor, and the influence of Zen Buddhism and Confucianism, which were introduced to Japan from China. Zen Buddhism provided the samurai with mental discipline, fostering a state of calm readiness and mindfulness, while Confucianism

contributed ideals of loyalty, filial piety, and benevolence. Together, these influences melded with the samurai's martial lifestyle to form the early foundations of Bushido.

As the samurai class became more established, the need for a formal code to regulate behavior and resolve disputes became apparent. Bushido filled this need, offering a set of ideals that emphasized honor, courage, and loyalty above all else. It was not a written code but a set of principles passed down through generations, taught from master to apprentice, from father to son. This oral tradition ensured that Bushido was not just a set of rules but a living philosophy, adaptable to the changing times and circumstances of feudal Japan.

Bushido's emphasis on honor and self-discipline resonated deeply within the samurai culture, influencing every aspect of their lives. It dictated how they engaged in combat, how they served their lords, and how they conducted themselves in peacetime. Over time, Bushido became synonymous with the samurai identity, embodying the ideal of the warrior-philosopher who seeks perfection in both martial and personal pursuits.

The origins of Bushido during the feudal era of Japan highlight the complex interplay of warfare, culture, and philosophy that defined the samurai's world. This code of ethics, born out of necessity and shaped by diverse influences, laid the foundation for a way of life that continues to inspire and guide individuals long after the samurai themselves have faded into history.

## **The Evolution of Bushido Through the Ages**

The story of Bushido, the samurai's revered code of conduct, is a tale of adaptation and resilience, reflecting the changing tides of Japanese society from ancient times through the Edo period. This journey from a loose set of warrior ethics to a formalized code offers insight into the samurai's enduring legacy and the timeless principles of Bushido. Let's explore the evolution of this noble path and how it was shaped by the historical events of Japan.

In its earliest form, during the Heian period (794-1185), the foundations of what would become Bushido were rooted in the warrior practices of the bushi or samurai class. These principles were initially focused on martial skills, loyalty to one's lord, and personal honor. The emphasis was on bravery in battle and the unwavering commitment to fight for one's clan and family.

During this era, the warrior's conduct was guided more by practical needs and personal valor than by a formal ethical code.

As Japan transitioned into the Kamakura period (1185-1333), the samurai's role in society began to solidify, and with it, the need for a more structured set of guiding principles. The rise of the shogunate, a military government, highlighted the importance of loyalty and discipline within the samurai ranks. It was during this time that the influences of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism became more pronounced in the samurai's life, intertwining with their martial values to form the early tenets of Bushido. Zen Buddhism, in particular, introduced concepts of mindfulness, self-control, and the acceptance of death, which became central to the samurai's philosophy.

The Muromachi period (1336-1573) saw continued warfare and political strife, which further emphasized the virtues of loyalty, honor, and the importance of living and dying with dignity. Bushido began to take on a more distinct form, serving as both a moral compass for the samurai and a means to maintain order and discipline within their ranks.

However, it was during the Edo period (1603-1868) that Bushido truly flourished and became codified. With the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate and the ushering in of a prolonged era of peace, the samurai found themselves in a society with fewer battles to fight. This shift prompted a deeper exploration of Bushido as a way of life, not just in warfare but in peacetime as well. Scholars and samurai alike began to write extensively on the subject, detailing the virtues of Bushido and its application to daily life. This period saw the crystallization of Bushido into the code of honor familiar to us today, emphasizing ethics over martial ability alone.

The evolution of Bushido from ancient times through the Edo period reflects the changing roles and challenges faced by the samurai. From battlefield conduct to governing principles and personal ethics, Bushido adapted to meet the needs of its time while maintaining its core values of honor, loyalty, and courage. As we look back on its journey, Bushido stands not only as a testament to the samurai's legacy but also as a guiding light for principles that transcend time and culture, offering wisdom for living a life of integrity and honor.

## **The Spiritual Foundations of Bushido: Zen, Confucianism, and Shintoism**

The Bushido code, revered by the samurai as the ultimate guide to a life of honor and duty, was not born in isolation. It is a rich tapestry woven from the threads of Japan's major spiritual and philosophical traditions: Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. Each of these played a pivotal role in shaping the ethos of the samurai, infusing Bushido with depth and complexity that transcended mere martial prowess.

**Zen Buddhism:** Zen Buddhism's entry into Japan from China brought with it a profound influence on the samurai class. Its emphasis on meditation (zazen), mindfulness, and the attainment of enlightenment through direct experience appealed to the warriors. Zen taught the samurai to clear their minds of distractions and fears, especially the fear of death, which was an ever-present reality in their lives. The practice of zazen allowed them to cultivate a state of "mushin" or "no-mind," where actions are performed instinctively and without hesitation. This mental discipline was invaluable both in battle and in the practice of Bushido, encouraging samurai to face life's challenges with calmness and equanimity.

**Confucianism:** The ethical teachings of Confucianism, which arrived in Japan from Korea and China, also deeply influenced Bushido. Confucian ideals of loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, and benevolence provided a moral framework for the samurai's relationship with their lords, families, and society at large. The emphasis on proper conduct, respect for hierarchy, and the importance of education and self-improvement resonated with the samurai's role as both warriors and stewards of culture. Confucianism's focus on duty and ethical behavior helped shape the samurai's understanding of honor and their obligations to their clan and country.

**Shintoism:** As the indigenous spirituality of Japan, Shintoism imbued Bushido with a deep sense of connection to the natural world and the divine. Shinto beliefs in kami (spirits) that inhabit all things cultivated a sense of reverence for life and the environment. This spiritual perspective encouraged samurai to live with sincerity, purity, and gratitude, seeing their actions as part of a larger cosmic order. The Shinto emphasis on ritual purity and devotion also reinforced the samurai's loyalty and dedication to their masters and their cause.

The interplay of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism within Bushido created a comprehensive code of conduct that governed not only the samurai's actions in battle but also their behavior in everyday life. This fusion of philosophical depth and spiritual discipline made Bushido a way of life that sought balance between the warrior's inner and outer worlds, guiding them in their pursuit of honor, duty, and enlightenment.

Through the influence of these three traditions, Bushido evolved into a holistic philosophy that remains relevant today, offering timeless lessons on living a life of integrity, courage, and mindfulness. The legacy of Bushido, enriched by Zen, Confucianism, and Shintoism, continues to inspire those who seek to lead a life of principle and honor, reminding us of the enduring power of wisdom and virtue.

## 8 Core Principles of Bushido



### Rectitude (義, Gi)

At the heart of Bushido, the revered samurai code of honor, lies the principle of Rectitude or Gi. This fundamental virtue represents the essence of making morally right decisions, guiding the samurai to act with integrity and justice.

Rectitude is not merely about knowing what is right but having the courage to do it, embodying the true spirit of a warrior who upholds honor above all.

Rectitude, in the context of Bushido, goes beyond simple ethical correctness; it is the moral backbone that supports all other virtues. It demands a samurai to be honest with themselves and others, making decisions that are not only right but also fair and just. This principle requires a deep understanding of one's moral duties and responsibilities, encouraging the samurai to reflect on their actions and their consequences.

The importance of Rectitude in the samurai's life cannot be overstated. It was the guiding light in times of confusion and moral ambiguity, providing a clear path forward when faced with difficult choices. For a samurai, acting with Rectitude meant adhering to the highest standards of behavior, whether in the heat of battle, in service to their lord, or in daily interactions with others. It was about setting an example for others to follow, demonstrating that true strength lies in the quality of one's character.

Practicing Rectitude also meant that a samurai's word was their bond. Honesty and reliability were expected, with promises kept and duties fulfilled with unwavering dedication. This commitment to truth and fairness fostered trust and respect among the samurai and the communities they served, strengthening the social fabric of feudal Japan.

In contemporary times, the principle of Rectitude remains a powerful guide for personal and professional conduct. It reminds us of the value of ethical decision-making, encouraging us to act with integrity in all aspects of our lives. Whether facing ethical dilemmas at work, in our relationships, or in our personal choices, striving for Rectitude helps us navigate the complexities of modern life with honor and dignity.

The principle of Rectitude, as taught by the samurai code of Bushido, is more than a historical concept; it is a timeless virtue that continues to inspire and guide individuals seeking to live a life of honor and integrity. By embracing the spirit of Rectitude, we honor the legacy of the samurai and commit ourselves to a path of moral courage and ethical clarity.

## Courage (勇, Yu)

In the profound and disciplined world of the samurai, Courage, or Yu, stands as a pivotal virtue within the Bushido code, encapsulating the true essence of bravery in the face of danger. This principle goes far beyond the mere act of physical fearlessness, delving into the moral and ethical courage required to confront adversity, uphold justice, and stay true to one's convictions.

To the samurai, Courage was considered a virtue that enabled them to face the trials and tribulations of life with unwavering resolve. It was not just about the boldness required in battle but also about the inner strength needed to confront ethical dilemmas and make difficult decisions based on what was right, rather than what was easy. This aspect of Courage demanded a deep introspection and a commitment to the principles of Bushido, guiding the samurai to act with integrity even when faced with personal risk.

Courage in the samurai code was about mastering fear, not eliminating it. The samurai understood that fear is a natural human emotion, but allowing it to dictate one's actions was seen as a failure of character. Instead, they trained themselves to acknowledge their fears and move beyond them, using their resolve and training to guide their actions. This approach allowed them to remain calm and collected, making rational decisions even under the most stressful conditions.

The application of Courage extended beyond the battlefield. In everyday life, samurai were expected to demonstrate bravery in upholding justice, speaking the truth, and defending the honor of their name and their lord. This could mean standing up against corruption, protecting the weak, or refusing to compromise on ethical standards, no matter the consequences. Such acts of moral Courage solidified the samurai's role as not just warriors but also as guardians of societal values.

The concept of Courage also emphasized the importance of perseverance and endurance. The samurai's path was fraught with challenges, both physical and spiritual, and it was their Courage that allowed them to persevere in their duties and in their pursuit of mastery in martial arts and personal development. This relentless pursuit of excellence, driven by Courage, is what led to the legendary feats and stories that continue to inspire to this day.

In contemporary times, the samurai's interpretation of Courage offers valuable lessons on facing life's adversities with bravery and integrity. It teaches us that true bravery is not the absence of fear but the ability to move forward in spite of it, guided by our moral compass and a commitment to doing what is right. The legacy of Courage in Bushido reminds us that, in both great battles and in the struggles of everyday life, our character is defined by our bravery, our integrity, and our unwavering resolve to stand for what we believe in.

### **Benevolence (仁, Jin)**

In the heart of the samurai code of Bushido, nestled among virtues like courage and honor, lies Benevolence or Jin. This principle highlights the surprising power and critical importance of mercy within the life of a warrior known more for martial prowess than for acts of kindness. Benevolence, however, is far from being a sign of weakness; it represents the true strength of character and the depth of compassion that a samurai must possess.

Benevolence is the virtue that balances the samurai's skill in combat with a compassionate heart. It is the moral fiber that guides a warrior to wield power responsibly, to protect the weak, and to show kindness to those in need. Far from diminishing a samurai's might, Benevolence enhances it, ensuring that strength is used not just for personal glory but for the greater good.

The importance of Benevolence in the samurai's life cannot be overstated. It informed their role as leaders and guardians within society, compelling them to act with a sense of duty and care towards others. This aspect of Bushido encouraged samurai to look beyond the battlefield, to see the value in fostering a just and harmonious community. By practicing Benevolence, samurai demonstrated that true bravery includes the courage to show compassion and to make decisions that benefit others, even at one's own expense.

Benevolence also played a crucial role in the way samurai approached conflict. While they were unparalleled warriors, trained to face death without fear, Benevolence taught them that mercy and understanding were often more powerful than the sword. A samurai guided by Benevolence would seek peaceful resolutions where possible, resorting to violence only when all other avenues were exhausted. This approach not only saved lives but also helped

build respect and loyalty, strengthening bonds between rivals and within their own ranks.

In the broader context of society, Benevolence had a stabilizing effect, promoting social welfare and the common good. Samurai, influenced by this virtue, engaged in acts of charity and public service, contributing to the well-being of their communities. They were educators, patrons of the arts, and supporters of temples and public works, embodying the ideal that true warriors serve not just with their swords but with their hearts.

Today, the principle of Benevolence continues to inspire, reminding us of the power of kindness and compassion in our lives. In a world often marked by conflict and division, the samurai's commitment to Benevolence offers a timeless lesson on the importance of empathy, understanding, and the strength that comes from caring for others. Embracing Benevolence, we too can aspire to make a positive impact, using our strengths to support and uplift those around us, following the noble path of the samurai.

## **Respect (礼, Rei)**

In the esteemed world of the samurai, where valor and honor dictate the course of one's life, the virtue of Respect, or Rei, serves as the cornerstone of social harmony and personal dignity. This principle of Bushido emphasizes the importance of courtesy and manners, not just as superficial acts of politeness, but as profound expressions of esteem for the inherent worth of all individuals.

Respect in the context of Bushido transcends mere etiquette; it is a deep acknowledgment of the value and dignity of others, regardless of their status or relationship to oneself. For the samurai, this virtue was manifest in every interaction, ensuring that even the smallest gestures were infused with sincerity and consideration. This approach to life nurtured a culture where harmony prevailed, and conflicts were resolved with wisdom rather than force.

The practice of Respect influenced various aspects of samurai conduct, from the battlefield to the tea room. In combat, samurai showed Respect by honoring the bravery of their opponents, treating the fallen with dignity, and avoiding unnecessary cruelty. This code of conduct extended to prisoners of

war, who were often treated with unexpected kindness, reflecting the samurai's commitment to fairness and honor.

In daily life, Respect governed the samurai's interactions with family, peers, and superiors. It was reflected in their careful adherence to social protocols, which facilitated smooth relations within the rigid hierarchy of feudal Japan. These protocols were not mere formalities but expressions of a deeper recognition of the interconnectedness of all members of society and the importance of each person's role within it.

Respect also played a crucial role in the education and training of young samurai. From an early age, they were taught to value humility, to listen attentively, and to speak with consideration. This training ensured that the future generation of warriors would uphold the same standards of courtesy and respect, preserving the social fabric of samurai society.

In contemporary times, the principle of Respect continues to offer valuable lessons on how to navigate our interactions with others. It reminds us that true respect goes beyond outward manners to encompass a genuine appreciation for the worth of every individual. By embodying this virtue, we can build stronger, more harmonious relationships and create a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

The samurai's adherence to Respect as a fundamental virtue of Bushido illustrates the profound impact that courtesy and consideration can have on society. It serves as a reminder that, even in a world characterized by competition and conflict, there is immense power in treating others with the dignity and esteem they deserve, fostering a community where peace and harmony thrive.

### **Honesty (誠, Makoto)**

Within the revered code of Bushido, which guided the samurai through centuries of Japanese history, lies the principle of Honesty, or Makoto. This virtue underscores the paramount importance of truthfulness and sincerity in all aspects of life, advocating for a way of being that values authenticity and straightforwardness above all else.

Honesty, in the context of Bushido, is not merely about speaking the truth but embodies a deeper commitment to living one's life with unwavering sincerity.

For the samurai, Makoto was a way of aligning one's words and actions with the truth, ensuring that every decision and interaction was guided by a genuine heart. This adherence to Honesty was considered a mark of true strength and character, distinguishing the honorable warrior from the deceitful.

The emphasis on Honesty extended beyond personal integrity to include the samurai's professional conduct. In their dealings with lords, peers, and the common people, samurai were expected to uphold the highest standards of transparency and fairness. This created a foundation of trust that was essential for the smooth functioning of feudal society, where alliances and loyalty were the bedrock of stability and order.

In battle, the virtue of Honesty was manifested in the samurai's honorable approach to warfare. They faced their enemies with respect, never resorting to trickery or deceit to gain an advantage. This commitment to fair play, even in the direst of circumstances, earned the samurai a reputation for valor and integrity that transcended the boundaries of friend and foe.

In daily life, the practice of Honesty encouraged the samurai to cultivate self-reflection and personal accountability. Recognizing one's mistakes and taking responsibility for them was seen as a strength, not a weakness. This openness to learning and growth fostered a culture of continuous improvement, both in martial skills and moral character.

Today, the principle of Honesty remains a guiding light for those seeking to lead lives of authenticity and integrity. In a world often clouded by falsehoods and half-truths, the samurai's commitment to Makoto offers a reminder of the value of being truthful in all situations. By embracing Honesty, we build stronger, more trusting relationships, create communities based on mutual respect, and pave the way for a more just and sincere world.

The virtue of Honesty, as espoused by the samurai, teaches us that truthfulness is not just an ethical choice but a way of life that enriches our interactions and deepens our understanding of ourselves and others. In valuing truth in all situations, we honor the legacy of the samurai and commit ourselves to a path of sincerity and genuine engagement with the world around us.

## **Honor (名誉, Meiyō)**

In the intricate tapestry of values that define Bushido, the samurai code of conduct, Honor, or Meiyō, holds a place of paramount importance. This principle underscores the deep significance attached to a samurai's reputation, not as a superficial marker of status, but as a reflection of one's moral and ethical standing within society.

Honor, in the context of Bushido, transcends the mere concept of dignity or prestige; it is the essence of a samurai's identity, embodying their integrity, bravery, and commitment to the code. A samurai's reputation was built upon their adherence to the virtues of Bushido, including righteousness, courage, and loyalty. To live honorably meant to act in alignment with these principles, ensuring that one's deeds mirrored one's values.

The significance of Honor was such that it influenced every aspect of a samurai's life. It guided their interactions with others, from fellow warriors to common folk, ensuring that they conducted themselves with respect, humility, and fairness. The preservation of one's Honor was considered so crucial that samurai were often willing to face death rather than commit acts that could tarnish their reputation or betray their code.

Honor also played a vital role in the samurai's relationship with their lord and clan. Loyalty and fealty were paramount, and a samurai's Honor was intertwined with their duty to serve and protect their master and family. This deep sense of responsibility often required personal sacrifices, highlighting the samurai's selfless dedication to the greater good over individual desires.

In cases where Honor was perceived to be compromised, the samurai had recourse to actions such as seppuku, a ritual suicide, to restore their reputation and that of their family. While extreme, this act underscored the profound weight of Honor in samurai culture, where the preservation of one's dignity and ethical standing was considered worth the ultimate sacrifice.

Today, the concept of Honor as understood by the samurai offers valuable lessons on the importance of living with integrity and authenticity. In a modern context, maintaining one's reputation involves acting with honesty, respecting others, and upholding one's commitments. The samurai's emphasis on Honor reminds us that our actions and choices define us, and that a life lived in accordance with our values is the highest form of respect we can earn.

The legacy of Honor in samurai culture teaches us that reputation is not merely about how we are perceived by others but about how closely our lives align with our principles. By embracing the virtue of Meiyō, we commit to a path of righteousness, contributing to a legacy that honors not just ourselves, but the communities and societies we are a part of.

### **Loyalty (忠義, Chugi)**

Loyalty, or Chugi, stands as a cornerstone of the Bushido code, embodying the samurai's unwavering allegiance to their lord and the deeply held principles that guide their life. This virtue is not a mere obligation but a profound commitment that defines the essence of the samurai's honor and duty.

At the heart of Loyalty is the bond between the samurai and their lord, a relationship built on trust, respect, and mutual support. This connection was considered sacred, with the samurai pledging their service and, if necessary, their life in defense of their lord's interests and honor. Such devotion was not blind obedience but a conscious choice, rooted in the belief that Loyalty to a worthy leader was a noble pursuit that transcended personal gain.

The concept of Loyalty extended beyond the samurai's allegiance to their lord, encompassing a broader dedication to the principles of Bushido itself. This included a commitment to justice, righteousness, and the welfare of the community. Loyalty, in this sense, was about upholding one's moral and ethical values even in the face of adversity, embodying the true spirit of the samurai as both a warrior and a guardian of society.

The significance of Loyalty in samurai culture cannot be overstated. It was the foundation upon which the feudal system was built, ensuring stability and order within the hierarchical structure of society. Loyalty fostered a sense of unity and purpose among the samurai class, creating a code of conduct that emphasized the collective good over individual desires.

However, Loyalty also demanded sacrifice. The samurai's duty to their lord and principles often required them to face danger without hesitation, and their readiness to lay down their life for their cause was seen as the ultimate expression of devotion. This aspect of Loyalty highlights the depth of the samurai's commitment, illustrating that true allegiance is proven not in words but in actions.

In contemporary times, the virtue of Loyalty offers valuable lessons on the importance of fidelity, integrity, and the strength of convictions. It reminds us that true Loyalty is not about blind adherence but about a heartfelt commitment to what we believe in and those we choose to stand by. Whether in personal relationships, professional endeavors, or our broader societal obligations, embodying Loyalty in our actions can lead to a life of purpose, honor, and meaningful connections.

The samurai's unwavering Loyalty to their lord and principles continues to inspire, serving as a testament to the power of devoted allegiance. In embracing this virtue, we honor the legacy of the samurai, committing ourselves to live with integrity and to uphold the values that define us.

### **Self-Control (自制, Jisei)**

In the disciplined world of the samurai, Self-Control, or Jisei, emerges as a fundamental virtue, highlighting the importance of mastering one's emotions and desires. This aspect of Bushido, the samurai's ethical code, underscores the belief that true strength comes from within, requiring a warrior to exercise restraint and composure in all aspects of life.

Self-Control for the samurai meant much more than just tempering one's anger or refraining from impulsive actions. It encompassed a holistic approach to self-discipline, involving the regulation of thoughts, feelings, and physical responses. This mastery over oneself was believed to be the key to achieving mental clarity, enabling samurai to make rational decisions, maintain focus during combat, and uphold their duties with honor and integrity.

The practice of Jisei was essential in cultivating the mental and emotional stability required in high-stakes situations. On the battlefield, where hesitation or overreaction could mean the difference between life and death, the samurai's ability to remain calm and collected allowed them to apply their strategies effectively and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. This inner calm was also crucial in managing the fear of death, allowing samurai to face their fate with equanimity.

Beyond martial prowess, Self-Control played a significant role in the samurai's social interactions and personal conduct. It guided them in exercising patience, showing respect to others, and adhering to societal norms and

expectations. By controlling their impulses and emotions, samurai were able to navigate the complex hierarchy and etiquette of feudal Japan, earning the respect and trust of their peers and superiors.

Moreover, the virtue of Jisei had profound implications for the samurai's moral and ethical decision-making. It encouraged a reflective and deliberate approach to life, ensuring that actions were aligned with the principles of Bushido and the greater good. This self-governance fostered a sense of responsibility and accountability, qualities that defined the samurai as honorable and just individuals.

In today's fast-paced world, the principle of Self-Control remains deeply relevant, offering insights into how we can lead more balanced and meaningful lives. It teaches us the value of self-discipline in achieving our goals, managing stress, and interacting harmoniously with others. By cultivating mastery over our emotions and desires, we can navigate life's challenges with grace and resilience, embodying the spirit of the samurai in our pursuit of personal and professional excellence.

The samurai's commitment to Self-Control, or Jisei, serves as a timeless reminder of the strength that comes from within. By embracing this virtue, we can unlock our full potential, leading lives of purpose, dignity, and self-respect.

## The Practice of Bushido in the Life of a Samurai



### Daily Routines and Practices of the Samurai

The life of a samurai was not all about warfare and combat; it was deeply rooted in a disciplined routine and practices that reinforced the principles of Bushido, the samurai's code of honor. These daily rituals and habits were integral to maintaining their physical prowess, mental clarity, and spiritual balance.

**Martial Training:** At the core of a samurai's daily routine was rigorous martial training. This included the practice of kenjutsu (the art of the sword), kyudo (archery), and jujutsu (grappling), among other martial arts. These training sessions were not just about honing combat skills; they were also exercises in discipline, focus, and the pursuit of perfection. Each strike and movement was a meditation in motion, reflecting the samurai's dedication to mastery and self-improvement.

**Meditation and Zen Practices:** To cultivate mental discipline and achieve inner peace, samurai engaged in meditation and other Zen practices. Zazen, or seated meditation, was a fundamental practice that helped them clear their minds, control their emotions, and develop mushin (a state of no-mind). This mental training was essential for maintaining composure in battle and making swift, decisive decisions.

**Calligraphy and Tea Ceremony:** Samurai also dedicated time to more serene activities such as calligraphy (shodo) and the tea ceremony (chanoyu). These arts were not mere hobbies; they were considered spiritual disciplines that mirrored the principles of Bushido. Calligraphy required precision and patience, echoing the samurai's approach to combat, while the tea ceremony emphasized respect, purity, and tranquility, reinforcing the virtues of harmony and mindfulness.

**Ethical Studies and Philosophical Reflection:** The education of a samurai included the study of Confucian classics, Buddhist texts, and other philosophical works. These studies were crucial for understanding the ethical underpinnings of Bushido and cultivating a well-rounded character. Reflection on these teachings helped samurai navigate the complex moral dilemmas they faced and reinforced their commitment to the virtues of loyalty, honor, and benevolence.

**Physical Fitness and Care of Equipment:** Physical fitness was maintained through regular exercise and a disciplined lifestyle, ensuring that samurai were always ready for battle. Additionally, great care was taken in the maintenance of their armor and weapons, which were considered extensions of their being. This meticulous attention to detail underscored the samurai's respect for their tools of trade and their readiness to serve.

The daily routines and practices of the samurai were comprehensive, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of their lives. Through these disciplined habits, they embodied the principles of Bushido, striving for excellence in all facets of their existence. The samurai's commitment to this structured way of life offers timeless lessons in dedication, integrity, and the pursuit of self-mastery, inspiring us to incorporate similar principles into our own lives.

### **Martial Arts and Their Role in Shaping the Samurai Spirit**

In the life of a samurai, martial arts were far more than just techniques for combat; they were a central pillar of their very existence, shaping their path towards discipline, resilience, and mastery. The practice of martial arts was intertwined with the principles of Bushido, the samurai's code of honor, reflecting a deep commitment to personal and ethical development.

**Foundations of Discipline:** For the samurai, martial arts training began in childhood and continued throughout their lives, laying the foundation for their discipline. Daily practice was not just about physical preparation for battle; it was a ritual that honed their focus, patience, and dedication. The repetition of forms (kata) and techniques required a level of precision and commitment that transcended the physical, teaching samurai the value of perseverance and the importance of refining their skills to perfection.

**Cultivating Resilience:** The rigorous demands of martial arts training also cultivated resilience, both physically and mentally. Samurai learned to push through physical discomfort and mental barriers, developing a toughness that prepared them for the hardships of battle and the challenges of life. This resilience was crucial in helping them face adversity with courage and maintain their composure in the face of danger.

**Mastery Over Self:** Beyond physical prowess, the practice of martial arts was a path to self-mastery. It taught samurai to control their emotions, manage fear, and achieve a state of mushin, or “no-mind,” where actions are performed instinctively and without hesitation. This level of mental discipline was essential for making clear, strategic decisions in the heat of battle and for living a life aligned with the virtues of Bushido.

**Spiritual Growth:** Martial arts also served as a medium for spiritual growth. The principles of Zen Buddhism, often integrated into martial arts training, emphasized mindfulness, self-awareness, and a deep connection to the present moment. Through their practice, samurai sought not only to sharpen their swords but also to cultivate their inner selves, striving for enlightenment and a harmonious balance between the warrior’s way and the wisdom of Zen.

**Building Community and Loyalty:** Finally, the practice of martial arts fostered a sense of community and loyalty among the samurai. Training together, they developed strong bonds with their fellow warriors, reinforcing their commitment to each other and to their lord. This camaraderie was essential for building cohesive units that could rely on one another in battle, underpinning the samurai’s unwavering loyalty and collective strength.

In the life of a samurai, martial arts were a profound expression of their identity, embodying the essence of discipline, resilience, and the pursuit of excellence. Through their dedicated practice, samurai not only prepared themselves for the physical demands of warfare but also embarked on a

lifelong journey of personal and spiritual development. The legacy of martial arts in shaping the samurai spirit continues to inspire, reminding us of the transformative power of discipline and the enduring value of mastering the art of living.

### **Meditation, Zen, and the Samurai's Quest for Clarity**

In the tumultuous world of the samurai, where the clash of swords and the weight of duty were ever-present, meditation and Zen Buddhism offered a sanctuary of peace and a tool for mastering the mind. Far from being mere spiritual exercises, meditation and the principles of Zen were integral to the samurai's pursuit of mental clarity, focus, and the inner strength required to face life's battles with equanimity.

**The Heart of Zen:** Zen Buddhism, with its emphasis on simplicity, mindfulness, and the direct experience of enlightenment, found a resonant audience in the samurai class. The Zen approach to life – valuing the present moment, acknowledging the impermanence of existence, and finding peace within oneself – offered the samurai a philosophical grounding that complemented their martial endeavors. It taught them to look beyond the superficialities of life and to seek a deeper understanding of their place in the world.

**Meditation as Mental Armor:** For the samurai, meditation was not just a practice but a form of mental armor. It was a discipline that allowed them to cultivate mushin, a state of “no-mind,” in which the practitioner is free from thoughts, emotions, and distractions that could cloud judgment or weaken resolve. This mental clarity was invaluable, both in the heat of battle and in making strategic decisions that could determine the fate of their clan and their honor.

**Achieving Focus:** The repetitive, focused nature of Zen meditation practices, such as zazen (seated meditation), helped samurai to hone their ability to concentrate. This unwavering focus was crucial in a culture where mastery of one's craft – whether in swordsmanship, archery, or calligraphy – was not just expected but revered. Through meditation, samurai learned to channel their energy and attention in ways that enhanced their skills and deepened their work.

**Emotional Equilibrium:** Beyond its cognitive benefits, meditation offered the samurai a way to manage the emotional turmoil that could arise from their duties and the realities of warfare. The practice helped them to face fear, loss, and the prospect of death with a serene heart, embracing the impermanence of life as a natural cycle. This emotional equilibrium ensured that samurai could carry out their duties with compassion and wisdom, upholding their commitments to their lord, their family, and the principles of Bushido.

**The Legacy of Zen in Samurai Life:** The integration of Zen and meditation into the samurai's life underscored a holistic approach to warriorhood, where physical prowess was balanced with mental and spiritual depth. This legacy of mindfulness, presence, and inner peace continues to inspire, offering lessons on living fully and consciously, regardless of external chaos.

The significance of meditation and Zen in the life of a samurai extends beyond historical curiosity; it represents a timeless guide to achieving mental clarity, focus, and balance. In embracing these practices, the samurai found not just the key to effectiveness in battle and leadership but also a path to a more profound, insightful way of living.

## Bushido and the Art of War



### Bushido's Influence on Samurai Strategy and Combat

The principles of Bushido, the venerable code of the samurai, extended far beyond the realms of ethics and morality, deeply influencing the strategies and combat techniques of these legendary warriors. This code, embodying virtues such as honor, courage, and loyalty, provided a philosophical foundation that shaped the samurai's approach to warfare and personal conduct in battle.

**Strategic Honor:** In the realm of strategy, the Bushido virtue of honor influenced the samurai's approach to planning and engagement. Samurai leaders were known for their emphasis on fairness and respect for the enemy, often sending notices before attacking and avoiding deceitful tactics. This approach fostered a sense of integrity on the battlefield and ensured that victories were achieved through skill and bravery rather than trickery, reflecting the samurai's commitment to a higher ethical standard.

**Courage in Combat:** The principle of courage was manifest in the samurai's bold tactics and their readiness to face overwhelming odds. Samurai were trained to charge into battle without hesitation, embodying the fearless spirit of Bushido. This bravery was not reckless but calculated, with each warrior understanding the importance of sacrifice for the greater good and the honor

of their clan. Their courage also meant facing their own fears and doubts, enabling them to perform feats of valor that have become legendary.

**Loyalty and Unity:** Loyalty, a cornerstone of Bushido, played a crucial role in the cohesion and effectiveness of samurai units. The unwavering allegiance to their lord and comrades created a tight-knit group of warriors who could rely on one another implicitly. This loyalty was crucial in battles where trust and teamwork could mean the difference between victory and defeat. It also ensured that strategies were executed with a unified purpose, strengthening the samurai's effectiveness as a fighting force.

**Discipline and Mastery:** The samurai's dedication to continuous improvement and mastery of their martial skills was another application of Bushido in combat. This commitment to excellence meant that samurai spent countless hours practicing with their weapons and studying tactics, always striving to enhance their capabilities. Such discipline ensured that when called to battle, a samurai was prepared not just physically but mentally and spiritually, ready to apply their skills with precision and effectiveness.

**Adaptability and Wisdom:** Finally, the samurai's application of Bushido principles in strategy and combat was marked by their adaptability and wisdom. Understanding that the battlefield was an ever-changing environment, they were skilled in adapting their tactics to meet new challenges. This flexibility, grounded in the deep contemplation and strategic foresight encouraged by Bushido, allowed the samurai to outmaneuver their adversaries and seize opportunities as they arose.

The influence of Bushido on samurai strategy and combat underscores the profound impact of this code beyond the personal realm, shaping the very tactics and outcomes of historical conflicts. Today, the principles of Bushido continue to inspire not only martial artists but leaders in various fields, offering insights into the art of strategy, the importance of ethical conduct, and the power of a disciplined and courageous spirit in overcoming challenges.

### **Famous Samurai and Battles That Embodied Bushido**

The annals of Japanese history are replete with tales of legendary samurai and epic battles that vividly showcase the principles of Bushido in action. These

stories of valor, honor, and loyalty not only define the legacy of the samurai but also offer timeless lessons on courage and integrity.

**Miyamoto Musashi and the Duel at Ganryu Island:** Miyamoto Musashi, perhaps the most renowned samurai of all time, epitomized the virtues of Bushido through his life and duels. His most famous battle, the duel with Sasaki Kojiro at Ganryu Island, showcased not just his unparalleled skill with the sword but also his strategic mind and adherence to the principle of honor. Musashi's victory was not merely a testament to his physical prowess but to his deep understanding of the warrior's path, embodying the Bushido virtues of courage, respect, and mastery.

**Oda Nobunaga and the Battle of Okehazama:** Oda Nobunaga, a daimyo known for his ambition to unify Japan, demonstrated the Bushido principle of courage in the Battle of Okehazama. Facing an army vastly outnumbering his own, Nobunaga's bold strategy and fearless charge turned the tide, leading to a surprising victory. This battle highlighted not just Nobunaga's military genius but also his unwavering resolve and bravery, qualities central to the samurai spirit.

**Tokugawa Ieyasu and the Battle of Sekigahara:** The Battle of Sekigahara, which paved the way for the Tokugawa Shogunate and a unified Japan, was a definitive moment that reflected the Bushido virtues of loyalty and strategic wisdom. Tokugawa Ieyasu's victory was the culmination of years of careful planning and alliance-building, underscoring the importance of loyalty to one's allies and the strategic acumen that Bushido espoused. Ieyasu's leadership in this battle exemplified how honor and wisdom lead to lasting peace and stability.

**Takeda Shingen and the Battles of Kawanakajima:** The series of battles between Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin at Kawanakajima are legendary, showcasing the mutual respect and honor between these two great rivals. Despite their fierce competition, both leaders adhered to the principles of Bushido, respecting the bravery and skill of their opponent. These battles are emblematic of the samurai's commitment to fair play and honor even in the heat of conflict.

**Sanada Yukimura and the Siege of Osaka Castle:** Sanada Yukimura's valiant defense of Osaka Castle against the Tokugawa forces in the Siege of Osaka is a powerful testament to the virtues of loyalty, courage, and sacrifice. Yukimura's

leadership and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds inspired his men and exemplified the samurai's dedication to their lord and principles, ultimately embodying the spirit of Bushido in his final stand.

These famous samurai and their battles are more than historical events; they are enduring narratives that continue to inspire admiration for the principles of Bushido. The courage, honor, and loyalty demonstrated by these warriors remind us of the profound impact that living by a code of ethics can have, not just on the individual but on the course of history. Through their stories, the legacy of Bushido and the spirit of the samurai live on, guiding future generations in the pursuit of virtue and integrity.

### **The Bushido Perspective on Death and Seppuku**

In the profound and disciplined world of the samurai, the concept of death was embraced with a unique perspective shaped by the principles of Bushido. Central to this understanding was the notion that preserving one's honor was more important than life itself. This led to the practice of seppuku (also known as hara-kiri), a ritualistic form of suicide that represented the ultimate sacrifice for honor.

**The Bushido View on Death:** For the samurai, death was not to be feared but accepted as an inevitable part of life. Bushido, the samurai's ethical code, taught that a life lived with honor, loyalty, and courage was paramount, and death in the service of these virtues was considered the highest fulfillment of a samurai's duty. This acceptance of death allowed samurai to face battles with a calm resolve, making them formidable warriors who could act without hesitation or fear.

**Seppuku: The Ultimate Act of Honor:** Seppuku was a ritualized form of suicide, reserved for samurai who sought to die with honor rather than live in disgrace. This act was often chosen in situations where a samurai had failed in their duties, brought shame upon themselves, or preferred death to falling into enemy hands. Seppuku was performed with precision and ritual, emphasizing the samurai's commitment to the values of Bushido even in death. It was seen as a final act of taking responsibility for one's actions, restoring honor to the individual and their family.

**The Ceremony of Seppuku:** The process of seppuku was marked by solemn rituals that underscored its significance. The samurai would dress in white,

symbolizing purity, and perform a final act of cleansing. They would then compose a death poem, reflecting on life and expressing their final thoughts. The act itself was carried out with a short blade, and an attendant (kaishakunin) was present to deliver a swift death blow, ensuring the samurai's passing was as painless as possible. This ceremonial approach to seppuku highlighted the samurai's dedication to the principles of Bushido, even in the face of death.

**The Legacy of Seppuku:** While the practice of seppuku may seem distant and foreign to the modern world, its underlying principles of accountability, honor, and taking responsibility for one's actions resonate across cultures and times. It serves as a stark reminder of the weight of honor in the samurai's life, where the preservation of one's dignity and principles was considered worth more than life itself.

The concept of death in Bushido, epitomized by the practice of seppuku, offers a window into the samurai's profound commitment to the virtues of their code. This understanding of death as an honorable conclusion to a life lived with integrity continues to inspire and challenge us, reminding us of the enduring value of honor and the importance of living—and if necessary, dying—with dignity and purpose.

## Bushido's Influence Beyond the Battlefield



### Bushido's Influence on Japanese Culture, Arts, and Governance

Bushido, the revered code of the samurai, extends far beyond the battlefield, weaving its principles into the very fabric of Japanese culture, arts, and governance. This ethical framework, emphasizing virtues such as honor, loyalty, and discipline, has left an indelible mark on Japanese society, influencing its values, traditions, and artistic expressions.

**Cultural Values and Social Conduct:** The principles of Bushido have deeply influenced Japanese cultural values, fostering a society that values respect, courtesy, and a strong sense of duty. The emphasis on honor and integrity seen in Bushido is mirrored in the Japanese approach to social interactions and the importance placed on maintaining harmony within the community. These values are instilled from a young age, shaping the character of individuals and the societal norms that guide their conduct.

**Arts and Aesthetics:** Bushido's impact on Japanese arts is unmistakable, inspiring a unique aesthetic that values simplicity, subtlety, and a deep connection with nature. Traditional arts such as tea ceremony (chanoyu), ink painting (sumi-e), and swordsmanship (kendo) are imbued with the spirit of Bushido, emphasizing mindfulness, discipline, and the pursuit of perfection.

These practices are not just artistic endeavors but spiritual disciplines that reflect the samurai's quest for mastery and self-improvement.

**Literature and Philosophy:** The themes of Bushido have been a rich source of inspiration for Japanese literature and philosophy, with classic works exploring the complexities of honor, duty, and the human condition. The tales of legendary samurai and their heroic deeds have been immortalized in epics, poems, and dramas, contributing to Japan's rich literary heritage. Furthermore, Bushido's philosophical underpinnings have influenced Japanese thought, encouraging a reflective approach to life's challenges and the cultivation of inner strength.

**Governance and Leadership:** The ethos of Bushido has also permeated the realms of governance and leadership in Japan. The virtues of loyalty, responsibility, and ethical conduct advocated by Bushido have informed the principles of leadership and public service, emphasizing the welfare of the people and the importance of moral governance. This legacy is evident in the emphasis on consensus-building, respect for hierarchy, and a commitment to the collective good that characterizes Japanese political and business practices.

**Modern Interpretations and Global Influence:** In contemporary times, Bushido continues to resonate, influencing modern interpretations of martial arts, corporate ethics, and personal development. Its principles are applied in new contexts, from the boardroom to the dojo, demonstrating the timeless relevance of Bushido's virtues. Internationally, the allure of Bushido has captivated imaginations, contributing to the global fascination with samurai culture and Japanese traditions.

The impact of Bushido on Japanese culture, arts, and governance is a testament to its enduring significance. As a code that transcends the martial origins of the samurai, Bushido offers insights into the pursuit of excellence, the importance of ethical conduct, and the value of living a life guided by principle. Its influence on Japanese society serves as a reminder of the power of ideals to shape not just individuals but entire cultures, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire both in Japan and around the world.

## **Bushido's Echo in Tea, Ink, and Word**

The principles of Bushido, the samurai's way of life, extend their influence beyond the realms of combat and governance, leaving a lasting imprint on traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, calligraphy, and literature. These cultural practices, rich with history and meaning, are imbued with the spirit of Bushido, reflecting its virtues of discipline, respect, and mindfulness.

**The Tea Ceremony (Chanoyu):** The Japanese tea ceremony is a ritual of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility, principles that resonate deeply with the ethos of Bushido. Each movement and step in the ceremony is performed with careful attention and respect, mirroring the discipline and mindfulness of the samurai. The tea ceremony emphasizes harmony between host and guest, reflecting the Bushido principle of respect towards others. The meticulous preparation and cleanliness required for the ceremony also echo the samurai's dedication to purity and meticulousness in their lives and practices.

**Calligraphy (Shodo):** In the art of calligraphy, the brush strokes are more than just ink on paper; they are expressions of the calligrapher's spirit and discipline. Like the samurai's mastery of the sword, mastery of calligraphy requires years of dedicated practice, reflecting the Bushido virtues of discipline and continuous self-improvement. The fluid, decisive movements of the brush require mindfulness and presence of mind akin to the samurai's mental clarity in battle. Each character, bold or delicate, embodies the calligrapher's adherence to the principles of Bushido, making shodo a meditative practice of artistic expression.

**Literature:** Bushido's principles have profoundly influenced Japanese literature, from epic tales of legendary warriors to reflective poetry. Stories of samurai exploits often highlight virtues such as loyalty, courage, and honor, serving as moral lessons that reinforce the values of Bushido. Poetry, particularly haiku, often captures the samurai's appreciation for nature, simplicity, and the fleetingness of life, encouraging a reflective and mindful approach to existence. Through literature, the ideals of Bushido are passed down through generations, inspiring readers with tales of valor and reflections on the human condition.

These examples demonstrate how the principles of Bushido permeate various facets of Japanese culture, influencing practices that might seem far removed from the martial origins of the samurai. The tea ceremony, calligraphy, and

literature are not merely cultural activities but are imbued with the spirit and virtues of Bushido, serving as avenues for expressing and perpetuating the samurai's way of life. Through these practices, the legacy of Bushido continues to inspire and influence, reminding us of the depth and breadth of the samurai's impact on Japanese culture and beyond.

### **The Legacy of Bushido Today**



### **The Relevance of Bushido in Today's World**

In an era far removed from the age of samurai, the principles of Bushido, the venerable code of honor, continue to offer profound guidance for both personal growth and professional excellence. Despite the passage of centuries, the virtues embedded in Bushido—such as integrity, courage, and loyalty—remain strikingly relevant, providing a moral compass in a complex, fast-paced modern world.

**Integrity and Honesty:** In a world where integrity can sometimes seem in short supply, the Bushido emphasis on honesty and sincerity stands as a beacon of ethical conduct. Whether navigating personal relationships or making decisions in the workplace, the principle of acting with unwavering integrity fosters trust and respect among peers, colleagues, and friends.

Embracing these values encourages us to be authentic and true to our word, building a reputation of reliability and honor.

**Courage and Resilience:** The samurai's valor is not just about bravery in battle but also about the courage to face life's challenges with determination and resilience. This aspect of Bushido encourages us to confront difficulties, whether personal hurdles or professional obstacles, with a steadfast heart. It teaches us that true bravery involves stepping out of our comfort zones, taking risks for the greater good, and persevering through adversity with grace.

**Loyalty and Commitment:** Loyalty, a cornerstone of Bushido, extends beyond feudal allegiances to encompass dedication to one's family, friends, and professional responsibilities. In today's transient and often fragmented society, the value of loyalty—to our loved ones, our employers, or our causes—reinforces the importance of commitment and faithfulness. It reminds us that enduring relationships and successful collaborations are built on a foundation of mutual respect and unwavering support.

**Self-discipline and Continuous Improvement:** The samurai's pursuit of mastery through constant self-improvement offers a template for personal development and professional growth. The discipline to refine our skills, to learn and adapt, and to strive for excellence in all aspects of life is at the heart of Bushido. This principle inspires us to set high standards for ourselves, to embrace lifelong learning, and to view each day as an opportunity to become better individuals.

**Mindfulness and Balance:** Finally, Bushido's integration of Zen principles, such as mindfulness and the appreciation of the present moment, provides a counterbalance to the frenetic pace of modern life. It encourages us to find harmony in our daily routines, to cultivate inner peace amidst external chaos, and to appreciate the beauty and impermanence of life. This perspective helps us to navigate stress and maintain mental and emotional well-being.

The relevance of Bushido values in modern personal and professional life is unmistakable. By incorporating these principles into our daily practices, we can navigate the complexities of the contemporary world with a sense of purpose, integrity, and balance. The legacy of the samurai, therefore, continues to inspire, guiding us toward a life of honor, respect, and continuous growth.

## **Bushido's Legacy in Martial Arts**

The principles of Bushido, the esteemed samurai code of honor, continue to resonate far beyond the battlefields of feudal Japan, deeply influencing the practice and philosophy of modern martial arts. This ancient code, with its emphasis on honor, courage, and discipline, has become a foundational element in the way martial arts are taught, practiced, and philosophized around the world.

**The Ethical Backbone of Martial Arts:** At its core, Bushido provides an ethical framework for martial artists, emphasizing respect, integrity, and humility. These values are evident in the ceremonial aspects of martial arts, from bowing to one's opponent as a sign of respect, to the disciplined manner in which practitioners conduct themselves in the dojo. Bushido's influence encourages martial artists to see their training as a path to personal betterment, rather than merely a means to physical dominance.

**Courage and Perseverance:** Bushido's principle of courage finds new life in the martial artist's journey, inspiring practitioners to face challenges with bravery and resilience. This is not only about the courage to compete or defend oneself but also about the inner strength required to persevere through rigorous training, overcome personal limitations, and continuously strive for improvement. The samurai's resolve is mirrored in the martial artist's commitment to pushing beyond comfort zones and embracing the rigorous path of self-discipline.

**Loyalty and Honor:** In the context of modern martial arts, Bushido's emphasis on loyalty and honor influences the deep bonds formed within the martial arts community. Practitioners learn the importance of loyalty to their dojo, their sensei, and their fellow martial artists. This sense of community and mutual respect fosters an environment where honor and integrity are paramount, guiding behavior both inside and outside the dojo.

**The Pursuit of Mastery:** Bushido's dedication to mastery and continuous improvement is a principle that deeply resonates within martial arts. Practitioners are encouraged to view their training as a lifelong journey, where the goal is not only to master techniques but also to cultivate character and wisdom. This pursuit of excellence is a reflection of the samurai's relentless quest for self-perfection, emphasizing that true mastery extends beyond physical skills to include moral and spiritual development.

**Mindfulness and Harmony:** Finally, the Zen aspects of Bushido, with their focus on mindfulness and harmony, enrich the philosophical underpinnings of modern martial arts. Practitioners are taught to be present in the moment, to find balance between mind and body, and to seek harmony within themselves and with the world around them. This holistic approach to martial arts training is a direct inheritance from the samurai's integration of Zen practices into their lives, offering a pathway to inner peace and self-awareness.

Bushido's influence on modern martial arts is profound, weaving the samurai's ancient virtues into the fabric of contemporary practice and philosophy. Through the lens of Bushido, martial arts become not just a system of self-defense but a way of life, imbued with deep ethical values and a commitment to personal growth. As practitioners around the world continue to embody these principles, the legacy of the samurai lives on, inspiring a new generation to walk the path of honor, discipline, and enlightenment.

### **The Global Allure of Bushido in Media and Culture**

The principles of Bushido, the ancient samurai code of honor, have transcended the shores of Japan to capture the imagination of people worldwide. This fascination is not confined to historical texts or martial arts dojos; it permeates movies, literature, video games, and various aspects of popular culture, illustrating a universal appeal that resonates across cultural boundaries.

**Cinematic Tributes:** The film industry, both in Japan and internationally, has long been captivated by the samurai's stoic dedication to the Bushido code. Classic Japanese films by directors like Akira Kurosawa have celebrated the samurai ethos, portraying these warriors as embodiments of honor and sacrifice. Meanwhile, Hollywood has also embraced samurai-inspired narratives, often focusing on the themes of redemption, honor-bound duty, and the internal struggle between personal desires and ethical obligations. These films not only entertain but also offer insights into the complexity of Bushido principles.

**Literary Echoes:** Literature has been another powerful medium for exploring Bushido, with novels and stories depicting the lives, loves, and battles of the samurai. These works often delve into the philosophical underpinnings of Bushido, presenting characters who grapple with moral dilemmas and the demands of loyalty and honor. Through these narratives, readers are

introduced to the depth and nuance of the samurai code, fostering a deeper appreciation for its values.

**Video Games and Virtual Worlds:** The interactive world of video games offers a unique canvas for the portrayal of Bushido, allowing players to step into the shoes of a samurai and navigate the challenges of living according to this strict code. Games set in feudal Japan often emphasize strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, and the mastery of martial arts, immersing players in a world where Bushido governs the fate of characters and kingdoms.

**Cultural Celebrations and Martial Arts:** Beyond entertainment, the fascination with Bushido has influenced cultural festivals and martial arts practices around the globe. Events celebrating Japanese culture often include demonstrations of samurai weaponry, armor, and traditional martial arts, all of which are steeped in Bushido principles. Moreover, the practice of martial arts such as Kendo and Iaido outside Japan is not only about physical training but also about embracing the spiritual and ethical teachings of Bushido.

**Educational and Inspirational Influence:** Finally, the principles of Bushido have found their way into educational materials and self-help books, used to teach lessons in leadership, integrity, and perseverance. The samurai's dedication to continuous improvement and ethical living offers a model for personal development that appeals to a wide audience, inspiring individuals to strive for excellence in their own lives.

The global fascination with Bushido and its portrayal in media and popular culture reflects a universal admiration for the virtues it represents. Across different mediums and among diverse audiences, the samurai code continues to inspire a sense of honor, discipline, and a commitment to living a life of purpose. As Bushido's influence endures in the global imagination, it reminds us of the timeless appeal of its principles and the enduring legacy of the samurai spirit.

## How to Incorporate Bushido into Modern Life



### Embracing Bushido Principles in Everyday Life

In today's fast-paced world, the ancient samurai code of Bushido, with its focus on honor, courage, and integrity, may seem like a relic of the past. However, the timeless virtues of Bushido offer valuable guidance for navigating the complexities of contemporary society. By adapting these principles to modern life, we can cultivate a sense of purpose, discipline, and respect in our daily routines. Here are some practical tips for living by Bushido principles today, proving that the way of the samurai is as relevant as ever.

**Integrity in Actions and Words:** Start by aligning your actions with your values. Speak truthfully and act with sincerity in all your interactions. Whether in personal relationships or professional settings, let honesty guide your decisions, ensuring that your conduct reflects your true intentions and beliefs.

**Courage to Face Challenges:** Embrace the courage to tackle difficulties head-on, whether it's addressing conflicts, pursuing new opportunities, or standing up for what you believe is right. Remember, courage in Bushido isn't just about bravery in the face of danger but also about the resolve to do what is difficult but necessary for growth and improvement.

**Loyalty and Commitment:** Show loyalty and dedication to your family, friends, and community by being reliable and supportive. Commit to your responsibilities, whether it's in your career, personal goals, or relationships, demonstrating that others can depend on you.

**Self-Discipline and Mastery:** Cultivate self-discipline in your personal and professional life by setting clear goals and working diligently towards them. Practice self-control in your habits and desires, focusing on personal growth and mastery in your skills and hobbies.

**Respect for Others:** Practice respect and courtesy in your daily interactions. Listen attentively, communicate thoughtfully, and show appreciation for the contributions of others. Recognize the inherent dignity in everyone, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

**Mindfulness and Balance:** Incorporate mindfulness into your routine to achieve balance and harmony in your life. Take time to reflect on your actions, stay present in the moment, and maintain a calm and clear mind amidst life's challenges.

**Service and Benevolence:** Look for opportunities to serve and contribute to the well-being of your community. Acts of kindness and generosity, no matter how small, can make a significant impact, reflecting the Bushido virtue of benevolence.

**Continuous Learning and Improvement:** Embody the samurai's commitment to lifelong learning by seeking knowledge and self-improvement. Stay curious, embrace new experiences, and be open to feedback, using every opportunity as a stepping stone towards becoming a better version of yourself.

Living by Bushido principles in contemporary society doesn't require us to wield a sword or don armor; it invites us to wield our character and don our virtues as we navigate the modern world. By embracing these practical tips, we can honor the legacy of the samurai, applying the wisdom of Bushido to lead lives of purpose, integrity, and excellence.

## **The Pillars of Integrity, Respect, and Perseverance in Daily Life**

In the journey of life, filled with its myriad challenges and obstacles, the virtues of integrity, respect, and perseverance emerge as guiding lights, helping us navigate through storms with grace and strength. These timeless principles serve not only as moral compasses but also as the foundation for building a life of fulfillment and purpose.

### **Integrity: The Core of Our Character**

Integrity is about being honest and consistent in our values, actions, and words. It's the quality that compels us to do the right thing, even when no one is watching, and even if it's the harder choice. Living with integrity means being true to ourselves and our principles, creating a life that's aligned with our deepest beliefs. In the face of daily challenges, integrity guides us to make decisions that we can stand by, ensuring that our actions reflect our true selves. It builds trust in our relationships, credibility in our professions, and peace in our hearts.

### **Respect: The Foundation of Harmony**

Respect is the virtue that teaches us to value others and ourselves, recognizing the inherent worth in every person. It's about treating people with kindness, empathy, and consideration, regardless of their background, beliefs, or status. In everyday life, respect manifests in the way we listen to others, communicate our thoughts, and honor the differences that make us unique. By practicing respect, we foster environments of mutual understanding and cooperation, turning challenges into opportunities for connection and growth.

### **Perseverance: The Key to Overcoming Obstacles**

Perseverance is the unwavering determination to continue our efforts despite difficulties, setbacks, or failures. It's the resilience that keeps us moving forward, driven by the belief in our goals and the strength of our spirit. In the face of challenges, perseverance empowers us to learn from our mistakes, adapt our strategies, and never lose sight of our aspirations. It teaches us that success is not about avoiding failure but about how we rise after we fall, revealing our true capacity for growth and achievement.

Together, integrity, respect, and perseverance form a powerful trio that can guide us through life's challenges with dignity and courage. These virtues remind us that the quality of our lives is not determined by the obstacles we face but by how we choose to respond to them. By embodying these principles, we can approach each day with confidence, build meaningful relationships, and pursue our dreams with unwavering commitment.

Incorporating integrity, respect, and perseverance into our daily lives transforms not only how we tackle challenges but also how we view ourselves and our place in the world. As we strive to live by these virtues, we inspire those around us to do the same, creating a ripple effect of positive change. Let these pillars be your guide, and watch as they open doors to a life of greater fulfillment, harmony, and success.

### **Cultivating Discipline, Focus, and Inner Peace**

In today's fast-paced world, finding balance and inner calm amidst chaos can be challenging. Yet, the ancient principles of Bushido, the samurai code of honor, offer timeless wisdom on cultivating discipline, focus, and inner peace. These virtues, essential to the samurai's way of life, can guide us in navigating modern challenges with grace and resilience.

#### **Building Discipline through Routine:**

Discipline starts with establishing a routine that aligns with your values and goals. Like the samurai who adhered to strict daily practices, create a structured schedule that includes time for work, learning, physical activity, and rest. Begin with small, manageable tasks and gradually incorporate more challenging activities. Consistency is key; even on days when motivation wanes, sticking to your routine fosters discipline that transcends momentary impulses.

#### **Enhancing Focus with Mindful Practices:**

The samurai's mastery in martial arts was not merely physical but also a mental discipline, requiring intense focus. To sharpen your focus in everyday tasks, engage in mindful practices such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga. These practices help center your thoughts and reduce distractions, allowing for deeper concentration. Set aside time for these activities, even just a few minutes a day, to cultivate a focused and attentive mind.

### **Achieving Inner Peace through Reflection:**

Inner peace was crucial for the samurai to face life's battles with composure. To find your inner calm, make time for regular reflection and self-examination. Journaling, nature walks, or quiet contemplation can provide opportunities to connect with your inner self, assess your thoughts and emotions, and realign with your core values. Embrace solitude as a chance to detach from daily stressors and rediscover your sense of peace.

### **Practicing Gratitude and Acceptance:**

The samurai appreciated the impermanence of life, a concept that fostered a deep sense of gratitude and acceptance. Cultivate gratitude by acknowledging the positive aspects of your life, big or small, and expressing thanks for them. Embrace acceptance by recognizing that some things are beyond your control, focusing instead on how you respond to life's challenges. Together, gratitude and acceptance pave the way to lasting inner peace.

### **Engaging in Physical Activity:**

Just as the samurai dedicated themselves to rigorous physical training, incorporating regular exercise into your life can enhance both mental and physical discipline. Find an activity that challenges you and brings you joy, whether it's martial arts, running, cycling, or any other form of exercise. Physical activity not only strengthens the body but also clears the mind, contributing to a focused and peaceful state of being.

By embracing these practices inspired by Bushido, we can cultivate the discipline, focus, and inner peace needed to navigate the complexities of modern life. The path of the samurai, grounded in commitment, mindfulness, and serenity, offers a blueprint for living with intention and integrity, reminding us that true strength lies in mastering ourselves.

### **Final Words**

As we conclude our journey through "The Complete Guide of Bushido: The Samurai Code of Honor," it's clear that the principles of Bushido have transcended the ages, offering not just a glimpse into the lives of the samurai

but also timeless wisdom for navigating the complexities of modern life. The virtues of honor, courage, integrity, and discipline that defined the samurai's existence continue to inspire individuals seeking to lead lives of purpose and principle.

The enduring significance of Bushido for the samurai was profound; it was more than a code of conduct—it was a way of life that shaped their identity, actions, and legacy. This ancient code fostered a warrior class renowned not only for their martial prowess but also for their unwavering commitment to the higher ideals of loyalty, respect, and ethical conduct. The samurai's dedication to Bushido cultivated a society where honor was prized above all, influencing countless generations.

In reflecting on how Bushido's principles can guide us today, it's evident that these virtues remain deeply relevant. In a world often marked by uncertainty and rapid change, the Bushido tenets of living with honor, embracing courage in the face of adversity, and upholding integrity in our actions provide a solid foundation for personal growth and ethical leadership. By integrating these values into our daily lives, we can navigate challenges with resilience, build meaningful relationships based on mutual respect, and contribute positively to our communities.

Bushido teaches us that true strength lies not in power or victory but in the quality of our character and our commitment to live by our principles. As we strive to embody the virtues of Bushido in our own lives, we honor the legacy of the samurai and embark on a path that leads to a life of honor, courage, and integrity. Let the principles of Bushido inspire us to be better individuals, committed to a higher purpose and the greater good, proving that the way of the warrior is as relevant now as it ever was.

### **Suggested Readings**

In embracing the timeless wisdom of Bushido, we discover that the journey towards self-mastery and ethical living is not only a tribute to the samurai's legacy but also a profound way to enrich our own lives and the world around us. *The Complete Guide of Bushido*, then, is more than a historical exploration—it's a beacon of inspiration, guiding us toward a noble and fulfilling existence.

Diving into the rich world of Bushido and samurai culture opens up a realm of wisdom, history, and philosophy that continues to intrigue and inspire. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a martial arts practitioner, or someone seeking life guidance, there's a wealth of knowledge waiting to be discovered. To help you continue your exploration of this fascinating subject, we've compiled a list of suggested readings that offer comprehensive insights into Bushido, the samurai way of life, and their enduring legacy. Here's where to turn next on your journey into the heart of samurai culture.

**1. "Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai" by Yamamoto Tsunetomo:** Often considered the definitive guide to samurai philosophy, this classic text delves into the concepts of loyalty, honor, and personal conduct according to Bushido.

**2. "Bushido: The Soul of Japan" by Inazo Nitobe:** This influential book provides a detailed examination of the seven virtues of Bushido and their relevance to modern life, making it a must-read for those interested in the philosophical underpinnings of the samurai code.

**3. "The Book of Five Rings" by Miyamoto Musashi:** Written by the legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi, this text explores strategy, tactics, and philosophy through the lens of kenjutsu (the art of the sword), offering timeless insights into mastery and mindset.

**4. "Samurai: The World of the Warrior" by Stephen Turnbull:** This comprehensive work offers a historical look at the samurai class, detailing their origins, evolution, and impact on Japanese culture and history.

Embarking on a journey through the world of Bushido and samurai culture promises a rich exploration of values, history, and philosophy that remain as compelling today as they were centuries ago.

Through these suggested readings, you can deepen your understanding, appreciation, and application of the timeless principles that defined the samurai way of life. Whether for scholarly interest or personal inspiration, the path of the warrior is open to all who seek its wisdom.

## **Bushido - The Warriors Way**

The Code of the Samurai - Sometimes called "The Seven Virtues of the Samurai", "The Bushido Code", or "The Samurai Code of Chivalry".

In Chinese characters, Japanese Kanji, and old Korean Hanja it translates as "The Way of the Warrior", "The Warrior's Way", or "The Warrior's Code". (The Korean word is pronounced "Moosado" (무사도).

Bushido is a set of virtues that warriors/samurai from Japan, China and Korea had to live and die by. It is not solely a Japanese belief system, but common to much of Asia (but referred to by different names).

In many ways Bushido is similar to the Seven Virtues (from Christianity). It incorporates a variety of virtues like courage, sense of justice, benevolence, respectfulness, honesty, honour, loyalty, piety, fidelity, and wisdom. Many of the virtues are also found in the belief system of Confucianism, which was certainly an influence on the creation of the Bushido code.

Between the 9th and 12th centuries in Japan the warrior class was known as bushi or samurai, thus bushido basically means "way of the warrior" or "warrior's way". It was during this time period that the bushi became the ruling class of Japan until their decline and later total abolition in 1876 during the Meiji Era.



Not all warriors lived by the Bushido code, but many did and saw it as a way of life to guide all actions they did - not just in combat. The Bushido code incorporated many concepts followed by Zen Buddhism. The elite of the bushi warrior class was typically known as samurai.

Not all samurai used swords. Indeed in the early days of the samurai their preferred weapon was the Japanese bow. As the quality of Japanese swords improved however, and the art of swordplay in Japan also rose dramatically, the samurai changed their focus to use swords more often. (Due to pop culture the use of swords by samurai has since become over-emphasized.)

A samurai's loyalty to the emperor and his overlord / daimyo were unsurpassed. They were trained to be trustworthy and honest. They lived frugal lives with no interest in riches and material things but believed in honor and pride. They were men of true valor, having no fear of death and believed that to die in battle would only bring honor to one's family and one's lord. The actual Bushido code was passed on verbally to each new generation of samurai, but over time, seven chief virtues emerged, and became the written form of Bushido. Please note that variations of this list exist, as some people use different Kanji or have 8 or 9 tenets.

### **The Seven Virtues of the Bushido Code**

(Korean and Chinese pronunciation in brackets)

*Note: I have included all 10 from various versions of the Bushido Code.*

Gi - Justice / Rectitude / Right Decision (의, yi)

Isamu - Bravery / Courage (용, yong)

Jin - Benevolence (인, ren)

Rei - Respect / Gratitude (례 or 예, li)

Makoto - Honesty / Confidence (성, cheng)

Meiyo - Honour / Respectful (명예, ming yu)

Chuujiitsu - Loyalty / Devotion (none)

Kou - Filial Piety / Respect for Elders (효, xiao)

Shin - Honesty / Fidelity (신, xin)

Chi/Tomo - Wisdom / Resourcefulness (지, zhi)

Title	Characters Simplified Traditional	Japanese Romaji (Romanized Japanese)	Various forms of Romanized Chinese	
Bushido / The Way of the Samurai	武士道 武士道	bushido	wǔ shì dào wu shi dao wu shih tao	wu3 shi4 dao4 wushidao
Justice / Rectitude / Right Decision	义 義	gi	yì yi i	yi4 yi
Bravery / Courage	勇 勇	isamu / yu- isamu/yu-	yǒng yong yung	yong3 yong
Benevolence	仁 仁	jin	rén ren jen	ren2 ren
Respect	礼 禮	rei	lǐ li	li3 li
Honesty	诚 誠	makoto	chéng cheng ch`eng	cheng2 cheng cheng cheng

Honour	名譽 名譽	meiyo	míng yù ming yu ming yū	ming2 yu4 mingyu
Loyalty / Faithful / Devoted	忠実 忠實	chujitsu chujitsu	n/a	
Filial Piety	孝 孝	kou ko	xiào xiao hsiao	xiao4 xiao
Honesty / Fidelity	信 信	shin	xìn xin hsin	xin4 xin
Wisdom	智 智	chi / tomo chi/tomo	zhì zhi chih	zhi4 zhi

## The Way of the Warrior: Samurais and Spirituality



*Naba Ghauri Syed, Japan*

'There are, if I may so say, three powerful spirits, which have from time to time, moved on the face of the waters, and given a predominant impulse to the moral sentiments and energies of mankind. These are the spirits of liberty, of religion, and of honour.' [1]

## The Warrior

The legend of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the great Samurai warrior, tells of a peasant boy sent by his family to a nearby temple in order to become a priest. Hideyoshi absconded at the age of 15, eventually entering into the services of Oda Nobunaga, an ambitious Samurai general, as his sandal-bearer. [2] One cold winter's night, Hideyoshi pressed his master's straw sandals to himself under his *kimono* in order to keep them warm. Nobunaga, impressed by his dedication and sense of honour, rewarded his sandal-bearer's intellect at each turn, as Hideyoshi began to distinguish himself as the military leader who would eventually unify Japan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Hideyoshi's loyalty to his duty is renowned in Japanese history as a practical depiction of the word Samurai, denoting 'one who serves; with this service ethic spawning the roots of Samurai nobility, both social and spiritual.' [3] Following Japan's pacifism and with civil society at the precipice of peace, the nation's need for its master swordsmen declined. Thus, the Samurai, formerly engaged in intense martial training, devoted their time instead to furthering their own spiritual development, scholarly pursuits, or in service to Japan's traditional arts – from monochrome ink painting to flower arranging and Zen rock gardens.

The art of *sadō*, the Japanese tea ceremony, particularly flourished in Japan's era of post-pacifism due to its emphasis on simplicity and tranquillity; consequently, enabling the Samurai to gain critical insight into realism through contemplation. The practice of preparing the tea was introduced to the Samurai by Buddhist monks who used the tea to stay alert during periods of meditation. However, the ritual nature of the ceremony particularly intrigued the highly educated Samurai, and

thus, the peaceable custom was adopted and subsequently flourished through the people's emulation of the warrior elites' practises.



**The Worshipper**

The culture of the Samurai was influenced by the spiritual philosophies of Buddhism, Zen, and Confucianism, whilst also to a lesser extent, ideologies from the native Japanese religion of Shintoism. Zen meditation, as well as the Buddhist concept of reincarnation, led the Samurai to overcome the fear of death and to abandon futile violence, while Confucianism laid great emphasis on the importance of loyalty and honour. The theoretical obligations of the lord-retainer relationship of the Samurai were further emphasised by the teachings of Confucius, whose works were a required reading for the Samurai class.

It was this fierce loyalty demonstrated by the finest Samurai warriors which led to the unwritten code of chivalrous conduct, outlook, and customs known today as *Bushido* or 'the precepts of knighthood.' Nitobe Inazo, the author of *Bushido, the Soul of Japan*, elucidates these eight virtues:

### 1. **Justice (義 Gi)**

'Justice is the bone that gives firmness and stature. Without bones the head cannot rest on top of the spine, nor hands move, nor feet stand.'

### 2. **Courage (勇 Yū)**

Confucius explains: 'Perceiving what is right and doing it not, reveals a lack of courage.'

### 3. **Benevolence (仁 Jin)**

'Love, magnanimity, sympathy and pity are traits of benevolence, the highest attribute of the human soul. Confucius often said that the highest requirement of a ruler of men is benevolence.'

### 4. **Respect and Politeness (礼 Rei)**

'Respect should be the expression of a benevolent regard for the feelings of others; in its highest form respect and politeness approach love.'

### 5. **Honesty and Integrity (誠 Makoto)**

Living modestly was encouraged 'for the exercise of abstinence. Luxury was thought the greatest menace to manhood, and severe simplicity was required of the warrior class.'

### 6. **Honour (名誉 Meiyo)**

'A vivid consciousness of personal dignity and worth characterised the Samurai, who were raised to value the duties and privileges of their profession. Fear of disgrace hung like a sword over the head of every Samurai.'

## 7. Loyalty (忠義 Chūgi)

'Loyalty to a superior was the most distinctive virtue of the feudal era', and paramount importance was placed on loyalty to one's nation.

## 8. Character and Self-Control (自制 Jisei)

The Samurai were taught that 'Men should behave according to an absolute moral standard, one that transcends logic. It was a man's obligation to teach his children moral standards through the model of his own behaviour.' [4]



In a report sent by St. Francis Xavier to Father Ignatius Loyola in Rome, the Christian Missionary remarked upon the importance of the values of *Bushido* to the Japanese nation:

'They are of a kindly disposition, not at all given to cheating, wonderfully desirous of honour and rank. Honour with them is placed

above everything else. There are a great many poor among them, but poverty is not a disgrace to anyone. There is one thing among them of which I hardly know whether it is practised anywhere among Christians. The nobles, however poor they may be, receive the same honour from the rest as if they were rich. They listen with great avidity to discourse about God and Divine things... they do not worship any gods under the form of beasts. Most of them venerate certain ancient men, who, as far as I have been able to ascertain, used to live after the fashion of the old philosophers.' [5]

The *Bushido* code of conduct served as a demonstration of model behaviour for every social class and was heavily based on ideologies laid out by Confucianism; as Confucius' 'calm, benignant, and worldly-wise character of his politico-ethical precepts was particularly well suited to the Samurai. His conservative tone was well adapted to the requirements of these warrior statesmen.' [6] Yet, while Xavier's report outlines the basic tenets of *Bushido* from the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Confucianism pervaded throughout every aspect of Samurai society, its influences can still be felt within the moral education, social ethics and civil order favoured by Japan today.

The Japanese nation's collective psyche and ethos is one which consciously or unconsciously has in some measure received an impetus from the *Bushido* code in a manner which transcends time. Even as Japan now identifies as one of the least religious countries, the sacred is often inextricable from the secular. For example, the morals and ideological practices of ancient religions are still flourishing and honoured, whilst visiting sacred sites is limited to national holidays and life-cycle ceremonies. Yet, more and more Japanese individuals are now turning to seek some sort of spiritual experience through contemplation and meditation- a quality of the Samurai spirit. Thus, understanding the foundation laid by these great warriors' ideals might provide an insight into the values of honour, integrity and respect which the world admires in the Japanese nation today.

**About the Author: *Naba Ghauri Syed holds a 1<sup>st</sup> class Honours in English Literature and is the joint-head of Japanese subtitles for Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA) International.***

## ENDNOTES

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# [Building Unshakable Discipline](#)

Mastering Discipline: A Unified Approach Using Fogg’s Behavior Model, Duhigg’s Habit Loop, Wood’s Habit Formation, Baumeister’s Willpower, and Clear’s Atomic Habits

[PRACTICAL STOIC ADVICE](#)

APR 11



Last year, I made a promise to my daughter. She was seven, with wide eyes and big dreams, and she asked me to run a 5K for a charity she loved. “You can do it, Dad,” she said, her voice so sure it broke my heart. I said yes, picturing us crossing the finish line together, her little hand in mine. But deep down, I knew I wasn’t a runner. I’d tried before—new sneakers, playlists, apps—and every time, I’d quit by day three.

My name’s Tom, and discipline has never been my strength. I’m the guy who buys gym memberships and forgets to go, who starts diets on Mondays and orders pizza by Wednesday. Lily, my daughter, didn’t know that side of me. To her, I was Dad, the guy who could do anything. Her charity was for kids like her friend Mia, battling leukemia with a grin that could melt ice. Lily threw herself into it, coloring posters until her crayons were nubs, chattering about the race every

night. “We’re gonna help Mia, Dad!” she’d say, her fork dancing. I’d grin, ignoring the voice in my head, saying I’d flake again.

Work was my excuse, always. Deadlines piled up, and layoffs were whispered in the break room. I stayed late, came home drained, and crashed on the couch while Lily drew hearts around Mia’s name. I’d tell myself I’d train tomorrow—jog a mile, maybe two. But tomorrow became next week, then next month. I’d see Lily practicing in the backyard, her ponytail bouncing, and I’d think, “She’s fine without me.” I’d scroll my phone, promising to join her, but Netflix was easier. Discipline felt like a language I couldn’t speak.

The night before the race, Lily was electric. She climbed into my lap, smelling of strawberry shampoo. “You ready, Dad?” she asked, eyes shining. My stomach knotted. I hadn’t run once—not a single step. “Ready, kiddo,” I lied, picturing a miracle where I’d gut it out. I’d always winged things—presentations, bills, life. Why not this? But deep down, I knew I was gambling with her trust.

Race day was crisp and chaotic. Lily wore a pink headband and a shirt with “For Mia” in glitter. The starting line hummed with energy, and when the gun fired, we took off. Lily’s laugh pulled me along, her sneakers flashing. For half a mile, I was her hero, matching her pace. But by mile one, my lungs screamed. My legs were cement. I wasn’t built for this—not my body, not my will. Lily glanced back, her smile fading as I lagged. “Keep going, Dad!” she urged, but I was wheezing, the crowd blurring past.

At mile two, I broke. I stopped, hands on thighs, gasping like I’d drowned. Lily froze, her face crumpling. “Dad, what’s wrong?” she asked, voice small. “Just... a breather,” I muttered, but my body wouldn’t move. Runners dodged us, and shame burned hotter than my lungs.

That night, she was quiet. No race stories, no medal on display. I sat on her bed, fumbling an apology. “I’m sorry, Lily. I didn’t train. I messed up.” She twisted her blanket, eyes down. “You said we’d do it together,” she whispered. Her words

were a knife, carving out the truth: I'd chosen ease over her. I hugged her, but she was stiff, already learning I wasn't someone to count on.

Discipline isn't about being a superhero—it's about doing the right things consistently, even when you don't feel like it. Discipline is your secret weapon whether you're chasing a fitness goal, writing a novel, or just trying to stop scrolling X all night. But how do you build it? Science has answers.

Creating habits and building discipline are central to self-mastery, and beyond BJ Fogg's Behavior Model, several researchers and studies have explored how habits form, why discipline matters, and how to make these stick.