

The Essence of Ilustrisimo System (2)

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“It is not a question of the right or wrong thing to do, as much as the right time in which to do something.”

In the martial arts, there is much agonizing with regard to what technique to perform in combat. Since good martial art derives from a good philosophical base (e.g. *Bun Bu Itchi* – Sword and Pen One [together]), the foregoing quotation provides a clue – timing – when to act, when to perform a technique, is paramount and of utmost importance.

We are so conditioned by the moralistic injunctions of our society, parents, and religion concerning wrongful and rightful acts that we bring this mindset even into our martial art. Deeper philosophical insight, however, discloses that all acts are by themselves inherently empty of moral content. Their moral value derives in the context, the surroundings, interacting events in whose time an act is performed. So too in martial arts: all techniques are practiced for particular situations. When that situation arises, the time is right for a technique to be performed.

In conflict, where life and death are at stake, timing determines the outcome. Time is a component of space-time – the fourth dimension – in which all events are defined. Any act occurs in a region of space-time. Too early, too late, too near, too far and we are lost. Being exactly in the right point, in space-time and we win.

Speed, which is the rate of movement through space – does not make up for bad timing. How often have we seen old masters hit younger, faster, more agile opponents with seeming ease and slow movements? They do so because they have timing. Their students focus attention on technique and exert great effort to build up speed and strength to no avail because they pay no attention to timing.

Anatomy of Timing

Timing requires attention. Unwavering attention and awareness, both of the opponent and oneself. A novice spends his time reviewing his bag of tricks – which technique to use at maximum speed and strength. The master spends his time on being focused and aware. He does not think or plan his strategy. He allows his trained reflexes, his intuition to take over his responses and ensures that he feeds his brain-body-mind with information he can act upon by being aware and attentive. He does not distort his information by reflexive thoughts that typically follow sense-input. These would garble his information base and distort or slow down his reactions.

It takes about 0.2 or one-fifth of a second for information from our senses to travel to the brain. It takes an equal time for a decision to travel from the brain to the limbs through the nervous system. In all, it takes 0.4 to 0.5 or two-fifths to a half second for a reaction to a stimulus when directed though is used by a normal individual. With training, so that response becomes reflexive, about 0.1 second can be shaved off. With gifted persons, maybe 0.2 second. This is still 0.2 to .3 seconds; say 0.25, for a reaction to occur. One second is measured by speaking out “one thousand and one” – five beats of 0.2, one-fifth second each. With this idea of time duration, we can see that while a strike can reach in one beat, a reaction to that strike will require two beats – one beat to pick up/receive information, another beat to react. Anyone who has scrolled a cell phone hurriedly looking for a name has experienced seeing the name but not being

able to stop in time and scrolling beyond the name so that he has got to scroll back. This is the best reaction of this reaction time.

Timing, to be used successfully, must be mated with space (space-time, remember?). Distance or length, one of the measures of space (the other two being width and height), must be used to buy time – that extra beat. This can be done by maintaining a definite distance from the opponent. Once an attack occurs, the opponent is compelled to use two beats. This gives us a chance to parry or evade. Another way is to displace our body, such that we are moving away from the original region or target area at the end of the opponent/s beat. As we avoid the strike, we have the opportunity to counter strike. A third way is to induce a reaction from the opponent but with your own rhythm already established. The opponent now has to react to your technique whose succeeding move is predefined to take care of his reaction move. Technically this is called a feint.

In attacking, this reaction time of two beats can be used to advantage by ensuring a closing distance and a strike in one beat.

Beyond Physics

However, more important than the above-described physics is awareness, so keen it moves into precognition. Cognition research has established that in card guessing tests, a series of successful tests diminishes the success rate of a subject in guessing a card drawn by the tester. Why? Because the subjects began guessing the next card the tester was going to draw. (The tester was unaware of which card was next, so telepathy was ruled out.) The focus and attention of the subjects on these tests had brought out a latent facility – precognition. Overall examination of precognition research data provides the conclusion that precognition, like telepathy, is a basic survival instinct buried under the newer survival tools of logic and rationality. Awareness, under various forms of pressure brings the facility into re-use.

The Japanese, with a very long history of warfare based on duelling face-offs between warriors have the concept of “*Munen Muso*” (No thought, No intention). This is to preclude, as much as possible, the opponent’s precognition or telepathic pick-up of one’s moves. They realize from Zen meditation that awareness/attention displaces thinking or thoughts which can be picked up.

Gaps in Awareness

A discussion of timing is incomplete without mentioning gap. There are two forms of gap – one involves physical techniques, strategies and tactics; the other gaps in awareness.

In the first, attacking and defensive movements leave no chance for the opponent to catch up on beats. This was discussed in the last issue.

The second, involving mechanisms of awareness, shows that awareness may freeze, stall waver for split seconds in a phenomena called micro-sleep. How often have we seen a strike come our way in full clarity and are unable, frozen as it were, to react or to defend? Typically this strike came from a master or a senior student who had learned to identify a gap in awareness.

This micro-sleep can be any of the altered states: low alpha, theta, or delta. Alpha will produce a delayed reaction; theta, a flash hallucination, making a proper response impossible; and delta, a cut-off of nervous impulse to the limbs so that we are frozen in place although still being able to see. Thinking also produces delayed wrong responses.

For the less experienced, focusing intently on the opponent eliminates extraneous input from the surroundings, which unfortunately moves the brain into an altered state. In this state,

the brain begins to manufacture its own data (fantasies, hallucinations) because it is habituated to processing information now absent. Such a condition also exists in the root level of sleep where dreams occur, as well as, in deep, dreamless sleep where we are muscularly inert (a survival mechanism to prevent us from falling off tree branches).

In combat, therefore, we watch for these gaps in awareness, in order to attack effectively. We must also avoid these gaps in our attention to ensure good defense. A sense of these gaps is important in timing.

I still recommend that in addition to timing, accuracy, speed and strength, along with technique, must be developed with awareness training being the base.

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