

Precept in Martial Art Training

Recently I heard a talk on precepts in which it was said that a precept is not a commandment, not a rule, but a vow. A vow is very different than a rule. A vow is a solemn promise or assertion by which a person binds himself to an act, service or condition, while a rule is a regulation that is imposed by an authority figure.

This started me thinking about martial arts training. When we enter a school, we are actually making a vow. We are committing ourselves to a course of training. There is something there within us that says I want to do this. The commitment, the need, is already there.

But why do we choose to commit to a martial art? If we just wanted to learn how to fight, we could follow many great fighters who do not teach a system of martial arts; if we just want body conditioning, we could exercise at a gym; if we just wanted to explore movement, we could practice dance. We choose a martial art because of its traditional connection to the body, mind and spirit. Your commitment to martial arts is yourself saying that this is what I know to be natural, this will be my practice, this will be my freedom. Not body alone, not mind alone, not spirit alone, but all three together.

We start with the body, with hard physical training: the repetition of techniques, hundreds even thousands of repeated movements. Then the mind begins to comprehend, understanding on a non intellectual level the movement in those thousands of repetitions. And finally the spirit is awakened; that which goes beyond movement; that which goes beyond the understanding of the movement; that which brings you right back to the very thing in yourself that made a commitment to this process.

The experience may seem sequential: first body, then mind, then spirit, But it is not! All three are there from the beginning, all three are working at the same time But we need to realize this, not just read it, not just intellectually understand it, but to breathe it, because the way we practice is no other than the way we live our lives.

by Mark Dyshanowitz