

# MEDITATIONS ON VIOLENCE



**A Comparison of  
Martial Arts Training &  
Real World Violence**

**Sgt. Rory Miller**

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When it comes to martial arts, self-defense, and related topics, no text, no matter how well written, can substitute for professional, hands-on instruction. These materials should be used *for academic study only*.

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# FOREWORD

*By Steven Barnes*

There is a “gap” between reality and fantasy, and that “gap” is where the novelist plays. Whether the reality of day to day life in marriage as opposed to the fantasy world of “falling in love,” the reality of the workaday world as opposed to the fantasy of “making it big,” or the reality of life and death combat as opposed to the fantasies of battlefield glory.

The gaps between these things are the meat of my profession. Because so few of us actually place our lives in jeopardy, ever face the reality of combat, or self-defense, of facing an aggressive human being, or discovering our own potential for violence, we are endlessly fascinated by images of the men and women who can and have done such things. We make them into heroes, we study them in books, we are hypnotized by their images on thirty-foot high movie screens, and pay those who can convincingly portray them staggering sums of money.

And behind much of our fascination is a question: what would I be in that context? Could I cope? And what would I become if I did? What would happen if I could not?

One of those who portrayed this hyper-effective fighting machine stereotype was, of course, Bruce Lee, and after *Enter the Dragon*, legions of young men swamped martial arts schools all over the world, seeking to be strong, to be brave, to be capable—to, in other words, deal with their fear that they would not be *able*. Or to feed their hunger to learn what that mysterious creature lurking in the back of their subconscious was really all about.

I remember during the early 1980’s, when training at the Filipino Kali Academy, a school maintained by Danny Inosanto and Richard Bustillo (two former Lee students), that every time a new class opened up, we’d be flooded by the LBKs—Little Blond Kids. They came in the

doors with their eyes filled with dreams of martial glory. And we knew that the instant it got real, the instant we put on the gloves and actually started whacking each other, 90% of them would flee.

And friends, sparring in the school has a very limited application to what happens on the streets. Those of us who wanted to learn how to apply what we learned in an academic context to a real life and death situation studied texts by ancient samurai, killer monks, warriors of every culture—those who had actually been and done. We struggled to grasp the difference between fantasy and reality, between theory and application. Because the gap between them could cost us our lives.

Could we do it? And what if we could not?

I met Rory Miller about fifteen years ago, and was immediately impressed by an odd fluidity of movement that told me that he had endured long and intense practice in some effective physical discipline. I suspected martial applications. Over time, I learned about his background, and that his profession as a Corrections Officer placed him in the peculiar position of, as he said at the time, having “A fight a day.”

Every day? Against some of the most dangerous and desperate members of our society? This was not a theoretician. But more than his obvious skill, what impressed me was the quality of his relationship with his lady, Kami. Their clear and obvious love told me that he had been able to find a way to engage in violence at a level most martial artists, most people, cannot even dream—without losing his soul.

Because he is both classically trained *and* the survivor of literally countless all-out confrontations, Rory has the absolute right and responsibility to share his impressions of the difference between theory and application. What works and what will get you killed. What attitudes and illusions are harbored by those of us who don't have to face the animals who ENJOY hurting, killing, raping, maiming. What is that space? Where do you have to go inside yourself to survive?

I believe that his training, environment, and inclination created a “Perfect Storm” of martial awareness, in which he has attained a kind of clarity about these things that is a hallmark of those on the road to

enlightenment. Very few human beings would be willing to pay the price he has paid, or be capable of paying it even if they were willing.

That he is willing to report back what he has learned is an act of love and social responsibility. I have the very highest respect for Rory and what he has to say about the “gap” between martial arts as taught and conceptualized, and survival in the crucible of actual combat. In other words, how he stepped through the fire without being utterly destroyed by the flame.

*Meditations on Violence—A Comparison of Martial Arts Training & Real World Violence* is not a joke, or a fantasy, or a screed written to salve the ego of some wannabe. I’ve met the men who work with Rory, and they are tough, hard, guys—and they adore him. They know that what he knows, and who he is, has kept them alive to return to their lives and families.

You hold in your hands a document long in incubation, the musings of a modern warrior on a topic central to mankind’s survival since the first dawn.

Can I? And if I can, how? And who will I be? What MUST I be, to protect my life, my values, my family?

There are few questions more important than these.

Here, in these pages, are the results of one man’s quest for answers.

It’s the real thing.

Steven Barnes  
Southern California  
August 1, 2007

*Steven Barnes is a N.Y. Times bestselling novelist and former Kung-Fu columnist for Black Belt magazine.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a book about many things and I was helped by many people from many different worlds. Cops and criminals, friends, trainers, authors, and students have all helped with this work—some directly with the manuscript and very, very many with opening my eyes to different parts of the world.

From the world of martial arts: Sensei Mike Moore and Sensei Wolfgang Dill set my foundation. Sensei Dave Sumner introduced me to *Sosuishiryu*, which became my core. Whatever I am as a fighter, Dave created. And Paul McRedmond (Mac)—has carried the torch from there, showing me new depths and urging me toward a purer intention. I can never thank you enough.

From the world of crime and cops, there are too many names. The guys who wore the cuffs taught me as much as the ones who put them on. To the bad guys—thanks for the lessons, now go forth and sin no more. By name—Sgt. Bill Gatzke taught me what it was to be a sergeant; Phil Anderchuk taught me how to plan. C.D. Bishop trusted my judgment. Lt. Inman made me do the parts of the job I hated. Deputy U.S. Marshal J. Jones taught a new level of precision. Thank you all. And most of all, to all CERT members past and present—you’ve always had my back and demanded my best. NPNBW!

Living is one thing, writing it down is something else. Mary Rosenblum taught me that writing well was a skill. With the help of Mike Moscoe Shepherd she had a big hand in turning a barely literate jail guard into something of a writer. I thank them both, but maybe the readers are the ones who should be grateful.

Every new book gets read many times by many people before it ever sees print—so for encouragement, finding the big holes and helping translate things from my special private language into basic human words: Dana Sheets, Riku Ylonen, Jeff Burger, Jim Raistrick, Mark Jones, and Lawrence Kane. Special thanks to Kris Wilder—without your impetuosity, bad timing, and total disregard for my comfort level, this might never have been seen by a publisher. Thanks, pal.



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Thanks to David Ripianzi and Tim Comrie for making this whole manuscript-to-book process so easy. Easy for me, anyway. Making it look easy takes a true professional.

The last part is personal. Through everything, Kami has the immense responsibility of keeping me sane and holding me to my promise to always be one of the good guys. Thanks. No matter how bad it gets, I've always been able to look at you and know that on balance the world is a good place.

Lastly, to Norma Joyce Miller. The first steps are the most important. As I promised as a wee child, this first book is for you.

## INTRODUCTION: METAPHORS

People are weird. They have an almost infinite ability to learn and communicate. At the same time, this amazing ability is used as much for fantasy and entertainment as it is for information and survival. Take, for example, the rhinoceros and the unicorn.

The rhinoceros is a real beast, an animal native to Asia and Africa. It is large, formidable, and familiar to most of us from pictures or visits to the zoo. What do we really know about rhinoceroses? Are they grazers or browsers? Do they live in big herds, family groups, or roam the savannah alone? In the movie *The Gods Must be Crazy*, we learned that the rhinoceros doesn't like fire and will stamp out a campfire. Is that true? I have no idea. Look at how little we know, and how little we know with confidence, about this beast that really exists and is truly dangerous.

The unicorn derived from the rhinoceros. Over time and distance and by word of mouth, the reality of the rhinoceros slowly changed into the myth of the unicorn. This process has been so powerful that everyone knows many, many facts about the unicorn. It has the beard of a goat, cloven hooves, and a single horn. It kills elephants by impaling and is strong enough to hurl the elephant over its head, yet it can be tamed and captured by a virgin. We know all these "facts" about the unicorn, but there is only one true fact to know:

*The unicorn is imaginary.*

Unicorns are mythical, yet we know so much about them. The rhinoceros is real and, except for a few experts, we know so little.

There is a parallel between the unicorn and violence. Just as travelers' tales passing from person to person and place to place and century to century managed to morph the reality of the rhinoceros into the fable of the unicorn, the insular tradition and history of each *dojo* has morphed a primal understanding of violence into the modern ritual of martial arts. Just as the grey and wrinkled skin of the rhinoceros has become the glossy white coat of the unicorn, the smells, and sounds, and gut-wrenching fear of close-up personal violence has

somehow spawned the beautiful cinema of the action adventure movie and the crisp precision of the martial arts.

In today's world, who are the real experts on violence?

**The Priests of Mars.** The minute you don a black belt, the minute you step in front of a class to teach, you are seen as an expert on violence. It doesn't matter if you have absorbed a complete philosophical system with your martial art. It doesn't matter if the art gave you, for the first time, the confidence to view the world as a pacifist. It doesn't matter if you studied as a window to another age and culture. It doesn't matter that you have found enlightenment in *kata* or learned to blend in harmony with the force of your attacker. It doesn't matter because you are about to teach a martial art, an art dedicated to Mars, the God of War. A MARtial art. Even if somewhere over the years you have lost sight of this, your students have not. You wear a black belt. You are an expert on violence. You kick ass. You are a priest of Mars.

The simple truth is that many of these experts, these priests of Mars, have no experience with violence. Very, very few have experienced enough to critically look at what they have been taught, and what they are teaching, and separate the myth from the reality.

**The Super Star.** Do you ever notice that weight lifters don't look like boxers? For that matter, if you watch fencing matches you see a lot of tall skinny guys, Judo matches tend to be won by short, stocky *judoka*—basically, none of them look like body builders. But action stars usually do. Unless they want to appeal to the goth/techno market, in which case they are really skinny, pale-complected, and wear a lot of black.

The idea is the same—pretty sells. In the media world, everything is about attraction. The fighters look pretty, not the gnarled, scarred up, sometimes toothless fighters that I know. The fights look pretty, too—you can actually see the action and even identify specific techniques.

They are paced for dramatic content. A movie fight doesn't end when the hero or villain would naturally be lying in a pool of bloody vomit, clutching his abdomen and gurgling. It ends at the moment the director thinks the audience is hyped and not bored yet.

Even when they try to be realistic, it's about the spectacle. The

very fact that the camera can see what is going on is unrealistic. In smoke and dust and rain and the melee of bodies or the flash of gunfire, the person right in the middle of it can't reliably tell what is going on.

And the fighting caters to the audience's idea of fair. It's almost always a close fight to the very end, won by a slim margin...I'll tell you right now that as a public servant who runs a tactical team if I ever, ever play it fair, if I ever take chances with my men or hostages in order to cater to some half-assed idea of fair play, fire me. Fair doesn't happen in real life, not if the bad guys have anything to say about it and not if the professional good guys do, either. I always wanted to see a movie with Conan talking shit in a bar and looking down to see a knife sticking out of his stomach with no idea how it got there.

**The Story.** Maybe this is a metaphor, maybe it is a model: Things are what they are. Violence is what it is. You are you, no more and no less—but humans can't leave simple things alone.

One of the ways we complicate things is by telling stories, especially stories about ourselves. This story we tell ourselves is our identity. The essence of every good story is conflict. So our identity, the central character of this story that we tell ourselves, is based largely on how we deal with conflict. If there has been little conflict in the life, the character, our identity, is mostly fictional.

I present this as a warning. You are what you are, not what you think you are. Violence is what it is, not necessarily what you have been told.

This book is about violence, especially about the difference between violence as it exists “in the wild” and violence as it is taught in martial arts classes and absorbed through our culture.

Couple things first...

## PREFACE: THE TRUTH ABOUT ME

I get paid (and paid well) to go into a situation, usually alone and usually outnumbered by sixty or more criminals, and maintain order. I prevent them from preying on each other or attacking officers. That's the job. Now, since I don't fight every day, or even every week (anymore—I'm a sergeant now, one step behind the front line) most of the minutes and hours of the job are pretty easy, far too easy for what they are paying me. But every once in a while on a really, really ugly night, I more than earn my keep.

The fighting happens less, partially from moving up in rank, but even more from the fact that almost every criminal in the area knows me, and I've become better at talking. At CNT training (Crisis Negotiation Team—sometimes called Hostage Negotiators), Cecil, one of the instructors, recommended reading books on salesmanship. In the intro to one book, the author stated that everyone, every single person in the world is engaged in selling *something*—no matter if you were building a car in a factory, performing medicine or changing oil.

I thought, “Bullshit. I'm a jail guard. I'm not selling jack.”

Shortly after, there was an extremely stupid and crazy old man who very much wanted to fight five times his weight in officers. It took about twenty minutes to talk him into going along with the process. It was then that I realized I am selling something, a product called “not getting your ass beat” which is very hard to sell to some people.

Here's the resume and *bona fides*. Feel free to skip it.

I enjoy teaching people who have already trained in martial arts how to apply their skills to real conflict. I like teaching officers—people who might need it—the simple, practical skills they need to stay alive or the equally simple and practical skills they need to restrain a threat without getting sued...and I like teaching the difference.

I have a BS degree in experimental psychology with a minor in biology from Oregon State. I'd planned on a double major, but Biochem killed me. While at OSU, I earned varsities in Judo and Fencing, and dabbled in Karate, Tae Kwon Do, and European weapons.

I've studied martial arts since 1981. I've been a corrections officer since 1991. As of this writing, that's fourteen years, twelve of them concentrated in Maximum Security and Booking. In 1998, a lot of things happened. I earned my teaching certificate in *Sosuishitsu-ryu* Jujutsu; I published two articles in national magazines; I was named to the CERT (Corrections Emergency Response Team) and was made the DT and Hand-to-Hand instructor for the team. I was also promoted to sergeant. By the end of the year I was designing and teaching classes for the rest of the agency, both corrections and enforcement. I've been the CERT leader since 2002.

CERT has been a huge force in my life and career. By 1998, I already had lots of "dirt time" in Booking, something over two hundred uses of force, some ugly (PCP and/or outnumbered and/or ambushed and/or weapons), but I'd only had to take care of myself. Suddenly I was responsible for teaching rookies how to do what I did. I had to really think about what made things work.

CERT also allowed me access to huge amounts of training—I'm currently certified with distraction devices (flash-bang grenades), a wide variety of less-lethal technology (40 mm and 37 mm grenade launchers used to fire everything from gas to rubber balls; paintball guns that fire pellets filled with pepper spray; a variety of chemical munitions and shotgun-fired impact devices; pepper spray; and electrical stun devices). I've had the opportunity for specialized high-risk transport EVOG (Emergency Vehicle Operations Course) and have trained with the local U.S. Marshals in close-combat handgun skills. More importantly, I've had the opportunity to use some of these tools and learn what was left out of class. There has been other agency training as well—I've done CNT classes, though a CERT leader won't be in that role; been through the introductory Weapons of Mass Destruction class from FEMA; attended school for the Incident Command System; been certified as a Use of Force and Confrontational Simulation instructor, and recently received a certification as a "Challenge Course Facilitator" in case anyone wants to walk a high wire and do some team building. When I'm not on swing shift, I'm an advisor for the Search and Rescue unit. Swing shift or not, I'm a peer counselor for my deputies.

I was a medic, NBC defense instructor, and rappel master in the National Guard; studied EMT I and II a long time ago; bounced in a casino for a couple of years; and attended Tom Brown's survival and tracking basic course...and I grew up in the eastern Oregon desert without electricity or running water.

That's just a list. Here's the truth:

Violence is bigger than me. There's more out there and more kinds of violence than I'll ever see...and certainly more than I could survive. I've never been a victim of domestic violence and I've never been taken hostage, but in this book I will presume to give advice on those two subjects. I've never been in an active war zone or a fire fight. Never been bombed, nuked, or gassed—except by trainers.

Violence is a bigger subject than any person will ever understand completely or deeply. I've put as much personal experience into this as I can, along with advice from people I know and trust to be experienced. I've also quoted or paraphrased researchers (many of whom have never bled or spilled blood in either fear or anger) when the research sounded right.

In the end, this is only a book. My goal in writing it is to give my insights to you through the written word. It will be hard to write because survival is very much a matter of guts and feelings and smells and sounds and very, very little a subject of words.

Take my advice for what it is worth. Use what you can use. Discard anything that doesn't make sense.

You don't know me; you've never seen me. For all the *facts* you have, I might be a 400-pound quadriplegic or a seventy year old retiree with delusions. Take the information in this book and treat it skeptically as hell.

Never, ever, ever delegate responsibility for your own safety.

Never, ever, ever override your own experience and common sense on the say-so of some self-appointed "expert."

Never, ever, ever ignore what your eyes see because it isn't what you imagined. And strive to always know the difference between what your eyes are seeing and what your brain is adding.

**The format of this book.** This book is divided into chapters. The first section, the Introduction, gives a brief overview of what the book is about, who I am, and why I wrote it. You've already either read it or skipped it. Fair enough.

*Chapter 1: The Matrix*, is an attempt to clear up the language of violence. It addresses the many types of violence, especially how different they can be and how the lessons from one type do not apply to the needs of another.

*Chapter 2: How to Think*, addresses assumptions about violence, about training, and introduces training for strategy and tactics.

*Chapter 3: Violence*, describes the dynamics of violence. It is focused on criminal violence—how it happens and what it is like. It will also cover the affects of adrenaline and stress hormones that accompany a sudden attack and how to deal with them.

*Chapter 4: Predators*, is about criminals—who they are, how they think and act. What you can expect from them, and what knowledge is not important in a moment of crisis.

*Chapter 5: Training*, will give advice and drills to help adapt your training to the realities of violence.

*Chapter 6: Making Physical Defense Work*, is about physical response to violence—not about effective technique but about what makes a technique effective.

*Chapter 7: After*, discusses the after-effects of violence—what to expect and how to deal with the psychological effects of either surviving a sudden assault or long-term exposure to a violent environment.







# CHAPTER 1: THE MATRIX

You all know the story of the blind men and the elephant, right? It was originally published in a poem by John Godfrey Saxe that was about the silliness of humans disputing the nature of gods and religions.

The blind men, each very famous for wisdom and intelligence, walk up to an elephant, touch a piece, and begin to explain and describe the entire animal. The first touches the elephant's side and declares that an elephant is just like a wall. The second, happening to grab hold of a tusk, knows that an elephant is just like a spear (okay, dull and curved and too thick but otherwise *exactly* like a spear...I don't think this was the smartest of the blind men). From his short experience with the trunk, the third decides that an elephant is just like a snake

I don't need to go on, do I?

Not to hit you over the head with the animal metaphors, but violence is a big animal and many people who have seen only a part of it are more than willing to sell you their expertise. Does someone who has been in a few bar brawls really know any more about violence than the guy who grabbed the elephant's ear knows about elephants? Bar brawling experience *is* real and it is exactly what it is, but it won't help you or even provide much insight into military operations or rape survival.

A truly devious mind that understands the principles can occasionally generalize from one type of conflict, say flying a combat mission, to very different types of conflict, such as crime prevention, debate or tactical assault. But that skill is both rare and limited. No matter how good you are at generalizing, there is a point where it doesn't work and you descend into philosophy at the cost of survival.

Many martial arts, martial artists, and even people who fight for real on a regular basis have also only seen a very small part of this very big thing. Often, the best know one aspect very well, but that is only one aspect.

Some of the experts who are willing to sell you their insights have never seen a real elephant. Many people, almost all men in my expe-

rience, are willing to talk at length on the subjects of fighting and violence. They will lecture, expound, and debate.

Know this: Watching every martial arts movie ever filmed gives you as much understanding of fighting as a child watching *Dumbo* learned about elephants. Learning a martial art often teaches you as much as a taxidermist would know about elephants. Watching boxing or the UFC teaches as much as a trip to the zoo or the circus. Really, really studying the best research available gives you an incredible amount of knowledge about violence or about elephants, but there is always one detail missing.

When you are standing next to an elephant, it is huge. It could crush you at will or tear you in half, and there is nothing you could do. The advantage of being blind, of only knowing a part of this beast, is the comfortable illusion of safety.

## **section 1.1: the tactical matrix—an example**

Violence isn't just a big animal. It is complicated as hell. If you ever really wanted to get a handle on just one piece—interpersonal violence—you would need to understand physics, anatomy and physiology, athletics, criminal law, group dynamics, criminal dynamics, evolutionary psychology, biology and evolutionary biology, endocrinology, strategy, and even moral philosophy. In this great big complex mess, if you want to survive, you need a quick and simple answer. That's hard.

A matrix is used to describe and analyze a multidimensional event in a multidimensional way. Ask a martial artist, “What's your favorite attack?” or “What's your favorite combination?” and they will have an answer. For a few years, mine was a backfist/sidekick combination. Remember that. It will come up in a few paragraphs.

There are many ways to break things up. Consider this as one example. There are four different ways that a fight can arise:

- (1) You are completely surprised, hit before you are aware that a conflict has arisen.
- (2) You felt something was going on but weren't sure what.
- (3) You knew it was coming and you were ready, a mutual combat.
- (4) You ambushed the other guy, initiating action when he was completely surprised.

There are also three different levels of force that you can use. (A) You must not injure the other person, (e.g. getting the car keys from drunken Uncle Bob). (B) It's okay to injure, but not to kill. (C) Killing is both legally justified and prudent.

This makes a simple 3x4 matrix of twelve options:

Figure 1.1: The Tactical Matrix

	SURPRISED	ALERTED	MUTUAL	ATTACKING
NO INJURY				
INJURY				
LETHAL				

In only one of these twelve possible scenarios is the backfist/side-kick a really good option. It is workable in perhaps two more, but for seventy-five percent of the options, my “favorite” technique is worthless.

You can plug almost any technique, tactic, or even system into the matrix and see where it applies. Karate's core strategy is to “do damage”—close in and hit hard. Given that it is difficult (not impossible) to kill with a bare hand, where does Karate fit on the matrix? Where does boxing fit? Sword and shield? Where does a handgun fit? Can you use a handgun when you are completely surprised?

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	<b>SURPRISED</b>	<b>ALERTED</b>	<b>MUTUAL</b>	<b>ATTACKING</b>
<b>NO INJURY</b>	Inappropriate due to risk of injury/ requires time and distance	Inappropriate due to risk of injury	Inappropriate due to risk of injury	Inappropriate due to risk of injury
<b>INJURY</b>	Requires some time and distance. Won't work	Possible, if attacker gives time	Good	Possible, but feint is inefficient if you have surprise
<b>LETHAL</b>	Insufficient force, time, and distance. Unworkable	Insufficient force	Insufficient force	Insufficient force

Using a backfist/sidekick combination in an example of a simple tactical matrix.

	<b>SURPRISED</b>	<b>ALERTED</b>	<b>MUTUAL</b>	<b>ATTACKING</b>
<b>NO INJURY</b>	Inappropriate due to risk of fatality/no time to draw	Inappropriate due to risk of fatality	Inappropriate due to risk of fatality	Inappropriate due to risk of fatality
<b>INJURY</b>	Risk of fatality/ no time to draw	Risk of fatality	Risk of fatality	Risk of fatality
<b>LETHAL</b>	Possible, if you can overcome surprise and draw weapon	Effective	Effective	Effective

Using a firearm as an example.

Looking at it like that, however, is a fundamental flaw in thinking. To work from technique to situation is backwards. The parameters, in this case “level of surprise” and “acceptable damage,” dictate the matrix. Each box in the matrix represents a type of situation. To go through life being very skilled at one or two aspects of the matrix, and hoping the violence you run into will happen to match your boxes, is dangerous and yet very common.

Here’s a rule for life: You don’t get to pick what kinds of bad things will happen to you. You may prepare all your life to take on a cannibal-

istic knife-wielding sociopath. You may get stuck with a soccer riot. Or a road rage incident with a semi. Or a pickup full of baseball bat swinging drunks. Or nothing at all. You don't get to choose.

The purpose of the tactical matrix is to introduce regular people to the idea that violence is complex. For martial artists, it is important to understand that preparing for one thing is not preparing for all things. For citizens watching the news, trying to figure out if what an officer did was the right thing, it's important to understand that not everything can be solved with a wristlock or a few kind words. Violence is complex.

The tactical matrix here is NOT an answer or a guide. It is an example. It's not even an example of types of fights. It is a first step in demonstrating complexity. The matrix can be extended infinitely. Multiple bad guys? Three ways that can break down—my side outnumbers you, your side outnumbers me or we're even. The matrix now has 36 boxes. Weapons? I have a weapon, you have a weapon, we both do or neither of us do. Four options and the matrix jumps to 144 boxes.

Got it? Good, 'cause now we're going to get complicated.

## **section 1.2: the strategic matrix: what martial arts tries to be**

A *New York Times* article dated June 7, 2005 describes a video of an officer in a traffic stop taking fire from the driver and his partner running away. The officer who ran away chose the perfect option for self-defense. It was not the best option for his partner. It was not what he was trained and expected to do. He was trained and expected to engage the threat.

Officers on patrol avoid hand-to-hand encounters. Fights are dangerous. Even when you win, there is a possibility of injury, exposure to blood-borne pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis, or a lawsuit. Within that context, there are two distinctive hand-to-hand skills that an officer needs. In the ugly, surprise situation, taking damage and

unprepared, the officer needs brutal close-quarters survival skills. Putting handcuffs on an unruly drunk who doesn't want to go to jail but doesn't really want to hurt you requires different skills, different techniques, and a different mindset.

Sometimes there are more. A SWAT sniper needs a crystal clear thought process and the ability to deal with hours of boredom and discomfort. The point man on an entry team doesn't need or use the same techniques or mindset as the sniper, isn't interested in semi-compliant handcuffing and damn well better not be surprised if he works for me. He is the "surprisor."

In just one profession, four different skill sets for dealing with physical conflict. Not one of them is like dueling, sparring, or waging a war.

Martial arts try to do more than that. Some studios promise self-defense skills and tournament trophies, discipline and self-discovery, fitness and confidence, and even spiritual growth and enlightenment.

How well do these goals really mesh?

Cardiovascular fitness is extremely important for health and longevity and should be the cornerstone of any fitness regimen, yet fighting for your life is profoundly anaerobic. Whether you had a good breakfast will have a greater effect on your endurance thirty seconds into the fight (and thirty seconds is a long time in an ambush) than your ability to run a marathon.

Spiritual growth, the measure of many modern martial arts, is a difficult concept to pin down. I once asked my *sensei* in Jujutsu if there was a spiritual discipline associated with *Sosuishitsu-ryu*. Dave said, "Oh. Sure. The dead guy doesn't get to go to church. Don't try to read too much into this, Rory. It's not a way of life. It's a collection of skills a samurai might need if he wanted to go home to his family."

Martial arts and martial artists often try to do it all. They teach self-defense and sparring and streetfighting and fitness and personal development, as if they were the same thing. They aren't even related.

Very, very different things get lumped under the general heading of "violence." Two boxers in a contest of strategy, strength, skill, and will. A drunken husband beating his wife. Two highschoolers punch-



	SELF-DEFENSE	DUEL	SPORT	COMBAT	ASSAULT	SPIRITUAL GROWTH	FITNESS
<b>REALITY OF EVENT</b>	Recovery from bad luck or stupidity	Glorified Monkey Dance	Contest of the similar	Monkey Dance between groups	Neutralize threat/enemy	Mostly stumbling in the dark	Physical training
<b>REALITY TO PERSON</b>	Absolute threat to health, survival, and identity	Voluntary physical danger for social gain	Test of self	Boredom, confusion, busywork, and occasional terror	Job	Reality doesn't go here	Part of life
<b>REAL GOAL</b>	Survive	Maintain or increase social standing	Ego validation	Please supervisors and peers	Mission and survive	Achieve and maintain <i>satori</i>	Varies, improve appearance
<b>BEST GOAL</b>	Prevent, if too late, escape	Win with style	Prove/test oneself	Defeat opposing group, preferably by display	Mission and survive	Understand self	Improve health
<b>DISTRACTERS Fake Goals; Illusions</b>	Maintain social illusions; deny reality	No choice	Fear of losing; belief that X=Y	Personal meaning or mission, freelancing	Fear of liability, crusade, ego, admin interference	Understand the world, ego	Appearance equals ability
<b>OPTIMAL MINDSET</b>	None or rage	Arrogance w/o overconfidence	Athletic focus, "the zone"	Obedience	Implacable predator	Perceive	Everyday—habit
<b>BEST ASSET</b>	Aggressive reactions	Cunning?	Skill? Cunning?	Teamwork and discipline	Planning and preparation	Bullshit detector (or openness)	Perseverance
<b>STRATEGY</b>	Beat the freeze	Dazzle the opponent	Psych the opponent out	Control individuality, make troops predictable	Shock and Awe	Listen, watch, feel	Stick to training plan
<b>TRAINING FOCUS</b>	Contact response	Skill, fitness, and conventions; showmanship	Skill and fitness	Obedience and rote specific skills	Teamwork, skills, threat analysis	Letting distractions go	Training, nutrition, recuperation
<b>REAL DANGER</b>	Loss of life, identity	Death	Injury	Stupid leaders	Luck	Being defrauded: otherwise, very safe	Overtraining, training for wrong thing
<b>PERCEIVED DANGER</b>	Same	Dishonor, loss of face, embarrassment	Damage to identity	Enemy	Enemy	Inability to see the world "in light"	None

Matrix of Martial Arts and Violence: Differences of Type

ing it out in the parking lot. A mental health professional trying to hold down a schizophrenic so that a sedative can be administered. An officer walking into a robbery in progress finds himself in a shoot-out. Soldiers entering a building in hostile territory. A rapist pushing in the partially open door of an apartment. An entry team preparing to serve a search warrant on a drug house with armed suspects. A Victorian era duel with small swords.

Because they involve people in conflict and people get hurt, we lump them together as violence, but they aren't the same and the skills and mindset from one situation don't carry over automatically to the other.

*Self-defense* is clearly my focus in this book. What is it? It is recovery from stupidity or bad luck, from finding yourself in a position you would have given almost anything to prevent. It is difficult to train for because of the surprise element and because you may be injured before you are aware of the conflict. The critical element is to overcome the shock and surprise so that you can act, to "beat the freeze." Self-defense is about *recovery*. The ideal is to prevent the situation. The optimal mindset is often a conditioned response that requires no thought (for the first half-second of the attack) or a focused rage.

The *duel* is out of fashion in our day and age. It was (and occasionally is) a glorified Monkey Dance (See Section 3.1) forced by society. It was a contest to see who could better uphold the standards of the day, thus it was fought over insults and unacceptable behavior and not more material injury. It was possibly more about show than survival. There was a "right" way to win. This still happens in rare incidents of "*dojo arashi*" when martial artists go to other martial arts schools to challenge the instructors. The early UFC bouts also tried to take on this element in the "style versus style" but they were very different.

Can we use the skills, mindset, and strategies of the duel in a self-defense situation?

*Sport* is a contest between two people; different than the duel because it is something the practitioners seek and not something they feel they must do to preserve their place in society. It is admirable, to

me, because the real goal is to test yourself. For most, it's not about domination but about what they have, what they can do, what they've learned. Mixed martial arts (MMA) is part of a long evolution of taking this concept as far as it can go safely.

Is the righteous rage, which has gotten so many people through an attempted rape, an efficient emotional response for a high school wrestling match?

By *combat*, I specifically mean war. Combat is a very different experience for generals than for soldiers. Generals can look at percentage killed, take risks, sacrifice, and maneuver men. For the generals, there are acceptable losses and you can continue to fight if you suffer twenty percent killed. For the soldier, it is binary: You are alive or you are dead. Generals win wars. Teams win wars. I remember my drill sergeant yelling, "You are not an individual! You are a part of this team!" In order for the generals to win, the soldiers must be predictable. The general has to be certain that if he orders them to march or attack or hold position, they will. Thus, obedience is critical and it is enforced by a culture that will do what is expected because they don't want to let the rest of the team down.

Given that the most common lead up to an attack on a woman is to show a weapon and order her to obey, is being trained to obey, whether in the military or one of the militaristic *dojos*, a good training method for self-defense?

*Assault* isn't just for criminals. Elite military teams, hostage rescue, SWAT, and entry teams use this mindset as much as criminals do. They don't want to be tested or find out what their limitations are, they want to get the job done and go home. The mindset is implacable and predatory. They use surprise, superior numbers, and superior weapons—every cheat they can, and they practice. On the rare, rare occasions when my team made a fast entry and someone actually fought, the only emotion that I registered was that I was *offended* that they resisted, and we rolled right over the threat(s) like a force of nature.

If you can truly flip the switch from surprised, overwhelmed, and terrified to the assault mindset, I can't teach you much. This is the

opposite of the “frozen” response often triggered by a sudden assault, and we train hard to trigger that freeze in others.

*Spiritual growth* is very difficult to define. If it is a depth of understanding of the human condition, you will grow more by living and serving and talking to people than you will ever learn in a class of any kind. If it is understanding of yourself, you will learn the most by challenging your fears and dislikes, and few people stick with a class that they fear and dislike. If it is a happy feeling that all is right with the world and there is a plan and everything is wonderful and good...you can get it from heroin cheaper and faster. If it is something great and magical that will open up your psychic powers, keep playing video games. There is a danger here that I don't properly address in the simple matrix and is beyond the scope of this book: people want to believe in magic and secrets and there are other people who will satisfy those beliefs for money or power. This can result in abuse and trauma, the very opposite of self-defense.

*Fitness* is objectively the most important effect of martial arts training. The physical skills and self-defense aspects of training will never save as many people from violence as the conditioning will save from early heart attacks. If you study Judo, Jujutsu, or Aikido, you will probably never use the skills to throw an attacker, but I can almost guarantee that you will and have used the breakfalls to prevent injury. Properly trained, many martial arts give balanced development of muscle, strength and aerobic training, increases in flexibility and agility, and all at a relatively low risk of injury. It may not be as efficient as a good circuit program in these areas, but it can be more fun and you will stick with the exercise program that you enjoy.

Fitness will never hurt you in a self-defense situation. Even aerobic conditioning, which rarely activates in a fight, will help to dissipate the stress hormones that will affect your mind and body. When comparing fitness with self-defense, the problems come from the other direction. Self-defense is largely about dealing with surprise and fear and pain, none of which is useful in developing fitness.

One example from the other dimension of the matrix to hammer home the point: Look at the optimum mindset for each of the examples of conflict.

The implacable predatory mindset of the assault is powerful. It is cold-blooded, calculating, and utterly controlled. It is also inhuman, reducing the target of the assault from human to either a resource (in the criminal mind) or a threat (in the mind of an entry team).

This mindset, in my experience, horrifies the people seeking spiritual growth. It is a natural mindset and beautiful in its place, but it is scary to someone who is seeking light and love and harmony. People who imagine the harmony of nature are often willfully blind to the savagery between wolf and rabbit. The assault mindset can revel in that savagery.

The assault mindset in a sporting competition is completely unacceptable. From the assault mindset, if you are scheduled to fight a world champion heavyweight boxer on Thursday, you shoot him on Tuesday. It is not just beyond cheating—cheating has no meaning in the mind of a predator—there are only odds, tactics, and meat. This comparison is doubly true for the duel.

Some elite elements in combat develop the predator mindset. It requires trust and respect to get an entire team into that mindset. Far more teams fake it by hard training under a good leader than actually have the mindset. True predators are unpredictable and that makes the chain of command uncomfortable. They will get the job done but will ignore any parameter or rule of engagement set by command that does not seem important to them. Because of this, they are idolized in times of serious conflict and marginalized, ignored, or pushed aside when combat is rare.

Fitness training is about your self. There is no prey and therefore nothing for the predator mindset to focus on. A predator without prey is a fat, lazy cat that likes to play and eat and sleep.

The predator mindset is a choice. No one is in that mind at all times—it has too many blind spots to function in normal society. Self-defense is never a choice. The attacker is in the predator mindset, not the victim. The victim will have to deal with shock and total surprise, the predator won't. The essence of self-defense is breaking out of the frozen

mindset you have been shocked into. If you can access the predator mindset a few seconds into the attack, you can turn the attack into something else. That's powerful, but takes great experience.

This matrix could be extended almost infinitely in either dimension. Fight choreography for films, stuntwork, performing arts, and restraining mental patients without injuring them could all be added across the top. Timing differences, best class of techniques, ideal opponent, and reliance on technology could all have a space.

Despite the wide variety of skills and complete incompatibility of the mindsets or strategy, martial artists are often convinced that they are training for all of these things simultaneously. In strictly regimented classes where things are done by rote and without question, you can see the military roots of a soldier's art...but that obedient mindset can set students up for failure if they are victimized by an authority figure or overwhelmed by an attacker who uses verbal commands with his assault. Some instructors extol the virtues of the predatory mindset, the "eyes of a tiger," without teaching how to get there from a moment of surprise, pain, and fear (for self-defense) or dealing with the logical consequences for sport—a true predator cheats in profound ways. Not the little ways, like illegal nerve gouges in the grapple, but big ways like getting a bunch of friends and weapons and finishing the fight in the locker room before the match starts.

This extends well beyond martial arts and into the world of conflict and the perception of conflict in general. In the world of movies, boots and fists and guns are used interchangeably. In real life, the skills, needs, and legal justification for striking and shooting are very different.

Police solutions to military problems are doomed to fail just as military solutions to police problems will never be allowed in a free society.

You will bring your experience and training (your touch of the elephant) to bear whenever you read about a military operation or see a story about a police shooting on the news.

Remember this—that the fair play and good sportsmanship you

learned as a child were predicated on two fairly matched people who wanted to be there, not some drugged-up freak with a knife and an officer answering a call.

That on TV and in your martial arts classes, they make it look easy to take away a knife—an officer knows that if someone is within seven yards he can be stabbed more than once before he can even draw his weapon.

That in the movies, the sniper can coolly make head shot after head shot at five hundred yards, protecting his team. In real life, snipers have tried in vain to identify a target through smoke and muzzle flash as civilians get slaughtered.

That in books, the radios always seem to work, cell phones never go off when you are trying to get into a position, the good guy always carries enough ammo, and no one ever just bleeds out and dies from a “flesh wound.”

That when the newspaper decries the brutality of the officer who used force on a fifteen-year-old, mentally-ill “child,” all the officer saw was a 280 pound person in an altered mental state coming at him, swinging a club.

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