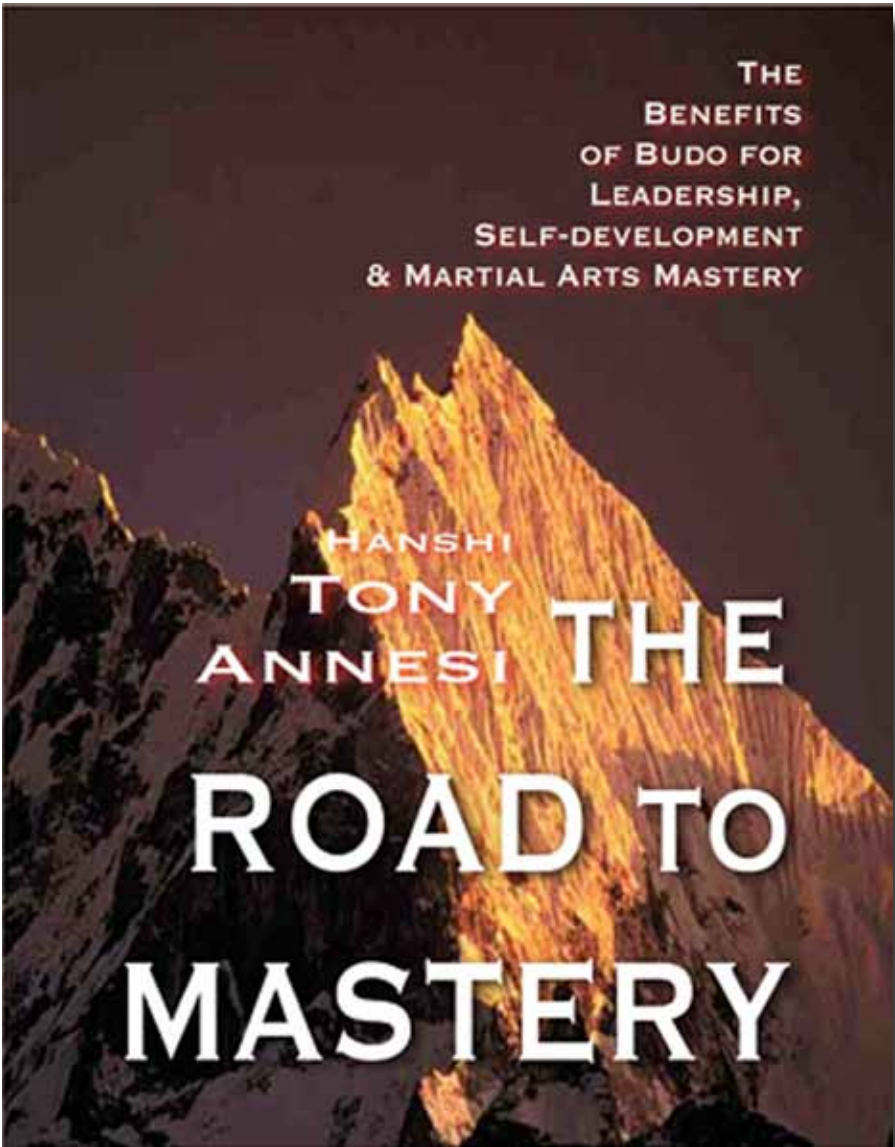


Tony Annesi



# Sample Chapter

# Introduction

## The Benefits of Budo

If you simply kick the bag in your garage twice a week and read a few martial arts magazines every month, you cannot garner the full benefits of budo. In order to benefit from the martial arts in ways beyond the obvious, one must first aspire to becoming an ideal martial artist. One must seriously commit to identifying and incorporating the qualities that exemplify your ideals. Once you have set your aspirations and taken the first step on the path, the path itself shows you the way.

And if you are not a martial artist, what then? Substitute Achiever, Leader, Self-actualizing Person for the terms “martial artist”. Although the specifics will differ, the same principles will apply.

Identifying the ideal martial artist or a “true” path is as personal a task as identifying one’s “true” personality. We are many things and we aspire to be many more. To inspire us to achieve our aspirations, we seek role models, some real and some ideal. Real martial arts masters, each of whom may satisfy someone’s ideal, come in many different blends of hard and soft, tough and gentle, big and small, sociable and reclusive, self-concerned and self-effacing. People have differing opinions as to which master exemplifies the ideal martial artist. No wonder there are so many schools of martial arts! Regardless of which role model a person chooses, however, he will consider that role model to be mastering his art if he approaches the student’s ideal.

There are many paths up the mountain, but we can choose only one at a time. There are many guides available, each having his/her preferred path. To choose which guide should lead us, we have

to know where we intend to go. A guide is a person who has already mastered the way. If our mountain is the mountain of excellence (martial arts excellence, leadership excellence, personal excellence), it is good to interview the guide to make sure his/her path will lead the way we choose to follow.

In the martial arts, a “master” is one who has traveled a long way toward achieving his concept of excellence. A “master” has used his art to improve himself and he has reaped the benefits of *budo*. But how?

If many masters have improved themselves through the martial arts, why is there no textbook to show how this is done? Perhaps because the master, as a student, did not know how improvement was happening to him. Like most students, he did not consciously interview a guide.

We commonly think of a person *actively seeking* self-improvement, not having it visited upon him, however I contend that the martial arts, which are seen as primarily physical endeavors, help a person in nonphysical ways — ways toward which he may not have consciously aimed and may not fully comprehend. Students who work very hard to improve themselves physically, to achieve in their art often find they have earned some unexpected bonuses from *budo*. In other words, when the student is ready to climb the mountain, the guide appears, un-interviewed, and often unseen.

“Budo” literally means “martial way(s)” in Japanese. I use it here to unify all serious, organized martial arts training under one heading. I am not trying to press Chinese, Korean, Okinawan, Filipino, or Indonesian martial artists into the Japanese mode, however. To be fair, I must say that my background has been dominantly Japanese *budo*, therefore the examples I use will be from my Japanese-oriented experience. I contend, however, that the more one understands many martial arts, the more they seem to have in common. They differ in attitude and emphasis, in flavor and accent, but many arts hold aspects

of many others. Most arts have more aspects in common than first meets the eye: most have a foundation of morality, and most aspire to self-perfection to accompany physical prowess.

I once was at a tournament (a rare occurrence for me) in which some relatively unseasoned black belts in a Korean art were respectfully commenting on my rather worn (i.e. tattered) black belt. Their master-instructor was introduced to me as I was explaining that, in the Japanese tradition, it was customary to allow the belt to age. The master, who sported a new, shiny black belt, said with a smile, “It is the same in the Korean tradition.” This simple statement, perhaps thrown out as an overture of unity between practitioners of cultures that often do not get along, struck me on various levels. I had not known that Korean arts had the same tradition — every Korean practitioner I had seen dressed in a pressed uniform with a clean, seemingly new belt. If allowing the belt to age was a custom shared by the two cultures, it was emphasized more by the Japanese. If it were not truly an important custom in Korean *mudo* (martial ways) than this master’s statement could be seen either as one-upmanship or as an attempt to emphasize commonality. Many martial arts practitioners would prefer to see it as the former. I saw it as the latter. Similarly, I hope martial artists who read this book will look beyond the specific examples I use to see the common concepts I intend to communicate.

All martial arts train the body. In order to do this, they must, per force, train the mind. Sometimes, we take our minds off what our bodies are learning and then realize that our minds have changed in the very process. Not only are we a little stronger, faster, more coordinated, not only do we have a larger repertoire of physical skills, but we actually *think* differently.

“As a man thinketh, so shall he be” is a phrase that gave rise to a famous little book by James Allen, used and advocated by inspirational, motivational, and self-improvement leaders for decades. The contemporary re-discovery, both in spiritual circles and in

scientific circles, of the non-dichotomous mind/body or “the body-mind” has confirmed that a person’s thoughts manifest themselves in the actions of that person.

Allen suggests many points relative to his theme “a change of mind is a change of one’s reality”:

- Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself. (*As a Man Thinketh*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, tenth impression, undated, pg. 16.)
- Men do not attract that which they *want*, but that which they *are*. (Ibid., pg. 17)
- Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves.... (Ibid., pg. 18)
- The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the indolent seeing only the apparent effects...of the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance.... They do not know the darkness and the heartaches; they do not see the long and arduous journey, but only behold the pleasant goal, and call it “good fortune;” do not understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it “chance.” (Ibid., pg. 65.)

One’s circumstance, Allen suggests, is the result of who one is, i.e., how one thinks.

At the risk of stating the obvious, not only does training the body train the mind, but training the mind effects one’s life. The martial arts are a part of the “training” we call “life”, and they concentrate that training.

The *dojo* (martial arts school), as a microcosm of life, minimizes the time between experiences and maximizes their intensity. Once one realizes this, the martial arts can offer a method of self-development, a reprogramming — a way to change one’s mind. Like most self-development methods, budo works its wonders once the individual wants the self-development to happen; but unlike most self-development methods, budo brings its benefits whether or not the individual knows it.

As practitioners of budo grow in physical skill and personal development, they approach a station called “mastery”. Despite the

fact that mastery is ill-defined in today's martial arts community, each person's sense of "mastery" typifies his ideal martial artist. That personal definition, I aver, nearly always combines redoubtable physical skill with the high personal development we sometimes call "spiritual development".

To climb the mountain of excellence in any field, then, one first chooses a guide. The guide can be a flesh and blood mentor, or it can be an ideal based on one's personal definition of mastery.

The road to mastery is based on ideals and therefore is a conceptual journey along a physical road that climbs to spiritual heights.

Tony Annesi

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TEACHERS OPEN THE DOOR,  
BUT YOU MUST ENTER BY YOURSELF.

— CHINESE PROVERB

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**PART ONE:**

**FOUNDATION**  
**INITIAL MOTIVATION**

# Chapter One

## The Martial Artist as Hero and Artist

### INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

When people care so much for others that they risk their lives for them, they are called heroes. When people care enough for themselves that they create around them a world in their own image of beauty, they are called artists. The hero must develop himself to the point at which he has both the ability and the confidence to risk himself. He must be self-concerned before he can be other-concerned. The artist, on the other hand, working hard under the discipline imposed by her art, must sometimes work for others to create *their* vision of reality before she can create her own. She must be other-oriented before she can be self-oriented.

A martial artist aspires to be both hero and artist, to have a code of ethics that subjugates the self and a desire for achievement that motivates the self to develop abilities beyond the limits of the average person. A martial artist draws from two extremes and merges them. A serious martial artist is a master in waiting. A master in any field is like the serious martial artist who has created himself like an artist, and by means of facing challenges, prepared himself like a hero.

This chapter will give some idea about my personal motivations as a 50+ year veteran of the martial arts. It will also offer an explanation for why so many people study martial arts not just for self-defense, but also for self-development.