

Happiness is Generous Conceit 2

...the spirit we feel when cheering for our favorite football team, our dojo-mate when she is sparring for a trophy, our friend as he goes for a rank, or the spirit that we feel within ourselves when we emerge unscathed from a multiple attacker drill—is that spirit conceited or generous?

Difficult to answer the lead question, isn't it?

Now let's go back to the first part of this article where I present Sensei Sterling Steel self-assuredly entering a room, a person who has earned his personal power and thinks nothing of giving, even though he does not live for anyone else but himself.

When our spirit feels elated having been awarded our rank, having won our trophy, or having emerged unscathed from a drill, we are happy because we feel we have both *earned* our happiness through our own personal efforts and *deserve* that happiness because of whom we have become. We feel accomplished because of our competence, and that is completely self-centered (detractors would call it conceited). Now, if we pound our chests and trash-talk those who did not rise to the same level, I suggest that we are unconvinced that our happiness will last, i.e. we are only momentarily joyful rather than thoroughly happy. That means we are feeling the spirit but not living it. And yet, in our current culture, **if we act as if we *know* we will succeed, we are either *envied* for our confidence or *disliked* because we think we are better than everyone else** (sometimes both).

How does a psychologically and spiritually healthy martial artist like Sensei Sterling Steel act? He smiles, accepts his victory and lifts the hand of his losing opponent. If he loses, he does the same thing to the victorious opponent. He does not seek the limelight, but nods at its presence then goes about looking for another way to self-improve. In other words, he has acted for himself but is generous in his victory. If he were to lose a match, he would congratulate his opponent. If he were not to be promoted, he would bow and ask his sensei how he could do better next time. If he were to be overwhelmed in the multiple attacker drill, he would thank his attackers for not sending him to the hospital and go back to his mental drawing board so that next time they would be thanking him.

Vishen Lakhiani's *Code of the Extraordinary Mind* has a section on imperturbability, in which a guest lecturer, psychologist Marisa Peer, suggests that the biggest disease affecting modern humankind is that people think, "I am not enough!" Ms. Peer suggests that they write on their mirrors in large letters, "I AM ENOUGH!" That sentiment is about as selfish/conceited as a sentiment can be without implying "I am better than anyone else". In other words, it is conceit with generosity both to oneself and others. It is an example of loving oneself while supporting others. It is, in my humble opinion, exactly what goes on in a well-functioning dojo: self-development with munificence.

In Lakhiani's view of a self-improvement through positive business practices, "You do not have to change the world..." which means you can act for your own self-fulfillment because no one is going to make

you happy but yourself; but he adds, "...just don't screw [that world] up." In other words, don't make things worse and don't support those who do. That may not be a big dose of generosity, but it doesn't have to be.

We are happy when we achieve our goals, but then we must continue to create and achieve, otherwise arriving at success will be disappointing after a day or two. I have thought for decades about how the traditional martial arts affect the martial artist and wrote about it in [*The Road to Mastery*](#). The method is called "martial arts"; the goal can be Mastery, but that Mastery is a "means-goal" not an "end-goal". Ultimately, a self-development or "spiritual" study will aim toward the mountaintop and the end-goal of Happiness.

When that cocky-looking martial artist walks through the door with a subtle smile on his face and an openness that others find alluring, ask yourself if he looks happy. If so, ask, "Is he really cocky or is his happiness a pleasant amalgam of conceit (I'd rather say "confidence") and generosity?"