

A Sense of Completion

Anyone reading this knows that, obviously, someone wrote it. Articles and blogs do not materialize by themselves. You may not realize that the “final product” may go through several revisions before it is “released”, that is, put on the weblog page of **bushido-kai.com** / **bushido-kai.net**.

The process of rewriting a book before publishing it is more intense and time-consuming. Then, it becomes available in print or as an e-book and the rewriting is completed, right? Not quite right. More like “more rewrite”. In converting my previously written self-published books to an e-book format, I noticed a couple of typos and a few phrases that could use rephrasing. I needed to spend time rereading the book with an eye toward catching the mistakes and improving the expression of ideas. Then, lo and behold, it is ready for release.

Yeah, but then I want to reformat the e-books for paperback release. The sizes differ and that means changing fonts, line spacing, etc. In doing this utilitarian labor, I notice a small inaccuracy, or a typo I had previously overlooked, or I recognize yet another way to express what I have already expressed two or three times previously. And so, yes, another rewrite is in the offing.

All of this work is because I seek a sense of completion, as does any author, as does any artist, as does anyone who creates anything. Pope Julius II, according to Irving Stone’s *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, kept asking Michelangelo if the Sistine Chapel ceiling and rear fresco was nearing completion. Mike was slow to be satisfied. How did he know that just one more stroke of the brush would not improve *The Last Judgment*? Or that his *contrapposto* pose of *The Libyan Sibyl* was not overly contra?

The best we can do is say, “As far as I can tell now, I like it the way it is.” That doesn’t mean that ten years from now we will be as equally satisfied with whatever we released to the public because we had reached a *sense* of completion and therefore felt that what we created had reach a *state* of completion.

We can go to any bookstore and buy a copy of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. We assume it is the edition that he wanted us to read or at least the final text that actors read from. False assumption. Shakespeare adjusted many of his plays from performance to performance (as current plays are often adjusted) and, at the time, he had no idea that over 400 years later, we would be reading an authoritative version. *Hamlet* may never reach a state of completion. If a scholar discovers that the folio edition was more accurate than the quarto edition or that actors preferred an earlier rendition of Polonius’s advice to his son Laertes, we might find a new edition of *Hamlet* slightly changed from the one we read in high school or college. Because ol’ Will has passed on to the big playhouse in the sky, his works are *closer* to a sense of completion than yours or mine, but completely complete they are not.

Martial styles and arts are similarly incomplete (although Classical arts tend to as close to petrified and any art can be). Most arts, however, are “living” in the way that languages are living. They change over time. I have written about this in my articles *Everything Flows*, *Killing the Art*, and others. So, how are we living

martial artists, most of whom are studying a living art that changes over time, expected ever to reach a sense of completion? We keep on training because we know we can always get better, right? But doesn't that necessitate our being constantly frustrated by never sensing the work we are doing on ourselves is "well done and ready for publication"?

Au contraire, mes amis! We publish all the time! Every time we perform, demonstrate, practice, put something on video, write something about the *budo*, or teach a class, we are publishing! And we have our ranks, titles, and positions to mark the stages of "completion" that brought us here. We reach a *sense* of completion with every rank. It is just not completely complete completion.