

Security vs. Adventure

*Freedom without order is facing the chaos outside unprepared.
Order without freedom is being unable to face the unknown at our own pace or in our own way.*

Human beings need both security and adventure, which means they need at least a little danger. Just how much of each item a person needs, at least in part, accounts for differences in personalities, values, and belief systems. Few human beings would prefer either extreme: no one wants an adventure such as escaping from rabid grizzlies in a 10-foot cage, and few would want to be secure living alone in that same cage without the bear, even if gourmet food, an HD TV, and a memory foam mattress were supplied.

When we learn, we try to feel ever more secure with the vast field of the unknown that we bring into our personal frame. We do so at a pace that our teachers believe will maximize our chance to balance the adventure with the skills it will take to master the danger.

In the West, people generally value freedom over ordered structures, but they need stable structures to make sure freedom does not revert to chaos. In the East, at least traditionally, people valued ordered structures over personal freedom, but they also needed freedom in order to keep their structures from petrifying in a world that was advancing around them. The martial arts generally come from the East and are presented to us in relatively strict structures that we dare not modify. And yet Easterners and Westerners both have a history of modifying those structures so that we not only have offshoot styles of an art, but also separate schools of those offshoot styles.

The practical result is that prospective martial artists have choices. They can find as perfect a fit as possible for their future training. The problem is that they are beginners just learning how to draw the vast field of martial knowledge into their personal frames. By the time they get a rank or two, they may feel that they don't fit as well into their art as they first thought. Since it is still too early in their training to determine if another art would fit them better, they continue and understandably become more invested in the method they chose initially. Familiarity makes them feel competent and competence makes them feel secure. If they are not careful, however, they will make the mistake of preferring a self-chosen order that cannot provide them with the variation, modification, or adventure they need to react both competently and freely when the chaotic field impinges upon the ordered frame.

How can we stay within an order that makes us feel secure while getting enough adventure/danger to test the validity of what our system teaches, thus feeling even more secure?

Want a little adventure? Why you did opt for the wall climb (complete with safety harness) at the nearby amusement park rather than an actual rock climb on Mt. Tallbutt? Isn't it because you wanted to mete out your adventure so that you did not sacrifice your safety? I prefer indoor motion odyssey rides in which my senses are fooled into believing that I am falling off a cliff rather than the "ride" in which I am pushed off a metal ledge

into a four story drop. I know which “thrills” I dislike and which titillate my latent sense of adventure. Over the years, visiting various amusement parks, I have upped the ante on myself, gradually going for more challenging rides until I find one that turns my stomach. Then I pull back a little until I am ready to up that ante again.

This is the same process as gradually letting in more chaos at a pace you can handle. A similar teaching process brings you out of the not-so-safe security of ignorance and incompetence into the somewhat more dangerous, but ultimately safer, security of experience and expertise.

Both you and the teacher are cooperating to provide you with a comfortable balance of freedom and structure, adventure and security, martial and art.