

Possession and Rejection

Sometimes you feel rejected. If you do not feel rejection easily, it is probably because you can count on someone's affection. But if you are arrogant enough to assume that you can possess that affection unconditionally, you are likely to be rejected. I have my Personal Psychology Lecture 17b prepared in one of my folders, but since this is a martial arts blog, I'll hold off.

Still, the idea of possession and rejection permeate martial arts relationships. How often have I referred to Mr. Kick S as "my student" when it would have been more accurately to say, "he is *currently* my student"? When Mr. S decided to stop training with me and start with Grandmaster Grant Dios, frankly I felt rejected. I thought Mr. S was happy and dedicated. Should we honest, trustworthy, and traditional martial artists label him disloyal? Or is he simply exercising his option as a consumer? And, did I feel rejected because, after all, I was foolish to count on him or any of my students to be unconditionally loyal?

I remember sitting at my parents' kitchen table, as a child, noticing that they drank only Maxwell House coffee. I deduced that it therefore must have been the best brand in the world and that those who did not choose Maxwell House must be sadly lacking. We were loyal to certain brands, but those brands do not personally feel rejected when you decide to occasionally purchase from a competitor; after enough personal rejections are noticed, they just work harder to keep your loyalty.

Times change, as do tastes. I don't buy Maxwell House anymore, nor do I think that those who do buy it must be sadly lacking. Rather, I simply think, "to each his own." In other words, I possess more of an *ongoing preference* than a loyalty. And that's how many martial artists tend to feel about their systems, styles, schools, teachers, etc.

Ironically, while "ongoing preferences" for various schools and teachers tend to dominate the attentions of many martial artists, at the same time, they can feel "possessed" by the single art to which they have devoted much of their lives, as if they have developed a unwavering commitment to it. So, if they study Aikido, for example, but currently are dabbling in Ralph's Ryu of Advanced Aiki-ju-jutsu, it is only to get a leg up on their Aikido training when they return to their Aiki-kai. They want to possess some of the skills of an advanced aiki-ju-jutsu practitioner, but they want to be *possessed* by the Aikido they proudly call their own. Their apparent lack of loyalty may actually to enhance a specifically preferred loyalty.

Concurrent to a martial artist's creative dilettantism is his rejection of the people he used to learn from, in a sense, the people he used to be the "customer" of. For a teacher, it is natural to offer knowledge unencumbered by the expectation of loyalty. The teacher expects students to

obey his rules and fulfill his assignments during their tenure as students while at the same time he knows that they will eventually move on. There is no such thing as securing the loyalty of students the way people try to secure loyalty with a marriage contract or a dojo contract. In today's world, how many marriage contracts guarantee even a continuing state of marriage let alone loyalty within the marriage? Fifty-percent. It's about the same with martial artists: "I'll be your faithful student forever! (*Until I decide I don't want to be anymore.*)"

The instructor sometimes feels rejected when those students move on. What keeps him from the rejection blues is that he knows he can count on someone's affection. No, not other students' affection, but his own affection for the process. A teacher teaching is a process of giving. And he or she gives even if he or she doesn't feel there is any prospect for loyalty, dedication, or continuity. It is not self-sacrifice; rather, it is being possessed by the teaching gene.