

Martial Arts & Anarchism

Anarchblr

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Self-defense should be a cornerstone of Anarchist praxis and to that extent I hope to here provide a relatively short, perhaps too short, overview of martial arts to pique the interest or perhaps guide those who may be considering joining a practice as well as tying it back to Anarchism, take what you will.

On the more philosophical side of Anarchism we find Taoism, a philosophy from around 4th Century BCE which was marked by its “*concept of wu-wei. It is often translated as merely non-action. In fact there are striking philological similarities between ‘anarchism’ and ‘wu-wei’.* Just as ‘an-archos’ in Greek means absence of a ruler, wu-wei means lack of wei, where wei refers to ‘artificial, contrived activity that interferes with natural and spontaneous development’. From a political point of view, wei refers to the imposition of authority. To do something in accordance with wu-wei is therefore considered natural; it leads to natural and spontaneous order. It has nothing to do with all forms of imposed authority.” (Anarchism and Taoism) I mention this because of the popularity of eastern martial arts in the west, and the fact that many of these Martial arts are influenced by Taoism, and any practitioner will most likely encounter these philosophies the more in depth they undertake their dedication to it, it seems relevant to include.

One other philosophy that I feel relevant to the conversation of martial arts is Jeet Kune Do. It could be considered an opposite to the way Taoism is practiced as it has inspired more aggressive forms of fighting styles than Taoism. “*Jeet Kune Do is merely a name used, a mirror in which to see ‘ourselves’... [it] is not an organized institution that one can be a member of. Either you understand or you don’t, and that is that. [...] Every movement in Jeet Kune Do is being so of itself. There is nothing artificial about it. I always believe that the easy way is the right way. Jeet Kune Do is simply the direct expression of one’s feelings with the minimum of movements and energy. The closer to the true way of Kung Fu, the less wastage of expression there is. Finally, a Jeet Kune Do man who says Jeet Kune Do is exclusively Jeet Kune Do is simply not with it. He is still hung up on his self-closing resistance, in this case anchored down to reactionary pattern, and naturally is still bound by another modified pattern and can move within its limits. He has not digested the simple fact that truth exists outside all molds; pattern and awareness is never exclusive. Again let me remind you Jeet Kune Do is just a name used, a boat to get one across, and once across it is to be discarded and not to be carried on one’s back.*” (Wikipedia) It is meant to invoke a personalized style that, while it may draw from as many or few disciplines, it will reflect the practitioner only. This, I think, will be easily digestible by the Egoist to incorporate.

Traditional Karate — Perhaps the most popular form of martial art from the East, Karate teaches basic fighting stances and punches that can be translated over to most other styles and it is a relatively low endurance fighting style. One other advantage that it has is that it teaches blocks that function as parries which, if executed correctly, can give a slight advantage as it can unbalance your opponent. However, given it is a “Sport” form of martial arts, it is low intensity, and outside of sparring it will not be very effective. In order to properly defend one’s self one needs to be put in high stress situations. By the time one reaches Yellow Belt status, enough practical moves will be learned and I’ve found everything else to be superfluous that while it looks beautiful when performed, it is functionally useless in a necessary situation.

Shaolin Kung Fu — This is a huge step above Karate for the fact that it is full contact, high stress fighting style that teaches fast series of punches that can be applied to most, if not all, situations outside of a classroom. A less intense form of Kung Fu is Tai Chi, a form which is very steeped in Taoism, the philosophy of Lao-Tzi who has been cited as the originator of Chinese Anarchism by Kropotkin and others. Tai Chi is practiced for its philosophy, low stress environment, and health benefits by people of all ages but not very much for its fighting effectiveness, unlike Shaolin Kung Fu. A dedicated practitioner of both schools may find a spiritually fulfilling and effective form of self-defense and exercise.

Boxing — Boxing’s reputation of effectiveness speaks for itself. While it is still a sport martial arts, it still provides high stress environments and practice which enables the practitioner to become accustomed to situations that might require a fight and to keep cool under such situations. It is a very direct form of fighting that doesn’t require fancy moves and it teaches excellent way of dodging and reading an opponents moves as well as how to exploit missteps in your opponent.

Kick-Boxing — All the advantages of Boxing but with kicks.

Muay Thai — Thai Boxing, it is an extremely high stress, full contact form of Boxing, on top of that, it teaches to use elbows and knees as well as hands and feet, and can have an intense form of body conditioning including the shin bone. Overall the most effective form of Boxing.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu — Constantly cited as one of the most effective form of martial arts, this one focuses on grapples and ground wrestling. Effective use of this martial art can knock out an opponent or dislocate arms.

Krav Maga — Also cited as one of the most effective forms of martial arts, this one was developed by the Israel Defense Forces and draws a lot from other fighting styles. Needless to say, it is not a Sport martial art and teaches how to most effectively deal with opponents, even lethally. It’s training reflects its genesis of real world application and military application.

Reclaim your use of violence; happy fighting comrades.

Note: I would not encourage some martial arts such as Tae-Kwon-Do or Aikido as I see them having near no practical use or being so specialized that mastery of them would require more training that could be spent developing other skills. They’re probably good exercise though.

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