



# The Power of Movement

## *The East/West Difference*

**The under-emphasis on movement** in our culture leads to a serious lack of embodied power among our leaders. One mark of the difference between those who can generalize their learning and those who cannot is an understanding and use of the principles and strategies of movement.

*By movement, we do not mean simply moving through space (for instance, as a dancer or athlete does), rather we are referring to the way in which we act and behave in the world.*

Other cultures have openly encouraged the development of individual and collective respect for the power of movement and conscious action. For example, if you were to visit China, you would see millions of people, every day, in the parks, moving and practicing movement.

It is part of the cultural heritage of the Chinese to enact through movement certain facets of their philosophy and science with the expectation that health benefits will follow.

It would not be uncommon to find a Japanese executive practicing the simple drawing of a sword or the pulling of a bow. That these activities will assist the development of certain mental or spiritual qualities that will "make the difference" in the business world is taken for granted.

Movement is not held in the same light in the Western world. There is a famous story that compares the cultures in this regard.

**Imagine that we are in fifteenth century Japan.** We come upon a small rice and sake shop, and sitting at a table, by himself, is a man eating his meal. His clothes are old and covered with patches, for he is a ronin or masterless samurai.

Into the shop come several young samurai, dressed in their exquisite livery. They are very boisterous and filled with the arrogance of youth.

Seeing that this older man has a really beautiful sword, they decide that it is too good for someone who looks so poor. So they begin insulting him, trying to draw him into a fight that they are sure they will win.

The older man just ignores them and continues to eat his meal. The weather is hot and the flies ever present. Without seeming to pay any attention to the young punks, and without disturbing his meal, the ronin just reaches up with his chopsticks and pulls several flies out of the air.

Witnessing this, the men quickly quiet down, apologize, and leave the inn. They realize that this man is a master of the sword and that they have no chance to win.

**Now** imagine that we are in the American wild West. Sitting in the saloon is an older man, poorly dressed, eating his meal. Strutting into the bar come several young cowhands from one of the big ranches.

Seeing that this drifter has a beautiful pair of guns, they begin insulting him, trying to draw him out into a fight. The man ignores them and continues eating.

The weather is hot and the flies ever present. Without seeming to pay any attention to the young punks, and without disturbing his meal, the man just reaches up and pulls several flies out of the air.

Witnessing this, the men say, "So what if you can grab flies, how good are you with a gun?"

### **This is the difference in attitude concerning movement.**

In Japan, a swordsman who could not do beautiful calligraphy was not considered to be a really excellent swordsman. To gain skill in one area and not have it extend to the totality of the person's life was unthinkable and crude. In the West, it often seems to be unimaginable that there should be any carryover at all.

In the gunslinger story, the realm of movement is separate from the rest of one's actions in the world. In the samurai story, movement is viewed as being inseparable from the rest of one's life and is a mirror of the totality of our development.

### **How I move is a statement of the whole of me.**

*The way of movement not only deals with  
the movements of the body  
but also the movement of the mind.*

*To know the movement of your opponent's mind,  
study the movement of your own mind.*

Walter Muryasz