

the allegory of "training" is astounding.

the Sufi's created "study groups", groups of individuals assembled for a purpose, and with the big picture in mind. individuals with traits necessary to the group. individuals chosen, assigned, to bring an element to the group. to create a space and momentum in a direction. to correct imbalances. to encourage certain behavior, and at times to serve as examples (in either direction).

there are also many stories of disciples being assigned work. weaving, tin-smithing, enameling, etc. these physical tasks were never openly linked to their spiritual teachings, but were used as allegorical tools. to help prepare the student for the next part of the teaching. to show real world consequences. to show, say, how bringing certain traits to the front and others behind at specific and critical points, when viewed from close seems erratic and nonsensical, but viewed from afar will create the images woven into a tapestry.

carving is the removal of what is unnecessary to expose the artists will. one learns about stages of reduction, working within constraints, and adaptation to unexpected irregularities of material. there are many tools, and they function differently in different mediums...

tin-smithing - as we shape a relatively soft metal, bend it to our will, it hardens. if we go too fast, it will crack. it must be tempered, softened with heat and time before it can be moved farther. artistry brings the proper shape and hardness together at the appropriate time.

at each moment we are making choices. weighing options. these choices all have consequences. long term and short. not recognizing an action as a willful choice, or dismissing an obviously harmful option as no option at all only robs us of the responsibility. of that choice. of owning up to it, and hopefully learning something.

by accepting the weight of our conditioning. by recognizing that all the little choices we make -like the threads of the weaver- will eventually make a picture, we are - hopefully - taking some measure of control, acting mindfully. acting with purpose.

the gym is adaptation to stressors.

the gym is an expression of discipline.

the gym is mindfulness of our selves.

the gym is our relationship to our surroundings.

strength, endurance, flexibility, speed, capacity, durability, conditioning....

the gym is where all of these words can be measured, at least in some small part of their definition.

these traits are addressed throughout the scope of their definition. while I am not trying to equate gym training, the relatively mild discomfort we put ourselves through, to the deepest ends of those terms, I believe - if we let it - it can send a ripple that way.

better men than i have said: the gym is only preparation for the real thing. it is a step on a path. a station. a crucible. a method of converting raw materials into a tool to complete a task. the best tools may give us an advantage, but only if we put in the time and effort to use them.

a hammer doesn't build a house.

perhaps more accuratley, a hammer is not a house...

time is finite. and most of us got a late start. layering these lessons is the only way I see to absorb them enough to allow them to be expressed in our personality.

constant awareness. objective tests. (healthy) community support. mentorship.

these encourage our efficiency. these drive us. force our expectations beyond....

I feel that is the function of a training center. with the time we spend, we might as well work these lessons on as many levels as we can...

learning....

-the station