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## Introduction

If one has read the Five Rings, a series of books by Miyamoto Musashi, you would be familiar with the concept of the "Way of the Warrior" or more accurately the "Way of Strategy".

If one is a Japanophile (someone interested in Japanese Culture), you would be familiar with the concept of martial art disciplines in general as they apply to everyday life.

In the introduction to the Five Rings, the translators, and to an extent Miyamoto Musashi himself, expose that the warrior is not an artist but a killer and that the discipline in his texts are not to be used for other ways of life. Many corporate execs and business management gurus tout the teachings of Sun Tzu's Art of War or Miyamoto Musashi's Five Rings as a management philosophy and the methods to run a corporation. This is a true and accurate analysis. And this text in no way uses the skills and knowledge of ending another man's life as a method to explore technology.

The "Way of Technology" or more specifically the name I seek to use is the "Way of the Tradesman"; is the skills and knowledge to apply technology to produce work or devices. The texts of Musashi Miyamoto directly make a comparison between a Warrior and a Carpenter. He describes the sword as a tool and makes an analogy of a Warrior must know his sword as a Carpenter must know his square.

He describes four specific "ways"; that of the Farmer, the Carpenter (or Artisan), the Merchant and the Warrior. He states that each person must examine his own way for their given occupation. That the Farmer must understand and know how to raise crops; the Artisan must understand their tools and the materials they work with; the Merchant (or Banker) must understand currency and markets; and finally the Warrior must understand his weapons and combat.

Specifically it is mentioned that while there may be similarities in the ways each are separate and are not to be used for the other occupations. A Farmer is not to study the way of the Merchant or the Carpenter the way of Farmers. As such there will be no exploration of the Five Rings as a martial discipline in this text. Rather we take the same structure of the texts and apply it to technology, skills and materials a Tradesman will work with.

First several concepts will be introduced to further explain the texts that follow.

## **The Five Rings**

The five rings ,or more correctly spheres, are a Buddhist concept regarding the path to enlightenment and heaven. While Miyamoto Musashi was a warrior and Kensai (sword-saint), he studied the Buddhist faith and applied their teachings to swordsmanship.

The structure of the rings is quite common but is wrapped in spiritual terminology but once explained you should recognize the basic concepts.

The first ring is Earth, it is the foundation upon which everything is built. You must first learn these concepts before you can continue on to the other rings. Like a building, without a firm foundation upon which to build your understanding will collapse.

The second ring is Water, this is understanding yourself in relation to Earth. Whatever the skills or subject you are trying to study, you must understand your own knowledge and skills to excel in the field. While some may be offended by the phrase , "know your place", as it can be used in hostility. This ring requires that understanding to know your position in relation to the subject at hand.

The third ring is Fire, this is the skills to perform the subject matter being studied. In this context it is the ability to do the work while Water is the knowledge of the work and the ability to use the tools of the trade. Fire is the ability to use those tools for the specific task at hand. It also includes the knowledge of the

materials being worked on.

The fourth ring is Wind or Air, it is the knowledge and skills of the environment and your co-workers. While in the martial sense it is used to discuss the acts of your enemies, a tradesman has no enemies. You could argue that competition is the enemy but a tradesman does not seek to kill competition. A skilled craftsman can eliminate competition by providing better quality goods and services. So the focus here will be on other team members and interacting with them and not enemies.

The fifth and last ring is Void, it is also called Nothingness or sometimes is seen as Heaven or Light. It can best be described in modern terms by using a term from a sc-fi novel series, Grok. To grok something is to understand it so completely it becomes a part of yourself. That is what Miyamoto Musashi tries to explain in his text on Emptiness. It is to make no distinction between yourself and the subject you have studied. When someone examines your skills they should see no boundary or division between your individuality and the subject at hand. It is to become one with the skills required. This is the Nothingness described by the Void Ring.

## **The Tradesman**

At several places I made use of several similar terms; the Tradesman, the Craftsman and the Artisan. Here I will explain the difference but first it doesn't matter which you use, they all roughly mean the same thing.

The Tradesman is one who plies a trade. This is an individual who uses their skill and knowledge to produce goods or perform a service for trade, that is for a price. They sell goods or their skill for currency or barter. They make their way through life by working materials into goods or as a service they can be hired to work your materials into goods.

The Craftsman is a specific tradesman that makes goods. Often these goods are hand-made, as in handicrafts, but that is not a requirement. In most cases there is little to no distinction between a Tradesman and a Craftsman. The largest will most likely be that a Craftsman often does not provide a service, they are not frequently hired. Rather they produce goods for later sale.

The Artisan does not produce goods and will be the largest distinction made here. The work produced by this tradesman is Art. It is material worked into a good whose purpose is to convey an idea or emotion. While the Tradesman and Craftsman is pragmatic in their work and have a physical benefit or value. The Artisan does not concern himself with the intrinsic value but rather the emotional impact or ideas he wishes to bring to his audience's attention. In this way I speak of the sculptor or painter and not an author or scriptwriter. The art of words can be a trade but here I speak of more material art. In no way do I seek to diminish the art of music, words or song.

Finally I do wish to speak of the programmer. Like the Artisan, the Programmer works with ideas but in a reverse manner. While an Artisan does Work to produce an Idea. The Programmer uses Ideas to produce Work. The computer is a tool like any other but one that follows instructions and acts as they are told. Like a musician uses notes on sheet music to produce a song with instruments. A Programmer uses machine instruction in source code to perform tasks of the hardware (or technical instruments) attached to a computer.

If a programmer wishes to use this text for their Way, he may do so. This text is focused more on the material work and technology but no effort will be made to exclude the Programmer. Anyone who seeks to know the Art of programming will be better served seeking texts of that name (Art of Assembly Programming by Randall Hyde). In fact, Mr Hyde's texts are either by accident or on purpose structured in a similar manner as the Five Rings. First, he introduces the concept of assembly programming and then teaches the structure of computers and proceeds to supply knowledge and skills of increasing value (mostly Earth and Water). His work on the Write Great Code series is good example of Water, Fire and Wind Rings. I haven't seen an example of the Void Ring from him, yet.

## Me

Not a reference to myself or a person. This is an ancient word, pronounced as in 'may'.

It is a concept of the laws of a trade the knowledge and the skills to perform the trade. It is a unified idea, both the definition of a trade and the ability to do so.

In Ancient Mesopotamia, the nation of Sumer, a goddess stole the laws from the temple and spread it to the people, giving them the knowledge and ability to work for themselves. This goddess was punished for her deed. It is similar to the myth of Prometheus giving man fire or of Lucifer giving man the Light of God.

Here in these texts I use it as the concept of the Void and Grok. To show that these are old ideas from many cultures not just Eastern mysticism.

A short list of these Me (there are over a hundred, and in no order) are : godship, sheperdship, kingship, priest, prostitution, art, music, eldership, heroship, carpentry, metal working, scribe, smith, leather worker, mason, basket weaving and muscial instruments.

In the Five Rings, sometimes knowledge or skill is used interchangeably with each other and the word ability. What this means is that they are all the same thing. Knowledge is required to know how to perform a skill and the skill is learned by that knowledge. Ability is the actual capability to perform. When reading the Five Rings, or this text, know that knowledge, skill and ability are the same.

## Rules

In the Five Rings there is also an inclusion of several rules that reinforce or list the ideals presented in the texts. It is the steps to implement the Five Rings and is a sort of "do or do not" set of rules to adhere to. I will not be making an extended list of such rules but may mention a few.

## **The Ring Structure of the Way of Technology**

### Earth

It is the Foundation, basis and meaning. What is technology and why do you wish to ply a trade.

### Water

It is general Knowledge, Skills and Ability. What you need to know to ply your chosen trade.

### Fire

It is specific Knowledge, Skills and Ability. What tasks to perform to ply your chosen trade.

### Wind

It is Knowledge, Skills and Ability of others (co-workers or management). The expectations of your chosen trade.

### Void

It is Knowledge, Skills and Ability of others (workspaces and teamwork). Unite efforts and process work as a team.

Sean Shaffer

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