

Arresting Shadows Summary

Miyamoto Musashi Book of Five Rings

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The author Miyamoto Musashi takes a philosophical approach to looking at the "craft of war": He writes, "There are five ways in which men pass through life: as gentlemen, warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants."

Throughout the book, Musashi implies that the way of the

Warrior, as well as the meaning of a "true strategist" is that of somebody who has made mastery of many art forms away from that of the sword, such as tea drinking (sado), laboring, writing, and painting, as Musashi practiced throughout his life.

***A warrior has developed mastery in many area's of life.

Musashi was regarded as an extraordinary artist in the use of ink's as depicted in two such paintings: "Shrike Perched in a Dead Tree" and "Wild Geese Among Reeds".

In the Book of Five Rings, Musashi talks discusses and compares many ways of life.

He notes the similar skills of artisans and foremen. When he wrote the book, the majority of houses in Japan were made of wood. In the building a house, foremen have to employ strategy based upon the skill and ability of their workers.

In comparison to warriors and soldiers, Musashi notes the ways in which the artisans thrive through events; the ruin of houses, the splendor of houses, the style of the house, the tradition and name or origins of a house. These too, are similar to the events which are seen to have warriors and soldiers thrive; the rise and fall of prefectures, countries and other such events are what make uses for warriors, as well as the literal comparisons: "The carpenter

uses a master plan of the building, and the way of strategy is similar in that there is a plan of campaign".

Musashi wrote from various perspectives, using metaphors and similes to convey his message. So, when reading a complex, 'hint' document, such as the 5 Rings. Read it from 3 different perspective's to see what gets fleshed out, through each filter.

Scholar's Perspective

Consider these questions when interpreting from this perspective:

1st Question: What is the author trying to say?

2nd: How does the author say what they're trying to say?

3rd: Why is the author's point important?

4th: Do you agree or disagree with the author?

5th: How does this work connect / compare / contrast with other works?

6th: What is the social context of the work?

All of the questions listed here could lead on to deep scholarly study. Here's Dustin Wax's guidance for exploring the social context:

To answer the 'Social Context' question:

Always consider the historical period in which a work was

created.

What kind of person wrote it, and for what kind of audience?

What historical events shaped the author's perceptions and ideas?

How was their world different from yours, and how was it similar?

Keep these questions in mind when sifting through important texts, to read it, as a scholar.

Warrior's Perspective

Keep the time filled up with your actions

- Consider Choy Li Fut and Hsing I theories

Enter the space so that the enemy is limited in space to maneuver. - Consider the Hsing I and all grappling skills. Limb control, specifically the elbow

Force many changes at once. Mental cleverness, physical positioning, timing.

Monk's Perspective

The passage and many other teachings from the Book of

Five Rings can be interpreted from a constructive perspective and not exclusively as destructive.

Musashi does not explicitly tell you to kill your enemy.

As Iain Abernethy likes to say, violence is ethically neutral. So it is how you are using it that shifts the scales.

Possibility that you can use a 'softness' or 'yielding' to overcome aggression in various circumstances. As the police officer who agreed with hostage taker.

Leaves room for powerful, forth right aggression to interrupt aggressive behavior, as did the holy woman who was tossed into the prison riot and brought peace to the situation.

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Catalyst for this episode:

Agent of Action : Kai Morgan - Budo-Inochi.com



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Tim Smith

Email: Tim@twsmith.center

More Information: Twsmith.Info