

Broken body

A philosophical anthropology inquiry into fighting

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This essay delves into the multifaceted meanings of the word “heart”, particularly its philosophical and metaphorical association in combat sports. Symbolically linked to courage, this connection traces back to ancient Greek philosophy, portraying the heart as a rational and natural source of virtue and bravery.

The analysis unfolds in two distinct sections: firstly, a philosophical genealogy dissects the rational dimensions of the term under examination, highlighting its various associations and meanings. Secondly, an exploration of the qualities inherent in a fighter is undertaken by focusing on the imagery surrounding the notion of “heart”.

The essay employs a blend of pragmatism and mysticism, drawing from the experiences and testimonies of Muay

Thai fighters and trainers. This approach aims to uncover the elusive and mysterious aspects of courage, transcending the limitations of language in exploring the essence of these rare qualities. This will be an attempt to penetrate the realm of those scarce things where words seem to abandon us.

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1. Into the heart of fighting

Heart is a concept with many meanings that occupies a special place throughout so many cultures. But if the first general impression lies on the symbolical, polysemic, and metaphorical image, the conceptual access regarding combat sports is through courage. In brief, our analysis will be developed into two parts:

1) a first part, concerning the horizon of *Into the heart of fighting*, where we will try to dig into the concept relying on a philosophical genealogical exercise, highlighting its main characteristics and elements within a Western tradition ;

2) and a second and final part, addressing our main problem: *The heart in the fight*. We will try to grasp the most elusive and mysterious quality in a fighter, building a mixed approach between pragmatism and mysticism, more closely to an Eastern vision of our problem.

These two joint unlikely sources will be developed, based, and guided through the experience and testimonies of fighters and trainers, but also in an attempt to penetrate the realm of those scarce things where words abandon us. The hardships of training and fighting Muay Thai will be our guiding light.

I would like to start this preliminary analysis by stating some important questions to clarify our point of departure. This means that we will address courage simultaneously in the ring of philosophy and fighting, both and at the same time, and this will occur inside an exercise of interpretations within the boundaries and understanding of fighting as a risk-of-death sport. This means, first, excluding all martial arts and performative alike, and affirming the heideggerian quality of the subject of analysis at hand. This means that there are dangers and risks in fighting, real dangers¹ and real risks, and serious damages, and of course, ultimately risking your life. Combat sports, or close combat², are disciplines, unlike martial arts, that takes its warrior's origins seriously, its body

1 Kimball, G., Schulian, J., *The hurt business*, MBI Aurum, London, 2013; Lewandowski, J.D., *On Boxing Critical Interventions in the Bittersweet Science*, Routledge, NY, 2022; Oates, J.C., *On Boxing*, HarperCollins, 2007; Hauser, T., *On Boxing*, University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, 2014

2 "We suggest five main categories of martial practices, distinguished from each other by five different purposes that they embody for the participant: close combat, warrior arts, martial arts, martial paths, and martial sports. We also identify some minor kinds, such as martial training, martial therapy, martial display, martial games, and martial dance". Cf: Irena Martínková & Jim Parry (2015): "Martial Categories: Clarification and Classification", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*; also Irena Martínková & Jim Parry (2011) "An Introduction To The Phenomenological Study Of Sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 5:3, 185-201, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2011.602571>; Irena Martínková & Jim Parry (2017) "Safe Danger – On the Experience of Challenge, Adventure and Risk in Education", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 11:1, 75-91, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2017.1292308>

and flesh to the front line, and suspending preemptively our inquiry regarding the possible variations if it is light or full, with or without protection, etc., our primordial focus is towards body and flesh, and our second exclusion towards *blood sports and nonblood sports*. Since it is probably clear to every reader that the path that the Olympic games are taking towards *hygienization of the games*, the reinforcement of an ethical view (also of the spectator, an ideal or medium viewer) as if ethical could be defined by clean and safe, according to the new political correctness dogma that seems to dictate our world, the days of all fighting forms³, which include blood, are probably at their last breath of life (also in the Olympic arena). This means that an interesting and deserved analysis has not yet been done, that relates blood with bestiality, the real image at the back of the heads of the “ethicists”, taking bestiality as a category, in different levels, that apply to different subjects like fighting, bullfighting, etc. It is probably a cultural soft war, but it’s already at its ending without great resistance. But getting back to our introductory line of thought, we could present some guideline categories of distinction: (that may help separate different forms of martial arts and combat sports, and even combat sports within and regarding different forms):

- a) contact/rules;
- b) damage, scale of intensity;
- c) range of techniques: limited or multiple (the reality check);
- d) blood;
- e) risk of death (intentional – present / or by accident – improvisável / não intencional).

Some may defend that *martial arts and combat sports* may differ regarding the *spiritual and ethical* outcomes or processes, personal development, etc., but both have a transformative power for the person⁴. One of the most interesting features of combat sports, but also martial arts, is the capacity to develop what is usually addressed as courage. This rational, and natural, association is a long-standing relationship with war and death, that thematically goes back to the ancient Greek philosophy, of virtue ethics, and that is usually associated with bravery and heroism. Courage doesn’t stand alone on the philosophical

3 This includes all forms of fighting, from the most spiritualized and ritualized, such as tai chi or chi kung in its game of disguise as fighting and slowing down the speed of combat to an almost meditative form, to the most barbaric and contemporary forms in the rescue of the Roman past such as MMA. Cf: Holt, J., Ramsay, M., *The Philosophy of Mixed Martial Arts*, Routledge, 2021

4 Cf. the video testimonial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAPAorkJ9uQ> , Lawrence Kenshin. 2021. Cf: <https://www.lawrencekenshin.com>

battlefield, and its general features are intrinsically connected to fear, risk, and danger. Overcoming and accepting them is an essential part of courage. As Napoleon Bonaparte said once: “Courage isn’t having the strength to go on - it is going on when you don’t have strength.” In this sense, we will try to understand courage in two main paradigm models of comprehension:

- a) *The courage – reason*: regarding Western tradition;
- b) *The courage – heart*: regarding an Eastern vision.

2. The *courage–reason* paradigm (and its complex silhouettes)

We will analyze the term ‘heart’, through a brief philosophical genealogical exercise, highlighting its associations and meanings, but it will be needed to dismantle the expectation of a full and detailed explanation of such a vast notion. Even so, one could draw some lines of access:

A) First of all, a primordial access to courage as a virtue⁵. So, for most of us, if we were challenged to define courage we could probably, and generally do agree, that courage is, in fact, a virtue that deals with enduring hardships, overcoming fear, and facing fear, or that it has a great extense, or is in, a relation to fear, like the bisons running towards the storm. Being the storm.

Courage is certainly a rich ground for dialectical and dilemmatic debates, from the possibility of understanding courage in different levels and types⁶, and that organizes different types of attributes that generally are addressed through the conceptual and moral spectrum of resilience, commitment, endurance, determination, etc.

B) In Greek antiquity, all of this could be summarized on the shoulders of Aristotle⁷ with the notion of *excellence*, *arête*. From endurance to accessing risk

5 A linear access would be through the idea of courage as an existential and practical virtue, a point of equilibrium between extreme positions, an Aristotelian practical wisdom, or the later interpretation according to the cardinal virtues.

6 Physical courage, emotional courage, intellectual courage, social courage, moral courage, spiritual courage, etc. Cf: Putman, Daniel, *Philosophical roots of the concept of courage*, In <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-22821-001>; but also in its more complex dimensions towards understanding nodes such as bravery, courage, means and ends, etc. Cf: Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg, *The Two Faces of Courage*, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/philosophy/article/abs/two-faces-ocourage/53BF6A90759428FD42FFE8C3B2CF1479>

7 Barnes, J., Kenny, A. (Ed.), *Aristotle’s ethics: the complete writings*, Princeton University Press (2014), p.73-79

danger, this specific hermeneutical access has a certain aura of nobility⁸, or in a more perfect interpretation, it concerns an *extreme possibility*⁹;

C) This idea of excellence brings us closer to our idea of virtue ethics but also of an idea that is mostly ignored, and rarely addressed, of *ethical virtues interconnectivity*, according to a non-isolation principle¹⁰;

D) Pragmatism and existence. Two main possibilities are at our disposal for interpretation and delving deeper into the topic: 1) the first approach regarding the stoic¹¹ perspective regarding life, possibly in specific areas, but mainly as a whole, and 2) related to Kierkegaard¹² and the tension between micro and macro, finite and infinite, in its relation to courage and humility, and the learning to suffer¹³;

E) Silvio Lima's reflection on courage¹⁴, beyond the physicality, the relation to fear in its paradoxical¹⁵ structure and specific identity, and expression, in each person;

8 The primacy of courage as a sort of pillar, or as Winston Churchill puts it: "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it has been said, it is the quality which guarantees all others". Cf: Yearley, L.H., *Mencius, and Aquinas Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage*, State University of New York Press (1990)

9 Cf: Caeiro, A.C., *A Areté como possibilidade extrema do humano*, INCM, Lisboa, 2002

10 Fortitude, perseverance, patience, temperance, etc. Testimony of this complexity are the views from Cicero to Kierkegaard. In this regard prudence seems to occupy a central role, calculation between wild, unrestricted surrender and decisive, solid action, related to fortitude in the sense that a fighter must have confidence and self-belief.

11 Addressing for example a four virtues taxonomy: wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation.

12 Existential courage as an affirmation of being oneself, and integrating anxiety, despair, guilt, etc., in the face of the vertigo of existence.

13 Suffering, humility, and acceptance. Cf: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44489081>; "Anyone who really knows mankind might say that there is not one single living human being who does not despair a little, who does not secretly harbor an unrest, an inner strife, a disharmony, an anxiety about an unknown something or a something he dare not even try to know, an anxiety about some possibility in existence or an anxiety about himself." "Time, Courage, Selfhood: Reflections on Kierkegaard's Discourse 'To Preserve One's Soul in Patience'". In: Grøn, A., Hansen, B., Rosfort, R., *Thinking with Kierkegaard*, De Gruyter, Boston, 2023, p.254

14 "O estoíco grego como Epitecto e Marco Aurélio, o apóstolo cristão primitivo como S. Paulo, o reformador moral à Fichte ou Rukin ensinam o varão idealista a portar-se na dura e vasta "arena" do mundo perante o "combate" da vida (qualquer que este seja) "como bom jogador", a saber conquistar a "coroa" da glória ou a receber a "palma" de martírio com o mesmo inalterável sorriso de fé e esperança na imperecibilidade ou invencibilidade dos ideais." Falcão, P., *Silvio Lima e o desporto*, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2010, p.170

15 "Existe uma curiosa especialização paradoxal do medo em vários homens; há quem tenha medo de certas cousas e quem tenha audácia para outras cousas", Falcão, P., *Silvio Lima e o desporto*, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2010, p.173, <https://digital-is-dsp.uc.pt/bitstream/10316.2/2615/9/SilvioLima%282010%29.pdf>

F) a sort of *genius*. Like Wittgenstein¹⁶. Between character¹⁷, originality¹⁸ and courage¹⁹. But how can we understand, and interpret, the words of Wittgenstein? Through Cus D'Amato and Mike Tyson²⁰, regarding the hero and the coward. They both feel the same, the same fear, but act differently (when someone, or something, brings the pain).

In the impossibility of deepening all the general characteristics and elements of courage, risk, danger, fear, etc., let's place this impossibility in a general movement of overcoming, acting, not freezing, and stopping. Of course, for most people, who don't belong to the philosophical arena, all these categorizations may be subjected to doubts, a sort of a boring waste of time, and even rhetoric. Because in an immediate perspective, courage is none of this. It is in fact an impulse, an instinct, that gets triggered or not. And they are right. And they are wrong. Because in action, in ethics, the axiological engine, the cause of the action is a crucial point. Beyond, or before that, the question of courage can be divided concerning its rational and reflexive central question: the courage of action and the courage of thought. There are some men, only a few, who seem to accumulate this double dimension, like Wittgenstein. Exemplary cas-

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- 16 There is a hermeneutic bias towards Wittgenstein, who follows a historicist presupposition that could never be applied to thinkers who think with life, within life (like Kierkegaard or Nietzsche). Thus, over these past decades, two fundamental interpretative keys seem to be missing: 1) *Thinking with your feet*. Wittgenstein is a walker, a sports or bodily thinker. His thinking is in motion, synchronous, and in tune with his body in motion. He thinks on the move, and when he gets home, inside or outside, he writes down his notes; 2) *Peculiar humour*. Wittgenstein's humor is very refined. Perhaps because of his wealth, his hunger for life and his disagreement with it, his search, etc. The reasons for this could be as vast as it would take a short treatise on humor just to explain Wittgenstein and his peculiar laughter. An essential clue: it's not really Wittgenstein's humor, it's his sense of humor and its expression, its form. A style. Laughter may not be, or mean, the opposite of seriousness.
- 17 "The measure of genius is character, — even though character on its own does not amount to genius. Genius is not 'talent plus character', but character manifesting itself in the form of a special talent. Just as one man will show courage by jumping into the water after someone, so another will show courage by writing a symphony. (This is a weak example.)", Wittgenstein, L., *Culture and value*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998, p.40
- 18 "Freud's originality too was like this, I think. I have always believed — without knowing why — that the real germ of psychoanalysis came from Breuer, not Freud. Of course, Breuer's seed grain can only have been quite tiny. Courage is always original." Wittgenstein, L., *Culture and value*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998, p.42
- 19 "One might say: 'Genius is talent exercised with courage.'; (...) Not funk but funk conquered is what is worthy of admiration & makes life worth having been lived. Courage, not cleverness; not even inspiration, is the grain of mustard that grows up to be a great tree. To the extent there is courage, there is a connection with life and death. (I was thinking of Labor's & Mendelssohn's organ music.) But it is not by recognizing the want of courage in someone else, that you acquire courage yourself". Wittgenstein, L., *Culture and value*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998, p.44
- 20 *Fear is like fire*. The Hero & The Coward: Cus D'Amato. In <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T13z3U2dLM> ; Between feelings and acting, the psychological advantage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9ZjkDsGO3Y>

es and therefore rare. It is a problem that has been thought of since the origins of our culture and that is linked, beyond the military frontier, to a philosophical question, but also an ethical and moral one. The problem of courage is, in a certain sense, a false problem. It is canceled by the very realization of the act of courage. And that is linked to time. It is only a hesitation that is resolved at the moment. However, negatively, one can internally pose the problem of postponement or procrastination. What does procrastination mean? Not having the courage to solve it? Or being held hostage by laziness? Thus, the problem unfolds positively, for example concerning the act of greater or lesser courage and in the debate of military honors of recognition, and negatively with what is not courageous. What seems simple may not be, that is, we are faced with the essential ambivalence of courage and cowardice. In this regard, film director John Ford, who fought in the Second World War and was present on D-Day, tells us about this ambivalence in his discussion about whether courage is innate or acquired, stating that his craziest and most fearless acts were always those of a coward trying to prove that he was not, but that deep down he knew he was a coward.

Courage has an umbilical relationship with fear. Why? Because it is an absolute problem that works at the limits of survival and radical affirmation of the solid structure of life: you either kill or you die. On the battlefield, this is most evident. The question of courage, besides being innate or trained, is realized. And it is not only individual, or exhausted in military life²¹. It has to do with life. All of life.

And when life puts us on the ropes we have to spit out the truth.

If we want to live, life demands courage from us. This may be because courage may also belong to that strange virtue of bearing and enduring life itself. But there are different stages in life, biologically speaking. What does this have to do with courage?

It is the circumstance that courage is generally associated with youth. That existential stage where it seems we are capable of anything, where impetus and courage reign. We are invincible when we are young. But this is not quite true. In the philosophical debate, the question is about virtue, but also about the difficulty of identifying more or less courageous acts with another virtue: prudence. And maturity, as opposed to youth, has more to do with prudence. The strength of youth seems to contrast with more mature prevention, with experience, anticipation, and restraint. Not to confuse courage with foolish-

²¹ "So courage is not inherently a military virtue. It can arise in any situation where there is sudden danger, catastrophe, or potential loss of life.", Walton, D., *The Virtue of Courage*, <http://www.dougwalton.ca/papers%20in%20pdf/87courage.pdf>

ness, for example, drunken courage which is just the lack of vision of danger by chemical effect.

There is a natural relationship between youth and courage. The courage of youth is his vital passion, and his being fearless has to do with this confidence in his condition. This is not to say that someone more mature cannot be courageous. What is problematized here is the relationship between courage and prudence, in terms of virtue, and ultimately the understanding of the value of a courageous act. That act of courage can be greater when one risks more, the risk already being within the logic of courage. Courage is about overcoming. Of risk, of fear, of odds. Abandonment to the game. Blind abandonment. Decided in that instant. Which is different from pondering putting yourself in a risky situation or deciding to do so. Of course, the debate about the virtue of courage is different from the analysis of a courageous act, but they can't be too far apart. This is why we talk about virtue and excellence. Excellence is the confrontation of the impossible. We are afraid of what escapes our measure. Courage is about disproportion.

Holiness or sanctity is the disproportion of courage. And it implies sacrifice, readiness, and fortitude.

Fortitude is the root of courage. It is born from inner strength. But also out of love for one's neighbor, and love for others. This relationship with others often allows one to see in a courageous act the forgetfulness of self. In heroism, unlike cowardice, one leaves no one behind. Morally determined by the circumstances of risk, pressure, and altruism, paradoxically it is these very indicators that attest to the fact that courage goes beyond moral duties. It is almost impossible to determine the decision-making and rational decision-making process present in an act of courage. The absence of pondering, or instantaneous pondering, implies the uniqueness of each situation. The solitary character of this is across all times, but in times of war, it becomes more visible. Beyond all possible mythologies and idealizations, the war hero already presupposes an excessive dose of courage. In a scenario of destruction and slaughter, we can only imagine what kind of character inhabits those superior gestures that defy all odds. If these gestures go beyond moral limits by their exceptionality, they leave a trail of inspiration for the ordinary viewer. It is admiration for the impossible that inspires. It inspires ordinary courage over the extraordinary. And indeed it may not be in exceptional circumstances like war. The hero as a rare case, or courage as an ordinary element of humanity, always causes astonishment when it happens in the most adverse situations, as in illness for example. Illness testifies to this relationship of the problem of courage to experiences of pain and endurance, showing how much sacrifice

there is in courage. If we think of cases of struggle against prolonged illness we can get a pale idea of the fortitude and courage that exists in these people. There an act of courage becomes an attitude of courage. This is also why we talked earlier about the relationship of courage to life as a whole. In this existential perspective, we see courage concerning fear and anxiety. We are all in some sort of fight. In the ontological relation to anxiety and despair of human nature, courage allows overcoming and surpassing as self-affirmation. It is given as an overcoming. Also of oneself.

3. The *courage – heart* paradigm

The *courage-heart* paradigm: regarding an eastern vision, *the heart in the fight*, or more than courage.

Like in the West, there is also an Eastern tradition²² and vision towards courage and fighting. Without going into detail about the particularities of each Asian culture, one possible way of access is through martial arts and combat forms. Almost every country has its own martial form and developed forms of defense²³ and close combat from Muay Thai, Lethwei, Kung Fu, Judo, Karate, Muay Lao, Taekwondo, Bokator, Pencak Silat, Silat Melayu, Kalaripayattu, Viet Vu Dao, etc. All of these forms of combat that are spread out in every style and dimension could also be an image and a doorway to the philosophical and pragmatical problem of courage, and is a real response to real political and anthropological issues such as war, invasions, and defense, in brief, a response to survival. What we are trying to do here is to grasp the unfixable, between pragmatics and mystical considerations, to apprehend the qualities of a fighter. Courage is essential but it does not stand alone on the battlefield or in the ring. Technique, power (potency), speed, stamina, strategy (capacity to deceive the opponent, or to create traps for the counter), stamina – endurance (the actual *physical heart*²⁴), and explosion²⁵, all of these seem to be reasonable mensurable qualities. But there is another set and realm of qualities that are harder to

22 We could draw examples such as in Hindu culture Courage (shauriya), Bravery (dhairya), and Patience (taamasa), or in Taoism (Tao Te Ching) where courage is born from love, a Chinese perspective towards harmony, or even in Islam regarding courage as facing evil, and the inner and outer struggle building faith and good actions.

23 Cf: <https://sportsaspire.com/martial-arts-types>

24 Cf: Falcão, P., *Silvio Lima e o desporto*, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2010, p.186

25 Explosion is one of the most important qualities in the sense that, like music or dance, it implies a variation of rhythm, playing with different elements such as surprise or dissimulation. Probably this sort of analysis equation could be applied to different sports, but our

access and to capture conceptually. Instinct, heart, gut feeling²⁶, sacrifice, they all seem to be mysterious qualities. The equation between fight and skills is not an easy task, especially between rational and non-fully rationalized thematization. If Courage as control could be presented between self-control and discipline, at least within the realm of martial arts and combat sports, heart could also be a strong case. As a thought-image, but also as a real quality that a fighter must have. From all the qualities mentioned, heart²⁷ is the most important.

In Muay Thai²⁸ this is particularly true, where the volume of destruction and resistance is taken to the limit. In Muay Thai everything is heart and bone, blood and guts. There are no soft parts in the fight. Maybe just the first round which in Thailand is used for accessing your opponent and placing your bets. In Muay Thai the hardships of preparation and training are always under the principle of hard training, easy fighting. If ‘heart’ could correlate to Courage (“cor” is the Latin word for heart), it goes beyond in Thai, it’s more, where heart is translated by *jai-su*²⁹ that means *your heart will not give into defeat*. It will never give up. Never surrender. Lionhearted, you will be in a strange place between belief³⁰ and defeat, believe, and win. Again, again and again. Train hard, fight easy. And inside the mystery, we find a *paradox* (just to make our life easier): *You can’t teach heart, but you can learn heart*.

Having heart is a sort of surrender (entrega), to give yourself into the fight.

Emptiness and flow, a magic connection to the hyper-present, a *flow*³¹ in the fight, flow in breathing, “*power from the hip, power from the heart - for the heart power out, power come back*”. Exhaustion, overcoming, restarting.

case is more clear since fighting is mostly based on this capacity for explosion and exploring different opportunities.

26 For example in the stare-down before the fight, but also during the fight when one of the fighters takes a chance in a sudden and unexpected move.

27 Cf: <https://youtu.be/hvV6LkKrrEM>

28 The history of Muay Thai is long and impossible to synthesize here, but one could briefly mention that it took a sports turn in the 20th century, reaching its golden era by the end of the century. Its roots are lost in history, but Muay Thai Boran is its most original (where there were probably no rules, no limits) and cultural example that remains to our days. In the old days the techniques, built towards the art of war, evolved to a sporting/modern muay thai, with the exclusion of forbidden death techniques, retains the radical force of a fight for victory and life professional combat in Thailand retains even today the proximity to death, the violence of combat, and the impossibility of leaving a ring untouched, cause, along with the orgiastic frenzy of betting, a parallel world, with no comparative image that can be accessed and fully understood in the western world.

29 *ใจ: (jai-su, lionhearted).*

30 Muhammad Ali: “If my mind can conceive it, if my heart can believe it--then I can achieve it.”

31 Regarding the notion of flow please cf: Pereira Martins, C., *Do Desporto / On Sports*, IEF / FD, 2021, Foreword, <https://estudogeral.uc.pt/handle/10316/96701>. For a more detailed technical, historical, and case-study analysis please cf: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-oNbMyP4vFE>

But what does happen in that dark place, exactly?

Coming back again, and again. Never throwing in the towel. Consistency in getting up again, continuing. Consistency is one of the key concepts in sport. Consistency, repetition, training, and waiting for evolution.

3.1 *The fire in the fight*

But the heart must be filled and fueled by something. I propose that we consider the hypothesis of fire³². It is a fire that fuels the heart. You have to be burning inside. *There is a secret fire in every heart.*

3.1.1 Variations on fires (that fuel the heart in the fight)

Since we are dealing with an attempt to reach elusive concepts, and trying to ground and give them some more intelligible form, we will try to map some of its most visible contours and silhouettes. The first, and more obvious, access could be addressed to the heart on fire, or hate. Hate is probably one of the most important substances, along with love, that can feed a fight, and that includes all its derivatives such as vengeance, etc. The strength of hate lasts longer than anything else. If an image could be built inside this idea, the fire and fury in Mike Tyson's wild version could be close to what we are attempting to draw here. The hunger to win, never giving up: the inner fire, the inner war, (as Ernst Jünger's WWI Diaries so brilliantly addresses *war as an inner experience*) that burns visibly and invisibly, a sort of hunger, an infinite fall into the well. The hunger to play, hunger to fight, is probably fueled by these wildfires, in the process of facing and releasing a savage beast, a contradictory process that plays with the inner monster, the gorilla, and at the same time control, lightness, strategy, thought, tactics, deception and illusion, mistakes, traps, etc.

The variations in defense and attack are the fighters dancing into the fire. What's a fight? A combat? Raw violence under the control of discipline and strategy, forged by technique and effectiveness.

But the violence, the rage is still there. In a low burning fire... Underneath the surface. Violence is like boiling lava waiting for the opening of the Vulcano mouth, the hidden desire to set the world on fire. The coach's work before a fight is very practical and mystical at the same time: they have to reach togeth-

32 A primordial essence, an identity of being and the cosmos, order and beginning. As in Heraclitus. Cf: Nietzsche, F., *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Gateway Editions (1996); Heraclitus, *Fragments*, Penguin Classics (2003); Kahn, C.H., *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, Cambridge University Press (1981); Guthrie, W.C.K., *A History of Greek Philosophy, Volume 1*, Cambridge University Press (1985)

er, an approximation to a hybrid state between firing up the fighter and calming the fighter. Not easy to reach, much less to describe. There is an oscillation, like the Buddha's fire Sermon on passion and disillusion, also during training, that we call in our more rational system a process, but that erases a mystical and religious part of the fight. As Khabib Nurmagomedov once said: "I take people into deep waters and they discover themselves". Another way to put it is probably understanding fight and combat as playing with fire. In conclusion, there is a hidden fire in every fighter's heart.

3.2 *The heart in the fight*

There are many types of fight, combat, or war, as there are many different types of hearts. In a fight the *flow* is also a *focus*, or as Kant put it, an *imaginary focus* (*focus imaginarius*³³), and that could be translated to heart and commitment, total surrender to the struggle, to the other, to the moment, present. This is probably true for most sports practices.

3.2.1 (Some) Variations of Fighting Hearts

The problem of getting older, maybe the most daunting, is repetition. Kierkegaard was a genius as we all know, and he too had his big fights³⁴. The experience of life makes every one of us build secret, explicit or implicit, categories about others, and about the other's characters, i.e., their hearts, and their nature. In Thailand, they went a little further and built a whole taxonomy³⁵ around hearts

33 Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1996, (A644/B672), p.619

34 Professors, journalists, even love and passion. And of course, the most important, with God.

35 For the full typology, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/yp233ecm>." 1) *Jai dii*: The word 'dii' means good so if somebody tells you that you are 'jai dii' it's a big compliment; being kind or good-hearted is a trait that is particularly admired in Thailand. 2) *Jai dam*: The word dam means black so a person who is 'jai dam' lacks feelings or pity. 3) *Dii jai*: Used in this combination 'dii jai' means happy. There is another phrase for happiness, 'mii kwaam-suk', but 'dii jai' is commonly used when people say that they are happy. 4) *Jai yen*: 'Yen' in this instance means cool so to have a cool heart means you are calm or easy-going. Thai people will tell you that being 'jai yen' is a good thing, not least because it fits in with Buddhist philosophy and helps to avoid confrontation. However, don't believe any guidebook that tells you that every Thai person is jai yen! 5) *Jairawn*: 'Rawn' means hot and just as the weather can be hot so can your heart. The nearest equivalent in English is being a hot-head and you should always remember that in Thailand being jai yen is an admirable quality in any person. A Thai proverb says, "If your heart is volcano how shall you expect flowers to bloom in your hand." 6) *Tok jai*: This is an expression used to denote surprise or shock, so if somebody decides to play a practical joke on you and jumps out from behind a cupboard, you can say 'tok jai'. The word 'tok' means to fall or drop so your heart drops in shock. 7) *Sabai jai*: If you're on a beach, swinging in a hammock with a cold beer in your hand and the sound of the waves lapping the shore then you are likely to be 'sabai jai' which means that you are contented or

and possible typologies. Our main interest was to circumscribe the meaning and range of the concept of *jai-su* regarding fight and combat. But different hearts generate different fighters and different combat forms³⁶ also. Of course, nowadays, it's probably outdated³⁷, or even romantic, a sort of philosophical, even mystic, approach to this sort of matter. A mystical view of the heart relates to an attempt to capture what we are probably missing beyond the inherent complexity of every sports form. But there are no sports without players, without the person that plays, as Manuel Sérgio so eloquently puts it. From all the almost infinite possible categories that we could build around the connection between the type of heart and type of fighter, I would like to address mainly three possibilities:

a) *the deep fighter*. Probably embodies the stereotype of the brainier athlete, more intelligent. And its depth comes from a strange balance between lightness and seriousness, between laughter and tears. Maybe a very specific melancholic type. "As trevas do meu coração", or the darkness of my heart, is also balanced with an acute view of existence. Desire³⁸ as the essential identity of the event of human existence: but man was created with a hole in his heart. A hole that no power, knowledge, or possession could fill. The pain of the hole

at ease ('sabai' translates as comfortable). 8) *Waan jai*:Waan translates as sweet so before you call somebody waan jai (sweetheart) make sure they feel the same way about you! If you do call somebody waan jai you may get a laugh and a response of 'bpaak waan' (sweet mouth). 9) *Kreng jai*: The whole subject of kreng jai is quite complicated but it's about respect, consideration, and social hierarchy, all of which are very important in Thai society. 10) *Sao jai*: When you leave Thailand at the end of your stay you may well be 'sao jai' (sad). Thai friends may be sia jai (sorry) to see you go as well as also being sao jai."

- 36 We must never forget the specificity of combat sports. It's not like when someone misses a goal and gets really disappointed with their performance. In fighting, the price you pay is very high and ranges from brain damage and broken bones to scars for the rest of your life. The lightness of some non-arena combat sports has another, more transcendental and intangible kind of translation in this regard.
- 37 The main and dominant interpretation of all the possibilities of understanding this specific phenomenon revolves around the psychology of sport and its relation to emotions and other concepts and operative tools. The argument I am proposing here is that there is something beyond, or before, a strict analytical positioning when you are dealing with fighters.
- 38 In this sense, there is a coincidence between West and East, in Buddhist and Christian perceptions of desire.

could translate to different forms: broken heart³⁹, heavy heart, hollow⁴⁰ heart, lonely⁴¹ heart, etc. There is an emptiness, a void, a hunger;

b) *the steel fighter*. Related to our last definition, but probably unaware of that, this steel fighter is based on a hunger from which his iron heart is filled with willpower and determination. Also, and simultaneously, a cold heart, neither rage nor pity. The hungry⁴² vheart, is a heart on fire and bloodthirsty;

c) *the humble fighter*. This is a complex and rare fighter, but usually the most common in the champions list of achievements. Like Baudelaire⁴³, they eat their own heart. In an absolute and absurd movement, they mix sacrifice and exhaustion. Exhaustion is, paradoxically, opening your heart too. The fighter gives it all, all in. Humility and heart: the energy of the warrior lies in his honest and true heart, always spiting the truth. Facing oneself in the eyes. Facing and diving into oneself, in its infinite source of pain and fears⁴⁴.

3.3 Conclusion: Fighting into the heart of darkness

Big heart, hungry heart, true heart, from all perspectives there is a common ground in which human existence is marked by an essential determination that distinguishes it from everything else: the heart. Of course, the meaning of heart is vast and polysemic even within the same culture. But the meaning of the heart in the fight is ultimately the fighter fighting with himself, and with his ghosts and fears. With that inner void and abyss. The perfect image for this proposition is shadow boxing: someone, alone or with oneself in the mirror, drawing movements of attack and defense.

39 Broken heart could mean a romantic tragedy, an absolute disappointment, a love that dies, but also a loss of the meaning of life. The task of philosophy is to ask good and difficult questions. And not to give simplistic answers. The world and life may be illogical, but they must have meaning. Life, the self, and the world must have a unity, a meaning. Could this be the hidden and unexplained inquiry behind Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*? An encrypted treatise on despair? How can we understand that we are constituted in the form of meaning? And that we can die if we lose the meaning (of life)? Isn't this question, or statement, too absurd? An undeniable fact: a broken heart is like a crack and wound in time, in the heart of time: an implosion. A destruction.

40 Empty heart: when the fighter has no soul, no spirit of sacrifice, he gives up easily. This is probably the worst form of fighter.

41 "De que vale ter coração e não ter o amor de ninguém." "What's the point of having a heart and not having anyone's love?". It's very important, the social and family net that can support and become a secure base, an unconditional support for the athlete.

42 This form is usually linked to the idea of the underdog, and to the current expression in boxing clubs: "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog"

43 Molder, M.F., *O químico e o alquimista*, Relógio'Água, Lisboa, 2011

44 Fear understood in its deepest philosophical sense, such as the fear of death or the fear of loneliness, and not related to small fears such as psychological or pathological phobias.

The heart of the fight is the encounter with oneself: with truth. Naked and raw. The heart of the fight is the essence of the warrior⁴⁵. There is one final thought that would be important to realize, and that for most people that are not related to sports might seem a bit odd: the idea of joy in pain. And even worse, to work with pain, inside the pain.

In conclusion, maybe we should just leave that open space to remain free and unrevealed, perhaps we must not forget what Pascal so perfectly saw: *the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know, of which reason knows nothing*. The reasons of the heart are sometimes not open to reasoning like the stars in the sky could be just there for us to admire. Perhaps in the end, the *heart* is the soul of the fight.

⁴⁵ Like Musashi saw in the *Path of the Warrior* that relates to a more profound insight of combat through Bushidō. Cf: Musashi, M., (1643) *The Book of Five Rings*, Shambhala Publications; Musashi, M., *Musashi's Dokkodo* (The Way of Walking Alone), Stickman Publications, 2015; Nitobe, I., *Bushido The Soul of Japan*, Tuttle, Tokyo, 1969

