



LEARNING THROUGH DETACHMENT

COMMAND

parallels

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Command Parallels is not a military exercise.

Sure sounds like one, right?

Command should be important to all professionals — command of mind, hands, workflow, others' attention, etc. To lack command is to be less of a professional.

The question becomes:

what's the best way to achieve command?

This resource offers a refreshing approach.

Step back from the thing you're trying to command. Attempt to command something else. Explore parallels.

This exercise can be as simple as recalling a parallel, or as active as going through a physical activity.

For many, physical activity releases the mind.
It's not the kind of release that leads to getting lost.
It's the kind that leads to thinking more freely.
Clarity.

It's the distance that helps your cause.
You allow yourself to connect to a greater pattern.
It's rare that one thing doesn't relate to other things.

**Create distance from what you need to learn.
Allow yourself to enjoy a parallel.
Enjoyment eases the stress of the need.
Return to the original task — loser, wiser!**

Don't fall sucker to your "inner western struggle" —
the notion that if you work hard enough, then you'll succeed.

There's working hard.

There's working smart.

You can't force the mastery you seek.

In the mix with strength, endurance and wits
is a little thing called finesse.

It's subtle.

It's not easily achieved.

It comes from profound understanding.

Profound isn't always difficult to attain.

Often, it's easy to grasp.

Simply change your perspective.

Try again.

Finesse arrives with a broader knowledge of how things work —
one that far exceeds any single task directly in front of you.

Here's a recent example.

I wanted to learn to play the cajón (*pronounced kab-bone*).

I saw one being performed in concert.

This video demonstrates the cajón's appeal:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_VhLCEkwi8&list=UUDhbP-B8G37_KOQX19Yb-Og&index=10&feature=plcp

A cajón is a wooden box with rubber feet.

Some feature an internal snare and/or external jingles.

The adornments are there to mimic a complete drum kit.

It appears to be the simplest instrument. In fact, anyone can produce sound from a cajón.

Orchestrating the full range of tones is another matter.

Kick drum. Snare. Tom tom. Tambourine.

Learning how each genre sets its tempo — that presented yet another level.

FYI, I paid \$199 for my cajón here:

<http://www.guitarcenter.com/Pearl-Primer-Jingle-Cajon-105349237-i1535607.gc>

Beyond just striking a cajón, there's a method to commanding it.

Loosen up.

Measure how strong you hit.

Control where you strike.

Bounce off the face of the drum.

Don't dampen the tone.

This video demonstrates cajón basics:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sH9Q1tn1s4&feature=related>

Before choosing my command parallel,

I was also curious about cajón construction.

The knowledge of how something is built
can quickly inform how it's meant to be utilized.

Don't ignore mechanics.

I found this video from a cajón carpenter:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVZN_mdz7Ks&feature=related

What other skills might inform cajón drumming?

Stepping away from the task at hand will make you wiser. Greater understanding will enhance your ability to execute. Better than execution, finesse may become attainable.

The first command parallel that occurred to me?

I stumbled upon this swimming video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6n_SrjLypA&feature=related

Yes, there are parallels between swim and drum strokes.

I recalled my honeymoon in the Dominican Republic.

While swimming, I was challenged by rough tides.

Working hard was not a solution.

The ocean is mightier than any one of us.

Allow your arms and hands to be decisive yet supple.

Reach forward.

Scoop and pull back.

Undulate.

Settle into a rhythm.

**It's one thing to hit something.
It's another to whip toward
and strike through something.**

Another parallel for striking a cajón?

Hitting a baseball.

You can swing stiffly, in an attempt to clobber a pitch,
or you can swing fluidly to catch and fling the ball.

Most focus on meeting the ball,

when it's far more productive to strike *through* the ball.

Here's how Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn instructs on the subject:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhVSBMjLwsA>

Balance is important.

Hitting through the ball provides far more power.

I've hit home runs, and I stand a mere 5' 9".

Do you prefer tennis?

Here's Roger Federer's forehand stroke (in slow motion):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z48-SP86LPU&feature=related>

In exploring command parallels,
back away from that thing you need to master.

**Find something else that's wholly different,
yet will likely offer related lessons.**

Free your mind as you perform the parallel.
Give it an honest effort.
Be aware of what's transpiring.
Look at how the masters execute their craft.

Even before you make substantial progress,
the reasons for why you were struggling with the original task
should begin to present themselves.

**Fight off the urge to quit the parallel.
Don't oversimplify the journey!**

This is the second part of honest effort.
First, commit to a serious try.
Second, stay with it.

Patience is critical.

Humility is paramount.

Don't assume what will likely come next,
just because a task appears to be heading somewhere.

Don't deny the surprise twist.

**Sometimes, that's the most important lesson
— how to navigate the unexpected.**

Parallels are not immediately obvious to all people.

Lessons can take longer to see and leverage for some.

Practice patience.

There's something magical in these parallels.

Give them an honest effort.

Let me know what happens.

Email me at eric.s.townsend@gmail.com.

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