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The Power of The Way



A Spiritual Journey

by Nodan

Lighthouse Productions

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Edition 2

Warning!

The breaking and self-defense demonstrations shown in this book can be dangerous and should not be attempted without the supervision of a qualified instructor

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Introduction

After training 15 years in the martial arts, I met Quan Li, who had received a black belt in Shotokan karate from an “enlightened” master called “Sensei.” But Sensei stopped teaching karate in favor of aikido and kobudo (weapons), because he believed his ferocious “one strike” art no longer fit in a civilized society. Consequently, I became Quan’s student to learn Sensei’s “one strike” art. In time, I also joined Sensei’s aikido school to take advantage of the master’s spiritual wisdom.

Along the way Sensei taught me that karate could be practiced on two levels. The first is physical, in which only one’s natural abilities are used. This is *karate jutsu* (empty hand technique). The board breaking demonstrations in my YouTube videos were all performed at a physical level.

The second level is spiritual, where enlightened adepts like Sensei display extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength. This is the highest level of *karate-do* (empty hand Way), an occult path that leads to higher consciousness and enlightenment. In my quest to gain “powers” like Sensei, I engaged in numerous occult practices and spent many hours in Zen meditation.

PART I, “The Way of The Spirit,” gives a brief account of my training with Quan Li and Sensei, and my spiritual journey to enlightenment and superhuman strength. I have placed this account first, because without these experiences this book could not exist.

PART II, “The Way of Technique,” is for those karateka who wish to increase their striking power. It describes a *method* that applies five striking principles to flexible post makiwara training to generate “one strike” power. In 2004-05, I filmed a series of board breaking demonstrations for a DVD warning karateka not to seek enlightenment through their arts. At that time, I created the make-believe karate master, “Nodan” (no rank), as a disguise to protect the identities of those who would not want to be associated with my occult past. To that end, I have changed names without altering facts.

In 2009, I began posting videos at the **nodankarate** channel on YouTube. Although Nodan’s buffoonish persona is a fitting parody of my misguided quest for enlightenment and superhuman strength, the board breaking demonstrations are authentic and can be replicated by following the “Breaking Protocols” on pages 30-32.

Sakugawa
(1733-1815)



Roshi
(Zen master)



Nodan
(faux master)



My Nodan character was inspired by “Tode” (karate) Sakugawa, who was an early Okinawan karate teacher, and by the anime Zen master, Roshi. As a disguise, I used a glue-on beard and mustache, a fake pair of black glasses, and a high-pitched voice with a non-descript accent.

YouTube Videos

Nodan Karate (20:01) A comprehensive summary of Nodan Karate's "one strike" training method with SD applications

Nodan Five Principles (8:41) Provides a concise summary

Nodan Makiwara (4:52) Instructions on how to build an indoor flexible post makiwara and board holder

Nodan Self-Defense (4:07) "One strike" street applications

Nodan Board Testing (3:51) An empirical method for measuring board strength using a loaded barbell

Nodan Students (3:46) Yohan's and Yakov's edited test for black belt in *Shotokan Karate Jutsu*

Nodan Katas (2:44) Tekki Shodan, Seisan, and Onsum

Nodan Dagger Form (2:19) Chinese/Okinawan form that features numerous rapid-fire focused techniques

Who is Nodan? (1:59) A video montage of techniques

Nodan Teacher (1:23) Quan Li performs Heian IV and V

Lighthouse Productions is an educational service that receives no royalties from YouTube videos or books.

PART I

The Way of The Spirit

The Dojo Spirits

In the late 1970s, I learned the first eight katas of Gogen “the cat” Yamaguchi’s Japanese style of Goju-ryu. Yamaguchi incorporated Zen Buddhism with Shinto and yoga to create a unique occult system. “The cat” was an ordained Shinto priest and was considered one of the great karate masters of his generation.

In the 1976 documentary film, “Way of The Sword,” Yamaguchi is seen in his dojo kneeling before a crystal ball conjuring up the martial spirits. The film’s commentator translates the legendary master’s words:

“In my crystal ball, I conjure up spirits of past and future. I talk to the samurai warriors of old and to the fighters who are yet to come, and the secrets they tell me I pass on through my karate school.”¹

Yamaguchi (1909-1989)



Traditional Japanese Dojo

The traditional Japanese dojo (Way room) is where the departed spirits of the masters meet with the followers of the Way. Portraits of these masters occupy the kamiza (high seat of honor) and before and after each class students are led in a ceremonial kneeling bow before it. This ritual includes Zazen (sitting meditation), which is intended to open the students' minds to make them more receptive to the spirits.

For most Western practitioners, bowing down before a kamiza is a symbolic act of respect that has nothing to do with contacting the spirits of deceased masters. This was my perspective, until I set up a proper dojo with kamiza in my home and began to experience unusual phenomena.



Quan Li's dojo kamiza displayed portraits of departed masters.

My Home Dojo

Following Quan's example, I set up a dojo in my home and Quan came once a week to train. He taught me the *Shotokan Karate-do Workout* that Sensei instituted when he taught the art. The workout was designed to burn away the ego, which was essential to reaching enlightenment. Special emphasis was placed on the katas, because they functioned as "moving Zen," and we practiced repetitions of the Shotokan forms using tempos that ranged from slow motion to full speed.

We used a kiai yell on every focused technique and without realizing it, I began using the sacred Hindu word "om" (pronounced ah-oom) as my kiai yell. I was unaware of the subtle spiritual influences operating in the workout, which functioned as a martial arts yoga.

During our workouts, the power I was experiencing was exhilarating and steeled my determination to reach further beyond my natural strength. During the week I practiced the workout on my own and spent many hours in Zen meditation. Ironically, I could not see that rather than burning away my ego, the workout was subtly inflating it with the pride of becoming more and more powerful!

Meeting Sensei

After training for a year with Quan, I wanted to meet his former teacher, Sensei, who was operating an aikido dojo. Quan had regaled me with many fantastic stories about the master and it was time for me to experience him for myself.

Upon meeting Sensei, I knew at once that he was everything Quan had said about him. His presence was different from other men, and when he performed his art a powerful energy flowed through him that seemed to transcend this physical realm. Now I knew what kind of “enlightened” master I wanted to become.

I asked him if he would give us private lessons in his karate, but he was skeptical and said, “You’d have to be a saint to find the Way through karate today.” His misgivings, however, did not discourage us from going back to see him several months later, and after his last class he invited us onto the mat. As we kneeled before him, he looked straight at me and declared, “Jay, everything you know is wrong.” Although Sensei, by his own admission, had barely finished high school and I was a psychologist working for a prestigious university hospital, I knew he was referring to more than my knowledge of karate.

Straight away he set about proving his point. First, he moved behind me and instructed that I not look back until I could sense that his fist was close to the back of my head. I waited until I could feel him almost touching me. When I turned around, he was standing ten feet away!

I tried again. This time I was confident that he was some distance away, because I did not sense anything close to me. Yet, when I turned to look the side of my face lightly grazed his extended fist. Somehow, Sensei could withdraw and extend his ki (vital energy) at will.

Next, he faced me in a relaxed front stance with his arms hanging loosely at his sides. He said, "Attack me." I shifted into a front fighting stance and cautiously looked for an opening. There was none. It was as if he could anticipate any attack I may have been considering.

Afterwards, I was more motivated than ever to pursue an experience that would make me an enlightened master with powers like Sensei. Over the next six months we met with him several more times to have him critique our progress in his Shotokan karate.

On our last visit he had us each perform a kata, which Quan executed with flawless precision. After considering Quan's performance, however, Sensei said, "It's not that it's wrong. It's just not right." I could not understand what he meant by this until I had experienced the "dark side" of enlightenment several years later.

A momentous decision

After our last visit to Sensei's dojo, I made a momentous decision. Quan and I would continue practicing the *Shotokan Karate-do Workout* together, but to better access Sensei's spiritual wisdom I would join his aikido school. The three-hour-round-trip commute limited the number of classes I could attend each month, but studying aikido and sword with the enlightened master over the next three and a half years completely transformed my understanding of the martial arts.

The Enlightened

While the dojo was the main focal point for Sensei's spiritual connection to his martial arts, astrology and the *I Ching*, a mystical Chinese divination system, were also important to his occult practice. I found this to be quite surprising, since years earlier Sensei had warned Quan against consulting Ouija Boards, mediums, and psychics, because there was no way to know for certain if all the information being channeled was accurate.

Nevertheless, Sensei himself had remarkable psychic abilities. For example, one evening during class he suddenly stopped and announced that he could feel the presence of Mike Dunn, a former student who had moved away more than a year earlier. To our amazement, in less than a minute Mike came walking through the dojo door!

Sensei also claimed that he received revelations about techniques, which he believed were gifts from the "Martial Spirit." On several occasions, I recall him coming out of his office to correct a student's technique, which he could not have observed through the dojo partition wall.

Referring to his martial arts, Sensei once remarked to Quan Li, "This is my religion."

The Martial Spirit

I asked Sensei how he had acquired his extraordinary psychic abilities and superhuman strength, and he told me about a life-changing visitation he received from the "Martial

Spirit” in the late ‘60s. He explained how he had become obsessed with reaching enlightenment,² or to die trying.

As he was practicing the Heian Godan kata one day, a tremendous energy entered his body and he heard an audible voice ask, “Do you want it to stop?” He recalled that he had only seconds to decide or the miraculous power would be gone. I can only surmise that when Thomas Fox chose to accept the Martial Spirit, he became “Sensei,” the most powerful martial artist I have ever seen.

After this profound spiritual experience, Sensei believed he had become invincible.

Sensei’s Strength

Sensei once gave Quan a dramatic demonstration of his strength when he instructed him to touch his collar bone, upon which Quan received a very strong “electric” shock. Sensei explained that the “little” jolt was only a fraction of the power he could project.

Another time he informed Quan, “If I hit you, you should be dead before you hit the floor,” and, “Once you have the Martial Spirit, no one will ever fight you.

Sensei and Reincarnation

Sensei believed he was the reincarnation of Japan’s last true samurai, Saigo Takamori (1828-1877), whose life was lionized in the 2003 blockbuster movie, “The Last Samurai.” Takamori’s role in restoring the emperor to the throne made

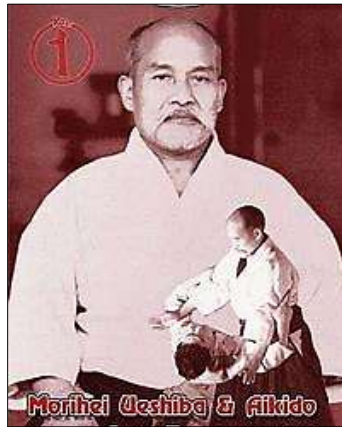
him a national hero, but his subsequent rebellion against the state turned him into a traitor. Sensei told us he had been allowed to remember his past life as Takamori, and that this had caused him much sorrow.



Sensei bore an uncanny resemblance to Takamori, whose bronze statue stands in Tokyo's Ueno Park.

Sensei's Aikido

Sensei taught a style of Morihei Ueshiba's aikido that was based on his own expertise in aiki-jujutsu. Ueshiba's enlightenment had come after he defeated a skilled swordsman without fighting by anticipating the adversary's attacks. Morihei believed he had become invincible and that he was indwelt by Izunome, the "Angel of Purification,"³ a Shinto goddess associated with energy, fire, and enlightenment.



**Ueshiba (1883-1969) urged aikidoka,
"Move on toward enlightenment."⁴**

Zen master and provocateur

A Zen master's role is to move his students out of their comfort zones and force them to view the world through a different lens. To this end, Sensei made many provocative statements on a variety of topics. In particular, Jesus Christ and Christianity were often the targets of his sarcastic wit.

For instance, when Pope John Paul II was nearly killed by an assassin's bullet in 1981, Sensei declared, "He ought to be shot!" Another time he pointed to the biblical account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with only two fish and five loaves of bread and quipped, "That boy should've been a baker." Then referring to Jesus' crucifixion, he looked up and sneered, "That boy's out there running around looking for a way to come back and do it all over again."

But the most shocking thing we ever heard him say concerned a comparison of the power of Jesus Christ to the highest power of the martial arts. He told us, "Boys, if you think the power of the martial arts is something, grab ahold of Jesus Christ. There's a power that'll knock you right on your ass!" How startling it was to hear these words from the enlightened master, who spoke them with the authority of someone who had firsthand knowledge of the fact.

A man without hope

I once gave Sensei a small token of appreciation that provoked a stunning response. It was a small brass plaque in the shape of the kanji symbol for "hope." Sensei slowly reached out and took the gift in both hands and mournfully opined, "I have no hope."

I could not fathom his melancholy response. Besides possessing superior martial arts ability and superhuman strength, Sensei had a successful dojo, a live-in disciple to assist him, and a loyal student following that revered him as

a great master. Sadly, at the end of his life Sensei became paranoid and alienated from family and many of his friends. By his own admission, Thomas Fox died without hope.

For those of us who trained with him, Sensei was the proverbial riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. Some assumed his mystique came from using hallucinogenic drugs during the 1960s, while others believed he was mentally ill or possessed. But none of us doubted his brilliance as a martial artist.

Pulling wrists with the “Big Guy”

Quan told me about a bizarre, yet revealing, incident that happened years earlier when Sensei was still teaching his Shotokan karate. During class one evening, he announced that he wanted to pull wrists (arm wrestle) with the “Big Guy,” and that he had asked the Big Guy if he could be the head demon over the United States. If not, could he be head demon over the East Coast. And, if that position was not available could he be the head demon of his home state. Barring that, could he at least be the head demon over his home town? Several years later I learned that both the Old and New Testaments teach that “powers and principalities” rule over every country and territory on earth.

In retrospect, I could not say to what extent Thomas Fox had fallen under the influence of occult powers, because spirit possession progresses in stages and by degrees.”

Enlightenment

One night after class Sensei began to impress upon us the extraordinary level of commitment required to reach enlightenment. He said that to access his kind of “power,” we had to want it more than anything in the world and expect to receive it. Then he admonished, “You can get power from the dark side or the light.”

Sensei’s demeanor changed and he pointed at me and said, “Jay, you’re going to get this. And when you do, you’re going to come back at me, ‘you goddamned son of a bitch!’” I was too dumbfounded to know what to think, but two weeks later his prophetic words came true.

It began when I looked in my dojo mirror and the eyes staring back at me were not my eyes! They were black and piercing and projected an alien intelligence of their own. Without thinking, I inexplicably beckoned to them and demanded, “Okay, show me the kundalini fire.”⁵

A cool, softball size “presence” manifested in my lower spine that intensified as it began to radiate throughout my body. The surge of superhuman strength was thrilling, but terrifying. I watched in the mirror as Sensei’s face suddenly superimposed itself over my own. It then morphed into a monstrous demon of enormous ferocity and power that leapt out at me with a thunderous roar. Shocked to see the real source of Sensei’s power, I jumped back and declared, “If this is what it is, I don’t want it!

As the Kundalini fire receded back into my lower spine,

I was transported to the outer darkness of the void, where I existed as a disembodied consciousness. My veil of self-deceit was lifted, revealing that despite trying to do right by family and friends, at a deeper level I had been living out of pride and self-interest. I saw that everything I do in this life, both the good and the bad, will be subject to judgment, but that the “arrow of time” prevents me from ever going back to undo past mistakes. The ghastly vision soon faded, but not before I had passed judgment on myself.

For the rest of the day, I contemplated how I might rid myself of the Kundalini spirit that continued to undulate slowly up and down my spine. Later that evening the idea came to me that nothing purges like fire, so I gathered up things associated with my martial arts and began burning them in our fireplace. Among the items were my rank certificates, books and magazines, portraits of the masters, and a prized personal letter from Sensei.

“Do you love me more than these?”

After a while an astounding thing happened. Out of the blue, in my mind’s eye I saw Jesus sitting in the chair across from me asking, “Do you love me more than these?”

My heart dropped into my stomach. Like most Americans born just after World War II, I had been raised in the church and knew the story of Jesus. But as an adult, I had concluded that Jesus may have been one of history’s great sages, but nothing more. Besides, my ego identity was firmly

wedded to my karate. I had developed “one strike” power in my techniques, and now Jesus was asking me to give it all up for him?

I knew answering “yes” would mean certain ego death, so I delayed making the decision by searching for more things to burn. Among the items found was my original black belt, whose frayed edges had turned white, a witness to years of dedicated training. Even so, I cut the coveted symbol of expertise into pieces and sacrificed them to the flames.

Yet, as the evening wore on, I came to the realization that the alien spirit could not be purged by fire or expelled by force of will. I recalled the terrifying encounter I had with the kundalini spirit earlier that morning and how Sensei had despaired at having no hope. My choice should have been easy, but the ego is a proud and stubborn master.

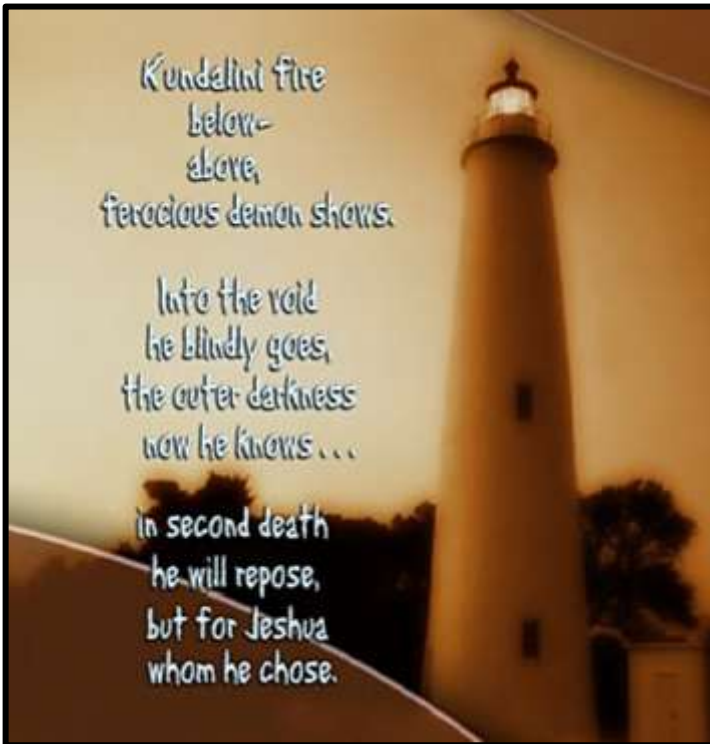
After much soul-searching I opted for hope. I chose Jesus. The moment I said “yes” to him the occult spirit, along with my ego identity as a karateka, drained out onto the floor. I became empty and deep despair engulfed my soul. This psychic death was far worse than any physical death I could have imagined. I was abandoned and alone.

Within seconds, however, a truly miraculous thing happened. A wonderful *Spirit of Love* poured in from above and filled the void with sublime peace that cannot be described in words. Now I *knew* Jesus was a real, *life-giving Spirit and Friend*, who loved me enough to deliver me from my spiritual darkness. He forgave me for all the years I

rejected him and accepted me with unconditional love.

Hence, my relationship with Jesus is personal and not grounded in religious doctrines or theological abstractions of belief, but in the supranatural encounter I had with him on the evening of December 2nd, 1985.

In 2004, I asked the Lord for help in finding the right words to sum up my spiritual journey from the “dark side” to Jesus (Jeshua). The following lines came to me, as if out of thin air, which was all-the-more amazing since I am not an accomplished writer, much less a poet!



The Apostle John, writing several generations after Jesus had been resurrected and returned to Heaven, wrote these words of hope for all mankind:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”⁶

I learned this Bible verse as a young child growing up in the church, but it had no special meaning for me until *after* (not before) I had humbled myself and said “yes” to Jesus.

Today the Apostle John’s words fly in the face of the strong headwinds coming from *scientism*, the modern philosophy that believes the only “truth” is that which is derived from the scientific method. As a psychologist, I had bought into this “non-scientific” philosophy, until I met Sensei and became heavily involved in the occult. Soon, I discovered there is a spiritual realm of good and evil spirits that transcends our material world of time and space.

Unfortunately, Sensei’s philosophy convinced him that believing in a personal God was a delusion. With nothing to believe in beyond himself, Thomas Fox died without hope.

Following Jesus

My experience has shown me that Jesus the Messiah can be accessed at any time through a sincere act of the will. Indeed, in my later years Jesus has rescued me from several personal crises and has proven to be the best Friend a person could ever have.

During the last supper before he was led away to be crucified, Jesus' disciples were troubled because he told them he was going away. Thomas asked how they would know "the way" to where he was going, and Jesus answered:

*"I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life. No one comes to the Father but through me."*⁷

Jesus taught his followers to love their enemies and be forgiving and merciful; to be peacemakers and not pass judgment on others; to keep a humble spirit and not serve money, but to be generous towards the poor.

Although I am far from perfect, striving to live in union with his *Spirit of Love* makes me the best person I can be, which is more satisfying than all the wealth, and power, and fame this world could ever offer. Besides, in the next life these worldly ambitions will be meaningless- like chasing after the wind.

Peace be with you,

1/25/2026



PART II

The Way of Technique

One Strike Power

After meeting Quan Li in late December 1980, it did not take long to see that his speed, power, and precision form made him the best traditional karateka I had ever seen. Fortunately, Li was as good a teacher as he was a martial artist, and my descriptions of “the five principles” are based largely on insights I learned while training with him.

Quan emphasized upright “centered” stances with proper bone alignments, powerful hip rotations, 45° angles, and the extension of ki. He did not deviate from Sensei’s Shotokan style, which Sensei claimed was based on the Okinawan *Shuri-te karate jutsu* that Master Funakoshi introduced to Japan in the early 1920s.



Quan Li taught Sensei’s Shotokan style at his home dojo. In the video, “Nodan Teacher,” he performs Heian IV and V.

Nodan Karate has no kata system and is not a *style* of martial art but rather a *method* for developing “one strike” techniques. The *method* applies five striking principles to flexible post makiwara training to forge “one strike” power.

Since callused hands are not necessary for effective street defense, I used soft rubber padding on the flexible post to protect my students from serious hand injuries. The flexible post proved to be excellent at forging “one strike” power.

The following board breaking demonstrations illustrate the advantage of this *method* for creating “one strike” techniques. To emphasize this point, the breaking was filmed while I was in my late fifties and I used my “weak side” left hand to break many of the thickest board stacks.

4-board break with “weak side” bent wrist strike



I trained on this flexible post makiwara for 13 years before filming the breaking videos in 2004-05. A flexible post utilizes “graduated resistance” to forge “one strike” power (see “Nodan Makiwara”).



The purpose of “one strike” power is to reinforce the old martial art proverb, “A man learns to fight so he will not have to fight.”

5-board break with “weak side” elbow strike



The break would fail if all five boards in the stack did not break *before* the 75 lb. suspended bag began to move.



Over time, the soft rubber padding on the flexible post will condition hands and elbows to execute thick board breaks.

5-board break with “weak side” reverse punch



The bag must be motionless before striking. If it is moving toward the karateka the strike will be stronger- If moving away, weaker.

5-board circular palm break from a neutral stance



Street defense often requires striking from a neutral stance position.



“One strike” power is intended to stun attacker, not kill or maim, which is why, except for several kicking examples, street defense scenarios shown in this book are restricted to 3-board breaks.

Training Both Sides

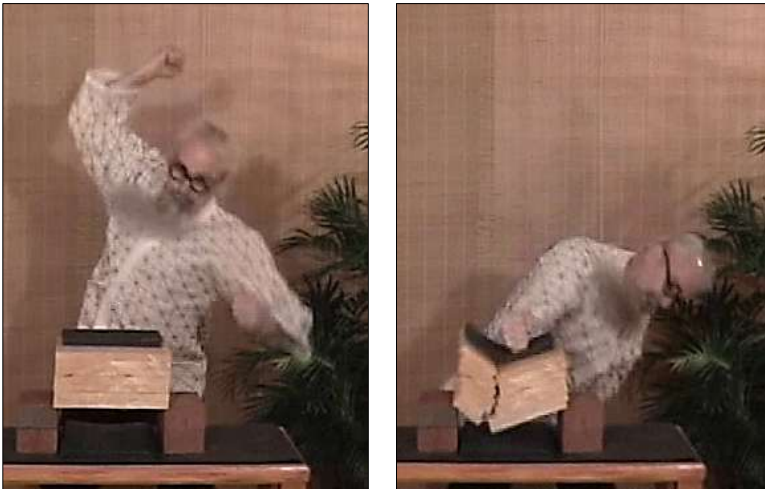
Training both sides is essential, because an injury can occur to either side before or during a street confrontation. Street assaults are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage. Master Funakoshi advised his students to practice their opposite sides “double” when training on the makiwara.

Left and right hand 4-board palm breaks



Left hand 7-board downward bottom fist break

Despite practicing more with the “weak side” left, my “strong side” right hand broke the 7-board stack (below) with greater ease.

Right hand 7-board downward bottom fist break

Breaking Protocols

Suspended bag: 75 lb. suspended bag (bag can weigh 40-100 lbs. without appreciably affecting breaking difficulty).

Materials: 1x12x10-inch-wide pieces were cut from clear white pine donor boards (actual mill size .75" x 11.25").

Board Strength: Board breaking is meaningless without an empirical method for measuring board strength. A 130 lb. barbell was *gently* lowered across the centerline of one designated 1x12x10-inch-wide test board, with the bar running parallel with the grain. The full weight of the barbell was left on the test board for 1 full second before being lifted off. If the board held, the weight was raised to 135 lbs. If the board broke with 135 lbs., the donor board met the protocol standard of supporting 130-134 lbs.

Breaking Methodology: Unspaced, suspended horizontal board breaking was used to measure the relative power of techniques commonly used in street defense situations.



Test boards must support a 130 lb. barbell for 1 full second, then break with 135 lbs.

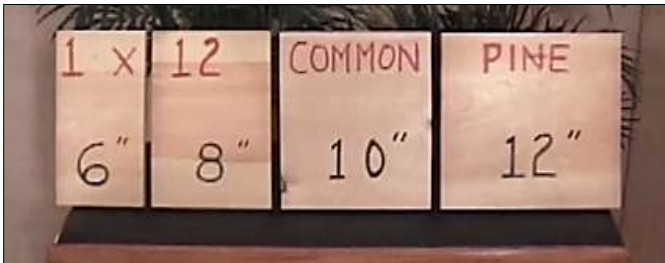
When assembling board stacks, the boards were arranged with their grains facing in the same direction, which enables suspended boards to break along a fairly-straight line.

Pine boards can vary widely in strength, depending on moisture content. To ensure consistency, a test board from the donor board should be tested just prior to breaking.

It is vital to strike along the centerline of the board stack because of the “floating” supports. Unlike supported breaks, in which body weight transfer plays a more significant role, suspended breaks depend on *both* speed and body weight transfer all the way through the board stack.

Proportional Resistance: Resistance increases proportionally with each additional board. A 3-board stack will support at least $3 \times 130 = 390$ lbs. 5-boards will support $5 \times 130 = 650$ lbs.

Adjusting Board Width: For filming purposes, I used only 1x12x10-inch-wide boards that conformed to the protocol standard. However, board width can be adjusted. For example, If a 10” wide test board breaks with 150 lbs., a 9” wide piece from the same donor board should break with 135. lbs.



The boards can be cut to any width that conforms to the breaking protocol supporting between 130 and 134 lbs.

Downward vs. Suspended breaking.

Downward board breaking has the advantage of moving with gravity and generating the maximum speed and body weight transfer. In addition, the rigid supports typically used in downward breaking more efficiently transfer energy than the softer “give” of the suspended bag.

When spacers are placed between the boards, they break one-at-a-time in rapid succession, which requires much less force. My un-spaced 5-board stacks could support at least a 650 lb. barbell placed across the centerline, whereas each individual board in a spaced 5-board stack would break with 131-135 lbs. of weight.

Finally, karateka should be aware of the increase amount of force needed to break each additional board, lest they become unnecessarily discouraged. For example, adding one board to a 3-board stack will require 33% more force to break. (Imagine raising a bench press from 300 to 400 lbs.)



The 5-board stack attached to the suspended bag on left would be much harder to break than the 5 supported boards on right.

The Five Principles

The five principles are not new to the martial arts and do not represent a definitive list. Rather, they are the result of analyzing my breaking demonstrations to determine the main factors in their success. These principles can be applied to most striking arts to improve striking power.

1) Proper Bone Alignment

Stances are *centered* in the hara, a point two inches below the navel

2) The 1-2 Timing

The hips are fully rotated *before* the striking arm or leg is extended

3) Follow Through

Mentally *follow through* (extend ki) with every technique, “all the way to infinity”

4) Correct Breathing

Inhaling through the nose and *exhaling* through the mouth using the diaphragm

5) Soft and Hard

The correct sequence of *relaxation* and *contraction* of all major muscle groups

1) Proper Bone Alignment

Proper bone alignment is foundational to all striking arts, in which the center of gravity is located or “centered” in the hara, a point approximately two inches below the navel. For the karateka, this “centering” creates a stable stance. The ability to “move in center” is vital for the transfer of maximum power through the hips, which assume a slight pelvic tilt position. The mind must be “located” in the hara or “center.” This is, “thinking from the center.”

In the demonstration below, Nodan is assisted by Yakov “the hammer” and three former students, who will attempt to push Yakov out of his “centered” one-leg crane stance.





Yakov maintains his “centered” crane stance as the three men attempt to push him backwards. Using proper bone alignments, he can redirect their energy into the floor.



By “moving in center,” Yakov pushes the men backwards.

“Centered” lunging step machete defense

The machete is an essential tool used throughout the world. Nevertheless, when used against a person it can be a lethal weapon. For instance, in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, countless thousands of Tutsi civilians were hacked to death by Hutu militia groups using machetes.

Defending a machete assault is similar to confronting an overhand or side arm attack from an opponent using a club or hatchet. These weapons are large enough to require a “hitch” in the attacker’s swing. A good strategy for a trained karateka is to step in as assailant begins to hitch. The goal is to jam the weapon hand before the attacker can generate enough speed and leverage to cause serious injury.



Nodan assumes a front fighting stance and positions himself to withdraw or preemptively counter attack.



After a quick head feint, Nodan steps in to jam the attack.



The momentum of Nodan's "centered" lunging step, block, and palm heel strike will stop the attacker in his tracks.

“Moving in center” with cross step/knife hand strike



Nodan assumes a fighting stance to confront a knife threat.



After a head feint, he leans in to block attacker's weapon hand.



He positions his left arm to strike to the head or throat while maintaining his “center” as he cross-steps toward attacker.



To apply “one strike” power, he must briefly come full stop in a “centered” straddle stance *before* striking the stack.

2) The 1-2 Timing

The 1-2 Timing uses the “centered” bone alignments of the 1st Principle to generate speed and body weight transfer through the hips. In Step 1 (below), the hips are fully rotated *before* the upper body is *actively* turned toward the target.



Step 1- The hips are rotated sharply towards the target as the upper body remains relaxed and turns naturally.



Step 2- The shoulders rotate while the striking arm remains relaxed. Then the punch is *actively* extended into the stack.

In the 1-2 Timing, the hip rotation (step 1) and the upper body rotation (step 2) are separate actions. In addition, the upper body rotation and the extension of the punching arm also move in a 1-2 timing sequence. This must be studied well, because most striking techniques use a 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing Principle. These actions spiral the energy generated by the legs and hips up the spine and out the striking arm. In Japan, this technique is often referred to as a “double whip” or “returning wave.” Karateka should *consciously* separate the movements within the 1-2 Timing until they become a natural part of every technique.

Note how his fore fist forms a 45° angle to enable his elbow to remain turned “under” throughout the technique, which reduces power loss through the elbow and wrist.

1-2 Timing reverse thrust punch on a suspended bag



Yakov executes a simultaneous middle level block/reverse punch.



The bag caroms off Yakov's fist like a pinball, which is what distinguishes a properly leveraged "thrust" punch from the much weaker "push" that does not apply the 1-2 Timing.

1-2 Timing thrust punch from a one-leg crane stance



Step 1- Nodan rotates his hips toward the 5-board stack (right).



Step 2 – He rotates his upper body and then extends punch, which illustrates 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing.

1-2 Timing in the lunging elbow strike



Nodan steps into a "centered" straddle stance with hips cocked at a 45° angle (left). Step 1- he rotates his hips toward target (right).



Step 2- He rotates upper body and elbow strike follows which reveals 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing.

3) Follow Through

I first learned this principle as the “extension of ki,” but found that Western practitioners more easily understand the “follow through” concept taught in sports that throw, hit, or kick a ball. The Eastern concept of “extending ki” is philosophically different from the follow through practiced in sports. But practically speaking, “Follow Through” is similar in that the energy of every block, strike, and kick must be *mentally* extended or projected, “all the way to infinity.”

“Follow Through” is essential for breaking multiple unspaced board stacks, because the kinetic energy of a strike dissipates as it meets the resistance of each successive board. The function of the 3rd Principle is to maintain the speed and momentum of the strike all the way *through* the target.



The flexible post makiwara helps perfect the *Follow Through* Principle. It mimics an opponent's body better than a rigid post and strengthens the musculature used to execute fully formed “one strike” techniques.

Follow Through with a zero-inch break

This is a safe, but difficult demonstration of the 1-2 Timing hip rotation and Follow Through principles. The challenge is to push against a single board with enough speed and body weight transfer to break it before the suspended bag moves. This is a zero-inch break, because the hand remains in contact with the beginning to the end of the technique.



In the left photo, Nodan rotates his hips sharply towards the target (this action cannot be discerned from the photo, because his hips were cocked *before* his thrust.)

Next, he rotates his upper body and arm through the board (right), while following through “all the way to infinity.” Before the hip rotation (left), his stance is relaxed, the spine is straight, his head is held erect as if suspended on a string, and his elbow is turned under to reduce power loss through the elbow joint.



A 3-board bent wrist break from cat stance is executed from a “weak” cross-chest position. It required a quick 1-2 Timing hip rotation and Follow Through, “all the way to infinity.”



4) Correct Breathing

Breathing is controlled through the diaphragm, *inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth*. Shuri-te styles like Shorin-ryu and Shotokan use natural breathing, while Goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu use a forced breathing style.

When executed vocally, the *kiai* yell is carried on the breath and manifests as a primal roar that emanates from the depths of the hara or “center.” When Nodan executes *kiai* without using a vocal yell, a loud and forceful rush of air can be heard on every focused technique. Correct Breathing is vital for facilitating the 5th Principle, Soft and Hard (see the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form”).



Correct Breathing uses the diaphragm (left) and not the intercostal muscles in the upper chest (right). Boxers, wind instrument players, and opera singers are trained to breathe using their diaphragms.

5) Soft and Hard

Soft and Hard refers to the sequential contraction and relaxation of the major skeletal muscles in the body. For example, in the reverse thrust punch, the legs, abdominals, and hips are contracted first, while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the upper body and arms are sequentially contracted and the entire body focuses hard upon impact. Mastering the 5th Principle requires many thousands of repetitions, until the *transitions* within and between the techniques flow without tension.

In defending against multiple opponents, surprise, speed, and “one strike” power are the key factors in an effective defense. Soft and Hard is vital for maintaining form and maximizing speed and body weight transfer.



Nodan becomes Soft (relaxed) before preemptively attacking.



He abruptly rotates his hips and strikes one of the assailants.



His relaxed (Soft) transition following this first strike will maximize speed and body weight transfer into the next.



Using a 1-2 Timing hip rotation, he strikes second attacker.



The ability to go Soft in transition enables him to break both board stacks in slightly more than one second.

Kicks and Blocks

Kicking and blocking techniques utilize the five principles. For self-defense, the middle and lower-level applications of the front, side, and back kicks are the most practical. Lower-level kicks are easier and safer to perform and are more effective against un-trained street criminals.

Front Thrust Kick

In the front thrust kick, the hips are rotated 45° as the knee is raised. This opening of the hips releases the hamstring muscles and allows for greater flexibility of movement, which maximizes speed. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” trajectory gives the front thrust kick its greatest power.



Nodan faces a knife threat utilizing a front fighting stance.



Nodan steps in and blocks the attacker's weapon hand as he punches toward attacker's face to disguise his kick.

5-board break with front thrust kick



He kicks to the abdomen using a "down and in" trajectory.

Front thrust kick using the suspended bag



Yakov applies the five principles to his front thrust kick.



The bag rebounds off Yakov's foot, which distinguishes a front "thrust" kick from a "push." Note how he maintains his "center" and hand positions throughout technique.

Low back thrust kick defense



Nodan's hips are cocked before he extends a low back thrust kick to his adversary's knee joint. Note that his blocking arm remains extended to hide his intention.



Nodan's body forms a straight line as he breaks 4 boards.

Formal downward block

The formal downward block is an example of a “one strike” blocking technique that hits with the entire body, and not only with the arm and shoulder.

All blocks use the “unbendable arm,” in which the blocking arm is extended in a soft/hard state of tension using the triceps and latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. With the application of the “unbendable arm,” Nodan’s downward block becomes like a “slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.”

Formal blocks use the full range of motion to develop proper form. With practice, however, karateka can project strength into the shorter and quicker street applications.

5-board break with formal downward forearm block



This break is made possible by applying the “unbendable arm.”

Abbreviated downward forearm block defense



To defend against a thrusting knife attack, Nodan applies “one strike” power from a hands up surrender position.



Nodan drops into a “centered” stance and “thrusts” his blocking arm downward to intercept the knife attack.

Formal middle level forearm block



As the hips begin to rotate, his blocking arm moves naturally (left). His hips fully rotate (center) before the block makes contact (right). (Note 45° angle of his block as he applies the “unbendable arm.”)

Abbreviated middle level forearm block defense



Nodan defends the knife thrust using an angle step and abbreviated middle block. His hook punch to the head breaks a 3-board stack.

Rising forearm block defense



Nodan moves in to jam his assailant's overhand knife attack.



He adjusts his block outward to intercept the attacker's arm. His rising block forms a 45° angle and applies "unbendable arm."

Street Defense

From the beginning of my foray into the martial arts, I did not believe the competitive “point” sparring practiced in sport karate during the 1960s was realistic. For me karate was supposed to be an exercise in survival, so my main interest was in learning how to apply the techniques to real street situations. But the training I received at the dojo did not teach practical self-defense applications. Fortunately, a college classmate who was skilled in combat jujitsu taught me practical street defense strategies that could be used in conjunction with karate.

Today the mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, highly trained world class athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. This latest manifestation of the martial arts, however, is very different from reality street defense.

No rules in the street

There are no rules in the street. For instance, striking to the eyes, throat, and groin are among many of the tactics prohibited in sport competition, while biting is a strong deterrent against grabs and holds. Sport competitors have warmup time, wear hand protectors and mouth guards, and have a referee to monitor the action. But more importantly, sport competitors do not fight armed or multiple opponents where grappling skills become less relevant.

To be practical as street defense, karateka must train to respond to more than just competitive fighting techniques. They must also understand the psychology and predatory nature of street criminals and adapt their arts to respond to different kinds of street assaults, because ***what we practice is what we will do in a real situation.***

Finally, street attacks are unpredictable and require a defensive mindset, which may include preemptive counter attacks. Preemption is often initiated from a “surrender” position, which uses surprise and the attacker’s false sense of confidence that may come from having a weapon.

For examples of “one strike” street defense, see YouTube videos, “Nodan Self-Defense,” and, “Nodan Karate.”



Yakov defends against continuous freestyle knife attacks during the street defense phase of their black belt test.

Defending against a pitchfork attack

Defending against a pitchfork attack is similar to facing a thrusting sword or staff. A good strategy is to use an initial head feint before initiating a spinning maneuver behind the attacker. This strategy positions the defender to execute a decisive strike before the adversary can turn and counter attack. (See the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form.”)

A “spin and run” maneuver can also be used as an escape strategy when surrounded by multiple opponents. Rugby players, as well as football running backs and receivers often use this tactic to spin out of the grasp of would be tacklers.



Nodan assumes a “centered” fighting stance just beyond attacker’s effective thrusting range. To succeed, he must “spin in center” and maintain proper bone alignments.



He uses a quick head feint to momentarily freeze opponent before beginning to spin outside the line of attack (left). Adversary reacts to his head feint and thrusts (right), but Nodan has already moved out of the line of attack as he continues spinning behind attacker.



He spins into a "centered" ready-thrust position prepared to counter attack to the kidney, the spine, or the head.

Preemptive knife defense using a lunging step



This technique is used to preemptively counter attack a knife threat. Nodan will use a quick head feint before advancing.



He blocks attacker's weapon hand as he begins to move in.



Nodan holds an upright “centered” position as he strides in prepared to execute a palm heel thrust to opponent’s jaw.



Nodan’s back foot and palm heel strike form a straight line running through his “center.”

Defending against a gun hold up from behind

This defensive maneuver provides a good example of the difference between sport fighting and reality self-defense, which often begins from a “surrender” position.

First, Nodan raises his hands in “surrender” to give the gunman a false sense of confidence. This enables him to take advantage of the element of surprise.

Next, he says something like, “Okay, take anything you w...” But before finishing his sentence, Nodan abruptly swings his arm up and back, which turns him out of the line of fire. This tactic is effective because the gunman’s brain will naturally anticipate and finish Nodan’s sentence before he can react and pull the trigger.



He “psychologically” disarms gunman by giving him false confidence when he raises his hands and says, “Okay, take anything you w...”



Nodan continues turning into a “centered” straddle stance and wraps and pins gunman’s weapon arm firmly against his side.



He executes a hook punch to the gunman’s temple. (A real gun holdup may justify more force than this easy 3-board break.)

The Best Martial Art

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, “best for what?” There are traditional throwing and striking arts, competitive fighting styles like sport karate and mixed martial arts (MMA), and reality-based self-defense systems like Krav Maga and combat jujitsu. Each of these arts develops its own strategies and techniques.

Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses *your* needs and goals. Those who would seek instruction should research and visit their local schools, because there are good and bad teachers in every style, and each art has its strengths and weaknesses.

Not all practitioners will have the strength or athleticism to develop the “one strike” power necessary to stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Furthermore, for many people “one strike” training may not be available, or may be too expensive or time consuming to pursue. A practical alternative is to take a hands-on self-defense course and carry pepper spray (mace), which is available in handy pocket-sized containers. Pepper spray is relatively safe, inexpensive, and legal in most countries.

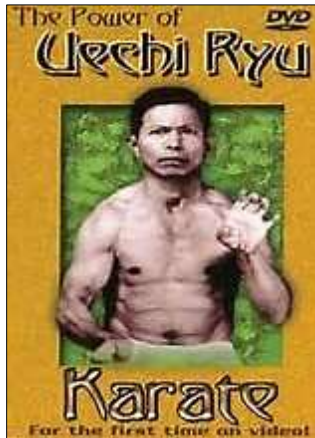
As with any defensive tool, users should become familiar with its proper use and legal application, and should practice arming and discharging live canisters in both indoor and outdoor settings. Fortunately, there are many good YouTube videos showing basic self-defense techniques and the proper use of pepper spray as a self-defense weapon.

A Brief History

1960s I lifted heavy weights for 7 years during the '60s that gave me an advantage in karate. Years later this lifting background was a factor in my breaking thick board stacks with my “weak side” left hand.

I also began studying Okinawan Uechi-ryu karate during my first year of college. This in-fighting style emphasizes the Sanchin kata, which utilizes a narrow hourglass stance for maximum stability. The art features many circular blocks and snapping kicks and punches, and specializes in attacking pressure points. I applied the five principles to Uechi-ryu's Seisan kata, which gives the form a uniquely different expression (see the YouTube video, “Nodan Katas”).

Kanei Uechi (1911-1991)



Kanei helped popularize the art his father imported from China.

Combat Jujitsu

My interest in karate was always as self-defense, but my karate schools did not teach practical street applications. Fortunately, I met a college classmate, Tex Barnes, who was proficient in combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife to our first practice together and succeeded in “killing” me many times, which left large red welts all over my body. My blocks were too slow, I was always out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter. This was a wakeup call, exposing the fact that reality street defense was very different from formal dojo training.

Tex taught me how to defend against the kinds of assaults street criminals were most likely to use. This training, in conjunction with karate, became foundational to my future approach to street defense.



My students, Yohan and Yakov, practice a twisting joint hold defense that I learned from Tex Barnes during the 1960s.

1970s After graduating college, I moved away to pursue graduate studies in psychology. There were no Uechi-ryu dojos in the area, so I joined a school that taught a hybrid style of Gichen Funakoshi's Shotokan. It was very different from the Uechi-ryu I had studied; the stances were deeper, the breathing was natural, and it incorporated aspects of Okinawan Shorin-ryu, judo, and Chinese kempo.

The school emphasized competitive sport karate and the katas closely followed the forms endorsed by the Japan Karate Association (JKA). In addition, the school offered private self-defense courses, many of which I taught due to my training in jujitsu. After receiving a dojo charter, I relocated to work as a psychologist at a big city hospital and taught Shotokan karate and street defense at local colleges, recreation departments, and community centers.

Funakoshi (1868-1957)



Funakoshi is considered by many,
“The father of modern karate.”

1980-1985 I trained with Quan Li in Sensei's Shotokan style, and with Sensei in aikido and weapons (sword and jo).



I studied aikido, sword, and jo with Sensei. My brother, wielding the jo, has practiced and taught aikido for more than 25 years.



Aikido is a throwing art designed to inflict as little injury as possible.

1992-1996 I taught Yohan and Yakov Sensei's Shotokan style without the occult trappings. After 5 years, without receiving any rank, they were awarded black belts in *Shotokan Karate Jutsu*. Testing included Sensei's Shotokan basics, kumite sets, suspended bag techniques, and two katas, Jion and Kanku Dai. Street defense required defending a variety of assaults and random "freestyle" knife attacks. (See the video, "Nodan Students," for an edited version of their black belt test.)



Yohan "the bull"



Yakov "the hammer"

1999-2004 I taught karate and street defense to Rowdy, a former track athlete who was a good training partner. We practiced together once a week for five years, which helped keep me strong in karate into my late fifties. Rowdy broke three suspended boards with a reverse thrust punch, a feat that would challenge many high-ranking karateka.

2004

I purchased a video camcorder and began filming the breaking experiments for a DVD warning martial artists not to seek enlightenment through their arts. The critics rightly savaged my effort, calling it “cheesy” and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. I concluded that Nodan and my message were dead.

2009

I finally discovered YouTube, which presented a new opportunity to use my Nodan video demonstrations. This time I wisely hired a professional videographer to help edit videos for the **nodankarate** channel, which began posting on YouTube in March, 2009.

2011

I wrote this book, ***The Power of The Way: A Spiritual Journey*** to describe my experience of the “dark side” of enlightenment and superhuman strength. The book was not well received, but I have continued to revise and improve the work in the hope of one day producing a satisfactory edition.

This book is posted as a FREE pdf, with no registration or sign-in requirements at the website, nodankarate.org.

END NOTES

¹ “Way of The Sword,” c. 1976, distributed by Coe Film Associates, #65 E 96th Street, New York, N.Y. 101286 (p. 5)

² *Enlightenment*- Sensei believed that yoga, Zen, and the martial arts shared the same goal of *enlightenment*, which is attained when the ego has been annihilated and the illusions of this physical world disappear. The emerging divine soul is no longer bound to endless cycles of birth and rebirth, but has been absorbed like a drop of water in a vast cosmic ocean. Thus, one becomes One with the universe.

This pantheistic philosophy, that we are divine souls inhabiting a divine universe, is very different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of a Creator who transcends the physical and spiritual realms. (p, 11)

³ Morihei Ueshiba, *Budo*, Kodansha International, Ltd., First edition, c. 1991, p. 29 (p. 13)

⁴ Ibid., p. 20 (p. 13)

⁵ *Kundalini fire*- Kundalini is the Indian snake goddess, whose dominant feature is energy infusion or possession. When awakened, *Kundalini fire* spirals upward to the crown chakra to bring on enlightenment. Sensei had intimate knowledge of the Kundalini, but refused to ever discuss it. (p. 16)

⁶ The Gospel of John 3:16 (p. 20)

⁷ The Gospel of John 14:6 (p. 21)



Lighthouse Productions c. 2011