

**THE
ELEMENTS
OF
ZEN
IN
MARTIAL ARTS**

HAGEN SEIBERT

Reading
Sample

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Book One: The Elements of Zen in Budô

Preface

In 1993, my friend Martin Geiß and I opened a new *dôjô* of Tendôryu Aikidô in Regensburg, Germany. By coincidence, most participants of our first beginner's course were psychology students from the local university. At first, they were especially interested in the theoretical and philosophical background of Aikidô, preferably by reading a book about it.

However, I could only recommend the "Aikido Brevier" to them, a slim booklet with some basic techniques and a few essays upon history and idea within, and at the same time making clear that Aikidô will only reveal to them during training, on the mats. Books are no potential substitute for personal experience. "Old, rotten paper", that is what some Zen masters called books.

For those who still had a desire to read, I recommended "Zen in the martial arts of Japan" by Taisen Deshimaru Roshi. But this is rather a book about Zen than about Aikidô, although I found it very inspiring to an advanced student. Apart from these, there was nothing I felt I should recommend. Not the intellectual "Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere" or Andre Protin's "Aikido", which confuse more than clarify. Not the numerous picture sequence books of various masters from miscellaneous schools. Not even the comprehensive, but rather academic work of Kamata in "Zen and Aikido". What makes it so difficult, to put it into plain, clear and lively words?

Aikidô cannot be explained, it can only be experienced in practice. Maybe there is the problem. The most important thing is "*waza*", the techniques. If you simply tried to get the techniques perfect, including everything, which is necessary for a perfect technique, you would automatically be on the right path. Strive for good technique leads to correct breathing

and attitude. Although it would be quite arduous for every single student, if he had to discover it all again on his own.

This knowledge already exists. But how to pass it on to our students? To teach the techniques and to keep silent about the rest, and to hope the students will reach it on their own would certainly not be the right strategy. As a teacher, you have to give clues, not explaining it elaborately in every detail, but giving hints so that students will comprehend when they are ready to understand. In order to be able to give these kind of clues I had to devise it for myself. And this is the commencement of this book, I needed it to prepare training, to be able to answer questions and as a reference to help my own memory.

Now the script is finished. So why not share it with others? I reckon it is all right in this case to produce some new, not already completely rotten paper. This book is supposed to satisfy first curiosity, elucidate, motivate, and arouse new curiosity. Neither Zen nor Aikidô will be explained completely, this is not feasible in a book. But it should allow to grasp and discover elements of Zen in our training. The book refers mainly to Aikidô, but what is said will be valid for any martial art.

Arco, 15.6.1995

For the third edition, which is the first edition to be available in English, I would like to remark that it is again a revised issue. Frequently there were passages, where it could be said in better words what I meant to express. During seminars I found out that the idea of "It happens" instead of "I do" was not easily understood. To make this more comprehensible, a new chapter was inserted. Then another four chapters were added to explain more deeply the fundamental concepts of Buddhism, and further four chapters to deal with violence and

the application of violence. Thus, the book could be rearranged and divided into two parts. In the first half the practical aspects of Zen in martial arts are outlined, the latter half deals with thoughts leading from fighting to philosophical themes. Consequently, the purpose of the book has changed: it is not only basics for reconsideration and reminder for the trainer, but also became guideline for future development. Finally, while years passed, my own horizon in martial arts broadened, from Aikidô to laidô and JuJitsu, thus the theses in this book do not only refer to Aikidô, but to all branches of Budô. Therefore, the title changed to "The Elements of Zen in Martial Arts".

Berlin, 2.1.2011

Chogen - The connection of Zen and Budô

If I compare fencing in Europe and its connection to Christianity with fencing in Japan and its connection to Buddhism, will there be a difference? Fencing in both cultures has a long tradition. In Europe, it was the institution of the Knight's Orders, which tied together knighthood and religious spirituality. Christianity provided the knights with guidance for *what purpose* they should use their swords. Although it never provided counsel about *how* to use a sword. The art of fencing – first with the longsword, later with the epee – developed bare of spirituality. Today this art persists in sport fencing, an Olympic event, which is focused on competition. In Japan too, existed a knight class, the *samurai*. But there were no orders like the Hospitaliers or the Templars. Yet still a spiritual conjunction arose from the creative power of the ideas of Zen, which gave the *samurai* valuable clues to *how* they could best use their sword, an influence reaching even into the practical handling of a sword. Today, the arts of Budô¹ remain. Within these, the art of fighting is considered as a way of personal development, attaching only secondary importance to competitions.

“The Japanese Budô is the unification of martial arts and zen.” ([2] S.38)

Without Zen, the martial arts would not be as we know them today. Zen was the source of inspiration for Budô.

The tie of Zen and Budô developed historically. According to the records of Gautama Siddhartha, the historic

¹ Bu=war, fighting Dô=way. Budô is a collective name for all martial arts, which beyond fighting techniques offer a path for personal development, e.g. Kendô, Karatedô, (classic) Judô, Aikidô, Iaidô.

Buddha², after six years of striving and wandering, he sat down underneath a fig tree to meditate. Through meditation, he finally received enlightenment. This practice of meditation was called “*dhyana*”. After Gautama’s death, Buddhism divided into several sects. Some kept up “*dhyana*” as an encouraged, especially emphasised practice.

With Bodhidharma this special approach became established in China³. There it was called “*ch’an-na*”. Buddhism blended with thoughts from Taoism, and the specific Chinese kind of “Ch’an” Buddhism emerged. But all the time it remained insignificant among religious beliefs in China. Its attitude of denial of all forms deemed it improper for official purposes in Imperial China.

In Japan Buddhism, coming from China, spread quickly⁴. Frequently Japanese monks would travel to where they thought the homeland of Buddhism was, to deepen their studies. Two of these travellers, Eisai and Dōgen, on their journey came in touch with the new “Ch’an” Buddhism and spent several years with their teachers. After their return, they started to spread “Zen” in Japan⁵. Especially the warrior caste, the *samurai*, was influenced by the teachings of this sect. Their life situation demanded ways to cope with death, because they were standing next to its gate at any moment. The common people, in contrast, were in a different life situation and rather devoted to the esoteric Buddhism (Shingon, etc.) or the “Pure Land” sect.

Then the Heian period, the splendiferous time of the emperor’s court at Kyōto, ended as the Tenno was no longer

² About 500 B.C.

³ In the year 520 Bodhidharma travelled from India to China by ship, where after lengthy wandering he settled near the Shaolin Temple. Later the monks of Shaolin would become famous for their Kungfu.

⁴ The decisive incident happened in the year 552, when the king of Korea sent the Tenno a statue of Buddha as a present. The Tenno decided, that the statue had to be deployed in an honourable way, thus he ordered to build the first temple.

⁵ Eisai returned from China in 1188, Dōgen in 1227.

capable to rule the country. The Shogun took over. As regent, he in fact held the power. The Shoguns came from the *samurai* class, and Zen temporarily became the state religion⁶. Consequently, the spiritual influence of Zen entered into many realms of life and Zen arts developed: calligraphy, ikebana, tea ceremony and Budô. As a result, Zen became accepted by the common people.

“Zen would not have been accepted without some kind of form. Zazen is one form, but Zen can create an infinity of forms. I believe that one of these forms is aikido. ... Thus, aikido is called ,moving Zen,’ while zazen can be described as ,aikido at rest.’” ([1] p.23f)

The spiritual influence of Zen can be transmitted into many activities. On the contrary, somebody would develop quite similar manners by pursuing excellence, even without any prior knowledge of Zen. The teachings of Zen are something deeply natural. Some elements can be discovered everywhere.

A free-climber once described his mental state, when climbing fully concentrated without rope high up a steep rock wall, with the words: “Then you’re in gas.” He sketched out, that for the moment up there only aerial lightness exists, but no cliff, no peak, no danger and no climber. He put a state of mind, known in Zen as “here and now”, in pictorial words without ever having heard of Zen.

Every art which requires difficult body coordination, let it be a martial art like Aikidô, or free-climbing, ski racing, weight lifting, tennis, golf, or repair of a mechanical clock, or from whatever scope it may derive, all these activities bear a mental aspect.

⁶ The first Shogun was Minamoto Yoritomo, who came to power in 1185. During the period of Shogun Ashikaga Takauji (1338-1358), Zen was especially promoted: he founded 66 temples throughout Japan.

Before the race, a skiing pro in his mind runs through the slalom poles, and during his race forgets everything else: his opponents, his world-cup points, his danger to straddle, only concentrating on the next pole and his line. That is Zen. A weight lifter takes a moment of silent contemplation before stepping forward, taking grip of the rod, and pushing all power of his body underneath the weights. That is Zen.

To be successful, all these activities ultimately require the same elements, which have entered from Zen into martial arts a long time ago. The masters of Budô owe their excellence especially to these elements.

The elements, which Zen holds ready for practical Budô are: *sennen*, *kokyu*, *shisei*, *mushotoku*, *sutemi*, *zanshin*, *mushin*, *hishiryô*, *shoshin*. This book shall serve to reveal them.

Zuihō-In - A Visit to Zuihō Temple

The Tani House is my charming hostel in Kyōto. The entrance is a bit hidden. A narrow gate leads through a bamboo hedge, then a path a few steps along the edge of a pond. To be honest, the pond is rather a puddle, so narrow, that the Japanese carp in it can hardly turn around. I have met nice people here, two American girls looking for a job in alien Japan, several scientists participating in an international congress on biology. Last night we were sitting in the tiny community kitchen talking about the suricates⁷ of Tanzania and about Gorbachev and Perestrojka, while drinking some incredibly mild vodka brought along by the Russians.

This morning I got up early and left the Tani House, in spite of tiredness. My sightseeing program leads me to Zuihō Temple with its stone garden. I travel there by bus. A narrow, right-angled path leads into it. No one is there. Seems like I am the first visitor this morning. I perch down on the wooden veranda and behold the stone garden. It is much different from the famous and noble-empty garden of Ryoan-ji. There the stones are sporadically dispersed rock islands lost in a wide area of raked gravel. Looking at the garden of Ryoan-ji, at first there is no aesthetic concept, no expression, no message, no sense, no purpose to be found. Although there are some stones there, they seem to even more increase this impression of emptiness. In contrast, the garden of Zuihō-in appears almost expressionistic. The rocks are wildly jagged, their sharp edges pointing into the air like javelins. They swing up to a large boulder in the back right-hand corner. The gravel is sculptured into rolling waves. This garden has a message: the large boulder represents the enlightened person – the

⁷ Small mammals, related to the mongoose, which live in groups of 10 to 20 individuals in burrows in the dry savannah of southern Africa.

Bodhisattva – who is untangled by the contestations, distractions and temptations – the Samsara – around him.



Thus, I am sitting by myself on the terrace, a little tired from last evening, looking at the bewildering, expressive garden landscape. I hear steps: tap, tap, tap. A Zen monk strolls around the corner, bare feet, and wrapped in a knee-long garment. As he notices me, he stops. “Hoh! You have to sit straight!” With a few steps, he is by my side, tapping on my back, and explaining to me, that this garden was a place for meditation, and to sit upright was part of it. His English is slightly stumbling. If I had already heard about the Zazen meditation? I say yes, and that I have tried it, but had not had a teacher. He steps aside, opens a sliding door and waves his hand beckoning me to come closer. The room is filled with mats and several floor cushions. Muted light is leaking through the paper blinds. One of the sliding doors to the veranda is open, but a barrier has been positioned in front of it.

He places me on top of one cushion and sits down beneath. It is important to sit straight and to breathe correctly. He demonstrates: "In..." breathing in and "Outo..." breathing out. (In the Japanese alphabet are no detached consonants. Thus a Japanese would articulate "t" usually as "to" with a short unvoiced "o".) He takes my hand and puts it on his belly: "In....Outo..". During exhaling, the lower abdomen expands, not while breathing in! I ask about that. Yes, while breathing out. Then it is my turn. He sticks his hand down into the front of my trousers, which gives me a kind of awkward feeling, but deciding not to give it too much thought I try to do the breathing right. "In....Outo..". After a few times he seems to be pleased with it. With the words, "Please feel free to sit as long as you like." he vanishes through a sliding door and leaves me sitting in the room.

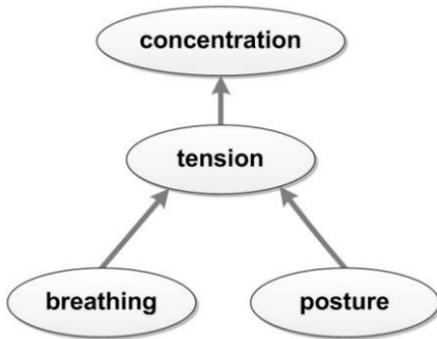
Unexpectedly I am practising Zazen meditation. I try to keep up the demonstrated, strange breathing technique. That's something I have to figure out for a start.

In the meantime, the first tourists have arrived. They would glance over the barrier into the room, taking pictures. Should I let myself get distracted? Of course not, I try my best to ignore them, keeping up my Zazen practice.

Finally, it is enough and I discontinue Zazen. About three quarters of an hour have passed. I step back onto the veranda. There I meet the monk again. He gives me a grin, and asks how I got along. We have a conversation; then he excuses himself as he would have to welcome a group of visitors shortly, and we say good-bye.

To practice Zazen correctly, a number of aspects are important: in the first place, it is about concentration, but breathing, posture and tension are also essential elements of an effective meditation. The importance of these four aspects in martial arts is likewise substantial.

Thus breathing and posture affect (mental and body) tension and finally concentration.



Sennen - Concentration

In Zen, the training of concentration usually follows three paths: Zazen, Kinhin and Samu.

Zazen, meditation while sitting, is the substantial exercise of Zen. The practitioner sits on a cushion, the *zafu*, with crossed legs in half or full lotus posture, which means that one or both feet rest upon the other leg's thigh. The hands are held in front of the belly, so that the fingers of the right hand lie on top of the fingers of the left hand and the tips of the thumbs touch. The body is kept upright, the head drawn back, the lids half closed and the glance vaguely directed towards the wall, without focusing on a certain point⁸.

The purpose of Zazen meditation is to pacify the mind, so that it will come to clarity. To achieve this, the first step is to direct attention inwards, to the breathing. Letting the breath flow calmly allows to let go of the flickering, jack-o'-lantern like mind chatter. Once the permanent, self-induced distractions are obliterated, a state of non-thinking and subject-less attentiveness emerges⁹.

"The best way to experience true Zen [...] is to coax the body in a state of outright balance and outright silence, such that it is not sensed any more ..." ([33] S.15)

Kinhin, the meditation while walking, is usually practiced during the pause between two Zazen units, in order to move the limbs and to loosen the muscles, while still maintaining a state of concentration. The practitioners walk around in a circle, with slow, small steps, the hands put together in front of the chest. Exhalation begins the moment the heel touches

⁸ As it is not the matter of this book to give a detailed instruction for the practice of zazen, the book of S. Sekiguchi, "Was ist Zen?" [33] is recommended.

⁹ In Sanskrit this state is called „Samadhi“

the ground, continues as body weight shifts to the front of the foot, and is completed when the full weight is on this foot. When lifting the rear foot off the ground the inhalation starts, and continues while that foot slowly swings forward, until it is about to touch the ground again. Hence results a very slow walk in unison with breath. It should feel like practising Zazen.

Samu, the practice in daily work, is a further training of concentration. Regardless the task, like wiping the floor or weeding, it is important to keep the attention focused, not letting the mind wander. How tempting is the thought: "Ah, I don't fancy doing that now." But the goal is concentration until complete unification with the actual doing. Then there is no more space left for "no fancy". This can be applied to any activity. For example: drinking a glass of water could fill up the whole mind. I am "to drink a glass of water".

Regarding martial arts, at first laidō, the art of drawing the sword, appears to me as a logical sequel of this line: Zazen while being seated, Kinhin while walking, Samu while being preoccupied with work and now laidō while moving with an object, the sword.

Certainly, laidō brings about many further aspects: striving for perfection of form in conjunction with the imaginary opponent, naturalness and efficiency of movement with the sword, to name just a few. There are different ways of training, with distinguished aims, each with its own purpose.

The first phase is practicing. It is characterized by imagining the opponent as physically as possible, in order to make the movements realistic and to explore the application of the form. Also, there is permanent self-control of the performance: Was the cut performed well? How was the standing? Was the posture correct? Training is physical, directed to acquiring the form.

Once the form has been learned, the next phase, performing, commences. The image of the opponent becomes less important, it may fade to an abstract shadow.

The situation of a sword match is regarded with serenity instead of engaging further in an imaginary combat. In contrast to the permanent self-observation and control during the phase of practicing, the performing phase is conducted in a state of non-thinking, like in meditation, with a non-reflecting mind. Training is mental: being alert, starting the form without preparation, putting the energy on the spot and inducing force at the right moment, letting the natural lead of the sword become prevalent, keeping sword and movement in mental unison.

The next step in this line leads us to the other martial arts, there the logic chain continues to the movement with an active opponent.

In every step in this row, the number of distracting factors increases and the temptation to lose concentration by stopping the mind becomes stronger. At the end the line, with the opponent, suddenly the mind is occupied with victory and defeat, with fear, anger, strategy, pain and injury. This can be counteracted by practicing the right state of mind in the facile situations at the beginning of the line.

Kokyu - Breathing Power

Breathing is the key to Zazen practice. Hence, the practitioner at first concentrates on the correct breathing. A commonly used method is counting the breaths¹⁰. Every completed exhalation is counted: one ... two ... until ten and then starting again with one. Inhaling and exhaling should be very regular and slow. Thus a rhythm of three breaths per minute is attained easily.

Also this breathing should be very deep, like an elevator moving from the attic to an underground garage. It should feel like streaming. We can imagine a bowl within our pelvis and the breath collecting at its bottom, or breathing into the center of breath, which in Zen is called "*tanden*" or "*hara*". This center of breath in the lower belly is located about a handbreadth below the navel.

Breathing is essential in martial arts, too. This is entirely different to the fact that effort in sports makes people pant. For example, in Aikidô there are certain breath-power techniques ("*kokyu-nage*"), where the opponent is not thrown by a wrist lock, but by deliberate body thrust. For these breath power throws breathing from the *tanden* is necessary. First of all, a natural exhalation in unison with movement is important. It is essential that this exhalation comes from the center.

This way of breathing contains a universal principle: if you are applying strength, exert it while exhaling. Breathing in means collecting energy, breathing out means releasing it. Hence you are stronger while exhaling and weaker, less concentrated and more vulnerable when inhaling. There is an easy experiment to demonstrate this effect. Look for the point three fingers above your navel. Then use the edge of your

¹⁰ Counting the breath is a method for beginners, later on breath is not counted anymore and "*shikantaza*", just sitting there, is practiced instead.

hand to tap at this point, a few times while breathing in and a few times while breathing out. There is a perceptible difference: while breathing in the sensation of beating will almost reach up to the spine, while breathing out it will stay on the belly's surface. Therefore, it is better to breathe out when being hit by a blow or when landing on the ground after being thrown by an opponent.

Consequently, in Budô it is advantageous to attack when the opponent is weak, that is when he is taking in his breath. A friend once told me about his Korean Tae-Kwon-Do master, who in free sparring would sometimes hold his fist in front of his mouth, or turn the head away until he could just barely see his opponent from the corner of his eyes. By doing so, he concealed his breathing.

On the contrary, it is better to strike or apply strength together with our own breathing out. The breath should emerge from of the hip, the *tanden* to be precise. Energy for movement or force develops from this point.

*

What I found most astonishing about the encounter with the Zen monk at Zuihō-In temple was this way of breathing, with the abdomen expanding during exhalation. At that time, it was something completely new to me. This method is called “reverse abdominal breathing”, and its origin is in fact Taoist. More common for Buddhist breathing is the “normal abdominal breathing”, where the lower belly expands during inhalation.

The Zuihō-In belongs to the Rinzai School of Zen. At the other major Zen school, the Sôtô School, where I started practising later on, the normal abdominal breathing is used. There strong emphasis is put on the upright posture. A higher cushion is used for sitting. It is not taught to expand the belly while exhalation. Due to the upright posture and the higher

cushion, while sitting the surface of the belly is tenser, making it unpropitious to expand the lower abdomen while exhaling.

What are the different effects of these two breathing methods and when is the right time for use of each? If it is the objective to pacify the mind, like in normal Zazen meditation, I would rather prefer the method of normal abdominal breathing, plainly because it is the usual and inartificial way. The method of reverse abdominal breathing is an interesting supplementation. Its effect is a strong and conscious emphasis of the *tanden*, and a feeling that the body's center of gravity lowers.

In martial arts, both methods of breathing are applicable. The normal abdominal breathing for example after lining up, during the short meditation at the beginning and the end of a training session, in order to clear the mind as a preparation for training. Reverse abdominal breathing could be the choice when a stable body sensation is wanted, if someone needs to find his center quickly. An application would be the brief moment before the start of a *randori*¹¹.

*

Breath and movement are adjunctive. There are techniques, which should be performed within one breath, others require two breaths. Frequently a technique can be done in one or two breaths. There is no rigid rule. Breathing depends on situation and dynamics, on the movement altogether. It is essential that it happens in a natural way. Generally, one would breathe out while applying strength and breathe in while stretching. (Usually, soon after stretching you will apply force. Also, while stretching the chest will expand.)

As we improve in Aikidô, attention will shift. We would start to influence the attacker increasingly earlier. A beginner

¹¹ Free fight practice.

is fully absorbed by the technique itself, his attention is on the act of throwing. The advanced student begins to look at the dynamics of the attack, and tries to blend in with movements, making them smooth and harmonic. The attention is on how to make contact with the attacker. The master practices sensing the attacker's breath, and tries to apprehend the intention of attack even before the assault starts.

Breathing and movement together make up rhythm. We have a rhythm and the opponent has his own rhythm. It is advantageous to perceive the rhythm the opponent adopts in his attacks. We can then lead him and attune our own rhythm to it.

Rhythm is difficult to understand for a beginner. I shall give an easy example. In Aikidô there are two variations to every technique, "*omote*" and "*ura*". Why? Should not one version be enough? Each version is a different option in response to the attacker's rhythm. Optimal performance is attained by enhancing the force of the attack exactly in its innate direction, then the attacker will ultimately lose his balance. If we apply any other force onto the attacker, he could make use of it to stabilise himself, or turn it against us by utilising the principles of Aikidô and counter. The rhythm of the attacker can vary, depending on his intentions. He may rush forward to hit or he may cautiously hold back to keep away from the danger zone. This rhythm can be detected by his facial expression, his breath, his way of moving. We can react accordingly. If he holds back, we would push him over with an *omote* form. If he rushes forward, we would let him run into the void with the *ura* version of a technique.

This is only one aspect. Rhythm matters too while performing the technique, or when altering the distance to the attacker in order to force or to delay his assault. The sense for rhythm should not be confused with quick apprehension. Rhythm is more important than swiftness, such as wisdom is more important than intelligence. With swiftness one gets

quickly into the advantageous position; wise feeling for rhythm means already being there.

Shisei - Posture

Next to breathing, the correct posture is essential for Zazen. Both knees need to be in contact with the floor, otherwise concentration might be unsettled. The upper body should be kept straight and upright. Without an upright posture, the “elevator” breathing is not possible. I remember my first Sunday morning *sesshin* at the Zikishin-Kai. As a beginner I was trying, but did not get into the correct breathing. Then master Mon-san came along and gently leaned a stick against my spine, thus helping me to hold the back straight. Suddenly breathing worked. After a while, I moved and lost the correct posture and the correct breathing immediately vanished as well.

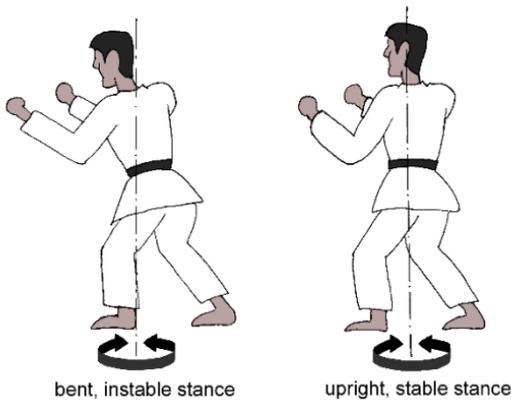
There are only few martial arts, which abstain from an upright posture, mostly full contact sports, where the head is dodging behind the guard of the raised arms. All others, like Karatedô, laidô, Aikidô attach importance to being upright.

Once in Japan, there were the “*yamabushi*”, the “mountain warriors”, or to give a better translation: robbers. They often had a forward bent posture. This kind of stance represented their way to fight. In combat, they would always keep a way open for escape. They ambushed travellers or peasants. If they found their victim too strong, they would retreat and disappear into the woods. This tactic was also reflected in their stance. Fighting sword against sword, they would try to hit the opponent while trying to keep their body out of the enemy’s range. Hence, they would stretch out their arms and take back the hip.

The *samurai*’s way of fighting was much different: unswervingly confronting the enemy and seeking showdown. He would deliberately enter into the range of the opponent, so he could pursue if his first strike was parried. The higher risk

was accepted, because there also were higher chances to hit. The hip was not held back, instead he would enter with his entire body. The *samurai* kept an upright posture, because it was more stable and allowed free breathing. Hence, all Budô arts, which derive from *samurai* fighting techniques, have adopted this principle.

While moving it is important to use the whole body. When applying force, then bring the whole body into it. Keep upright. The body is behind the force when movement starts with the hip. Specifically in Aikidô every movement, especially the *sabaki* turning, starts from the hip. If the hip is truly the axis of the movement, then the balance will be kept during any turn, and the movement can be controlled at all times. If, in contrast, a stance was adopted, which is slightly bent forward, then the hip would be taken back, the axis of movement relocates from the hip towards the chest, and the turning movement becomes less stable.



Posture has many aspects. Equally important is the correct position and direction of the feet. If the feet are in the wrong place, nothing can be done with the upper body to compensate. The best way is to let the feet point towards the

opponent, then the alignment of the entire body is correct¹². The elbows should always be kept low and close to the body; raised elbows are weak. When holding a sword, the hand's grip and angle decide whether the opponent might be able to strike the sword out of one's hands.

*

Samy Molcho, the famous pantomime and expert for body language, once said, "The body is the glove of the soul." The body with its posture and movement is always expression of what happens inside. But the other way round works likewise. By bringing the glove into a certain form, the fingers within will move accordingly. By changing the outer posture, the inner processes can be influenced and controlled. A few examples:

Gassho, the gesture of both hands put together, has the effect of inducing a humble feeling. By opening the hands, this feeling changes immediately.

Soldiers have to stand at attention, when receiving orders. The reason for this is subtle manipulation and has proven effective for centuries: if they were allowed to stand casually with their hands in their pockets, they would not accept their orders as readily. Such an attitude is to be inhibited.

In Ninjutsu there are the "Kuji-Kiri", which is a set of nine hand gestures, which allow the ninja to mentally adapt to a situation and to support a required mind-set.

There is significant difference, whether the head is drooping with sunken chest or if the body is held upright. The adopted posture produces an according mind.

Posture not only means body position, but also the way of moving and acting, hence attitude. My Jujitsu teacher always put great emphasis on how students presented

¹² See appendix, chapter „Ashi“, there are further explanations about „How to place the feet.“

themselves at the greeting ceremony at the beginning and end of a training. He said, "When you look like rubbish, chances are high you are rubbish." The student was supposed to first fix his training gear and orientate towards the other students, and then consciously step forward at his place in the line. "Try to feel nice." With an attitude of "I am standing here, in this place" and "I am occupying this space". Therefore, I can stand upright in this spot, no need for adjustment, no need for looking left or right. I can stand without wobbling and focus my attention to the front. The value of this custom is obvious: this is not something to be done for the teacher or to comply with *dôjô* rules. This is something to be done for oneself.

Frequently I see students listening to explanations while in the meantime stepping from one foot to the other, letting their glance wander from left to right or to the ceiling, or playing with their hands or belt. It is not necessary to stand in an overstated posture, at attention. But standing simply upright, resting assured in one's place and focusing the attention is a task quite a number of people find difficult. Improper posture is always a sign of a distracted mind.

Chôryoku - Tension

Along with breathing and posture, a certain level of tension attends. This can be physical as well as mental. Generally, tension is increased by posture and diminished by breathing. Utilizing this, a proper level has to be adjusted between distracted – concentrated – strained.

During Zazen, the hand position reveals if practice is done with the correct mental tension. The hands are put together so that the fingers of the right hand are on top of the fingers of the left hand. The raised thumbs are held so that tips keep light contact. Ideally, there is an oval opening between thumbs and index fingers.

Sometimes, observing oneself or others, you may notice thumbs pressed tightly together. That is a sign this person is pursuing practice very tensely, thinking, “I must concentrate!”

Or you may notice the thumbs hang down limp, eventually until the tips no longer touch. That is an unmistakable sign that this person lets his thoughts wander about in a daydream.

In both cases, tension is not correct, thus posture is wrong and concentration lost.



too much tension

good tension

too low tension

Another example may be the situation of delivering a speech. At the beginning, the speaker might have some stage fright, tension is very high and by chance, he is getting muddled. Later on, the tension wanes and the speech becomes monotonous.

Knowing that tension, breath and posture are inherently connected, we can deduce a general advice. When noticing

that one's nerves are strained, try to breathe out the tension. When noticing that concentration is weak, adopt a straight posture.

In martial arts, tension has even more importance than for Zazen practice, as we are moving dynamically instead of sitting statically. The mental tension decides between victory and defeat. The body tension is fundamental for any movement. (A digital distinction between physical and mental tension shall not be made here, as both mostly appear together.)

Basically body tension is the contraction of counteracting muscles. A high tension is necessary, if an opponent's force has to be countervailed, for example in a lock, when the opponent has to be fixated in a certain position, or in a block, when the arm has to protect the own head. The arm is supposed to remain stiff.

Body tension means immobility. At times that is wanted. But it may also be disadvantageous, when tension is not released again completely. When moving, it is bad to work against one's own body tension. If a muscle has to move against the tension of its antagonist, it needs to overcome that force first. Thus, movement will become slow like driving with a pulled brake.

A Karate-ka trains to perform a striking movement without setup. A fast strike is only possible, when beforehand the muscles are completely relaxed.

As Aikidō-ka it is better to remain relaxed, even when attacked with tension. Remaining loose helps to adapt to and blend with the dynamic of an attack. Receiving the attack in a relaxed state is essential for responding with an effective technique. A good help to prevent tension is to think, "I allow the attack", instead of thinking the attack is happening to me. That means to receive the attack with a consciousness of "I let you grab me"; it means to accept the attack instead of defending against it.

When we smile at someone, that person usually will smile back. When we notice other people's excitement, like at a sports event or a concert, we get carried along. When we encounter some person in an unfriendly way, he will often react with unfriendliness. There is a natural human trait to seek consonance with another. This applies for feelings and moods, as well for the degree of body tension.

Tension can be transmitted, even unconsciously, by touch, by contact. An opponent can feel my tension, for example, when I hold his wrist or grab his shoulder. By feeling my tension, he also becomes tense. Once he notices my tension, once he senses that I want to do something to him, he will resist. If I try to twist his arm, he will not let me do it; instead, he will block this with tension or counterforce. Just unconsciously sensing my tension suffices to instinctively increase his tension as well. Grabbed firmly by a tense arm, the opponent automatically becomes tense. A relaxed contact is less likely to provoke this instinctive reaction of tensioning in the opponent.

In Aikidô I want the opponent to follow my lead. Therefore, I should try to avoid inducing tension. Performing a technique while in a relaxed state helps to avoid starting the mechanism of transmitting tension.

A fundamental idea of Aikidô is that it is not I, who does something to my opponent. Rather he and I together generate a joint movement. It is not I throwing him, it's him falling (because of the technique – if it is well performed he will have no other choice but to fall). Only movements, which are not cramped can adapt to the opponent in such a way that a joint movement is created. Being tense means putting too much of one's own dynamics and own intentions into a common movement, which then will cease to be a joint movement. Techniques then become rigid and only succeed by inducing pain, instead of becoming round and working by dynamics.

Mushotoku - Action without Intention

Usually we notice immediately whether a throwing technique was performed well or poorly. I recall two brown belts training for their black belt grading¹³. One of them was clearly not satisfied with his throws. During a pause to catch their breath, the other said:

“You’re dragging me.”

“Yes, I feel it myself ... I’m just trying to really throw you onto the mat.”

“That’s why the technique is not flowing. For all that throwing down you start dragging.”

The first one wanted to throw his partner with vehemence onto the mat; however, he could not fully succeed. By putting in so much will into the throw, he neglected to sense his partner’s movement; therefore, he did not properly initiate the technique, preventing his partner to follow in a natural movement. The power of the throw did not blend with the way the partner was able to move and thus the other felt dragged. The thrower, by fixating his mind too much on his desired result, neglected to focus on getting to this result, and therefore failed it. Intention impeded the action. He would have achieved a powerful throw more easily, if he had concentrated just on the movement.

Acting without intention is one aspect of Zen Buddhism, which can be traced back through the teachings of Gautama Buddha to its starting point: suffering. Any suffering is caused by “*bonnō*”, the desires, which arise from the three basic human evils: greed, wrath and ignorance. In Buddhism, those three basic evils are often symbolised in the shape of animals.

¹³ Aikidō is a purely defensive martial art. Training is always done with appointed roles: One is the attacker, who will be thrown. The other is the defender, who executes the technique. After a few throws roles are swapped.

The snake as a symbol for greed, the rooster represents wrath, and the pig depicts ignorance. The *bonnô* are rooted in these three basic evils.

Suffering can be mastered if a person discards his desires. Only those actions, which are not motivated by desires and are free of the basic human evils, will not entail *karma*¹⁴. But, if *bonnô* are no longer the incentive for action, if all desires are weeded out, what is left? In Zen, this train of thought is radically carried to its end. Discarding all these kinds of impulses results finally in action void of intention and without seeking profits. It means performing an action for its own sake.

Once I attended a Zazen weekend seminar with Nakasawa Rôshi¹⁵. The master explained in his lecture, that you should not practice Zazen, if you do not have the desire to help other people. Of course, you could practice Zazen in order to achieve a personal gain, and there were even people who had become abbots despite this attitude, but it is not the proper way. I frowned and was puzzled. Exactly that's why I was there: I thought Zen might be useful to me, and was hoping for some disclosure about Aikidô.

The words of Nakasawa Rôshi become better understandable, when listening to another Zen master, Seung Sahn, who spoke to his students and thereby enlightened Nakasawa Rôshi's statement:

“Some of you want to reach enlightenment and become (as soon as possible) a Zen master. While that is your motivation, you won't achieve anything. ... There is a big difference between desire and endeavour. Already the idea of obtaining something with Zen is selfish.”

¹⁴ „*Karma*“ in Buddhism means aftermath of an action, it predicts rebirth on a higher or lower level.

¹⁵ Fumon Nakasawa Rôshi, Mon San, appointee of the Sôtô School in Germany, directed at that time the Jikishin-Kai community in Munich.

The endeavour to attain enlightenment was ...

"... not for myself. It is not the least a personal wish, it persists above the notion of a self. It is a wish without desire." ([4] p.75)

"You should cut off any thought and any want to achieve something for yourself. Then you will soon reach enlightenment." ([4] p.81)

In order to attain enlightenment, the Zen novice had to relinquish self-centred behaviour and practice Zazen without seeking something. Some, so is the story, had *satori* just when they had given up and were about to leave the monastery.

You may want to share this belief or not, yet this idea can be assigned at profit to the practice of Budô: An action, that is performing a technique in Budô, should always be done without an intention in mind.

That means firstly not thinking about throwing the other, not sticking to the idea of locking the joint, not trying foremost to win, but concentrating on the movement itself. Experience confirms that techniques work much better then. Whether a throw or a lock succeeds is not determined in the instant the technique is performed, but much earlier in the movement. Train so that the technique itself is performed well, and as result you will get the throw or the lock for free.

Secondly: If we have an intention, the opponent may be able to perceive and thwart it. If we are acting spontaneously and without intent, how could he guess our intention?

And a third point: During *randori*¹⁶ it is better not to predetermine a certain technique (e.g. "Next time I'm gonna throw him with *koshi nage*¹⁷ !"). The chosen technique may work, but because of the attacker's dynamics a different one might have been better suited. Preferably, you should let the

¹⁶ Free fight practice

¹⁷ Hip throw

technique happen. Of course, a considerable amount of practice is required to develop this ability. But only then can we trust our skilled intuition to choose the appropriate technique.

Sutemi - Forget your Body

Zen master Shoju¹⁸ once wanted to test the quality of his Zazen:

“There is a story about Shoju sitting in meditation with wolves. Shoju heard that many wolves had been lurking around Narasawa village at the foot of Shojuan and harming the villagers. He decided to sit in zazen meditation for seven consecutive nights in the outdoor crematory of the village where the largest number of wolves most frequently gathered in order to test the effectiveness of power he had acquired through training. The wolves gathered around him. Two or three jumped over his head one after another. Some wolves sniffed around his throat and some nudged his back while others struck their muzzles into his hands, legs, ears and nose. However, it is said that Shoju was not disturbed by the wolves and continued meditation ...” ([1] p.98)

Shoju did not allow his concentration to be distracted. Otherwise he probably would not have had survived his experiment. If he had lost his nerves, if his mind had moved, the wolves would have had assaulted him immediately. At no time did Shoju have a thought that the wolves were going to eat him. With his concentration, he was able to dismiss from his mind that he was in deadly peril. He had forgotten the danger; he had forgotten the wolves; he had forgotten himself.

Zen evokes a certain attitude, which is valid for daily life as well. If any action is performed just for its own sake, and we concentrate fully on this action, worries about one's own person are forgotten.

¹⁸ Shoju lived from 1642 to 1721.

In the previous chapter, we dealt with the action without intent. Closely related with intention is self-consciousness. If someone pursues an intention, a personal motive will underlie and derive from self-consciousness. In this case, self-consciousness means that someone is being aware of himself while doing something. Thus: "I'm doing this.", "I want this." or "I'm feeling it." This is equally important for Zen and for Budô. Self-consciousness means

Shinakatta - I didn't do it

One day as I was reaching for something in the back of my kitchen cupboard, as I accidentally touched a cup and it fell off the shelf. With my other hand, I caught it.

This was quite a trivial incident. But there was something special about this everyday occurrence: it was not me who actually caught the cup. There was not the impression that I had watched the falling cup, then stretched out my hand and grasped it. It was different: I just saw the cup falling, and suddenly it was in my left hand. And I thought, "Oh, I caught the cup." There was the feeling of things accomplished without myself having been involved. It seemed like something else, something more alert than "I" was doing the catching of the cup.

This brief anecdote illustrates the borderline between "self" and "consciousness". Martial arts lead us

Zanshin - Here and Now

In a flashing swords combat between *samurai*, fractions of seconds would decide between life and death. If there is only the fraction of a second to react, no time remains for hesitance or pondering. Action must come intuitively.

"Intuition and action have to emerge at the same instant. In the practice of Budô there cannot be considerations. Not for a single second." ([2] p.35)

Acting intuitively means

Mushin - Empty Mind

Once a scholarly European with some questions visited a Zen master. After they sat down, the westerner began to expose elaborately his views about Zen. The Zen master listened patiently. Finally, he offered his visitor a glass of water. He placed the glass on the small table, poured water into it until it ran over, and kept on deluging the full glass with more and more water. "The glass is full, more won't go in!" the westerner shouted. "Yes", the Zen master replied, "just like your head. If you want to understand anything (about Zen), you will first have to learn how to empty your mind."

"To empty the glass" is something we know from

Hishiryo - Not Getting Stuck

In the "Mahabharata", the great epos from India, there is one passage telling of three brothers of the Pandavas being taught archery by a master of martial arts.

"Look, up there I've hung the stuffed body of an eagle. Now take your bows and aim at it!"

He asks the first, "Tell me what you can see."

"I can see the sharp beak and the claws, the outspread wings ..."

"Stand up!" and turning towards the second, "You tell me, what do you see."

"It has brown and white feathers, and behind is blue sky, and clouds are ..."

"Stand up!" Then he turns to Arjuna, the third, "Well you, tell me, what do you see?"

"... I ... can't."

"Why not?"

"I can only see the eye."

"SHOOT!"

The first two were not

Shoshin - Beginner's Mind

There is a famous series of ten ink paintings made by a monk and artist named Kakuan. They became very popular, so several later masters copied the theme and painted the series again. Depicted is the search of a runaway ox by a peasant, as a metaphor for the way to enlightenment.

The first picture shows the peasant as he is about to start the search. There is no trace of the ox. Lonely he stands on a path, which leads only deeper into wilderness. Where should he seek?

In the second picture, he discovers hoof tracks in the moist ground besides a brook. This means that he has found writings and teachers to lead him further.

In the third drawing, he catches a first glimpse of the ox, which is partly concealed by a bush. This drawing picturizes his partial beginning of understanding of the teachings.

Now he tries to capture the ox, but it is a demanding task: the ox is stubborn and tries to break free. He is still struggling with his teachings.

Finally, still snorting, the ox lets the peasant lead it by the rope. Having understood something does not mean having mastered it.

As he rides on the ox, playing his flute, all toils and efforts are forgotten. Now he has mastered the teachings.

In the following picture, the seventh of the series, the peasant sits front of his hut. Besides him, rope and cane lie on the ground. But the ox, on which he rode home, has disappeared. Up until now, understanding was dependent on thinking in terms of forms, words and categories. This dependency has now been

Jukutatsu - Prowess

Now what, in summary, are those elements that have entered from Zen into our Budō, and which we should regard in order to match up to the requirements of Budō, and perhaps one day lead ourselves to prowess?

Concentration: Any path towards skill starts with the ability to

Book Two: Zen philosophy and martial arts

Preface of Book Two

If you were merely seeking counsel for the practical aspects of your Budô, you can put this book aside now. The elements relevant for practice have been outlined.

To those, who seek a deeper and broadened consideration, the second book is dedicated. It starts with a simple, unpretentious explanation of basic concepts of Buddhism. Furthermore, some special aspects of Zen Buddhism are mentioned. It is again the intention to create a bridge to our martial arts. Budô shall be questioned in its ethics, general direction and purpose.

Münsterschwarzach - Seminar in a Monastery

South of Würzburg, in the plains of Franconia, rises the monastery of Münsterschwarzach. The towers and the large building complex of the abbey can be seen from afar; around it are only low houses and fields, giving the building a monolithic character. It is obvious that here is an economical and spiritual centre. The impact such an abbey bears for its surroundings today is not much different than in medieval times. Yet everything else is quite modern, even the monastery itself. Although it looks like it would be standing there since Romanic age, the appearance is deceiving. The present building was erected only 70 years ago. There is a school, a bakery, agriculture and of course, it has its own website¹⁹. It is a place of spirituality, which has not remained in the past. The Benedict monks have acquired a reputation of open-mindedness. Especially pointed out should be the interest and approach towards Zen Buddhism, sustained by a few members of the abbey, which did not always find approval by the leaders of the Catholic Church.

An active and Aikidô-enthusiastic pater enabled us to organize a seminar about “Zen and Aikidô” there. It was for several days, with overnight stays in the hostel owned by the monastery. Gotthard Diethelm²⁰ came from Switzerland to direct the Zazen. The program was extensive: the first Zazen took place early morning before breakfast, followed by a breakfast – like at a real *sesshin* – with *genmai* rice soup and recitations instead of coffee and bread. After this, we had the second Zazen session. The afternoon started with an hour of

¹⁹ In the year 2001 this was not common.

²⁰ Gotthard Hôgen Shuei Diethelm, director of the Zen-Dôjô Bern and student of Nishiyama Rôshi, Sendai

laidô, followed by Aikidô. The goal of the seminar was to allow the participants insights into Zen and Meditation and to make a bridge to Aikidô. laidô was a helpful tool to shift from a meditation while sitting to a form of meditation in motion, and further on to a form with a partner – the Aikidô. Important aspects, which Zen provides for the practice of martial arts, were dealt with during training: concentration, imperturbability, dealing with fear, the prerequisites for presence of mind and spontaneous action.

I was at this seminar as a lecturer and did not expect to learn anything for myself. Yet an incidental sentence from a conversation gave me reason for further thought. Previously, during the lectures the understanding of “self” in Buddhism was mentioned, stating that what we perceive as “self” is fiction. We were sitting on the stairs in the hall of our hostel, having a discussion, and Gotthard said to one of our participants, “If there’s no self, what do you want to defend?” The latter did not know how to answer. I was sitting next to both and could neither give a spontaneous and sensible answer, although self-defence and the whole concept of martial arts was questioned. What can you say?

That question has quite a deep quality, like a “*kôan*”. The *kôan* are riddle phrases, mostly short sentences or anecdotes of historic Zen masters. Superficially paradox, they are mostly used by the Rinzai school as an object of meditation and as a task for the student in order to give him incentive for further development. He can work on such a riddle for quite a while. The answer to a *kôan* cannot be deduced by logic; instead, he will find it after intense, thorough pursuit by suddenly stepping over it intuitively.

Famous *kôans* are:

“What is nothing?” or:

“What is the sound of one clapping hand?”²¹

²¹ A single hand clapping, how could that produce a sound?

Gotthard's questions denies a quick answer, instead it opens the door for a whole series of further questions.

What shall I defend? Who is "me", and what do I really need to protect?

Why do I defend? What reasons lead to fighting and conflict?

Is it possible to break away from those spirals leading to fight and conflict?

When shall I defend? How can I respond in a conflict? What options for action can I choose? How do I justify violence, and when is violence appropriate? Is there a defence without violence?

How do I defend? What are the prerequisites for effective self-defence? If necessary, how can I overcome my natural restraint? How do I avoid being captivated by violence? Which methods shall I apply?

Sometime after the seminar at Münsterschwarzach I put the sentence "If there's no self, what do you want to defend?" into several forums for discussion. I received some interesting answers:

"I exist; therefore I know what I need to defend."

"Any animal will defend, if it is threatened."

"I am defending whatever it is you are defending when you put food into your stomach each day."

"If Aikidô is used to create harmony between *uke* and *nage*, the self-defence concept is non-existent."

My favourite advice was this one²²:

"Slap him. If he defends, ask to see who it was that defended. If he does not defend, ask who is it that got slapped. If there is no self, then there is no one slapping and no one getting slapped."

What could be a good answer? An acceptable reply would need to express the state of unintentional action. It

²² When I read this, I had to laugh out loudly. Finally, someone had beaten a Zen man – one of those posers of paradox riddles – with his own weapons. Special thanks to L. Seiser in the forum of www.aikiweb.com.

should include that when in action, do not get stuck thinking about yourself: Not defending one's self, but plainly defending.

Thus, I will give it a try, according to the motto: "Quick-witted is, which comes to my mind three days later" and say to Gotthard, "Arms and legs move, no strike can hit."

Seisei - Dependent Origination

Gotthard's question led to a whole row of further questions. This text shall be the enterprise of finding an answer to those questions one by one. On the way, the most important concepts of Buddhism will be mentioned. Let's start with "What do I defend?"

Basically, the purpose of self-defence is to protect and preserve oneself. But what exactly needs to be protected? Life, health, self-esteem, rights, claims, sinecures, vanities? What constitutes that "me"?

Most people believe in something like "me" because they experience and understand themselves as autonomous units in interaction with their surroundings. Buddha in his teachings turned this observation around and said: because we interact, the one cannot be without the other; the "me" can only exist dependent of the conditions of its surroundings. Everything, which appears existent to us, emerged because of a special constellation of conditions. That constellation will dissolve one day. Nothing is permanent. Nothing exists autonomous for itself. Buddha called this "Dependent Origination".

Zen master Seung Sahn explains it illustratively:

"Everything emerges from a coincidence of conditions. If the condition emerges, everything emerges. If the condition vanishes, everything vanishes. Thus, if I am here, then something is there. If I am not here, that something vanishes. [...] I create my world. If I am here, my world exists. If I vanish, my world vanishes.

Perhaps somebody says, 'You vanish. Does the sun in sky vanish too?' No, if I vanish, the sun in the sky will still be there. But it will not be 'my' sun, the sun I had seen. It will be somebody else's sun. Because originally the sun did not

exist. We create 'sun', and when I vanish, this sun will vanish too. If I am here, something else will be there. That is a fundamental concept of Buddhism.

An example: A rainbow merely is the coincidence of certain conditions at a special place and a special time – water, light, my eyes and consciousness. But the 'rainbow' as such does not truly exist. Independent of these conditions it would not exist at all. Everybody is looking at an object and thinking, 'Ah, there is this thing. This thing exists, therefore I exist as well.' This way of thinking is a fundamental delusion. [...] We create our world, because I create my time, create my place and create my cause and effect. And then all these things are controlling us. This is a fundamental teaching of Buddhism." ([15] p.96)

The rainbow is a very nice example. It is only there because I look at it. In reality, I am standing in front of a wall of water drops with light shining on them. Every single drop breaks and reflects the light in all colours of the rainbow. The same is happening with every drop. In reality, I am standing in front of a wide wall of red, orange, yellow, green, blue. My eyes meet only those coloured rays, which are reflected in a certain angle to the direction of the incoming light²³. Somebody, standing twenty meters besides me, will also see a rainbow in about the same direction. But it is a different rainbow; it has been created from different drops.

This elucidates the principle. It is the same idea when the impression of the rainbow meets my conscious mind. Then the rainbow exists within my conscious world. But only, if there is a consciousness for it. Once I look somewhere else or think about something different, it is gone.

²³ The light impinges along a virtual axis from the sun through the back of my head and my eye to the centre of the rainbow. Around this axis, the rainbow forms into a circle.

Now we can turn around the way of looking at it and seek the conclusion for the consciousness. A thousand things meet my consciousness. There must be something, which perceives these thousand things: "me". But, if these thousand things were other thousand things, it would be a different "me".

That is dependent origination. For Zen Buddhism this is a fundamental concept.

Henkyô de - At the border

If you ever spend your holidays in Alsace, you should take a trip to the Hartmannswillerkopf. It is most pleasant on a clear summer day, when the sun has warmed the red rocks and a gentle breeze carries away the heat so that you can sit on the rocks gazing across the Rhine valley towards the rounded hills of the Black Forest. Rare butterflies are in the air – swallowtail, marbled white, heath fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary. Now and then, they rest on the yellow, violet and white blossoms of the wild shrubs, on the rusty spirals of old barbed wire raking out of the ground at some places, or they swing lightly along the rim of a trench. This otherwise idyllic part of barren land once was the place of a bloodstaining conflict, a battlefield of the First World War. As a location of strategic importance, at the end of the Vosges Mountains high above the Rhine valley, it was fought bitterly. The peak was taken and reconquered in exchange by German and French troops eight times. Over 30.000 soldiers died. Today you can visit the old trenches, walk in the dugouts and stroll over a soldier's cemetery. There you will find rows of uniform concrete crosses, some nameless, some carry a name and the number of a regiment, and on every one you can read, "Mort pour la France."

At this place, it is the delightful, intact nature, which forms a contrast to the relicts of war madness and reveals how instable borders can be. At that time, the soldiers had struggled bitterly, "with iron and with blood" for every hand-width of ground; today, this borderline does not exist any more. After the Treaty of Versailles, the hill became French territory. And if you search for a border today, you will find it thirty kilometres east, at the Rhine.

Without people, there would not be borders. And even if people take great efforts to manifest them – border stones, fences, walls, wars – they are artificial. A butterfly insouciantly flutters across, every bird neglects them, the wind waves over them freely, and the mountain ridge does not feel them.

In a lecture, Fumon Nakasawa Rôshi once spoke that it was "... not true, to consider the air as something detached from myself, and to assume that only by inhaling it might become a part of myself. It is already a part of me before that, and it remains a part of me after exhaling." The distinction is artificial. He used this depiction to point out that.....

Genjitsu - Reality

There is a difference between what exists in reality and what we embrace as our perception and notions. This thought is not new to western philosophy. John Locke²⁴ wrote:

“To discover the nature of our ideas the better, and to discourse of them intelligibly, it will be convenient to distinguish them, as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds ; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us; that so we may not think (as perhaps usually is done) that they are exactly the images and resemblances of something inherent in the subject ...”

since

“...what is sweet, blue, or warm, in idea, is but the certain bulk, figure, and motion of the insensible parts in the bodies themselves, which we call so.”
([30] p.74-76, Chapter 8, §7 and §15)

The real world – probably only consisting of abstract atom- and quant-interactions – is not directly accessible and not completely apprehensible. The only access we can find is through

²⁴ English philosopher of the age of enlightenment (1632-1704)

Shôsei - I

Most people believe in their self. The revelation of Buddha contradicts this belief: there is neither a permanent nor a detached self. To believe in such a self is a fallacy; this self does not exist.

“To assume in the body, which is a coalescence of different elements for a limited time, a self, believing this was eternal or substantial and adhering to that self, means self-centeredness. It is a fundamental delusion.” ([5] p.35)

The self, that image, that conception of oneself, is a part of our imaginary reality. It is a product of the mind, like all other phenomena we perceive, like all other conceptions we embrace.

*

Thus, Mr. Shakyamuni has explained to me that I merely imagine

Kurushimi - Suffering

Why do we defend ourselves? That is the next question I would like to discuss. Subjectively we always defend for good reasons: We do not want to be hurt, we want to keep our belongings, we cannot tolerate that our relatives get harmed, and we resent our dignity being demeaned. Being hurt means pain, getting robbed means loss. We are affected when our relatives are harmed, and we become annoyed about any humiliation. That is suffering. We resent having to endure the various forms of suffering. Usually, the purpose of self-defence is to prevent us from suffering.

But, also this

Ware o wasureru - Abandoning One's Self

Preceding violence is suffering; preceding suffering is the self. To eliminate suffering, Buddhism asks to discard the self. Dôgen Zenji said:

*"Most important is striving for liberation from the own self."
([5] p.104)*

Regarding martial arts, we find the thought again in *mushotoku* – action without intention and *sutemi* – forgetting the body. (This has been mentioned in Book One.)

For abandoning one's self there are two ways, a misleading way and a promising way. The misleading way feeds from the notion, that

Kû - Void

How can we imagine a self-defence “without self”?

The opposite, a defence with self-presence, I witnessed at times while watching some students parrying a straight punch. They seemed to feel better when they thrust away the opponent’s fist vehemently, as if they wanted to cast the danger as far away as possible from their body. But this is not the optimal reaction, because a much larger space than actually necessary is being defended. It is an overreaction. Their need for security enticed these students to enter into an illusion of security. That reaction

Bôryoku - Violence

Let us next turn to the question: "When and how do I defend?" Before we can answer this question, we need to discuss the use of violence. Here, especially the individual dealing with violence shall become the subject of our discussion, not the changing cultural standards concerning violence.

The research of violence: Isn't that

Katatumuri no henshi - Death of a Slug

I once read in a Buddhist leaflet how to deal with unpleasant pests, like slugs: Under no circumstances should slugs be killed. They should not be poisoned with slug grains, not cut into pieces, nor should salt be poured over them. Instead, they should be collected and then released at some other place.

I have a garden. We are living in a humid and warm region in the south of Germany. The climate is optimal for slugs. In my garden, I have dahlias and torch lilies. I once also had Purple Coneflowers. But now I do not plant coneflowers anymore because as soon as the first green shoots leaf out, they are eaten at ground level. The slugs also fancy the blossom buds of dahlias and torch lilies. It is astonishing, how artistically and targeted these beasts climb up even the thinnest stems. I once watched a fat specimen crawl up a long, slim stem of a torch lily, only a forth its own thickness, and sincerely admired

Setsunintô – Katsujinken

Death Dealing Blade – Life Giving Sword

There is one form in Aikidô Tôhô laidô²⁵ with which I could not feel at home for quite some time. I liked the movements, but I struggled with the meaning. ... The name of the form is “Todome” and it is performed as follows: The imaginary opponent approaches with raised sword. The defender draws and in the same move executes an upward cut, aiming first at the chest and then at the lower side of the raised arm. But the attacker has withdrawn, thus the cut misses. Now the defender

²⁵ laidô is the art of drawing the sword. Aikidô Tôhô was developed by master Shoji Nishio. The speciality of this style is that it generates a connection between the wielding of a sword and the weapon-less techniques of Aikidô. The form described in this chapter is difficult to imagine just from the description. Though, for understanding of the text, only a vague idea is necessary. Otherwise, there is a detailed description with pictures in the appendix, chapter “Todome”.

Jiyû - Unlimited

The sword fighter Miyamoto Musashi²⁶ is famous from the elaborate novel by Yoshikawa, and from the deduced films, mostly renowned the trilogy from the years 1954 to 1956 with Toshiro Mifune in the main role. Much of that life story certainly is re-narrated and does not strictly comply with historic authenticity, but similar events probably took place.

Especially remarkable among the sixty duels he had won during his life was the third duel against the Yoshioka clan. It took place in the year 1604. The Yoshioka were one of the eight prominent and established sword schools in Kyôtô. Previously, Musashi had the first duel against Yoshioka Seijûrô, the head of the school. Both were fighting with wooden swords. Yoshioka Seijûrô was beaten down, his right arm broken several times. In the second duel Seijûrô's brother Denshichirô wanted to restore the reputation of the school, this time with a sharp blade.

“Musashi’s tactical trick at the agreed day of the duel was to arrive late, and only seconds after the beginning of the fight he cracked his opponent’s skull with his wooden sword. Denshichirô was dead the same instant.” ([6] p.33)

The following third duel turned even more serious. The Yoshioka and the reputation of their sword school were close to abyss. Denshichirô's twelve-year-old nephew, Matashichirô, was sent into battle against Musashi. A date and place was settled, at the great pine near the temple Ichijô-ji outside of Kyôtô. One thing must have been obvious to Musashi: a challenge to fight against a twelve-year-old boy could never be meant as a fair duel. It must have been

²⁶ Shinmen Musashi-no-kami Fujiwara no Genshin, also known as Miyamoto Musashi (1584 – 1645).

Tôitsu - Unity

In the monologue of Colonel Kurtz in the film "Apocalypse Now" someone has found words for a state of mind of unscrupulous

Kyômei - Compassion

In my experience, techniques work especially well when the attacker is regarded with a kind of sympathy, a friendly, welcoming attitude. This attitude helps to be much more relaxed and less tense than if seeing the attacker simply as an enemy, who has to be defeated at any price. The latter always leads to edges in technique.

The founder of Aikidô, O-Sensei Uyeshiba once said that you should take the opponent into your heart. Aikidô does not aim to destroy the opponent. This too is an expression of sympathy. Buddhism holds a

Teki - The Enemy

A Zen master asks his student:

“You and this pencil, are you same or different?”

‘Same.’

‘If you say ‘same’, I’ll hit you thirty times, if you say ‘different’, I’ll hit you thirty times. What can you do?’” ([4] p.60)

Zen is a teaching of

Shôtotsu - Conflict

Before a conflict emerges, usually a disagreement has taken place. Then three possibilities appear how that divergence of opinion can develop:

- 1) Concede / convince: One of the parties gives up their position and accepts the opinion of the other side.
- 2) Compromise: Both parties approach one another and work out a solution, which is acceptable for both.
- 3) Stuck dissension: The divergence of opinion remains unsolved, and neither of the parties

Funsô - Quarrel

A common root and analogous mechanisms relate conflict and suffering. The analogy though does not apply in every aspect: Whereas suffering is an inner process within one person, conflict is a complex situation with two participants.

Thus, a conflict has, compared to suffering, many subjective aspects such as the image of the opponent, interpretation of his actions, threat, enmity, defence, claim, expectation, fear, defeat. These are self-made, imaginary. Can we therefore conclude that ...

Tegoro na tebiki - Practical Advice

Now it has happened: I am target of an attack. How shall I react? In such situations, different grades of attack are possible; it can be a physical assault or just a verbal insult. Depending on the type, verbal or physical, and the severity of the attack, various options pose themselves.

Against a verbal attack, it is in many cases sufficient

Aikidô - The Origin of Aikidô

When Buddha began teaching, his starting point was suffering. He discovered how suffering is caused, through “Dependent Origination”²⁷, and he described how suffering can be overcome through the “Eightfold Path”. Yet Buddha progressed in his teachings to the step, which became a core statement of Mahayana²⁸ Buddhism: all phenomena are void. In the Hannya Haramita Shingyo this statement found its densest form. It says:

“Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.”

And with this realization, that phenomena do not possess true substance, follows:

*“There is no suffering, no cause of suffering
And no cessation of suffering
No path leading to the end of suffering”*

Thus, Buddha went beyond the scope of his own approach.

When O-Sensei Morihei Uyeshiba at the age of nineteen started his study of martial arts, he wanted.....

²⁷ See chapter “Kurushimi”

²⁸ “Great Vehicle”, a major branch of Buddhism

Yûshô - Victory

Accepting violent aggression with friendly affection and turning it into a kind of harmony – thus O-Sensei left us with a task, an ideal, and we, his students, if we look at it truly self-critically, have tremendous difficulties to reach it. In the artificial situation on the mat, in the defused, controlled atmosphere of the *dôjô* it may work to some extent, but in a true physical confrontation or sometimes just in practical life we leave without even touching the ideal.

To reconsider

Appendix

In the following, we will examine further concepts, which are not specifically related to Zen Buddhism, but derived rather from Chinese-Daoist practices. Nevertheless, they have great relevance for Asian martial arts in general.

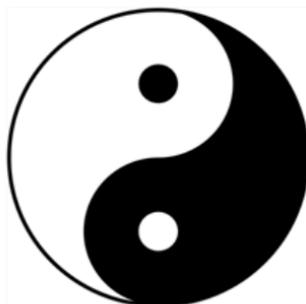
Besides certain aspects of martial arts practice, which have only been briefly mentioned in the text so far, will be explained elaborately.

Yin and Yang - The Two Forces

The Book of Changes [I Ching] describes how the entire world of phenomena is premised on a polar dualism of forces. These bring about all changes.

These two forces are called Yin and Yang. Yin is the negative, dark, female power. Yang is the positive, bright, male force. The table shows, which opposites are assigned to them.

<u>YANG</u>	-----	<u>YIN</u>
positive	-----	negative
bright	-----	dark
male	-----	female
day	-----	night
sun	-----	moon
fire, ice	-----	water
active	-----	passive
producing	-----	receiving
time	-----	space
rising	-----	descending
emitting	-----	absorbing



The character of both these polarities is multidimensional. In its simplest form, we can understand Yin and Yang as a dualism, a possibility to divide the world into two sides, like a coin has two faces. Hence, night, moon and water are assigned to Yin. Day, sun and fire belong to Yang.

On the other hand, we can understand Yin and Yang as dynamic, really effective forces. Then we discover the actually interesting part: the complementarity of both forces and the mechanisms of their interactions. There are several facets:

1) Yin and Yang give rise to each other: If positive exists, then automatically there is negative. This applies to terms, designations and values:

*“When in the world all understand beauty to be beauty,
then only ugliness appears.
When all understand goodness to be goodness,
then only badness appears.”*
([34] verse 2)

Because as soon as we call something “hot”, we have instantly declared, without saying, several other items “cold”.

2) Likewise this applies to real forces: by magnetizing an iron rod, a north pole is created and without exception a south pole as well. A force inevitably produces a counterforce. An acceleration generates an inertia. Light automatically creates shadow, when illuminating an object. If there are orders, the disobedience is spawned.

*“The more mandates and laws are enacted,
the more there will be thieves and robbers.”*
([34] verse 57)

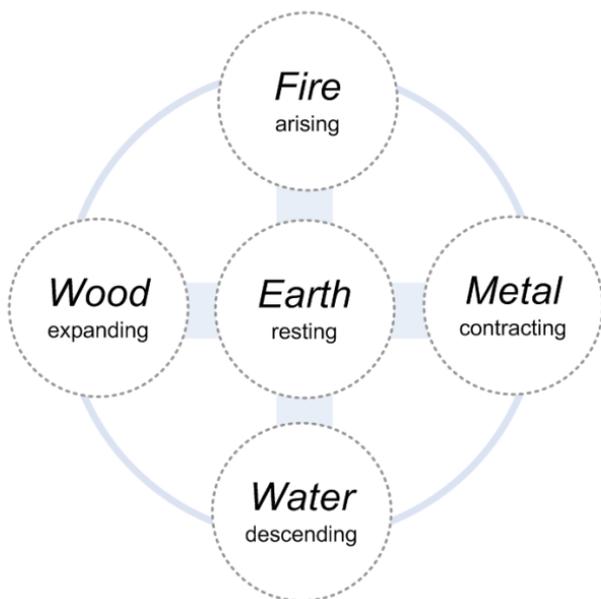
That means if one thing is created, its opposite emerges instantly.

3) One side needs the other, otherwise the entire is incomplete and there

Gogyô - The Five Phases

A principle related to the Yin-Yang and likewise fundamental is the Gogyô, the Five Phases or Five Elements. We can discover this in Traditional Chinese Medicine, dietetics and astrology as well as Feng Shui, but also in martial arts. The Gogyô represent universal, essential energies or patterns. This is displayed in the next diagram. Here the cyclic aspect has been neglected, in order to emphasize the contrasting aspect of these energy forms.

Diagram D: Gogyô (cosmologic array)



Wood and Metal as opposites of

Wuwei - Not Acting

An essential idea of Taoism with deeper meaning for martial arts is Wuwei, which means “non-acting” or “achieving without acting”. Laozi wrote, who practices the Dao finally ...

“... arrives at non-assertion.

With non-assertion there is nothing that he cannot achieve.

(...)

He quickens but owns not.

He acts but claims not.

He excels but rules not.

This is called profound virtue.

(...)

*Therefore the holy man does not travel,
and yet he has knowledge.*

*He does not see the things,
and yet he defines them.*

*He does not labor,
and yet he completes.*

(...)

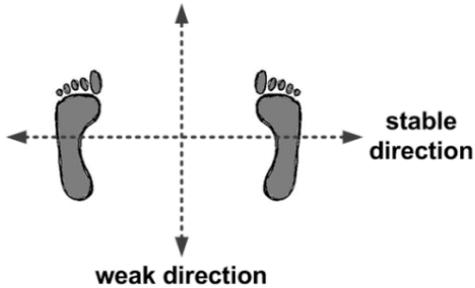
*When he acts with non-assertion
there is nothing ungoverned.”*

([34] verse 48, 10, 47 and 3)

“Non-acting” certainly does not mean

Ashi - How to Place the Feet

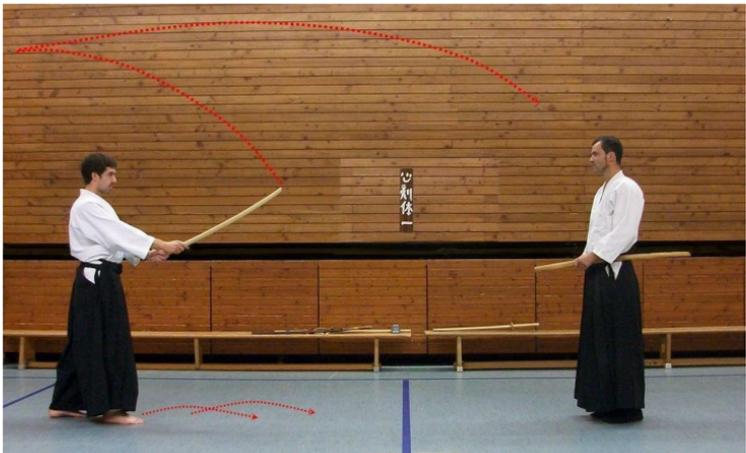
Once our feet are placed at the wrong spot, there is nothing we can do with the rest of the body to compensate.



The position of the feet determine

Todome - The 14th Form of Aikidô Tôhô laidô

For better understanding, the laidô form mentioned in the chapter “Setsunintô – Katsujinken” will be described with pictures in the following.



The opponent approaches with raised sword, in order to strike with *shomen-uchi*, a vertical cut from above.

Nage, the defender performing the technique, steps towards the attacker; he shortens the distance in order to.....