



The Rest of Taido/Blog

Collected Articles *About* Taido

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Table of Contents

Let's Get Serious 3

Why Jokes are Important

How to Learn Taido 5

How to Apply What You tudy

You Should Know Theory

Technique and Principle 7

A Priori

Learning Principle Through Technique

Two Sides of the Coin

Taido's 5 Simple Rules 10

What is Taido Gojokun?

What it Says

So What is it Really Saying?

Rules We Can Use

Finding Taido's Core Values

Use It

The 5SRs as a Teaching Tool

A Rough Definition 19

What is Taido?

躰道 = 躰 + 道

躰道 = 躰 + 道 ?

躰道 = 躰 + 道

躰 = 身 + 体

To Be is To Do

Less than Meets the Eye? 23

My Bias 25

What is My Taido?

Asking the Right Questions 27

Who's the Master?

What did he seek?

How can we find mastery in Taido?

Apply Yourself 29

Consider It 30

Taido/Blog Gets Sick

Choosing To Ignore Reality

Willful Ignorance In Taido

Not My Problem... Yet 33

Of Course I Can Do That 35

Reality Sneaking Up On Me

Symptoms and Causes

Meta 39

Let's Get Serious

In Japanese, the word *jodan* means joke. It's one of the first Japanese words I ever learned, but in a Taido context, I always thought of *jodan* as referring to high kicks and punches. It's also one of our three *kamae*.

A few years ago, I got interested in *jodangamae* and began to practice it pretty seriously. I worked on all kinds of interesting applications for various techniques and other movements using *jodan*. Occasionally, I even find myself using it in *jissen* to change direction or level. I especially like using *jodan* with *sentai* movements.

So one time, at a special training day for Tokai University's Taido club, I was working with about 40 purple and green belt students on their *sentai*. We did all kinds of games and drills and other types of practice, and I was telling a few students during a break that they should spend more time working on their *jodangamae*. One of them replied "jodan desho?" which, in context, should have meant "you mean *jodan*, right?" So I confirmed that I was suggesting he practice *jodangamae*. Again, he said "jodan desho?" and I got it – he was saying "you've gotta be joking."

Sadly for him, I was not, and the entire group went on to practice *jodangamae* for about 45 minutes.

I learned two things from this experience:

1. Nobody but me likes to practice *jodangamae*.
2. There is always more than one way to look at any situation – one of which is usually much funnier than the others.

Now you know a Japanese Taido joke. Congrats.

Why Jokes are Important

I've been doing Taido for most of my life. As a result, I have a difficult time imagining what my life would be like or what I would be like as a person if I didn't practice Taido. Though I think Taido is crazy fun, I take my training and teaching very seriously.

Until very recently, I thought this seriousness was normal. I would talk to other Taido teachers and students about things like *responsibility* and how *important* it is that we do what we can to develop and spread Taido.

The fact is that Taido is not important. It's very important to me, but I now realize that not everyone in the world - and not even everyone who practices Taido - shares that sentiment.

To most Taido students, this is just a hobby. To people who aren't interested in martial arts at all, my obsession with Taido is just plain nutty.

I'm OK with that, but maybe you wouldn't be, and that's why we need jokes - to remind us that Taido isn't really all that important in the grand scheme of things. And that we are probably at least a little nutty.



Laughing makes practice more fun. As such, it is highly encouraged.

How to Learn Taido

Making a functional connection between Taido theory and what you actually do in practice is vital. Otherwise, your theoretical knowledge is meaningless. Yes, meaningless. Meaning is the result a piece of knowledge has on events in the real world. If your knowledge is purely theoretical, it is not acting on reality. This is not necessarily the opposite of practical knowledge, but it's still pretty close to useless.

There is an old saying that knowledge is power. I agree with the dozens of others I've encountered who insist that knowledge is only potential power. It can become power only if applied. Furthermore, knowledge must be applied selectively and consistently in order to have its maximum power realized. Selectively because not all knowledge is always applicable – some principles are more applicable to certain situations than others. Consistent because outcomes are cumulative – there are no such things as endings.

As Taido/Blog readers are well aware, I spend a good deal of time thinking about Taido theory. Some of the results of that thought are recorded here – though I spend much more time thinking and practicing than I do writing. I obviously believe that theory serves a

purpose in Taido. I believe that purpose is measured by the extent to which the theory improves application.

How to Apply What You study

Keeping a training journal is a discipline I have personally followed for a good number of years now. I always have a specific bag for Taido practices in which I carry my uniform and a couple of belts, a small towel, notebook, pens, chalk (for marking the floor), medical tape, and a beverage. The notebook is for writing my practice log and any ideas I have while working out, but stuffed between the pages are always a few printouts from the archives that form Taido/Blog's resource database.

I usually review these notes while changing before and after practice. When I used to have a four hour train ride to the dojo, I had ample time to review any quantity of material en route. I actually learned katsumeji hokei in one evening by studying the *Taido Kyohan* on the train and then getting Fukunaga Sensei to correct my form and breathing.

More often, I'd read an unrelated book on the train, but sit down for a cup of coffee before practice and decide what I wanted to work on during the evening's

training. I often envisioned specific combinations I wanted to attempt in jissen or thought about ways to improve some specific movement I had been working with.

The result was that I always made progress - in every single session. I also never lost motivation or felt that my time wasn't being put to good use.

You Should Know Theory

It is important to study the theory that makes Taïdo what it is. It's the difference between mimicking Taïdo and actually using it.

If nothing else, understanding how Taïdo works and why we do the things we do gives extra meaning and value to the time and effort we devote to training.

I present my "two guys sharing a car" parable:

Suppose two men share a car. They can do this because one of them works at night and the other works during the day. Both of them drive the car and have no problems getting to work every day (or night). One of these two men understands the concept of the internal combustion engine. The other man believes that there are gasoline-

drinking elves living under the hood of the car who spin the wheels by means of various levers and pulleys.

Both men get to work, but one of them is stupid. Let's not be the second man.

Technique and Principle

Most martial arts (of which I am aware) are essentially technique-based. By this, I mean that they were synthesized from groups of existing movements.

Demonstration: Many martial arts use the exact same mechanics for deploying a front kick. It would be ridiculous to assume that each art's creator independently designed a kick that looks exactly like every other front kick in the world. Obviously, the art was built around existing components (such as the front kick), perhaps with a couple of new movements as well.

We see this kind of thing very clearly in the history of Okinawan Karate. For example, a young man would study under several different masters and learn their techniques. After many years, the young man would be older and have grown proficient in many kinds of techniques. He would continue to practice those that worked for him and discard the ones he found ineffective. Eventually, younger students may come seeking instruction in his system.

However, he didn't create the techniques in his system; he simply grouped them together. Over time, the teacher may discover principles that explain why some techniques happen to be more effective than others in

certain situations. The principles are identified after the fact. They are descriptive rather than prescriptive.

A Priori

This is not true of all arts. Taido is an exception, but it is not the only one. Principle-based arts begin with ideas about what sorts of movements may be effective for whatever objective. Techniques are built from these principles.

For example, the individual techniques of Aikido come out of the principle of meeting and joining with the force of an attack. The techniques of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu arose from applying the principles of leverage and position. Taido techniques arise from the five movements, unsoku/unshin, etc.

Knowing principles, it's possible to improve any existing technique. It's also possible to create new techniques. Students practicing technique-based arts can apply principle-based thinking with good results. Students practicing principle-based arts may need to apply technique-based thinking in order to perfect skills, especially early in their training.

Learning Principle Through Technique

Though some arts are built on technique, and others are built on principle, it's actually the educational model employed (rather than the art itself) that makes the biggest difference. Technique-based instruction can be very effective for beginners. In such a curriculum, each technique is taught and practiced as an independent movement to be mastered on its own. Routines are strings of individual movements with a few transitions. It's possible to refine the outward appearance of a hokei or kata to a very high degree using technique-based methods alone.

However, advanced students need to know principles. A routine learned exclusively as a string of techniques will ultimately be hollow because the students will just be mimicking the instructor's movements. A child can do this, and monkeys have been taught to mimic karate-like kicks for TV shows. However, these methods (monkey-see-monkey-do instruction) cannot teach improvisation, strategy, or anything that doesn't look exactly like the model.

Of course, some people manage to become very skilled through technique-based practice. We call these people "talented." They manage (often unconsciously) to extrapolate the principles from the techniques and apply them. These people are not normal.

Normal people in a technique-based system usually don't ever become very good. They may learn the syllabus and start wearing black belts. They may even place highly in a forms competition. But they never become great. Not unless they learn principles as well.

Students tend to burn out. After practicing for years and attaining reasonable skill in a variety of techniques, they begin to intuit that, despite the perfect angle at which they hold their fingers in kamae, they still just don't "get it." This too can be unconscious, and the student simply loses interest because he doesn't feel that he is learning anymore. It's extremely frustrating to spend countless hours perfecting something only to find out that you still don't understand how it works.

Most people are not talented at martial arts. I'm not. We need to consciously study and apply the principles that make the techniques work. Then we can use our developed skills effectively. In order to study and apply the principles, someone has to teach them to us.

It would be ridiculous to take a class full of raw beginners, sit them down with notebooks, and begin to lecture about the principles of any particular martial art. I've tried teaching new students with strictly principle-based methods, and the results were not what I had hoped. New students respond well to the

watch, try, then correct method. Too much talking breeds confusion and boredom.

At the initial stages of learning, the technique-based approach is superior. Principle can be discussed, but it cannot be absorbed without direct experience from extensive practice of technique. Even if the principles are the basis of the techniques (as they are in Taïdo), technique is the basis of practice.

Still, at some point, principle has to be introduced. Otherwise, only the talented students stand a chance.

Two Sides of the Coin

There needs to be some balance between technique-based and principle-based instruction, and that balance will shift over the training career of each student. This is not an easy thing to achieve because it's probably not possible to use one or the other method exclusively – it's more of a continuum. Beginners need lots of technique practice (though knowing why a technique is performed a certain way can be beneficial). Those students with more experience can learn a great deal by studying the principles.

How is your practice? Do you pontificate to no end but barely break a sweat? Or do you do countless repetitions, only to have to ask later, “what's next?” These are extremes, but we all tend to lean to one or the other side at various times.

If you're feeling stuck, look at your practice and try the opposite approach for a while. Who knows? You may even learn something.

Taido's 5 Simple Rules

The *gojokun* (or five guiding principles) is the set of statements that forms the heart of Taido's philosophy. Since it is prescriptive rather than descriptive, the *gojokun* acts as a sort of mission statement for Taido. Though it gives us a few ideals to shoot for, it doesn't offer much in the way of practical guidance.

Through the years, several several people have tried their hands and coming up with a suitable English version. I will discuss a few of them and present my own thoughts on what the *gojokun* says, what it means, and what we should do about it. With any luck, this article will get to the point of what can be a very frustrating mission statement.

What is Taido Gojokun?

What's the point of the *gojokun*? That's difficult to say. Though some dojo require students to chant *gojokun* in unison at the end of class, very few Japanese Taido students show any evidence of giving much thought to what they are saying. It was a rare thing that the five principles would be discussed while I was a young student in America – I memorized them at one point

but was given no inducement to ponder their meanings.

Why Bother?

I think this begs the question of why we even have the *gojokun*. I have an answer.

Taido can be a very complicated martial art. We have three *kamae*, eight steps, several gymnastic movements, five body movement types, five control methods, kicks, punches, and other techniques... It can be a lot to think about. The *gojokun* has the potential to clarify things in that it offers us Five Simple Rules (**5SRs**) for practicing and applying Taido. The problem is extracting those precepts from the verbal fog.

Translating and Interpreting

The primary problem with the original *gojokun* is typical of Japanese philosophy. Even in Japanese, it's pretty vague, and in my opinion sacrifices applicability for the appearance of depth. This isn't necessarily a bad thing if you are talking about poetry, but I like my "guiding principles" to be clear and direct. What's the

point of having *guiding principles* that offer no guidance, no meaning?

Of course, they do mean something – they mean several things – but most students don't really know what that is, and aren't going to be able to figure it out without a lot of conjecture and uncertainty. Even in the original Japanese, students have to do a lot of interpretation to get anything out of the gojokun (I'll look at why this is so a bit later).

Honestly, I don't think the gojokun can be translated into English words that the western mind will readily "get" without taking a good deal of artistic license. Since English and Japanese operate on different operational principles, they convey meaning in different ways. Indeed, English speakers and Japanese speakers *think* in different ways – I've discovered that some thoughts are easier for me to think in Japanese. Since thought is inherently linguistic, it stands to reason that the grammatical structure of a language affects the thought patterns of the people who think in that language.

Part of the difficulty is that we can interpret the gojokun in various ways, none of which would be present in a literal translation. There are translations biased to different applications of each principle, but this requires students to study several interpretations

to understand what Taido is really all about. By doing so, we end up defeating the purpose of the **5SRs** because we need to extrapolate four or five versions of each.

All this is just to say that any simple translation of the Japanese gojokun into English will probably leave a lot to be desired. There have been three or four attempts to my knowledge at such a translation, but none of them have meant very much to people who weren't already experts. Experts don't need simple rules, but students do.

What it Says

The gojokun is structured around five sets of two statements. The first statement describes an ideal. The second statement is an "if/then" showing the benefit of achieving that ideal. For example, I could say this:

*Brush your teeth after meals and before sleeping.
If you keep your teeth clean, you won't have
cavities and gingivitis.*

This structure gives us a directive and a reason for each point. I'll analyze these in more detail later. Before we can go much further, we need to look at a couple of the existing English translations.

The Official Version

Here's the official English version of the Taido gojokun that most people have seen:

1. Keep your mind as clear and calm as the polished surface of a mirror. This way you will see to the heart of things. Having the right state of mind will help you avoid confusion.
2. Be composed. Body and mind should be as one. Bear yourself correctly and you need never fear insult.
3. Invigorate your spirit from the source of energy deep in your abdomen. With the right spirit you will never fear combat.
4. In every action, follow the correct precepts you have been taught. By doing so you cannot act wrongly.
5. Be adaptable in your techniques and maintain freedom of physical movement. The right technique will prevent you from being dominated.

This is pretty literal. As a result, it doesn't feel like English when I read it. It has clumsy construction and

odd-sounding fancy words in place of simpler words that are easy to understand ("bear yourself" instead of "act," "invigorate your spirit" instead of "focus your energy," etc.). It also sounds as if the author was trying a little too hard to sound philosophical by using passive-negative construction ("you need never fear insult" instead of "others will respect you," etc.).

It's not so much that it's difficult to understand – it isn't – but it reads like a fortune cookie. That's great for haiku, but not for the 5SRs.

What does it mean to invigorate one's spirit from the source of energy deep in one's abdomen? How can I tell if my spirit has enough vigor? What is this energy source, and how do I use it? Is that really all it takes to keep from fearing combat?

This vague language dances around the point without actually giving us any real guidance. But wait, it could be even worse...

An Older Version from America

This is what I learned as a child and wrote about for my shodan test. Rest assured, I didn't have a clue what this meant until I had given it a lot of thought.

1. If the mind is tranquil and searches for the teachings of the true state of affairs, one will acquire the righteousness of never being perplexed.
2. If the behavior is dignified – the mind and appearance – one will never be despised.
3. If the feelings are concentrated, vigor comes from internal nerve centers. If one has right feelings, he will never be threatened.
4. In every action follow the correct precepts you have been taught. By doing so, you cannot act wrongly.
5. The techniques change appropriately from offense to defense. One who acquires correct adaptability to these techniques will never be restrained.

Wow. What a nightmare. I want to “attain righteousness” as much as anyone else, but I’m not sure how that fits in with the things I practice in Taido. No wonder nobody in America seems to remember these, one of my teachers and I once found that it’s a lot easier after a few cups of sake. This is a fine example of a totally unusable text.

So What is it Really Saying?

That’s a really good question. Both of the above translation efforts use a lot of words and end up saying very little. The only way to get at what the gojokun is supposed to be teaching us is to take a more interpretive approach.

Interpreting the Gojokun

A few years ago, Lars Larm wrote a paper translating and interpreting the gojokun. It’s very good, and I recommend you download it from the British Taido site.

I think Lars makes some good points regarding the difficulty of translating adequately and the necessity of interpreting the points for use by an English-speaking audience. He also gives ideas about how each point can actually be used, and this is very good.

However, all of this interpretation (and multiple versions of certain points) takes up a lot of space. There’s almost a page of text to convey five ideas. Although I like the conclusions Lars draws, I would be more satisfied by a shorter version that could be quickly memorized and reiterated during practices.

One important thing Lars does is to relate the gojokun to the five suki: mind, preparation, energy, decision, and technique. By looking at the gojokun in light of these openings, we can get a better perspective on how this philosophy relates to use in actual combat.

My Interpretation

The first principle tells us to keep a clear mind so we can avoid confusion. What is the actual goal? Clear and accurate perception of the truth. Also, as Lars pointed out, there is an allusion to reflecting reality without distortion. This means keeping our thoughts firmly in the present. It's only by dwelling on past events or fantasizing about the future that we become distracted from what's happening in the here and now. So to attain the "correct state of mind," we need to cultivate a calm awareness of the present situation.

The second principle refers to a dignified appearance in which mind and body are one. This means having integrity. To integrate the mind and body, we must ensure that our actions match our intentions. If we say one thing and then do another, we "look" bad. This is just as true in kamae – mental preparation must support our physical preparation. Otherwise, our opponents will see through the illusion. Most adults

can smell bullshit from a mile away, so our preparation and appearance must be genuine.

The third principle is difficult to express in English. We should make our *ki spring up from the tanden*, and this will keep us from "trembling" from fear.

Ki has a bad reputation in the West because it is unfortunately associated with a lot of the mystical BS parlor tricks that people try to pass off as demonstration of martial arts mastery. But ki is really just a word for energy, and for our purposes, it can be summed up as the combination of proper breathing and mechanics.

Breath control is the easiest way to affect our Central Nervous Systems, which impacts emotional arousal, power generation, and stamina. Proper mechanics assures that our movements will be efficient and effective. This is ki, and using it well is the goal of the gojokun's third principle.

The fourth principle deals with training. It must be emphasized here that Shukumine viewed theory and practice as two sides of the same coin. In a Taïdo context, training includes study. The principle is that we must practice and study deeply. Having done so, we will know what to do at crucial moments.

The more thoroughly we train our minds and bodies, the more easily we can make movements and decisions without having to stop and consider.

The last principle is my favorite. It tells us to adapt to our environments without going against the current of change. Taido's techniques are designed so that defense transitions smoothly into offense. We use continuous movements so we can respond creatively to situations without the repeated necessity to stop and reset.

Of course, there are limits to how we can move. For example, those imposed by gravity. We should seek to remove unnecessary limitations and increase our freedom of motion (and thought) to allow ourselves the maximum possible expression of creativity in the moment.

Got It?

That pretty much sums up my ideas on each point, but it doesn't get us much closer to a handy cheat-sheet version. Now that I've explained each point at length, let's strip them down to the bare essentials and create some rules we can use.

Rules We Can Use

When I started my dojo at Gerogia Tech, I had to think a lot about how to teach the various components of Taido. I felt that understanding the gojokun was an important part of learning Taido, but I couldn't see my students getting much out of the version I had learned. I decided to work on a new interpretation.

What I had hoped to accomplish with this was something that my students could look at and say "Hey, that makes sense for combat as well as more peaceful aspects of my life." I tried to make sure that they could understand how each point could be applied to a variety of different venues (and even tested their ability to do so).

Tech Taido Version

This is how I broke it down a few years ago for my students at Tech:

1. If our minds are clear and calm, we can perceive reality.
2. If our minds and bodies are united in purpose, we can exceed our expected limits.

3. If we employ proper breathing and mechanics, we can move well.
4. If we practice well, we can be sure to act appropriately.
5. If we are adaptable, we can always find a solution.

I was pretty happy with this version, even though I knew it wasn't expressing 100% of what's written in the original Japanese. However, basing my judgment of quality on the ability to create a positive outcome, I wasn't concerned with preserving any of the original "flavor." Instead, I opted for something that would improve my students' understanding of Taïdo and enrich their practice. But then I took that idea to an even greater extreme.

Taïdo's 5 Principles in Operational Language

In most of the interpretations above, each principle is stated as an if/then, as in the original Japanese version. I find this to be a rather abstract way of expressing prescriptions for action. If we are really trying to state the Five Simple Rules for Taïdo, can't we just lay them out like, well... rules?

Most [good] scientific literature is uses operational language in order to make sense and avoid inaccuracies. I feel it's helpful to state the ideas in the *gojokun* as directives, so we can better intuit their immediate applicability.

Here are the **5SRs** in operational language:

1. Keep your mind clear and in the present.
2. Focus your intention with your actions.
3. Breathe and move appropriately to generate power and control your emotions.
4. Use your training to guide your judgement.
5. Adapt to the situation and don't fight changes.

This gives us a set of simple instructions that we can enact now, at this moment. Each point is simple and useful. We can see from these rules exactly what we must do to be more effective in anything. It isn't poetic, and you won't be able to impress people by talking like a wannabe samurai with this version, but that's precisely why it works.

These points can be used during classes to focus a student's attention on a specific idea without

interrupting the flow of practice. I introduce them one at a time to beginners, usually without mentioning the gojokun at all.

Once I've done that, I can use them as cues anytime that student needs a quick reminder. If a student is setting stuck in jissen by trying to apply a certain technique, it's often enough for me to simply say "adapt!" and the student will stop resisting the flow of the match. This isn't always the case, and it's not automatic, but it is possible when we use operational language for the gojokun.

Finding Taïdo's Core Values

So what do all these interpretations have in common? Let's try boil each of these five ideas down into a value that the rule attempts to express.

The 5 Core Values

1. Awareness and clear perception
2. Integrity and preparation
3. Correct breathing and movement
4. Judgement based on study and training

5. Adaptability, freedom, and creativity

These five points seem to sum up the desired end product of each version of the gojokun above. Whereas the operational version gave us **Five Simple Rules**, the above list gives us 5 goals to shoot for in everything we do.

Use It

News Flash: Students can learn more easily if they know what they are supposed to be learning. Up to now, we've been making them memorize the rules and telling them that they have to understand the concepts the rules imply. I'm suggesting that we begin by telling them the concepts and asking them to experiment with applying them.

The 5SRs as a Teaching Tool

Perhaps it would be beneficial to our students if we taught them what we wanted them to know. I mean, what's the point of rote memorization and occasional chanting of vaguely-worded philosophies? It will serve everyone better if we can simply remind students at appropriate times of the values they are expected to

cultivate by certain practices. This way, students can internalize the desired concepts readily.

Goal-directed learning is student-centered. By phrasing the gojokun in terms of the **5SRs** or as five values, we give students an idea of where they should be heading. This puts their practice into perspective and allows them more freedom in experimenting (thus bringing new, creative ideas to Taido) while still being certain that they are working within the framework of Taido's value system.

While there are still many factors in Taido's educational model that could use a lot of re-working, adopting a workable version of the gojokun such as those provided above will be one step in the right direction towards a more effective method of teaching.

A Rough Definition

What is Taido?

People often ask me what Taido is. I find this very frustrating. Taido is many things to many people, but it's certainly not something that can be summed up in a couple of sentences. I'm not even going to try to write an explanation that will satisfy people who don't already practice Taido.

Instead, I want to work out a kind of definition of the word "Taido." It's been done before, but not well (in English anyway). I think everyone who practices Taido for a while makes their own definitions. Perhaps my rough definition can help others define Taido for themselves, or possibly give some new ideas to those who already have their own functional definitions of Taido.

Here's my thoughts on the meaning of Taido.

躰道 = 躰 + 道

That's where the typical definition begins. I think it would serve us better to back up a little first. Before we start dissecting the word "Taido," let's take a look at

what we mean by "definition." It may seem like a fruitless mental exercise, but I think it's important to figure out exactly what we aim to achieve by defining our art.

I've argued before that what we do in actual practice is the de facto definition of what our art *is* – we can't claim that Taido includes things we don't practice. Taido only includes what our practice of Taido includes. Thus, though some hokei include ritualized motions that resemble joint manipulations, we cannot say that taido includes kansetsuwaza, because 99% of the students have never practiced applying them.

This is why I make the claim that taido *is currently* more sport than martial art (though it can be both, it just isn't right now) in most schools. If we design our practice to prepare students exclusively for the sport-play aspect of the art, then we are only teaching them a sport. When we practice fighting, Taido *is* a martial art. When we charge students and turn a profit, Taido *is* a business. Only if we research, hypothesize, experiment, and adjust will Taido *be* scientific. Taido that doesn't address the safety of its training practices *is* unhealthy. These are just a few examples of how what we do effects what Taido is. I think Taido can be many things, but none of them are automatic; we have to walk our talk.

What we do is what we are. How we define the techniques is what they are. We can't be what we don't do. This is an important concept to grok.

躰道 = 躰 + 道 ?

Sorry. Still not quite there. Before we can talk about what Taido "is" now, we need to understand how it came to be and where it came from.

Taido is Shukumine's response to Japanese martial arts (specifically karate) as they existed at the beginning of the 1960s. What was going on that impelled him to break away from the karate establishment (in which he had already founded his Gensei school and been awarded the highest rank)?

I don't know the answer to this question, though I've heard lots of theories. Apparently one of Shukumine's big points was that it should be possible for a small person to defeat a larger opponent. Apparently, he attempted to make changes to karate tournament rules that would value technique over domination, but others resisted his ideas. This begs a question: did Shukumine expect that a weak person can overcome stronger opponents in real life, or only within tournament play? How we answer this question makes

a big difference in Taido's efficacy as a martial (fighting) art.

In any event, Shukumine went on to create a martial art that was less about punching and kicking, and more about moving the body. Of course, the foundations for these body movements were present in Genseiryu, but the execution is quite different.

We often say that Taido came from Genseiryu. The common perception among Taidoka seems to be that Taido is a further evolution of Gensei. However, I suspect that they are more like siblings than parent and child. Both arts are founded on very similar principles. If those principles are applied to karate, the result is Genseiryu; if the same principles are allowed to expand beyond the fundamental assumptions of karate, Taido emerges. Of course, this is speculative, but it's a speculation that seems to be shared by several Taidoka who have experience with Genseiryu. I've heard it said that Taido and Gensei are two sides of the same coin, and I think this is more accurate than the idea that Taido "comes from" Gensei.

Whatever the causes, The Japan Taido Association was founded in 1965 – just one year after the Tokyo Olympics. I believe this, too, is significant. '64 was Judo's debut as an Olympic sport, and Shukumine often cited as his greatest dream that Taido would also

be in the Olympics one day. It's probably no accident that Taïdo tournaments are held on Judo courts.

Of course, the Olympics are a sports event, not a fighting event. And we see in Taïdo tournaments that there is very little that resembles actual combat to any but the most naive observer. Taïdo may have the potential to be developed as a martial art, but its current incarnation does not address actual combat. Is Taïdo's emphasis on sport move away from Budo, whether consciously or not?

Again, I don't know. I can't say what was going on in Shukumine's mind. These are questions that interest me, and they form a context for the best definition I can make for Taïdo.

躰道 = 躰 + 道

OK. So we've got the groundwork in place. Let's break things down.

It worked in *The Sound of Music*, so let's start with "Do." Of course, everyone knows 道. It has myriad meanings and uses, but in this context, it refers to a martial art as a cultural artifact to be used by a person in a society. All of the martial arts of Japan are

considered such by the Japanese. In the case of Taïdo, we typically have what might be termed a "martial sport." Of course, making this claim is to define 道 in light of its complement, 術.

Martial arts that are focused on combative applications are typically referred to as "jutsu" (術). A Do is an art that has been adapted for purposes such as sport, physical education, personal development, etc. This is true of all Japanese budo (武道): Judo, Kendo, Kyudo, Iaido, etc. As conceived by its creator, Taïdo is most assuredly a 道. Thus, while the principles of Taïdo can be applied to combat, Taïdo practice does not specifically address fighting.

Some people may complement their training of Taïdo with "taijutsu" (not to be confused with Bujinkan), but these are separate applications of a similar principle (much like the above discussion of Taïdo vs. Genseiryu). Shukumine was also skilled at kobudo weapons, but these do not appear in Taïdo. Would it not be fair to say that, though not included in Taïdo, weapons training is addressed by Shukumine's martial theories? Thus, various forms of fighting can be addressed by the principles of Taïdo, yet this does not mean that Taïdo addresses fighting.

躰 = 身 + 体

身 (*mi* or *shin*) refers to the internal body, e.g. that which is encased by the skin. This includes the internal systems: nerves, muscles, fascia, organs, bones. All of the non-visible aspects of the body are included in shin. Without getting metaphysical, it could also be argued that this is where the “self” lives, so the mind and spirit (but not necessarily soul) are sometimes included in Mi.

体 (*karada* or *tai*) refers to the external body, e.g. the visible shape and movement of the body. The torso, head, and limbs are obvious parts of karada. However, the movements of those parts are also included, as are all visible aspects of the body. Karada is our (at least physical, but possibly other as well) effect on our environment.

For some reason, I feel like making a nautical analogy. This is odd because I don't really like boats, and know very little about them. Anyway, Mi would include the engines and controls, the internal structure, and the driver. Karada would include the sails and rudders, the hull, and possibly the wake it creates.

Shukumine conceived Taido as a martial art that would combine positive effects on naiko (meaning the

internal organs and life-sustaining systems) and gaiko (which refers to the external conditions of attack and defense). In other words, Taido is supposed to be an effective martial art (however we decide to define that) that is also healthy for its practitioners.

We can now see that Taido's 躰 refers to uniting the internal systems with the external form in a single purpose, whether that purpose be defending ourselves from attack, or simply living out our lives. Therefore, 躰道 is a way for bringing both aspects of the body (the seeable and the unseeable) inline with the intention of the practitioner.

And that's my current best effort at defining it.

To Be is To Do

Personally, I enjoy Taido in many ways. I feel it is healthy, fun and, challenging, so practicing makes me a better person.

Part of me likes to think that my practice would prove useful should I have a need to defend myself from attack. But I have to admit that I feel most Taido students would be ill-prepared for such an application. Of course, that's OK for most of us – we mostly live in

affluent countries where violence is not much of an issue. In such a case, I'm glad that Taido training still has plenty to offer.

Maybe you have a different way of looking at things. I think everyone who does Taido for any length of time subconsciously develops a definition of some sort. A lot of us have given it some serious thought, and this affects the way we practice.

Whatever we think Taido "is," whatever we believe it is "for," Taido is not perfect, nor was its creator. Taido isn't "finished," either. It's up to each of us to define Taido anew for ourselves and adapt it to our own circumstances. That's 道 (Do). We can practice the Jutsu (fighting techniques), the sport (tournament Taido), or whatever. Applying these ideas where we need them is what Taido is about.

So Taido *is* what we do with it. What do you do with Taido?

Less than Meets the Eye?

After writing the above, I was reminded by a friend of something that I had neglected to include in this article originally.

The character for "tai" (躰) is probably not the uber-special word we are often taught to think it is. While the breakdown above is not *technically incorrect*, it's very likely a revisionist definition.

In fact, the character we use for "tai" in Taido originally referred simply to the body. In modern times, that character is no longer used; it has been replaced by the simpler form 体 "karada."

Looking at it this way, Taido is very simply "the way of the body," and a lot of the more complicated ways to define it are simply big talk. This is why I spend so much time in the article above discussing definition in terms of function and doing/being.

Still, one has to assume that Shukumine had some reason for using the older character in the name of his art. Perhaps it was because of the "deeper" connotation hidden in the composition of the kanji. Perhaps it was simply because he wanted to sound smart (and his writing style does have a little of that consciously over-complicated feel). Maybe he chose that character just to be contrary (lest we forget that much of what he taught does in fact center around and include rampant contradiction).

For whatever reason, in naming Taido, Shukumine left us with yet one more riddle. But, as with all riddles, once the confusion subsides, there is a dead simple answer. In this case, the most accurate definition of Taido's "tai" *as a word* is simply "body."



My Bias

Nobody can ever be totally objective, and before we go too much further, I want to be clear about my own bias regarding what Taido is and how we should practice it.

What is My Taido?

I see Taido as a system of principles which prescribe creativity in movement and thought. In my practice, I focus on health, mobility, and personal development through the exploration of creative movement. And I also hit people.

Freedom is a necessary precondition to creativity. In terms of motion, you are limited in your potential performance (your creativity) by your mobility and strength (your freedom to manipulate your body). Taido will increase your agility, strength, and endurance, as well as contributing to your overall health. Taido can be an integral part of a healthy lifestyle. Despite its sophistication, students of all ages, skill levels, and cultural origins, including those with physical and mental disabilities, can learn Taido.

Taido is based on five types of movement: rotation about a vertical axis, vertical displacement, axial tilt,

rotation about a tilted axis, and vertical displacement with rotation about one or more axes. These five movements are deployed through two locomotive methods that act as a framework for strategic development.

Combined with various hand or foot strikes, throws, and joint manipulations, the five movements and two methods create an infinite variety of possible techniques. These techniques are practiced in formal chains (hokei) and partnered drills (kobo) that progress in a logical manner from basic mobility to complex combative application (jissen).

I don't believe that Taido can be practiced as a traditional art – it is a radical art. When Seiken Shukumine synthesized Taido, he intended to take the martial arts out of the two-dimensional world of karate and into the multidimensional universe of Einstein. In fact, he referred to Taido as the “three dimensional art of defense” (though I would argue that it serves us better to think in terms of four dimensions). He hoped to release the full potential of human motion for application to martial science. The result is an athletic style of near-gymnastic combat. Watching Taido, one can easily see how it differs from “traditional” karate.

Since Taido was founded in the spirit of evolution, we are all responsible for continuing to evolve the art to

greater levels of sophistication and usefulness. This is as true for Taïdo theory as it is for technique – meaning: I am not pushing any dogma in any aspect of Taïdo. I don't believe in canonizing a technical curriculum nor allowing training methods to stagnate. Taïdo is about changing with science and society and making its practitioners successful in coping with those changes as well.

Taïdo is for people who want to evolve and develop as humans. This means realizing our full creative potential in all aspects of our lives. Taïdo can improve your performance in everything you do, and it all begins with learning how to move.

Asking the Right Questions

There is a saying I've heard in various forms that goes like this: do not do what the master did; seek what he sought. The wisdom here is very applicable to us in Taïdo.

Who's the Master?

Who's the baddest mo-fo low-down this side of town? Well, that would be the Shugun of Harlem, but in our case the master was Shukumine. I don't feel that's the end of the story though, because I think the entire point of practice is to attain mastery for ourselves.

I know it's taboo in martial arts to aim for mastery. We're supposed to "follow the path" without thinking of the goal. Goal fixation and the lust of results are sure ways to stultify our development. But I'm talking about something different. Mastery is not a result at which we will someday arrive; it's a process we live. I believe that thoughtful practice of Taïdo is one means by which one can choose to live the path of mastery.

To live on "the path," we have to have some goal, even in the knowledge that our goals may change. Without a goal, there is no path, it's only a long, narrow field.

Paths, by definition, exist for traveling between your current location/state and something else. Understanding our goals allows us to move on the path in one direction or another – otherwise, we just drift back and forth with no purpose and no meaning.

We all have reasons for practicing Taïdo. Looking how and why we have these goals for ourselves can be a difficult process, depending on how deeply we choose to dig into our fundamental motivations. Whatever we find, we can get more out of our Taïdo practice by comparing our goals with those of our art's creator. By doing so, we can "seek what the master sought" in light of our own personalities and situations in life.

What did he seek?

Shukumine's life centered around trying to answer certain questions about how a person could respond practically and creatively to the various situations that arise in combat and in life. How he answered these questions for himself will offer us few clues as to how he achieved his mastery. Doing thousands of repetitions of *kushanku* and *bassai* kata will not improve our concepts of Taïdo, nor will learning to pilot submarines, nor will fighting many larger opponents.

What, specifically, did Shukumine seek? The gojokun should give us some clues. As I wrote above, they show calm awareness, synergy of mind and body, skillful use of our bodies, judgment, and adaptability/creativity as valued attributes. In order to seek what Shukumine sought, we should apply our practice to developing these highest ideals he held.

Doing 10,000 sengi will not teach us what Taido is. It will make us very good at mimicking the outward form of Taido, but to understand what Taido is, we must seek Taido's values. If we seek these values in any action, then we are to a greater or lesser degree applying Taido to what we do. Application is a much better study method than mimicry is.

How can we find mastery in Taido?

Things that will help us understand Taido better include thinking about the design of the hokei we practice, imagining ways to move in 3-space, and applying our creativity to meeting the challenges we face in life. Asking similar questions to those asked by Shukumine will put us on the path to achieving his level of mastery.

Here are just a few examples of questions we should be asking ourselves as we practice Taido:

1. How can I develop the values expressed in the gojokun?
2. What was Shukumine trying to accomplish?
3. How would I go about seeking that for myself?

There are lots of other important questions too, but the most important thing is to ask them of ourselves, and not get caught up in how others have answered them. My answers are already written ad nauseam on this site, but that doesn't mean they aren't subject to change. Einstein said that "the most important thing is to keep having questions."

Let's ask high-quality questions about Taido so we can find our own mastery through the process of seeking.

Apply Yourself

One of the really cool things about Taido is Shukumine's understanding that the measure of a martial art is in the behavior of its practitioners. Outsiders will judge Taido by the things they see Taido black belts do. Shukumine always taught that Taido should serve us in society as well as in combat.

As a young man, I remember hearing him speak about the necessity of equaling our Taido achievements in society. He told us once that a Taido black belt should be a black belt in his career as well. He said a school-age student should study his courses and practice Taido with the same degree of commitment and attention. A business person should apply Taido's philosophy in negotiations (some business schools require students to read Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*). In short, we should be applying the lessons we learn in Taido to our daily lives in society as well. What I've been thinking over the past few years is that, maybe we should also start applying the lessons we learn in society to Taido.

I think there is a vast amount of knowledge and wisdom floating around in the world, and it's silly to segregate our experiences in one arena from those in another. Taido comprises a complete philosophy in

concept, but its implementation has some major holes – I outline many of them on Taido/Blog. All of us bring experience and knowledge from outside Taido that can help fill those holes by refining our methods of practice.

Those of us who are teachers should apply our skills to the way Taido is taught. Those of us who are in business should be working on fixing the problems with Taido's organizational structure. Those of us who know something about marketing should be busy making Taido better known and more popular. Those of us who are doctors should be making Taido practice safer ("first, do no harm...") and conducive to health. Those of us who are students can look for ways in which our studies can influence our training (geometry and calculus were *huge* influences on the way I understand Taido).

Everyone has a talent, and every talent can be useful to helping Taido grow and fulfill its promise as the 21st century martial art. How can you help?

Consider It

The two words “consider it” happen to make up one of my favorite English-language phrases. I was once asked what was required in order to be considerate – my answer was “consider it.”

Taido/Blog Gets Sick

So, foregoing any kind of clever segue, I once lost the ability to do anything at all to Taido/Blog. Obviously, I have now corrected the issue, but the nature of the actual problem was somewhat mysterious to me – it was something semi-technical which fell under the general rubric of “things I’ve chosen not to bother with learning to understand.” Luckily for me, an upgrade of my WordPress build pretty much took care of things.

I had intended to a blurb to say “sorry about the lack of updates – I had a good excuse,” but after rereading that first paragraph, I realized that it’s not actually all that good of an excuse.

Things I’ve chosen not to bother with learning to understand? Come to think of it, that’s a really lame excuse and exactly the kind of thinking I claim to be working against with Taido/Blog.

Choosing To Ignore Reality

But. If I take the time to consider it, I can find lots of examples of this willful ignorance in my life, and I have to admit it’s not something of which I’m extremely proud. Not to point the finger, but I’m willing to bet big money that you would also find a disturbing number of behaviors and attitudes with which you allow yourself to simply get by – things you could easily change.

I’m not referring here to social issues like the rampant homelessness in our urban centers, the horrible outlook for future ecology, or the deplorable state of politics and commerce. I’m talking about things easily within our grasp.

Obviously, personal habits are ripe for careful examination. What do you allow yourself to get away with when you know you could do better? Do you sometimes “cheat” just a little bit? Do you allow yourself maybe just a little too much leeway when you’re trying to accomplish a task or goal?

I know I do.

In the five minutes it’s taken me to type this so far, I’ve already noticed the following habitual cheats:

1. not shaving on the weekends, even though it makes Monday mornings just a little bit more of a pain in the ass
2. not sticking to my scheduled workout plans despite having the time to do so
3. neglecting to practice guitar modal patterns even though it's probably the best way to rebuild my technique
4. drinking a beer instead of a cup of coffee
5. drinking a cup of coffee instead of a glass of water
6. eating a cookie instead of drinking a glass of water
7. the above-mentioned things I've chosen not to bother with learning to understand, such as basic soldering technique, personal financial management, Japanese polite speech and anything above junior-high-level kanji, why my girlfriends cry so much, how to sew, and exactly how the hell the software that supports Taïdo/Blog actually works.

A lot of the above just comes down to my personal level of self-discipline, but for someone who considers

himself to be a student and seeker of applicable knowledge, the existence of that last category really makes me uncomfortable.

I realize this now, after a former student mentioned my name alongside Richard Feynman's as an example of someone who "can think".

I feel that this willful ignorance exists, in part, because I'm aware that there are other people whose knowledge I can employ without having to develop my own. But can we really rent understanding? I would venture not.

Willful Ignorance In Taïdo

Of course, this question is also applicable to Taïdo. How often do we simply take at face value the basic skills and concepts that make up our art? Too often, I think.

I had a discussion after a competition with some other instructors about reasons for blocking at jodan rather than chudan in sentaizuki. We discussed this for about ten minutes as we ate and drank. I'm not trying to make myself sound like an intellectual badass, but I wonder how many people actually have taken the time to consider where to block in sentai and why. And there are thousands of such details about Taïdo (40

years' worth of development) which we could benefit from analyzing.

Now I'm not suggesting that we should make life hell on our instructors by questioning every detail of every movement they try to teach us. What I'm really saying is that we should consider these things for ourselves rather than simply relying on the knowledge we receive from others to bring us true understanding. Perhaps it's impossible to think deeply about every detail, and I'm not suggesting that it's necessary or desirable. Much of the time spent in attempting such an exercise would be better spent actually practicing movements. However, it must be said that the more we practice various modes of thought, the more efficient and effective we become in applying them to various problems and ideas.

So after spending ten minutes this week discussing one seemingly very specific issue about sentaizuki, I have learned one thing, yes, but I have also improved my capability to learn similar things. In dissecting the reasons for blocking at a certain level in a certain technique, I added to my set of mental tools. Specifically, I've increased my understanding of the entire sentai family of movement and of blocking technique. Both of these could potentially be applied to any number of applications in Taido.

So I guess the point of this whole post is just to ask you to be aware of those aspects of your Taido practice of which you are engaging in willful ignorance. Maybe spend a few minutes thinking about how that affects your experience of Taido and contribution to Taido. Of course, any value judgments are yours to make. I'm simply asking you to consider it. And now I'm off to learn more about my blogging software.

Not My Problem... Yet

Taido/Blog has been fixed, but not neutered.

A few months after I launched Taido/Blog, I had some major problems with the software backend, and it prompted me to confront a personal weakness. In particular, I wrote about the mental “willful ignorance” category of thought of which we all seem to make liberal, if unconscious, use. This is a giant brain database of things we have consciously or unconsciously decided not to bother with learning to understand.

I believe that this is a pervasive habit among humans; it’s prevalent in every culture with which I have any experience. Sometimes, we just decide that things are going to be impossible for us, and then we prove that assumption to ourselves.

Here in Japan, it’s especially common; I can’t count the number of times I’ve made a perfectly lucid comment in Japanese, only to be met with the response “eigo wakarimasen (I don’t understand English)”. Apparently any utterance issued by white people is English...

Westerners are not immune to this kind of thinking. Somebody makes a comment we don’t like, and we

decide that this person is an asshole without even taking the time to consider why he or she may have made such a statement. It’s quite possible that there was a good reason – after all, most non-psychotic people believe themselves to have rational purposes for most of what they say.

In *Life, the Universe, and Everything* (I think it was that one), Douglas Adams gives us a wonderful example of a practical application for this phenomenon in the “not-my-problem field” that Slartibartfast uses to hide the *Starship Bistromath*. What kinds of not-my-problem fields are there in Taido? What aspects of our practice do we just take at face value without bothering to look at the possibility of finding better methods? What have we chosen (consciously or unconsciously) not to bother learning to understand?

I’ve been trying to answer these questions for myself in my writing on Taido/Blog.

I think we relegate things to our mental willful-ignorance files for three major reasons. Sometimes, we just don’t feel something is important enough. Other times, we may be trusting somebody else to take care of it for us. Most often, I think it’s because we don’t feel we are capable of understanding the issue well enough to contribute significantly to managing it. In any of these three cases, there is a very good chance

that whatever issue we store away like this will come back to bite us at a later date.

And this brings us up to date with Taido/Blog. At one point, I had been having issues with my database software, and I arranged what seemed like a viable patch. I figured that I had solved the problem and that no more coding or file management problems would arise until I made my next major overhaul.

Was I ever wrong.

Everything looked fine for a couple of days – until I tried to post a comment, and found that (as some readers had no doubt previously discovered) the comment would not post, and I was rewarded for a few minutes of thoughtful writing with a blank screen. In trying to discover the source of the problem and correct it, I ended breaking my admin interface and rendering the entire site uneditable in the usual manner.

The upshot of this is that I gave myself no choice but to learn a lot more about the code architecture that makes up the WordPress blogging platform. This may provide some cool benefits in the future as it will allow me to tweak things more accurately and avoid giant screw-ups like what happened last week (which I now

believe I understand well enough to prevent from happening again – maybe).

Anyway, let's remember that our willful ignorance, our not-my-problem fields, and our attempts at avoiding sticky issues will eventually bite our asses. Someday, someplace, somehow – “Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water.” I believe that this is true in every corner of our lives – of course, including Taido.

I've addressed some not-my-problem problems with Taido on Taido/Blog. Most importantly though is that we all decide to begin thinking about these issues and how we can address them in ways that are healthy and satisfying to all of us. Instead of looking at Taido in terms of “if it ain't broke...,” let's get down into the programming, into the machinery, and have a look at what we can do to make Taido the super-badass martial art of the future is was originally conceived to be.

I'm sure there are plenty of aspects of Taido that I too have at some point chosen to ignore. If you think of something I've missed, please let me know.

Of Course I Can Do That

You never forget how to ride a bike – maybe I’m just extraordinarily stupid, but I’ve proven that one wrong.

I was spending the weekend with a girlfriend in a small Japanese village and had volunteered to make a *conbini* (a wonderful little Jap-English corruption of “convenience store”) run for some drinks. Since it was a nice day, I figured that, rather than drive the two kilometers to the 7/11, I would just borrow my girlfriend’s bike and enjoy some fresh air.

Things were going well for a few minutes. Then, as I was coming down the hill toward the store I realized that I couldn’t remember how to stop. “Oh, shit!”

I fumbled as I tried to turn and simultaneously jump off in the parking lot. I didn’t fall, but I’m pretty sure that I looked like a complete idiot to the crowd of high school students hanging out on the curb as I skidded to a halt. Once I regained my balance and composure, I looked down at where my hands were gripping the handle bars and noticed the brakes. “Oh yeah, brakes...”

I’ve forgotten how to ride various other “bikes” too.

For example, at the 2006 US Taïdo summer camp, Mitsuaki asked me to help someone with *henin no hokei*. It seemed like a good idea at first – after all, I’m the guy who knows all the *hokei*, right?

I used to be one of the only people in America to know any of the women’s *hokei*, and I’ve since learned all of the *hokei* in Taïdo. But when I started watching this student move, I realized that I couldn’t remember *henin* to save my life. Unfortunately, she was just learning the routine and couldn’t keep things straight any better than I could, so I had to ask one of my students to help her instead.

Afterwards, I just couldn’t believe that I had forgotten a *hokei*. But I did forget. I mean, I totally forgot it. I probably should have been embarrassed, but my parents raised me to have a high threshold of self-consciousness (in other words, I usually don’t notice when I’m making a fool of myself).

The moral of the above anecdotes is that, even if something is common sense, it’s folly to take things for granted. Indeed, Einstein is noted for saying that common sense is “the collection of prejudices and assumptions one acquires by the age of eighteen and then believes until death.” I think that’s a pretty good characterization.

When phrased in terms of “prejudices and assumptions” common sense doesn’t sound so attractive an attribute to possess. Everyone knows, when you make an assumption, you make an ass of u and... mption? Anyway, to the point –

I try to learn from my mistakes, so in addition to relearning henin no hokei, I’ve been hunting lately for other instances where *what-I-thought-I-knew* and *what-I-could-actually-bring-myself-to-use* were incongruent. Here’s what I found:

Reality Sneaking Up On Me

It’s always good to begin a list that you know will reveal uncomfortable realities with something nice. I was once surprised to find out that my nengi is good by winning an award for it in competition. This came as a shock since I’ve always thought of nentai as my worst/least-comfortable technique in Taïdo. However, that lead me to practice it harder than I did sen or ten. I’m pretty good at both of these types of movements, and now my extra nentai practice seems to have paid off somewhat.

Next, I need to work on hen and un. A lot. I had assumed that my hen and un were ok, but a technical

checkup a reveals that I was mistaken. I’ve long been aware that my shajogeri is awful, but I have to admit that I’m a little disappointed in myself for letting my other hentai kicks slide so far. Though my defensive jumps have improved, my untai attacks are a lot weaker than I remember. Of course, some of this may have to do with my standards becoming stricter, but in either event, my un and hen are not up to snuff.

Another thing I thought I had down was *maai*, which in my definition includes, but is not limited by, distance. My recent tournament performance and some comments from friends and teachers reveals that my maai is not nearly so good as I had thought. What seems to be happening is that I can accurately judge the timing/spacing of my engagements defensively much better than I can while advancing on an opponent.

This is bad news, because relying on the ability to defend or escape is not typically a sound strategy. There is a time and place for everything, including aggression. I can move aggressively, but when I do so, I find myself falling short of my target all too often. This tells me that, even when I am attacking, I still harbor some uncertainty/indecision which is preventing me from devoting myself to a course of action. This has negative ramification both on and off the court.

My gentai is poor. This is another weakness come to light as a result of tournament participation. As someone who is constantly telling students the importance of gentai, I'm ashamed to realize that I'm not doing such an exemplary job of it, myself. Gentai is the return to a safe, detached point of observation after an action – in jissen, this means returning to kamae after a strike.

While the efficacy of shobu-ippon rules is debatable from the perspective of fight training, there are sound thoery reasons for doing so – at least part of the time. Part of my problem here is that, in recognizing the necessary continuity of events, I don't really think in terms of endings or finishing. However, individual tasks within the larger continuum do, indeed, have conclusions, and there are always consequences for failing to see them through. This is something I need to work on both personally and physically.

Another thing I've recently discovered is that rebuilding my endurance is a bitch. I've always been in "good" physical condition. I've twice developed a slight belly (as a result of testing a few dietary theories – one of which was based on the notion that obtaining the majority of one's caloric intake from ice cream and beer was a sustainable strategy), but it didn't last long either time. I'm strong; I'm fairly fast; my body fat fluctuates between "athletic" and "low-average" levels;

but my endurance is crap. What's worse, I'm finding that I really don't enjoy doing the work to improve it.

Symptoms and Causes

All of these incongruencies I've found in my Taido practice are symptoms of deeper personal issues in my life. I've always had a hard time gathering the self-discipline to do unpleasant-but-necessary tasks, even when they aren't all that difficult. I also have a history of leaving projects uncompleted. I tend to deal well with external pressure and can handle most challenges as they arise, but I'm not what I would call a go-getter. I thrive on changes that occur because they allow me to use my creativity, but I don't have Uchida Sensei's gift for dreaming big and catalyzing changes. Finally, I tend to let things slide once i've accomplished some arbitrary minimum achievement goal. Sometimes I forget that we lose what we don't use – and there's plenty I'm not using to its full capacities.

Without getting into a self-psycho-analysis, which would probably interest most readers about as much as watching me get a vasectomy, I have a few theories about what is causing these issues in my life. And I also have a few theories on how I can go about turning a few of them around, though a couple of them are

pretty confounding at the moment. Perhaps working towards finding solutions for a couple of these issues will give me some insights into the others as well.

I'll have to wait and see on that, but I'm pretty optimistic that by continuing to apply Taïdo thought processes to my personal issues, I'll be able to keep evolving and growing as a person, as a teacher, and as a student. Of course, I'll never approximate towards perfection, but each successive issue of which I become aware is one I can attempt to improve, and doing so will in turn give me greater capacity for seeing and understanding other aspects of myself that could use some work.

I believe that this is a process we can each apply to our personal lives and to our Taïdo performance. Doing so with conscious intent is the road to mastery.

Meta

I've often described Taido as a "meta" art. In many ways it seems to me that Shukumine's intention with Taido was not to teach fighting (which is pretty much the definition of a martial art) so much as it was to teach *about* martial art - making Taido an art about martial arts.

I don't know if that's really a fair description; after all, we do practice things that could be applied to combat, and Taido is at least as realistic as Capoeira, XMA, or Shotokan. Still, it's useful to think like this sometimes, to think around the point.

I hope you've enjoyed some of the ideas and stories about Taido collected in this ebook. Further, I hope they inspire in you some spark to study and practice Taido more seriously than before (*even if it's just so you can someday prove me wrong*).

But don't forget to also make it fun. Remember that not everyone takes Taido seriously, nor should they.

What do you practice after gendan and chudan?

Jodan desho?

