



HANSHI SPEAKS

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Dearest Bushi,

I would like to begin by wishing one and all a Happy New Year!

As in past issues, I will use the first half of this publication to share with you my thoughts and experiences within the martial arts. I have spoken to many different subjects, and in this issue I would like to share some of my insight in regard to Balance and **Center**.

These terms are used often in the Dojo and are the foundation for all good technique. The need to have an understanding or, more importantly, an awareness of **center** is paramount to executing effective technique when applying our Art.

To help put **Center** into perspective I have often suggested that if you were to imagine a bowl placed between your hips and a ball placed inside the bowl you could picture **Center**. Lean too far forward and the ball rolls out of the bowl or you have lost balance of **Center**, clearly illustrating the fact that **Center** is fluid or can be put into motion.

Stance will play a large role in how we affectively apply our **Center**. The mechanics of working one's **Center** will be based on the shifting of our footwork, legs, flexing of the knees, transitioning the hips and arranging our torso. These nuances will effect how we will manage or apply our **Center** to maximize technique. I broke this into two sentences.

To obtain a constant awareness of **Center** means you are in tune with your balance. As we are all aware, the inner ear has a great deal to do with the internal mechanics of our body's balance. The eyes effectively provide references for the brain and, as we are in motion, these natural processes report and correct our body as it relates to motion and our environment.

A prime example would be the motion generated walking down or upstairs. We all have misjudged the last step, the messages sent to the brain were "step to the next stair," but when we put our foot down—no stair. The effect is very overt

and we quickly counter the mistake and correct our balance. These are the sub-level operating systems that we are referencing.

I think sometimes we are unaware of the pre-conditioned programming that is taking place to make hundreds of unnoticed adjustments second to second, to keep us upright, moving and our feet firmly placed to the ground.

These preprogrammed actions, that we give little notice to, are what we should try to understand. Think just for a second of what it takes for you to bend over and pick-up a penny from the floor. First, break down the messages that have to be sent from the brain to the rest of the body, which joints have to bend, how many balance and counter corrections there are, where your upper body is, how you judge the distance, how you focus on the object, how do you know you have picked it up, the amount of effort it takes just in the hand and fingers to pick it up, and so forth. This basic action, in all reality, requires thousands of messages and adjustment to execute.

The Martial Arts are strongly rooted in awareness or the conscious effort to be aware of one's self and the world around. So, the internal awareness of what and how we function is the core to the development of Applied **Center**.

We could also refer to the action of when we start to fall, our natural reaction to try and grab something to anchor us and prevent the fall. Just think how fast that panic message is sent from the brain to the body, how quickly the eye searches, how fast the hand and arm reach for the targeted anchor; this all happens in a split second. Survival or the reduction of damage in that scenario is what trigger these natural pre-programmed responses.

I am suggesting that the preservation of **Center** is a conditioned response. This means that your balance is one of the important keys providing you the ability to function. delete "So" Simply put, if your balance is defeated, it impairs your ability to function or defeats the ability for you to defend against an attack.

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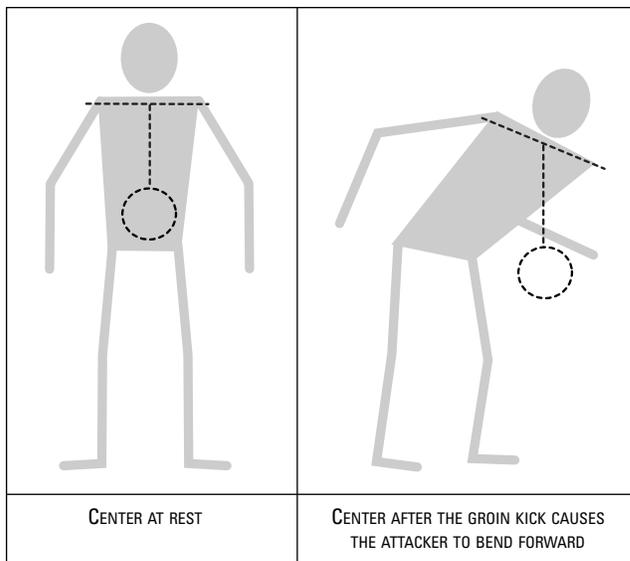


illustration 1-01

So, I could make the following statement and it would be true.

“Defeat your opponent’s balance and you will gain an advantage in the battle”

Vincent Anthony, Hanshi

In class we speak to the Major 13 off-balancing points on a regular basis. These points are target or striking areas that, when attacked, cause huge reactions in your opponent’s ability to remain upright and can drastically affect his/her balance. We also use a term referred to as **Body Mechanics**. This term suggest that we have an ability to apply technique in a series of applications that will cause specific results. As an example, if you were to kick someone in the groin, their knees’ would buckle and the upper torso would lean or lunge forward. This is a clear example of **Body Mechanics** and how they will position both the target subject and work or relocate their **Center**.

In other words, if I can grasp the concept of how **Body Mechanics** work, I can apply technique with an understanding of the effects it has on the target subject, providing me the ability to set-up or lead to the next technique which would have a prescribed result.

To reach just a step further in this statement, if we did apply a kick to the groin and the upper body lunged forward, where would the opponents balance be?

It would be extended forward, and your upper torso will be moving at a downward angle suspending **Center** in mid-air between the shoulders and knees in front of the body. The upper torso, forced into motion by the kick, will stop close to where the **Center** is suspended. Another way to picture this would be to imagine a pole running end to end between the

opponent’s shoulders and a ball suspended from a string tied in the middle of the pole. As the opponent is kicked, the ball will swing forward as he or she is struck. *(See illustration 1-01).*

The goal is to have an awareness of conceptual thinking in regard to the management and applied reaction through the use of technique directed to one’s **Center** or Balance. To have an understanding of this you must have a comprehensive awareness of how your **Center** is activated, used in motion and applied both on a conscious and sub-conscious levels. We can then use this knowledge to apply technique that will manipulate the opponent through the use of **Body Mechanics**.

A better question would be that when you apply technique, are you aware of your **Center** or Balance? Do you consciously make adjustments, do you check your footwork, when throwing or engaging an opponent do you sense their **Center**, do you plan on what effect you’ll have on their **Center**, do you consider the cause and effect of the technique applied and how it effects the balance of all those engaged?

Just to take this even one step further...

Do you understand that when applying technique, all technique affects all those engaged—both you and the aggressor. We should consider that through the use of **Body Mechanics** we can also effectively open and expose target areas and execute a much more effective series of applied technique with a known or predetermined result.

Body Mechanics can also be used to bring specific aspects or target areas in or out of range without you having to advance. Using the Groin Kick again as an example, when a person is struck in the soft target area or reacts evasively to the technique, he/she will bend forward bringing the head and upper torso into hand striking range and, as noted earlier, he/she will project balance forward in an accelerated fashion, causing instability in his/hers footwork or foundation..

The awareness of **Center** goes well beyond the Dojo. We should strive to grasp or connect with how our balance is maintained and controlled. When you walk, where is your **Center**? Do you distribute it from side to side, keep it centered, and or distribute it back and forth?

Please understand that I am not suggesting that you spend every waking moment trying to be aware of your **“Center”**. I am suggesting that you should try to understand that when you engage in technique or when you move, your actions affect your **Center** and can impact on the **Center** of others.

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From shaking someone’s hand to reaping an individual while working them to the floor—these actions all impact on Center and Balance.

In closing, the importance is not to get lost in the details, but think through your technique when training, ask yourself, is my Center being altered or the Center of the person I am working with? Am I applying technique with Center in mind?

These are simple awareness aspects that will help build stronger technique, better distribution of your weight and support an increase in your effectiveness when engaged.

I hope that you find this of interest. If you have any additional questions please feel free to address them in class or just drop me an email.

TRADITIONAL TEXT

Sometimes, as I review historic text from those Bushi long since past (?), I come upon words that strike me so clear that they provide insight and understanding to better define the martial principals and values. Allow me to share with you such a quote.

This is a great quote, written in or around the 1630. It is from the fifth son of Sekishusai Muneyoshi, Munenori who was born in 1571 and died in 1647. His name was Yagyū Tajimanokami, Munenori and he served the second Shogun, Tougawa Hidetada, as a Hei-Ho (Martial/Combat) Instructor.

In his reflection and writing to develop a manual here are his thoughts in regard to one’s personal training in Bushido (Way of the Warrior). Please find the translation to follow.

Train Yourself Thoroughly:
“Once you have trained yourself well, your body and limbs will move automatically without any conscious effort. Your mind will not be overwhelmed by your physical movements. You will employ techniques unconsciously without having to think. Once you have attained this state of mind, not a single doubt or hesitation will arise. No opponent, not even the Devil, will find an opportunity to attack. Train yourself thoroughly and then forget about it. Throw away your mind. You will follow the “Way” without being aware of it. This is the mystery of Bushido.”

Yagyū Tajimanokami, Munenori (1571-1647)

With no disrespect to Munenori Sensei, allow me to share with you the value I find in these words. Believe in your abilities, train hard and the “Way” will always be there when you call upon it.

WEAPONS FACTS

The Jo is defined as a stick between 30 to 36 inches. The Art of applying the Jo combatively is called Jo-Jutsu. The Jo falls under the impact weapon category. This means that trauma, damage and injury are generated through the force of impact. We have an applied philosophy that mostly all weapons function on a circle principal.

The Jo, though a stick, has several different effects and applied uses. The ends can be used for thrusting type attacks while the body of the Jo is used for impact. But as mentioned in a recent class, the hard 90 degree edge of the end of the Jo can be used for creating puncture, ripping or cutting wounds.

Most weapons are based on some form of the stick; we can clearly see the relation in design with such weapons as the lance, sword, bow & arrow. As stated in many classes, all weapons should be considered an extension of the hand and are designed to increase damage and distance from one’s opponent—remember, weapons provide reach.

Please remember to bring your Jo to Saturday classes.

CAMA NEWS

We received a call from Grandmaster Pierce wishing us all a Happy New Year. He is planning some West Coast seminars that we will be presenting in the March/April timeframe in Los Angeles and San Diego.

Also, our next testing session will be coming up in April, as you are all aware we only have two belt tests a year, so now is the time to start becoming prepared. Those of you that need assistance please see any of the upper belts in class; I know they will be more than happy to provide guidance.

Stay Safe.

With Deepest Regards,

Hanshi


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