

## The Roots of Technical Mastery

### Awareness, Harmony, Right Action

#### Part 2

Do you remember the first time you tried to ride a bicycle? What changed between the times when you struggled, fell, and scraped your knees and elbows and the times you found freedom and balance? Did any of the natural laws change or did you just harmonize with them in some intuitive way? We know that a large weight can be lifted if leverage is applied, ask anyone who played on the childhood “teeter totter”. It is true that a joint or bone can be broken with the application of force multiplied through the application of leverage, anyone who has broken a toe or finger while training is painfully aware of this truth. Consider, it is possible to knock down even the largest strongest person with the correct application of disturbed balance and momentum, ask anyone who has slipped on ice and fallen on their butt.



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The point here is this; natural laws exist and functions just fine, even in the absence of our awareness. Our lives and martial arts practice can become very difficult if we are continuously moving against natural law. Some of the most shocking events in our lives are a direct result of natural law coming up and biting us on the butt to remind us of our lack of awareness. Sometimes life can feel like we are swimming upstream and everything may feel like a fight, but it does not have to be that way. Awareness can open our eyes to a sense of harmony and balance. This often occurs first in the practice hall (Dojo) and then after diligent training this awareness can move to the arena of real life. I would propose that our goal is to move through life with that same sense of wonder, awe and exhilaration that you felt on your first solo bicycle ride (for those of you recapturing your youth, your first motorcycle ride). We are inherently designed to follow natural law and when we do, the feeling of freedom is profound.

Naturally, the question is, how then do we increase our awareness and start to understand what is happening around us and to accept that we play an integral part in the whole scene. Fortunately, many of us today live in a part of the world that is relatively peaceful and so becoming more and more aware is not a survival skill necessary for our life path. We have the luxury of time, reflection and meditation that may not have been available to inhabitants of the early tribal and feudal cultures. Many of our predecessors had to learn from a single observation and live or die by the execution of their very next encounter.

What happens after a fight, battle or painful experience? I believe there is a period of reflection where, we observe what has happened and try to make sense of it. We try to understand why the smaller person survived a conflict, a person steady on their feet was able to evade a dangerous situation or an angry out of control person is defeated. We see, if we survive and are aware, the things that may appear counter to our preconceived notion of natural law and ask ourselves, "how can this be".

Making sense of the world is a process of forming concepts. We tell ourselves a story that we think we can understand and we hope it explains what we have seen. Then we put it to the test in some practical way, perhaps responding to a combat situation or perhaps dealing with an angry supervisor at work or an upset customer. The point is this, we must put it to the test in the real world and see the results in a "full on" experience. If we fail to apply our newly forming concept in the real world, we will never really know for sure. Now, don't get me wrong here I am not saying you have to go out and punch or kick or throw drunk Uncle Harold just to prove the effectiveness of your technique (that is what Dojo practice is for). However, we can and should practice the more difficult techniques of mental and emotional control in a quest for balance in real world stressful situations.

***Continued in Part 3 ...***