



Tao of Jeet Kune Do

Bruce Lee

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From the Introduction: "In 1970, Bruce sustained a rather sever injury to his back. His doctors ordered him to discontinue the practice of martial arts and to remain in bed to allow his back heal. This was probably the most trying and dispiriting time in Bruce's life. He stayed in bed, virtually flat on his back for six months, but he couldn't keep his mind from working - the result of which is this book." Linda Lee "Jeet Kune Do, you see, has no definite lines or boundaries - only those you make yourself." Gilbert L Johnson

Tao of Jeet Kune Do Details

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From Reader Review Tao of Jeet Kune Do for online ebook

Andrewcharles420 says

This is a collection of tips and techniques from Bruce Lee about his martial arts technique. There is very little structure to the book, and it's not something one should read cover to cover. I think it would be most helpful as a martial arts/jeet kune do reference manual and improvement guide, including not only the movements and musculature necessary but also the mental focus and way of thought. The whole collection of material gives some insight into Bruce Lee's way of thinking--perhaps most especially the diagrams, drawings and hand-written notes by BL scattered through the text. Even as such it's a difficult read--there are many sections that are just collections of essentially one-liners, frequently overlapping each other in material and even words, and then at other times barely related to each other. As a training manual it does tell you how and where to move your body, but doesn't come near the utility of a video or live instructor.

Bernie Gourley says

Jeet Kune Do (henceforth, JKD) is Bruce Lee's "styleless style" of martial arts. Its literal meaning is "the way of the intercepting fist." However, Lee cautions one against attaching too much significance to that name (or any name) in the book's final chapter. Long before "Mixed Martial Arts" became a household word, Lee was constructing this fighting system that borrowed heavily from the Western traditions of boxing, fencing (conceptually speaking), and wrestling as well as from Kungfu, Savate, and Judo/Jujitsu. While JKD employs techniques and concepts from these systems, Lee remained adamant that no good came of organized styles built on fixed forms. In fact, that might be said to be the central theme of the book. That is, each fighter should begin with sound fundamentals and build an approach that is ultimately his or her own.

The Tao of Jeet Kune Do is an outline of the martial art. In many ways, it looks like and reads like Lee's personal notebook. It's illustrated with crude (but effective) hand drawings of the type one would see in a personal journal, and they are annotated with hand-written notes. (My biggest criticism is that on the Kindle version the graphics are largely unreadable. I'd recommend you get the print edition if you can, which is large-format paperback as I recall.) The book combines a philosophy of martial arts with nitty-gritty discussion of the technical aspects of combat. The philosophical chapters bookend the technical ones.

As others have pointed out, there's not much that is new in either the philosophical discussions or the technical ones. Lee's value-added is in how he states these concepts, how he selects the concepts of value (informed largely by a love of simplicity and a hatred of dogma), and the weight lent to the lessons by Lee's great success story—albeit in a life far too short. Lee was a man of charisma, and one who approached endeavors with gravitas.

Now, I can imagine some readers saying, "Why are you recommending a book on real fighting by a movie martial artist? Would you recommend a book on how to conduct gall bladder surgery from someone because they were on the first two seasons of *ER*? Would you take martial arts lessons from Keanu Reeves because his moves looked pretty nifty in *The Matrix*?"

I'll admit that there is nothing about making kungfu movies that makes one particularly competent to give advice on close-quarters combat. However, as I said, Lee seemed to devote himself entirely to everything he did. Consider the Bruce Lee physique, which seems so common place among actors today (no doubt in part chemical and in part owing to live-in Pilates coaches) was virtually unseen in the 70's. Yeah, he probably had good genes, but he must have trained like a maniac as well. Lee's constant mantra of "simplicity" lends him a great deal of credibility. (It should be noted that pragmatism is not a virtue in the movie-making industry.) Lee demonstrates that he's given a lot of thought to the subject and done the training when he discusses technical concepts. For example, while he gives high praise to Western boxing and emulates boxing moves in some regards, he also notes that boxers are insufficiently cautious owing to the rules/equipment of their sport (a comment—it should be noted--that can be leveled against any sport martial art.)

The technical material is organized in four chapters. The chapter on "tools" deals with the techniques of striking, kicking, and grappling. A chapter on preparations explains Lee's thoughts on faints, parries and manipulations. There is a chapter on mobility that discusses footwork and various types of evasions. The last technical chapter discusses the approaches to attack, focusing heavily on JKD's five types of attack.

The Tao of Jeet Kune Do is undeniably repetitive, but that repetition has value in hammering home key concepts. It's also consistent with the JKD philosophy of not getting into a great deal of complexity, but rather drilling home the basics. There's an old martial arts adage that says, "One should not fear the man who knows 10,000 techniques as much as the one that has done one technique 10,000 times." This seems apropos here. Besides, the concepts that are repeated are often worth memorizing. e.g. Simplify. Eliminate ego. Avoid fixed forms. Be natural. Don't think about building up as much paring away.

I'd recommend this book for martial artists of any style. Non-martial artists may find the philosophical chapters interesting, but may not get much out of the list-intensive technical chapters.

Reem says

Great book with detailed information about Jeet Kune Do and the philosophy behind it. Although it's incomplete but it's satisfying to read Lee's philosophy. A must read for those who are interested in this matter.

Miroku Nemeth says

An excellent book that I highly recommend. One of my favorite stories from the book is the following:

Bruce Lee and I were having dim sum, a traditional Chinese breakfast of meat-filled pastries, in a downtown Los Angeles restaurant after a lesson. I seized on this opportunity to tell him that I was discouraged. At forty-five, I felt I was too old and my body too stiff to achieve any real ability in jeet-kune-do.

"You will never learn anything new unless you are ready to accept yourself with your limitations," Bruce

answered. "You must accept the fact that you are capable in some directions and limited in others, and you must develop your capabilities."

"But ten years ago I could easily kick over my head," I said. "Now I need half an hour to limber up before I can do it."

Bruce Set his chopsticks down alongisde his plate, clasped his hands lightly on his lap, and smiled at me. "That was ten years ago," he said gently. "So you are older today and your body has changed. Everyone has physical limitations to overcome."

"That's all very well for you to say," I replied. "If ever a man was born with natural ability as a martial artist, it is you."

Bruce laughed. "I'm going to tell you something very few people know. I became a martial artist in spite of my limitations."

I was shocked. In my view, Bruce was a perfect physical specimen and I said so.

"You probably are not aware of it," he said, "but my right leg is almost one inch shorter than the left. That fact dictated the best stance for me--my right leg was shorter, I had an advantage with certain types of kicks, since the uneven stomp gave me impetus.

"And I wear contact lenses. Since childhood I have been near-sighted, which meant that when I wasn't wearing glasses, I had difficulty seeing an opponent when he wasn't up close. I originally started to study wing-chun because it is an ideal technique for close-in fighting.

"I accepted my limitations for what they were and capitalized on them. And that's what you must learn to do. You say you are unable to kick over your head without a long warm-up, but the real question is, is it really necessary to kick that high? The fact is that until recently, martial artists rarely kicked above knee height. Head-high kicks are mostly for show. So perfect your kicks at waist level and they will be so formidable you'll never need to kick higher.

"Instead of trying to do everything well, do those things perfectly of which you are capable. Although most expert martial artists have spent years mastering hundreds of techniques and movements, in a bout, or kumite, a champion may actually use only four or five techniques over and over again. These are the techniques which he has perfected and which he knows he can depend on."

I protested. "But the fact still remains that my real competition is the advancing years."

"Stop comparing yourself at forty-five with the man you were at twenty or thirty, Bruce answered. "The past is an illusion. You must learn to live in the present and accept yourself for what you are now. What you lack in flexibility and agility you must make up with knowledge and constant practice."

For the next few months, instead of spending time trying to get limber enough to kick over my head, I worked on my waist-high kicks until they satisfied even Bruce.

Then one day late in 1965, he came by my house to say goodbye before leaving for Hong Kong where, he said, he intended to become the biggest star in films. "You remember our talk about limitations?" he asked. "Well, I'm limited by my size and difficulty in English and the fact that I'm Chinese, and there never has been a big Chinese star in American films. But I have spent the last three years studying movies, and I think the time is ripe for a good martial arts film--and I am the best qualified to star in it. My capabilities exceed my limitations."

Bruce's capabilities did in fact exceed his limitations and, until his youthful death, he was one of the biggest stars in films. His career was a perfect illustration of his teaching: As we discover and improve our strong points, they come to outweigh our weaknesses.

Gautam says

Cool for fans, but I still can't throw a one inch punch.

Martin Maher says

What can I say about this book & this man. Bruce lee has always had such an influence on me, especially in my teens. Of course, he is well known as a martial art film star ,but he is so much more than that. He was a teacher & philosopher too, who had to fight against racism while living in america to become the man he was to become. This book describes the art that he created called `Jeet kune do` - the way of the intercepting

fist. One of my favourite quotes of his which sums up his philosophy goes as follows:- "Be formless, shapeless like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put water into a teapot, it becomes a teapot. Now water can flow, or it can crash! Be water my water." - Bruce Lee

Lindsey Berkowitz says

So good. No one says it better than Bruce Lee himself...

"Self-knowledge is the basis of Jeet Kun Do because it is effective, not only for the individual's martial art, but also for his life as a human being."

What an honor it must have been to have known him.

Vincent Chough says

During my adolescence Bruce Lee was a hero of mine. He was a minority hero who broke down racial barriers. I remember seeing a documentary about Lee. It interviewed famous black Americans who considered Lee a hero of theirs as well just because he wasn't white (and he could kick butt like no one else).

I bought this book back in the 80's and still have it. There's philosophy, art and, of course, martial arts. It is a testimony to a truly fascinating life. I don't agree with all the philosophy, but I appreciate the depths to which Bruce Lee lived his art. It transformed him and the world around him.

Ana says

I took martial arts a pre-teen/teen. I sucked at it. My teacher was a strict Asian badass, I was so terrified of him. lol What can I say, I am a delicate flower. Physical activities are not my forte.

I am such a nerd when it comes to Bruce Lee.

Keeno says

Long before Steven Segal, Van Damme or the UFC, there was Bruce Lee. While most of the world was

concerned with kata and board breaking, Lee was developing a concept that would eventually become the most fundamental aspect of today's fastest growing sport (mixed martial arts)—use what works for you. While taken as objective truth in today's rapidly expanding MMA community, it was revolutionary and anathema to the conventional wisdoms of the time. It crossed cultural boundaries within the realm of the martial arts community as Lee suggested that the complete fighter draw from multiple arts (boxing, Muay Thai, Judo and even rudimentary Jiu Jitsu) to round out their skill sets. The closest text to suggest anything remotely close to JKD would have to be Musashi's "Book of Five Rings" but Tao takes its examination even further. The text is replete with diagrams and theory for the applied sciences of combat but it remains in essence a manuscript of mixed opinions, maxims and philosophy rather than a "how-to" book.

I can say as a practitioner of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, many traditional martial arts, wrestling, boxing and MMA/vale tudo in general, Lee's "The Way of the Stopping Fist" (as a concept of fighting rather than a codified set of technique) is far and away more complete in its construction and more global in its application than any of its predecessors and yet still has gems to be unearthed by novice and experienced modern fighters.

Tao was not wildly popular during his life but it is a testament to his theories that today's MMA champions cross train with several coaches of their respective arts. The Gracie fighting family revolutionized the skill set needed to become a complete fighter in the street challenges of Brazil. Bruce Lee revolutionized personal approach to martial arts.

"I don't believe in different ways of fighting now. I mean, unless human beings have 3 arms and 3 legs, then we will have a different way of fighting. But basically we all have two arms and two legs so that is why I believe there should be only one way of fighting and that is no way."

"To know oneself is to study oneself in action with another person. If you want to understand the truth in martial arts, to see any opponent clearly, you must throw away the notion of styles or schools, prejudices, likes and dislikes, and so forth. Then, your mind will cease all conflict and come to rest. In this silence, you will see totally and freshly."

Nada says

Although this book is more for martial arts practitioner than the casual readers but I'm personally interested in Lee's philosophies. The first part of it is absolutely vital and satisfying and the last part as well. Bruce wrote magnificently about oneself and the art of expressing it honestly. He masterly simplifies everything and put everything regarding oneself into a clearer and freeing perspective. It's impossible to read this one and not gain something, I know I gained many.

1BrandonS. says

In "Tao of Jeet Kune Do", the only character is Bruce Lee. He is also the author of the book. Lee was born in San Francisco, November 20, 1940, and died on May 10, 1973, suffering from seizures and headaches. He was eager to learn martial arts mainly because he was bullied in school. He wanted to show people that just because he was Chinese he could be successful. He eventually was so successful in martial arts, he began to

create his own fighting style with a mixture of many different martial arts styles. Pros from many different styles combined into one. The style was called, "Jeet Kune Do". Also known as, "Way of The Intercepting Fist". He was the father of Mixed Martial Arts. Lee believed in peace, not violence. His art of fighting, was fighting without fighting. One famous quote was, "Be like water." He says that "Jeet Kune Do" is just a name. It is a formless form.

The book was made of Bruce Lee's thoughts and notes. All of his studies on martial arts in one book. It teaches you some of his fighting methods, like fighting stances, parries, sidesteps, cat-like movements, etc. It also gives you tips, like what you should think in a fight, which would be nothing. He says to clear your mind and stay calm. Always stay focused. Any misguidance of the opponent should be taken advantage of. The book explains many things, like qualities when you fight, preliminaries, tools, preparations, mobility strategies, and attack strategies.

Bruce Lee's audience is anyone who wants to learn martial arts. When he taught his skills in his school, the Chinese were offended by him. In Chinese tradition, They do not teach "gwailo", otherwise known as "outsiders". Again, he wanted to teach anyone who wants to learn. The same applies to the book. He was against racism. Bruce Lee's mother was half white, which was a main reason he did not fit in well with most Chinese.

I personally really like the book. It teaches me a lot of morals, and strategies. Learning to "be like water" is fun to me. I'm not just learning about martial arts, but i'm learning about Bruce Lee's life, and discipline. I really do love martial arts, because its a way of defense. I love learning the "Way of the Intercepting Fist." It calms my life, because it has morals and quotes. It's like defensive therapy, but in a book.

Brandon Simmasouk

Norm says

Jeet Kune Do (JKD) was never meant to be a specific style, or another form of martial art. It was just a name Bruce Lee reluctantly coined because he felt he had to call it something. He was concerned that, once named, his approach to Martial Arts could be misinterpreted or exploited.

Anyway, 40 years after Bruce Lee's death, this volume and the 4 paperback volumes of "Bruce Lee's Fighting Method" (now also available in one Hardcover volume) offer, in my opinion, the best overview of his practical and philosophical views on unarmed combat.

The "Tao of Jeet Kune Do" is a comprehensive collection of Bruce's writings and drawings on a variety of Martial Arts topics... practical, theoretical and philosophical. They were originally compiled and edited by Gilbert Johnson. Since each section is a compilation of separate notes, there is much duplication of material, but I never felt this was a problem. Some sections include reproductions of Bruce's original hand-written notes. The Expanded edition (published in 2011) contains additional introductions and commentary and has been rearranged and remastered. I have copies of both, but I think either volume, separately, is worth owning. There's a lot of information here and the reader could spend a lifetime practicing, refining and discarding the material presented in these pages.

Rather than forcing his students to fit one mold or style, Bruce tailored his training methods to fit the needs and balance the limitations of his students. The living, breathing person was far more important than any style. Bruce would encourage his students to "absorb what is useful" and discard whatever didn't work for them. So, in a sense, each student followed his own, personal, course of Jeet Kune Do instruction.

The "Tao" offers the reader an intriguing look at the art of unarmed combat, by the most celebrated Martial Artist of our time.

Paul says

There is a reason why, more than 20 years after his death, that Bruce Lee is still getting articles about his way and his own personal technique written in magazines and why he is still revered by so many. This book is a good example of the reasons why. The important thing though is to learn from his example, understand it, and then create your own method instead of just following it.

Faith Lowery says

I don't have the exact read start and finish dates on many books I have read this year. The dates are approximated, as I have been in & out of the hospital, and on bed rest, and read 2-5 books a day depending on the book & length and my ability to focus. All dates are approximated, by month.

I have studied this book since I was 9...
