

# **Book of Five Rings**

## **by Musashi Miyamoto**

### Swordplay as Philosophy

by Scot Conway

As an interesting historical aside, my mother's maiden name was Arakawa. *Her* mother's maiden name was Fujiwara. Musashi Miyamoto was a member of the noble family of Fujiwara, a family was one of the most powerful noble families as long as a thousand years ago. Musashi Miyamoto apparently did not have any children, so there is no chance that my grandmother was a descendant, but it is at least an interesting historical curiosity to Guardian Martial Artists that there may be some hugely distant relationship between Musashi Miyamoto (whom all should remember was born in 1584 - so it was a very long time ago) and the founder of their style.

## **TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION**

Musashi killed his first opponent at age 13, and another at 16. He became known as the invincible swordsman, and he is regarded to this day as the greatest, or at the very least one of the greatest, swordsmen Japan has ever produced. He wrote the Book of Five Rings late in life after studying swordplay for most of his life.

Musashi said "When you have attained the Way of Strategy, there will not be one thing you cannot understand." and "You will see The Way in everything." The Guardian ideal here is that we find something in which principles are contained, such as martial arts, and we study in great depth until we begin to fully and deeply understand those principles. It can take decades to achieve the magnitude of insight that allows one to "understand everything" - or the particularly philosophical who ponder these things can achieve it in perhaps a decade. When "The Way" is known, then the principles can be seen in everything. We call this The Martial Arts Metaphor.

Musashi's books are divided according to the "elements" conceived in his time. He speaks of Ground (Earth), Water, Fire, Wind and the Void - a very interesting concept in itself. These five books are his Five Rings.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Musashi spent some time describing his past. When he is writing the book, he is 60. It is interesting that this is the same age we use today in the Guardian Martial Arts for the standard minimum age for Hanshi - "one who has mastered himself." I wonder if that tradition might date back four hundred years to the age at which Musashi wrote his book or if Musashi was following some other tradition that already existed at the time. It is always difficult to know such things. I believe that the typical samurai would retire to be a monk at around age 40, so perhaps age 60 was the age at which one could be respected as enlightened.

He recognized at 30 that his victories seemed more by virtue of natural ability, good fortune, or poorly trained opponents. His great insight here was that he didn't really know what he was doing - he was just doing it. In my own life, I found my process similar - though simply in training, not in combat. I had an aptitude, and I had no idea how dependent I was on my attributes until I started to teach. At that moment I suddenly discovered that I did not really know what I was doing - I could just do it. While not the life and death battles Musashi faced, I can imagine the same realization magnified exponentially.

When he says that he had no teacher, he actually had several from whom he had learned, but

he was certified by none in what he was doing. What Musashi did was entirely different, and at odds with some of the traditional thinking of the time. The Muromachi period in which Musashi began his life, and the early Tokugawa Shogunate in which he lived his latter years had a system of grades and licenses, perhaps not too unlike we still use in martial arts today. In similar vein, and in line with the example set by Musashi, I have also studied with various masters, learned a great deal, and then gone to work on my own insights and understanding. There is some comfort knowing that this is a path was so successful four centuries ago - so it is not merely “modern American arrogance” but also the path followed by perhaps the most famous of ancient swordsmen.

## **THE GROUND BOOK (EARTH)**

Ichi Ryu Ni To was the name of the school that worked with both swords. It means “one school, two swords.” **The idea is fairly simple: “You have two swords. Use them.”** Samurai carried Daisho, which means long and short, which was the Katana and Wakizashi. Traditional schools used only one sword at a time. The Wakizashi was the inside weapon, and the Katana was the outside weapon. Philosophically, “Daisho” as a strategic principle means “Use a long sword in a long sword situation, and use a short sword in a short sword situation. Do not use a long sword in a short sword situation, and do not use a short sword in a long sword situation.”

Ni To or Nitten (two heavens) was an innovative idea Musashi applied to actually use both swords. While not mentioned in his book, the Portuguese were in Japan in those days, and they fenced using rapier and main gauche - a long and short sword. Musashi apparently noted this and considered that the Samurai, like the Portuguese, carried two swords - the difference being that the Samurai only used one sword at a time. There did not appear to be a good reason to only use one sword at a time - but in mass melee, there was a good reason to use both. **He hypothesized that when fighting multiple opponents, it was better to use both weapons.**

**“It is false not to do so, and to die with a weapon yet undrawn.”** This simply means that a warrior should not give up his life to the enemy without having used all the tools at his disposal. To build strength and control, he suggests practicing with two Katana. Then, later, one moves to a Katana and Wakizashi, since that is what is normally carried.

**“The Way of the Ichi School is the spirit of winning, whatever the weapon and whatever its size.”** In Guardian Martial Arts, we say “Don’t fight unless you absolutely must, but if you absolutely must... win.” In that sense, Musashi’s philosophy is reflected in our style. Our style is to win. Whether we win with Karate, Jujitsu, or a Weapon - or the combination of all skills through Kempo - we win. That is the goal, and all our training is to prepare us for victory - not just in combat, but to understand the physical conflict as a metaphor for all conflict, including conflict with any problem or obstacle in life.

**“You should not have a favorite weapons.”** By this, Musashi seems to be discussing the idea that there should be nothing to which you always go. If you always and only use one particular weapon, one particular style, one particular maneuver, then someone who is familiar with your style only needs to figure out how to defeat a very limited range of skills. It makes one vulnerable, and if a situation does not call for the use of a particular weapon, one whose expertise is limited to that one weapon will tend to look for a way to do what he knows - even if something else would be more appropriate. Musashi even mentioned that commander and troopers should not have likes and dislikes - again illustrating the idea that one should not make such decisions on personal preferences, but based upon what is effective for accomplishing the goal or mission.

There will naturally be things at which we are better than other things - but we do not choose our techniques based upon what we like, but on what will work. What will accomplish the

objective? We maintain a broad enough base of training to be able to do just about anything that needs to be done. In the days of Musashi, it meant knowing something of archery, naginata, spear, even firearms. It meant being proficient with the katana, the wakizashi, and both used together.

Today it means something different. For us, we study Karate, Jujitsu and the weapons of Kobujitsu. In Kempo we study more weapons and work to blend the skills. The ideal is the same. We want to be ready for whatever happens. For Musashi, he recognized that one does not always get to choose the circumstances of a battle and the opponents one will face. The situation is what the situation is. For us, we also do not get to choose the circumstances of battle or the opponents we will face. If we are defending against criminal attack, it is because the criminal has chosen us. Chances are we will not know the time, the place, or the weapons he will bring to bear. We will not even know the level of force that will be used against us.

At least in Musashi's day, one could always presume that any battle would be to the death, so, therefore, one would always be prepared to use lethal force. Cultural and legal complexities in today's world do not allow us even that much certainty in battle - but for all the uncertainty, at least the advantage we have in life is that life in modern civilization is not very dangerous. Even when danger finds us, many of the dangers we face will make combat skill irrelevant. Terrorist bombings, planes being downed, poisonous contaminants, and snipers do not lend themselves to hand to hand martial arts techniques. Car accidents are not readily stopped with martial arts defenses. The skills and sensitivity we develop might help us avoid some of these situations, and our presence of mind from our warrior's way of thinking might help us function more effectively afterward, but for the immediate danger the merely combat elements of our training are of limited use.

While these things are beneficial for living in society, they are also detrimental to ones training and even character because they allow one to never take responsibility for one's own safety and one's own life. If it is never threatened, then I will not need to know how to protect it. This is true of possessions, of one's body, even of nations. This also means that when we train, we are aware that almost all of our training is purely hypothetical. The majority of us will go through life never needing to fight. Even those of us who need to fight, no matter how often we fight, will *never* use every skill and every technique we learn in the arts. This does not mean that our skill is wasted, for the following quote from Musashi speaks to this.

**“From one thing, know ten thousand things.”** This flows from the ideal of Principles. When we study principles in the Guardian Martial Arts, there should always be an intent to not just understand the particular movement we are doing, but to understand how and why it works. Even so, we are limiting ourselves just to the physiological mechanics and physics - but the Principles. The more we study the underlying Principles, the more we can know. One piece of knowledge leads to a broader principle. The broader principle leads to other concepts that also reflect the principle and let us further broaden the principle. We begin to see that if the principle is true, other things we have not directly studied should therefore also be true - and we go find out. We refine our principles until we have built it up, burned away the dross, and pruned it until we have a single principle - a principle originating from a single technique - from which we can deduce ten thousand variations, applications, and - beyond physical martial arts - ways to live our everyday lives.

From Sparring we know that we do not wish to be injured. Based upon Do Unto Others, we can assume that our partner does not desire to be injured, either. Therefore, as a matter of respect, we do not try to injure our partner and we trust that our partner will not try to injure us. The principle of We Are Partners, Not Opponents defines our relationship as a partnership, so we know that we are on the same side and should be working to help one another. By Sparring at whatever pace and using techniques we can control, and using rules to limit our risk, and limiting the range of our style so we can focus our training - we improve. We finish even a “good match”

in cooperation, having both improved.

So from Sparring we learn Principles of Conflict With Partners. So, from the “one thing” of a particular Sparring exercise, I learn how to handle conflict with my wife, my children, my bosses, coworkers, colleagues, rivals and more. I learn how to treat others as partners when they are partners, and as opponents only when they are opponents. Thus I learn to build partnership even in the midst of conflict, how to engage a partner in a way so that we help one another rather than hurt one another, and we get better at the things we do - even through (or perhaps because of) the conflicts of life. Every time I handle a sparring match well, I improve. Every time I handle conflict with my wife well, I also improve, she improves, and our relationship improves.

“From one thing learn ten thousand things” may sound lofty and philosophical, and certainly it isn’t to be taken literally - as though 9,999 things is inadequate, and 10,001 is too much - but to plumb the depths of a principle and discover all there is in there to know.

**“There is timing in everything.”** Fighting in an obvious example, but his point is that everything has timing. There is the broad timing of farming season by season, even knowing how much time certain crops require - some one season, while others take several years before you have an appreciable crop (fruit trees being an example). Then there is the split second timing of shooting for an opening in combat. In many high tech ventures, things must be times to tiny fractions of a second. For all the issues in timing, Musashi says that his whole book deals in some way with the issue of timing, so I will not explore it in excessive depth here.

**“If you practice day and night in the above Ichi school strategy, your spirit will naturally broaden.”** Words here get a little complicated to interpret, but we will consider our definition of both Spirit and Soul. By using more concrete definitions in a particular instance, we can explore the issue more carefully. This word is not always used like this, though, but we will interpret it thusly here.

*If Spirit is Religion, Principles and Others, then broadening one’s spirit would be an broadening of one or more of them.*

Broadening in Religion could be using the physical principles of the martial arts to gain deeper insights into spiritual truths. As a Creationist, I find the potential inherent in all human beings to truly amazing - and it gives me greater appreciation for the genius in God’s creation. As I study the principles of Agape in the Bible, my mastery of martial arts gives me a greater appreciation for the character of Love. Because I have spent so much of my life learning to be dangerous, I am also more acutely aware on the need for good character.

As I study the Bible, I learn the precepts of life from the Bible, and my martial arts shows me how it applies and how important it is for me as a martial artist. Interestingly, I also become aware of how dangerous every single human being is to others - a word here, an action there, a failure to act somewhere else - and that means that this is important for everyone. A father is more powerful - and more dangerous - to his children than any martial arts master. As a fighter, I could hurt them or scare them, or protect them in a moment, but I cannot shape them day by day, week by week, for their entire lives. Father, Husband, Son, Man, Boss, CoWorker, Friend are all powerful positions - but it was my martial arts master that showed me how important it is and has greatly deepened my appreciation of the Bible.

Broadening in Principles could be very similar to Broadening in Religion, except that martial arts is not shedding new light on Religious Principles found an an objective, external, inspired source. Rather, it reveals Principles simply found in life. It shows how important hard

work is because you cannot short cut physical development.

Your body will not accept excuses. It gets better, or it does not get better - and when it doesn't get better, it usually gets worse. No matter how much we might seek excuses in business, in school, and in relationships - there are no excuses in martial arts. You do the work to gain the skill, or you don't do the work and you don't gain the skill - and the quality of the reasons are irrelevant. Whether you have a good reason or a stupid reason - if you don't work, you don't improve. The simple physical metaphor illustrates Principles in other areas. Another example is skill - whether one's ability to win is based upon talent and attributes or disciplined skill. It is easy to rest on one's laurels when you can beat everyone - but we are really short changing ourselves by our failure to seek our potential. Likewise in life - if we have natural advantages in school, business, opportunities, wealth or health - it's easy to rely on that rather than good character and disciplines.

Broadening in Others could be the dual awareness we develop of the evil that may be found in others as we train to deal with violence, and also compassion for others as we learn and practice the skills to protect people. We gain a greater appreciation for the nature of violence, the truth of emotions, and how out of the control people can be under certain circumstances - and how not all moments of violence are born from evil intent, but sometimes drunkenness, extreme emotional circumstances, and misunderstandings.

As we train, we become more aware of subtle things in the movement of people and what makes some people dangerous and others not. As we gain insight into such things, we likewise gain insight into the subtle things of build and posture that reveals the kind of muscular conditioning that reveals skill. We start to recognize more and more subtle things because more things take on meaning. We begin to see how the martial arts principles we learn also apply to interaction with people. We spar as partners, not opponents, even though the nature of sparring is working in opposition for mutual benefit - which helps us understand how to disagree agreeably, how to start from different perspectives and use one another's perspectives to expand one's insight, knowledge and skill. There are so many things in this area as well as the others. I expect that these things, fully explored, could become chapters in books.

*Soul is Will, Mind and Emotions. If broadening one's spirit includes Soul, then it could be an expansion of the Will, the Mind or the Emotions.*

Broadening in Will could be as simple as choosing to move, choosing to have power whether or not we want to - or simply choosing to work out when we don't feel like working out. Novice martial artists - or students who take classes and are not yet martial artists - often think that Power is created with Anger. If they want to do something more intensely, more powerfully, they will do something that creates Anger. Even when weight lifters push those last difficult reps - the grunting shout often sounds angry. All this flows from a sense that Anger is Power.

Interestingly, many do not realize that they are using Will to Choose Anger to create the Power indirectly. It can take years to create Power by Will instead of Power by Anger - but the broadening of one's Will includes being able to generate MORE power with Will than is possible with Anger. When we can do that, we have a Warrior's Will. This Affirmative Will also helps develop Negative Will. Affirmative Will is "I can choose to do what I do not feel like doing" and Negative Will is "I can choose to NOT do what I DO feel like doing." The Affirmative Will helps divorce Violence and Anger - which also means Will can trump Emotion when it needs to STOP emotion from doing something that ought not be done. If a samurai armed with katana and daikyu (bow) had his mastery governed by emotion - some very bad consequences could result. It is said that a katana does not make a samurai, but it can unmake him.

Broadening in Mind includes learning more, figuring out more, and memorizing more. Obviously by learning, one's Mind expands. But knowledge in martial arts has a stacked series of mental insights. It begins with what later becomes obvious fundamentals. Then come some more details. In time, the broad, obvious principles are honed so they are automatic, the details becomes easy, and then even more subtle details can be learned. In life, we often learn a broad concept and think we understand. By learning more details, we begin to gain greater appreciation with that insight. All this helps us figure out other things that may or may not seem perfectly related because we have Principles to apply to the new situation. We memorize a great amount of information and broaden our knowledge so much that it normalizes what for other people is at the very fringe of their ability to even conceive. When our Mind practices learning, figuring out and memorizing, we get better at those skills.

Broadening in Emotions could be being more self controlled - which is Will, but also Emotion. As we understand the nature of our own feelings, we gain greater insight into the feelings of others. Likewise, as we study feelings in others, we become more aware of our own. Anger and Fear are two Emotions commonly dealt with by warriors and in the realm of violence. We learn to deal with our own Fear, and we learn to recognize Fear in our enemies. We learn to recognize Anger and control Anger. As we move forward with delving into those emotions, a deep warrior will expand past the obvious emotions to the less obvious.

One seemingly contradictory Emotion is love - that a true warrior must expand his sense of Love. Without that, Anger and Fear can gain control. Love of Honor, Duty, Loyalty and the other values of the culture would drive their conduct. Love of Family, Love of Patriotism, Love of Compatriots are all important forces. It's the soldiers focus on "doing it for the guy next to you" in those moments when the little picture is so intense that broad, abstract concepts cannot guide your actions - you need something immediate, present and obvious. Conversely, one needs Love of Enemies to be an effective warrior. Even though enemies in war know they must kill one another, the loving warrior wants the kills quick and clean - does not wish an enemy to suffer or have loss of honor. The loving samurai would not want to dishonor an enemy by giving him an unworthy opponent. All this would be a show of what we, today, might call Love.

Warriors who ponder Life and Death on a deep, martial artist level also gain greater appreciation for Life - since death is more real to them. All this from the practice of Martial Arts on a very deep level.

Any one of these would probably be enough to technically qualify for Musashi's statement of the "your spirit will naturally broaden" using our definitions. It seems, from this analysis, that it probably means all of them.

## **MUSASHI'S NINE PRECEPTS**

Musashi sets forth nine precepts. In the book, they are simply listed, but I thought they warranted further exploration. As one uses each "**one thing**" to "**learn ten thousand things**" the seemingly simple, or seemingly obscure statements reveal a depth of principle for consideration.

### **1. Do not think dishonestly.**

This statement can have multiple meanings. The obvious is "Don't think about how to lie." A less obvious, and possibly more powerful and more accurate one is "Don't fool yourself" Deception is part of battle. A "fake" is a "lie" - a deception in which we intentionally try to get an opponent to believe something that we know isn't true so we can gain an advantage to hurt them. Large scale maneuvering (dealt with more in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*) is often based on keeping

secrets and getting opponents to think that things are other than as they are. With deception such a natural part of combat, and almost certainly part of Musashi's experience, it likely does not include such behaviors. The "Don't fool yourself" explanation is probably more true.

Despite the fact that deception is part of combat, "Don't fool yourself" also includes a variation on "Do not lie" or "Do not think on how to lie." It isn't that all deception is bad - it's that deception is a tool, a technique, much like a strike with a sword. Deception is, by its nature, for purposes of causing harm to another or protecting oneself from being harmed - whether physical, social, economic, etc. This can be explored in more detail for a proof, but I will move forward as though it is self-evident.

A Tamishi Giri power strike can kill an enemy - but it can also kill a friend. It can protect oneself from an enemy's strike who is trying to kill you, but it can also "protect" you from a friend's assistance. It is important to know when it is appropriate to strike - and when it is not. Just as there are those whom it is appropriate to kill, there are time in which there are those whom it is appropriate to deceive - which is the essence of ninjutsu, international intelligence services, or, as a more concrete example: German's hiding Jews from the Nazis. Most of the time deception is not appropriate - just as violence is not appropriate - and we would be "fooling ourselves" or "thinking dishonestly" if we convince ourselves that we can lie when it is not time for lies. This would be just as bad as using violence when it is not a time for violence.

It is commonly thought that the ninjas are nothing more than assassins, paid killers that would do anything dishonorable for a price. This isn't quite the truth - but assassination was a role that they played - that, and intelligence work (spying), espionage-sabotage, and more. They were not "dishonorable" as much as that they had a different code of honor. They were started by the samurai families that lost - and Musashi lived during the start of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a time in which many ninja families would be about to start their ninjutsu traditions.

One of the core, critical philosophies to which the ninja adhere is "You must eliminate desire." It is a difficult concept to translate. "Desire" and "thinking dishonestly" are mirrors in that both related to this: You must see things as they are, not as you want them to be. When ninja work, they must observe facts. They must be objective. If they desire certain outcomes, they might interpret information and see primarily what will support their desired outcome, and not notice things that do not support their desired outcome. We tend to see what we want to see, hear what we want to hear, and then we can believe what we want to believe because we have seen and heard what supports that.

We do not set out to fool ourselves - it is a natural byproduct of wanting to believe something. It isn't even that we thought about our outcome and sought it out - but that we already believe it, so we look for what supports what we already want to find. One of the hardest things to face is that a core belief is false that has driven so much of our behavior and guided many of our decisions - and that has been born in our experiences of our childhood and "proven" throughout our lives. Thus, the "want" is to "prove that what we believe is true is really true."

When Musashi says "Do not think dishonestly," he is almost certainly discussing a similar idea. We must think honest thoughts - thinking thoughts that seek and ponder the Truth. For us, this is Reality is More Important Than Anything I Believe. The pondering and applying is All Principles Must Be Consistently Applied. The situation is what the situation is. All this speaks to the need to understand the Truth so we can respond effectively. The better and more complete a handle we have on a situation, the better and more complete solutions we can apply to the problems and challenges of life.

## **2. The Way is in training.**

The Way is “in training” as opposed to “in combat” or “through experience.” The idea Musashi seems to be conveying is if one does not practice the Way in training, then one will not survive combat to have experience. Combat and experience are times to ALREADY have the Way in one’s Spirit, Soul, Body and Heart. Therefore, training must be the Way because the Way cannot be acquired in time for combat and experience by any other means other than training.

Therefore, one must train with consideration to what The Way of any given art really is. In the Guardian Arts, it includes combat - so we learn the skill sets to fight - but it is more than that. It is personal development on all levels - not just fighting - so we should endeavor to develop day by day, class by class, lesson by lesson, insight by insight. No lesson should be lost so that when it is needed - no matter the lesson - it is already known. This goes to “It doesn’t matter what you know - it only matters what you can think of in time.” It won’t matter if a lesson was taught if it wasn’t learned, and it won’t matter if it is learned if it cannot be recalled when it must be used.

## **3. Become acquainted with every art.**

During the Togukawa Shogunate the Bugei Juhappan was developed. The Bugei Juhappan, the eighteen martial arts, expected of Edo period samurai, 1600 to 1868); Bajutsu (horsemanship), Bojutsu (staff), Fukumibari (needle spitting), Hojutsu (gunnery), Iai (sword drawing), Jitte restraining techniques, Kenjutsu (sword), Kusari-gama (chained sickle), Kyudo (archery), Mojiri (barbed staff), Nanginata (halberd), Ninjutsu (spying), Shuriken (dagger, blade or star throwing), Suiejutsu (swimming), Tanto (short sword), Torite (rope, proficiency in rope use), Yari (spear), Yawara (jujitsu, judo)

When Musashi says to become acquainted with every art, chances are he is speaking of the Bugei Juhappan. Since he also speaks of not having a favorite weapon, he probably isn’t talking about learning various styles of swordsmanship, but learning different weapons and skills. The Bugei Juhappan includes obvious weapons - sword, sword drawing, bow, guns, jitte, chained sickle, short sword, spear, needles, staff and spear - but weapons are not all of the arts. Then there is Torite, a rope use fighting skill, Yawara which is a grappling skill - but that leaves skills not generally thought of as martial arts in the West. Horsemanship was a martial art. Swimming and Spying were martial arts.

Calligraphy is not in the Bugei Juhappan, but it was also considered an art all Samurai would learn and is also thought of as a martial art. Tea Ceremony, Noh Theater, and Poetry are likewise Samurai Caste martial arts. When Musashi says to become acquainted with every art, chances are he not only means the Bugei Juhappan, but the other arts of the warrior class.

Note, though, that he says to be acquainted - not necessarily master the arts. One cannot truly master a great many things in life. It takes years - decades - to master a skill so well that further training will be of little use. Many people will never fully master even one thing.

## **4. Know the Ways of all professions.**

In ancient Japanese times there were four major castes, the Samurai, the Craftsman, the Farmer, the Merchant and then below the four caste system was the Eta (outcasts). Musashi may have been referring to these four “professions” when we said to Know the Ways of All Professions. Or he may have been referring to the various professions within each of the castes. It is difficult to know.

However, something we can know is that Musashi thought it important to be exceptionally well rounded. He talked about being acquainted with all arts, so he also spoke of knowing the ways of all professions. There is a Chinese word, which may be Mandarin or Cantonese, but whose usage is obscure; the word is Jian - which roughly translates “master of everything.”

Musashi seems to want those who follow his way to be Jian, to learn enough about all things that they would be Japanese Renaissance Men. The term would not have been known in Japan at the time, and the word to this day is used only in reference to the European Renaissance, but it does seem to encapsulate what Musashi is talking about. He wants his people not to be “Jack of Trades, Master of None” but, rather, to learn the principles and concepts behind everything so that everything is martial arts - and martial arts is everything.

In the Guardian Martial Arts, many students find it striking how many things in the arts relate to other areas of life. Time and time again when martial arts principles and analogies are used to illustrate solutions in life’s problems, students are astonished - at least for a while. Steadily they realize that what makes martial arts so powerful is the objective nature of the art to test one’s concepts and principles. It is easy to hold an untested idea - but if an idea is put to the test then one can find out if it is true or not. Martial arts, by its nature, tests ideas. Not all people or martial artists avail themselves of this tool, but martial arts, properly applied, can be a laboratory to test one’s understanding of things.

Knowing the Way of All Professions, then, becomes not a separate learning exercise, but part of one’s martial arts training. Just as one’s principles can be tested in martial arts, one’s ideas of martial arts can be tested in various professions. Testing a martial art concept on the field of life and death battle can be dangerous. Various professions provide incredible insights about one’s training.

As an example, a Sword is made of hardened steel, but it cannot be too hard or it will break. With a katana, the cutting edge is incredibly hard so it will hold an exceptionally sharp edge. The back end is soft so it will flex and not snap if struck hard. Thus a warrior must harden that which he strikes with, but soften the rest. In the manufacture of a sword, it is not just crafting the form, but recrafting, pounding, recrafting, pounding, folding layer upon layer to create a hard, sharp edge. Blades are placed in heat, pounded, heated, pounded, and cooled. So many lessons can be found about the making of a warrior through the making of a warrior’s weapon.

The analogies between professions and martial arts are many. Musashi Miyamoto’s book along with Sun Tsu’s Art of War are both commonly used texts in business, both in the orient and America. This is because the principles of war and combat are also principles for business competition. The Way of Martial Arts is also the Way of Business. If business people, who possess minimal understanding of martial arts, benefit so greatly in business from reading these books, how much more the martial artist who, presumably, will have a deeper understanding of the text?

## **5. Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters.**

A casual reading might leave someone wondering how one could *not* distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters. This statement hints that the problem of the old times is no different than the problems of today in this sense. Many people, perhaps even the average person, does not properly distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters. An example might illustrate this better.

Children often think it is a good thing to have school closed. They think that having a day

off from their education and a day to play is gain - but most adults recognize it as loss for the children. Children would celebrate the permanent closing of school - oblivious to the damage it would do to their future. Children would celebrate chocolate cake every morning. Children would celebrate a great many things that provide temporary pleasure at the expense of their long term best interests.

One would like to think adults would out grow that. I certainly hope that most of us have, but in the United States the numbers would seem to indicate otherwise. The fact that the majority of us are overweight enough to adversely affect our health indicates that we do not distinguish between gain and loss in our eating and exercise habits. The fact that the divorce rate is so high indicates that many of us do not distinguish between gain and loss in our relationships - notably that we think we're winning arguments when we're losing our marriage in the process - or we think we're protecting ourselves when we're really endangering our marriages. Again and again there are examples of times in which adults do not distinguish between gain and loss.

The Japanese way of thinking in those days did not differ so much from the thinking of ancient Israel. One thought in terms of generations - of bloodlines - and that is also part of distinguishing between gain and loss. Samurai Lords might think as many as 250 years in the future. Of course things change dramatically in 250 years, but other things - principles in particular - stay the same. Kuroda Naganasa was a Samurai Lord whose life overlapped Musashi's, and he left behind a 100 year plan for the financial success of his family. More recently, the Sony corporation president was asked at one time if they had a long range plan, and he said that they planned 250 years in the future. Abraham was blessed with a blessing that would take more than 400 years for his posterity to actually inherit - the land of Israel.

This principle probably means that we should think about gain and loss both in terms of our own interests, and in the interests of our posterity.

## **6. Develop intuitive judgment and understanding for everything.**

This is a double sided process (at least). One, as we Become Acquainted with Every Art, we have a broad foundation from which to look at situations. Likewise, the Learn the Ways of All Professions likewise contributes to this. Second, Developing Intuitive Judgment and Understanding for Everything in turn contributes to Become Acquainted with Every Art and Learn the Ways of All Professions. As we broaden our base of knowledge, we can be more intuitive because we internalize the principles we learn. As we develop our intuitive judgment and our understanding, we are more able to learn arts and professions. It works in both directions.

The complete process for developing intuition, judgment and understanding can be involved, but these basic principles can guide the process. First, watch situations that do not directly affect you, decide what you think would be best, see what others do, and watch the results. If they do what you think they should have done, watch the results. If they do something else, try to figure out why you think they made that decision, the result you expect them to produce, and then watch to see what happens. Over time, you should gain an intuitive sense of what ought to happen because you have actively observed and predicted.

Second, watch situations that may not directly affect you, but those to which you are connected well enough to speak to one or more of the principals involved. Consider the variables and what you think ought to be done, but just ask the people what they think is the best decision and why, and then watch. Armed with more information, you can ask more detailed questions. Then predict and watch.

Third, think through the things you know and predict the outcomes. Fourth, use the principles you know in situations beyond your expertise. Fifth, use the principles you know in situations so far outside your knowledge area that you really know nothing about it. These are general guidelines that work from being totally disconnected and mostly observing to actually applying and living out principles you know in increasingly difficult and unfamiliar territory. It will test your understanding, and it will test your principles in the fires of outside situations. This sort of approach fairly quickly prunes principles that may sound good in the dojo or the classroom, but have limited applicability in real life.

Through all of this, you try to consciously hone your principles. Try to figure out how to word them so that not only do you have a kinesthetic, intuitive feel for them, but you could also explain and teach them to others. That is Sensei Thinking.

### **7. Perceive those things which cannot be seen.**

Without further explanation, we can only guess at the possible meaning here. The Bible says that Faith is the substances of things hoped for, evidence for things unseen. Faith is not blind, but, rather, intelligent assumptions based on known facts and evidence. Blind Faith is believing things without any logic, reason, evidence or, worse, in direct contradiction to all evidence. It is possible that Musashi here is discussing having Intelligent Faith.

This isn't just believing things, but making deductions based on known principles - in which case it relates to his previous principles. Explore this: First, you commit to thinking honestly. That is Reality is More Important Than Anything We Believe. Second, you learn your art. Third, you learn about other arts, other professions, and in time start to see the commonalities in all things - which is Musashi's third, fourth and fifth - which leads to the sixth. By now, one should have seen that All Principles Must Be Consistently Applied. When one knows that, then even those things that cannot directly be known - those things that cannot be directly seen - can be understood because they MUST be there if the principle is true.

### **8. Pay attention even to trifles.**

Part of the idea here is not to ignore things that appear small. One should be aware and attentive to even small things. First and foremost, one should not be absent minded in small things for the Biblical principle of "Faithful in little, faithful in much" has the contrary of "faithless in little, faithless in much." Not paying attention to trifles cultivates a spirit of inattentiveness. It leads to paying attention only to those things that are of natural emotional importance - which, in turn, may mean the difference between life and death on the battlefield because by the time unimportant things become both urgent and important, there may not be time or resources enough to solve the problem. In swordsmanship, that often means death.

Second, but really not much less in importance, is the never-ending analysis and testing of principles. Those things that may seem to be nothing more than "trifles" may reveal important principles. Many kung fu movies have the young master gain a sudden insight by watching water fall over a small falls at a stream, or watch something float in water, or watch some element of nature. Even a trifle such as cooking may reveal deep principles. Cooking cannot be hurried. One hour at 400 cannot be replaced by half an hour at 800 degrees. It is in small things that one can find and analyze insights and principles in a low risk environment and deeply consider those principles without the risk of true battle.

### **9. Do nothing which is of no use.**

Musashi is talking about always doing something that has some purpose. Note here that recreation does have a purpose - re-creating one's energy for more productive work. In this philosophy, one does not work so one can play, but, rather, play so one can work. The time of relaxation is to recover and rebuild - much like a body builder or high intensity athlete needs to give the muscles he worked so hard a day or more off so his muscles can recover and thus grow stronger. Then he can push his limits again. If he does it every day without rest, he will damage his body rather than strengthen his body.

The Biblical principle is to "redeem the time" - this is based on the "because the days are evil" which is more popularly understood as "idle hands are the devil's playground." A great deal of sin - perhaps even the majority of rebellious sort of sin (intentionally missing the mark) - occur in times of no responsibilities and/or non-productivity. This, again, is not to say there is no time to relax, but even relaxation has a purpose.

## THE WATER BOOK

**"Language does not extend to explaining the Way in detail, but it can be grasped intuitively."** This is the Sensei Challenge. Grasping something intuitively is relatively simple compared to trying to explain it. In the Guardian Martial Arts, we talk about "walking your talk" which is doing what you say - putting into practice the principles we teach. The greater challenge is our converse statement - "talk your walk." Talking your walk means you can do something, but you can also explain and teach what it is you're doing and why you're doing it.

One of the greatest difficulties ties back to the root word of "communication" - the root of which is "common." To communicate, one needs a common language, a common vocabulary (which means we not only use the same words, but we use them to mean the same things), and a common frame of reference. The challenge of discussing advanced martial arts techniques begins with definitions.

Even when words are used to define things, the subtle understanding is borne as much from experience as mutual definitions. It is one thing to both understand the meaning of "one million dollars" in a mathematical sense, but the person who is worth one million dollars has a different intuitive grasp than the person whose net worth is zero. Further, the person who has over one million dollars in liquid assets has a different understanding than the person whose million is tied up in illiquid assets. Someone for whom one million dollars is a small fraction of his annual budget at his business will have yet a different understanding. In each case, it can be difficult to get past one's experience to have effective communication with someone who cannot understand your frame of reference.

Language, then, is an introduction - the barest of beginnings, not the end. In the Guardian Martial Arts, the written form of the techniques is not meant to be instructive - meaning one is not meant to learn the technique from the written description. Rather, it is meant to remind the person who already learned the technique but whose recall is faltering. Likewise with the echoes commands.

**"The principles of strategy are written down here in terms of single combat, but you must think broadly so that you attain an understanding for then thousand a side battles."** This simply means to learn the Principles. If All Principles Must Be Consistently Applied, then any grasp of True Principles leads to understanding at many other levels - provided one is conscious of those levels and how the principle applies.

**“If you mistake the Way even a little, you will become bewildered and fall into bad ways.”** The difference between “exactly right” and “almost right” can be the difference between “effective” and “ineffective.” Locks illustrates this in a fairly concrete way - largely because locks can be done slowly enough to realize how little it takes to make something shift from “works” to “doesn’t work.”

If you do not learn something correctly, you may mistakenly assume the technique does not work when the truth is that you never learned it well enough to make it work. The more intricate the technique the more vital the subtle details, the more likely this is to be the case. This is often the case of those who think that they can “take the best of every martial art” and put them together to make a superior martial art. One does not begin to learn the “best” in an art until perhaps 4th or 5th degree Black Belt. Only then does one have sufficient intuitive understanding to grasp the advanced technique in the basic technique, and the basic technique in the advanced technique.

By the time one earns a Black Belt, typically you will understand the art well enough to ask legitimate questions to seek deeper understanding or discover weaknesses in particular technique. It is always better to presume the technique works and seek out how it works rather than directly question or challenge the art. Certainly it does not bode well for one’s ongoing training to argue with techniques (not so much that an instructor would remove you from his class as much as one does not learn when your focus is on “why nots” instead of “hows”). Generally by Black Belt, one has learned enough to know to move on - either moving on to higher rank in that style - or move on to a different style.

The most interesting challenges arise when it is junior students who seek to argue with techniques, philosophy and the principles taught. While one might think it more common for teens and youth to argue, it is often the adult who has the self-confidence to actually do so. This can produce a particular challenge because the instructor cannot let mistaken teaching stand. It is a less indicting version of the proverb “Answer a fool according to his folly or he will be right in his own eyes.” A difference of philosophy or a misunderstood or misapplied principle is not usually foolish, but if it is not addressed, then other students may be left with confusion - or in Musashi’s words - “bewildered” - and thus fall into bad ways because they do not grasp the principles upon which an art operates.

This is less of a problem in the Guardian Martial Arts than in many styles because our philosophy and principles are so broad and allow for dissent in a great many areas. However, in styles with very narrow philosophies that are clearly focused, this can be a very large problem. Nonetheless, there is a limit to the amount of variation that can be permitted.

**“Your spiritual bearing must not be any different than normal” “Determined though calm.”** Spiritual Bearing, in this description, seems to mirror our idea of State Management. We do not rely on our emotions to generate power - not adopting an angry or belligerent bearing that rests our determination on emotion - but, rather, we use Will Power to simply, calmly choose the best course of action.

The challenge is to eliminate “desire” - that wanting to hurt someone or wanting to kill. We simply choose the course of action that best suits the situation. We are problem solvers solving a problem. If that requires killing, as it often did in Musashi’s time, or hurting someone, we do so without any particular desire to cause harm. We INTEND what we do, but we do not necessarily want to do it - but neither do we NOT want to do it. Want has nothing to do with it. We simply do what must be done, and we do it in a way that intends to produce the result we need to produce.

This can be a very difficult concept for junior martial artists to grasp. Even in the Guardian

Martial Arts where this idea is continuously taught, Will Power is so clearly defined, the lesson shows up in teaching on Kiai, Mushin and many sparring lessons - we still have advanced students that do not fully grasp this concept. Even Black Belts sometimes mistake determination for a bit of anger. This idea must be diligently practiced so it is not only merely understood, but so ingrained into our natural way of thinking that it is our new “normal.”

**“On the battlefield, even when hard pressed, ceaselessly research the principles of strategy so that you can develop a steady spirit.”** This requires a hint of detachment. Whether we are observers or participants, we are still researchers. We can learn by watching, and we can learn by being aware even when we are in the middle of something. This requires several things. First, we must be aware of what we are doing. Sometimes we get so focused on “trying things” that we are not aware of what we are actually doing - what we are and are not accomplishing. Second, we must be aware of what others are doing. Sometimes our “I’m trying to...” focus makes us oblivious to what is being done to us - and in Musashi’s day, that meant you were dead. Third, we must be aware of the environment - which is not just terrain, but the entirety of the circumstances. In this sense, we go from being a fighter in a fight to a participant in an unfolding event - and we have a part to play for the events to unfold as they should.

If we can just detached enough to do this, we develop the “steady spirit” of a student in a class - whether a lesson is learned by watching, by training, or in the life and death struggle of lethal combat. It helps build the “determined but calm” spiritual bearing Musashi mentions earlier.

**Stance in Strategy.** “Maintain the combat stance in everyday life and to make your everyday stance your combat stance.” To Musashi, the everyday and the combat ready should be the same. He disliked special stepping and special stances for fighting.

In the Guardian Arts, we try to teach and hope students will practice Functional Anatomy. If the body is being used correctly, the body should be ready to move at any time. This may have been one of Musashi’s considerations. You practice moving in normal life with the same good posture you would want to use in combat. He specifically did not like specialized combat stances. In the Guardian Arts, we train stances, but we do not fight in stances. Stance work sets the boundary, but they are not poses to be used in combat.

State Management is also a consideration. If combat and normal life have the same physical bearing, it is easier for them to have the same spiritual bearing. One need not change stance or posture to become ready for combat - one is always ready for combat.

**Gaze for both near and far.** This means you do not focus on just one thing. You do this by softening your focus and using your peripheral vision. Most martial artists know this, but they also tend to get too focused on a single range - which must be avoided. It is more important in weapon fighting since the potential variation in the range at which one must see something moving is greater.

**Grip with a floating feeling.** This statement indicates that the Japanese untrained people had the same problem that Westerners have - gripping the sword in a tight grip that would quickly tire the hands. While the initial strikes might be powerful, the loss of grip strength would set in quickly and the power of the strikes would likewise fade. The “grip with a floating feeling” means to hold firmly, but lightly. It sounds like an oxymoron to typical Western thinking, but it is the same “relaxed power” that one finds in nearly all martial arts. The hands are relaxed, they are gripping the sword in a relaxed manner, but with a certainty of holding the weapon and a firmness to it.

To practice this gripping concept, one can hold an Escrima with a relaxed grip and have a partner pull on the other end. This should not be done with a jerking motion, just a gentle pull of increasing power. If the grip is correct, the Escrima will be very difficult to pull, even impossible (your whole body will be pulled forward before your grip is lost), and it will require very little effort.

**Feel intent on cutting your enemy.** The concept of Intent is often a difficult martial arts concept for nonMartial Artists to grasp. One does not think of hurting someone, even killing them - those are results of the movement. One does the movement with the purpose and intent of the movement - in this case executing a perfect cut that strike the target to do a particular type of damage. The natural result is that a cut enemy will die. One does not simply execute a move - since the purpose, then, is movement, not the intended purpose of the movement. One does not try to get a particular reaction from an enemy - not paying any attention to what the enemy might do to stop you - since one should not presume the block, but, rather, cut.

As many words are used here to explain it, many will nonetheless find it difficult to grasp and will mistake an intent to cut as an emotional desire to cause harm. One does not think of the harm one is doing to another human being with any anger or particular emotion about it. One is simply calm and determined doing what must be done given the facts of the situation at hand. An enemy may be killed, but not because one “wants” to kill or even particularly means any harm to anyone - simple that something must be done and what must be done will leave a man dead. The purpose of the movement is practiced intently, but never with anger. One is simply determined - but calm.

**“Your feet must always move as in normal walking.”** Musashi disliked the various footwork techniques of many arts. Many styles have curious stances and ways of moving - and there are many very good reasons for doing so. Despite those reasons, Musashi and the Guardian Martial Arts are in agreement that movement should be as normal as possible. In our styles, as I suspect in Musashi’s training, some curious footwork and stances were practiced simply because they do happen during the course of chaotic combat, but even the odd stances have purpose and are still as normal as possible.

**In-Yo Foot** or Yin-Yang foot is important. Do not move one foot preferentially. Think of preferential foot movement as almost walking with a limp - or walking up stairs by always stepping up with the right, and then bringing the left foot to the same step as the right. Musashi wanted the body balanced and the footwork balanced. Chances are he found opponents who used preferential footwork particularly easy to defeat because preferential footwork also means certain strikes are easier than others and training is asymmetrical and therefore twice as easy to predict. This matches his desire to not have favorite weapons as well.

**Five Attitudes - One Purpose: Cut the Enemy.** Upper, Lower, Middle, Right and Left. These are described more shortly. No matter the attitude he has, each has the purpose of cutting the enemy. That means that the “five attitudes” are tools to be used to cut. The purpose, then, is NOT to maintain any one of the attitudes, but to use whichever attitude is best suited for the situation so the enemy will be cut.

**“Wield it calmly.”** This is a recurring theme. One is determined, but calm. One is detached enough to analyze what’s happening, but calm. Even in the intensity of life and death combat, one is calm. When I say this in class, some may think that it is a result of wanting to stay calm so one has enough self-control to restrain oneself from doing too much harm. This is true as far as it goes, but it is also true that one remains calm no matter the level of force required. Musashi is talking about life and death combat, the sort of fighting in which men die, in which he had often

engaged and killed many and watch people, friends and foes alike, die in battle. Yet, despite what, to us, seems like a desperately emotional situation, he continually says “Be Calm.”

### **The Five Approaches:**

**The Middle Attitude** - Confront the enemy with the point of your sword against his face. When he attacks, deflect his sword and ride it. Hit it downward and cut his arms. The idea of “riding the sword” isn’t the idea of scraping along the blade, but following the line of the enemy’s sword to the target. The starting posture is holding your blade pointed at the eyes of the enemy so if he lunges in, he will impale himself, and as soon as the blade is in range, execute the movement.

The deflection has momentarily knocked the blade slightly aside, and the tendency is to keep pressure against the blade and slide down it, but that uses power to push aside and tends to lead to a clashed stand off with each pushing the sword blade against blade and no one is cut - which, for our purposes - has the problem of having the enemy not cut. By thinking of it as following the line of the sword to “cut the enemy” (which is always Musashi’s goal). Your blade is in the way of the enemy’s blade, so if he wants to cut you, your sword is already guarding and if he takes even the moment to go around, you have the time advantage because you are already attacking and have less distance to travel.

**The Upper Attitude** - Cut the enemy as he attacks. Swoop an upward cut if he evades. Repeat. The starting posture is with the blade held overhead ready to attack. I do not know if Musashi used the traditional Tamishi Giri posture of holding the blade entirely behind the body, ready to strike. This posture has some merit for creating great power, and it also conceals the length of the blade for those whose style uses an exceptionally long blade (a practice Musashi did not like because it made one depend upon the extra reach of the weapon rather than develop skill enough to fight no matter the weapon). Against similar length blades and similar techniques, it is equal. Against a foe using a faster technique, it would rely on hesitation in the enemy - which is always dangerous because whether it works or not is entirely dependent upon whether the enemy flinches - an event that is entirely dependent upon the training of the enemy. Because of these reasons and the caliber of the people whom Musashi fought and killed, I find it unlikely that this was his technique.

Another possibility is the he used a grip that held the blade straight upward, reaching for the skies. This grip, along with the Guardian posture of holding the blade parallel to the ground with half the blade in front, both have the virtue of being fast. It takes more training to create great power, but a quality katana is very sharp, very deadly, and does not require exceptional power to be lethal - so it is not especially difficult to create deadly power. When fights were almost entirely outside, the extra height needed for the aloft grip would not make an appreciable difference. It is slightly more difficult to create power with the aloft grip as the parallel grip, but the difference is negligible when performed correctly. Either could have been the case.

The timing of the technique is to strike downward no matter what the enemy does. This attack is especially difficult to stop. It relates to the story of the Tea Ceremony Master and the Ronin. Abbreviated, the Tea Ceremony Master was challenged, his samurai friend taught him one pose and the no matter what the enemy does, strike downward to kill him - always maintaining the same relaxed mental state you have when you do Tea Ceremony. Faced with a calm opponent prepared calmly to die, and ready - also calmly - to kill, the ronin surrendered and withdrew his challenge.

The three basic means to defend against this attack is evasion (moving to the outside of the upper hand), range defense (moving in enough to prompt the attack, but backing just out of range),

and blocking. Musashi's response as to instantly move as though in the Lower Attitude and strike upward. This indicates that he is cutting downward and instantly turning his blade upward as he strikes upward. The image is a flurry of strikes that cuts downward, then upward, then downward and upward - until the enemy is dead.

Our version is to strike downward to cut through the enemy and pulling the blade inward to thrust outward so our tip occupies the space between us and our opponent. A cut instantly withdraws to continue occupying the space and maintaining Position by controlling the range. If an enemy evades, we step the other way to maintain control of Position. If an enemy uses a Range Defense and moves in, he will encounter the tip of our blade as though we were in the Middle Attitude. (Musashi goes from Upper to Lower. We go from Upper back to Upper or to Middle.) If an enemy blocks, the pull to the Middle Attitude leaves him open for a thrust and puts us on even terms for his attack and our defense - whether a Range Defense or block.

**The Lower Attitude** - Strike upward as an enemy attacks, cutting diagonally if the enemy tries to knock your sword downward. To do this, you start holding your sword lower - ready for an upward strike as the enemy closes to attack. This is not a preferred technique in our style, largely because it is difficult to do against other practitioners of our style. Further, you are raising your blade to strike upward against gravity and doing so powerfully requires more training, and it is also difficult to execute properly while occupying the space. Nonetheless, it is a good extra technique for advanced students. In a day when swordplay was a matter of life and death, it would have been such a useful skill that it would be important to learn. Since Musashi is writing in such a day, his treatise on Attitudes would be incomplete without it. Also, since his technique was to flow between Upper and Lower as he attacked, it is also much more important for his style than for ours.

If one is interested primarily in killing and not in surviving, the Lower Attitude can be relatively easy to defeat if the Lower Attitude is used to cut the legs or body. Simply kill the enemy. The enemy may also strike you, perhaps even kill you, but the enemy will die as well. The easiest way to do this is to attack from the Upper Attitude. However, you are likely to trade life for life.

What makes this technique so useful is that most people want to survive. Thus they will tend to try to avoid the strike with Evasion or Range Defense, or they will try to knock the blade downward and then strike. A straight upward cut occupies the space and cuts. It is actually difficult to knock the blade downward without using a diagonal movement, and Musashi's counter was to strike upward at a diagonal against an enemy that tried this. Chances are he is talking about adopting the opposed line to the enemy's downward strike. If the blades are on parallel lines, they are unlikely to clash. If the enemy's target is your sword, he will probably miss. If your target is his body, you will probably hit while he wastes his attacking trying to hit a target a fraction of an inch wide while you attack a large target.

Another thing that makes the Lower Attitude dangerous to face is when the upward stroke is used to cut the arms rather than the body. This must be defeated with quickness (as opposed to speed). Quickness means from start to finish, your strike takes very little time. Speed is how fast it is going - but one can be fast and not quick if you chamber even slightly to telegraph your attack. If the Lower Attitude fighter is quick, he can cut upward and sever the arms of the attacker, and even if the only result is a stuttered attack as the attacker hesitates to avoid the upward cut, Musashi's technique would be to immediately cut downward from an Upper Attitude. We would adopt a Middle Attitude and Thrust.

**The Left Side Attitude** - This seems to be a lower start with an upward high block and diagonal cut. The the Guardian Martial Arts, we practice with both a Right Grip and a Left Grip (though students tend to favor their stronger side in sparring). By presuming a Right Grip, the Left

Side and Right Attitudes are more clear. If you are in a Right Grip with the sword to the left, you are guarding your left side against typical right handed attacks. The enemy will tend to strike downward in such a situation, in which case you do a high block and use the momentum of his attack to strike diagonally across his body. When you high block in this position, your arms cross at the wrists. Musashi probably used the crossed forearms as a lever on one another to generate torque as he twisted and dropped to add both power and speed to his movement. To simply strike downward would not take advantage of this torque and would actually be a little more difficult. Added difficulty while surrendering an asset is not typical of Musashi, which is why it was almost certainly a diagonal blow.

**The Right Side Attitude** - This seems to be a lower start with an upward high block and downward cut. From this side, the upward block will not have the forearms crossed. This means the easiest, maximum power and speed would be a downward strike.

**“Attitude-No Attitude”** and **“Existing Attitude- Nonexisting Attitude.”** The intent is to cut the enemy, not to maintain an attitude. One flows between the attitudes as necessary. The attitude is adapted to the situation at hand to always use the one that works best under the immediate circumstance. Interestingly, this would make Musashi’s method of fighting much more difficult to learn because one must learn all five ways of moving, all five starting postures, and how to flow instantly from one to the other. The sword styles that always relied on one of the primary attitudes would be much easier to learn, and the students of that style would much more quickly master the skills needed to kill. The downside, of course, is that every technique has strengths and weaknesses - and the strength of mastery can be countered by one who knows the weakness - or even one who exploits it by accident.

This is like the Guardian Martial Art concept of Kempo. In Karate, we do Karate. In Jujitsu, we do Jujitsu. In Kobujitsu, we do the techniques of the weapon with which we are training. In Kempo, we are supposed to blend. The goal at that level is to no longer think in terms of “Karate,” “Jujitsu,” or “Weapon” - but to think “Win.” It is much more difficult to earn a Black Belt in the three (representing 400 to 600 hours of training) as opposed to one art with the same number of hours of training and higher mastery - but, as with Musashi’s technique - the goal is not to “out wrestle the wrestler” or “out punch the boxer” - but to Win. A pure style is stronger within that style, but there are always vulnerabilities.

Brazilian JiuJitsu is a powerful fighting style - but it has the weakness of leaving the groin open. Maintaining Base almost always does so - whether in this style, in conventional wrestling styles, and even more dramatically for untrained people who are wrestling. Most weapon styles get weapon fixated - and for good reason - they only fight with that weapon. Their fixation is a natural byproduct of their training. When unarmed, many styles are ineffective - though others go from weapon to open hand version (Aikijutsu and most Escrima styles are examples). Strikers can be grappled. Grapplers can be struck (especially in targets such as groins and shins). These things may be taken advantage of by us when fighting a specialist, but they could be exploited even by accident by lucky untrained fighters.

Thus, just as Musashi says that the purpose is not to maintain an attitude, our purpose is not to learn Karate, Jujitsu and Kobujitsu as separate arts. Rather, we are learning common principles applied differently, and thus, it seems to some, our “pure” styles are less effective than they could be. This is because we make different assumptions. We have a weaker Base in Jujitsu because we presume groin and shin attacks may come - even though we don’t do them in Jujitsu. We occupy space differently and use a different range of techniques in Karate because we presume the possibility of an armed enemy or one that might tackle us - so fading back to sneak in an attack might work in pure striking, but an inopportune tackle would expose us completely. The goal, then,

is to win - not in training - but in a real life fight. What will an enemy do? We don't know. That is up to him. We just need to be ready for it.

## **Techniques and Principles**

Many of these techniques are fairly clear and need little explanation.

**“In One Timing”** is to close and hit him as quickly and directly as possible. Our version is the time we have to win a real fight. A real stand up confrontation should be over in ten seconds or less. A real ground fight should be over in thirty seconds or less. The goal is simply to win. Often the way we spar sabotages this as we begin each match by circlings, positioning and otherwise treating it like some kind of chess match where we can get the perfect opening if we just wait and maybe walk around a little. We should be training to win real fights, and real fights begin when the enemy closes. Once the fight has begun, it needs to be over. In Musashi's day, many death matches were fought as duels, and battlefield fights had forces close and then fight. In criminal self defense, the criminal closes and starts the fight. We must respond instantly.

**“Abdomen Timing of Two”** Follow the tension and strike at the moment of relaxation. It doesn't seem so much a “feint” as in a “fake,” but a stutter-start to break the rhythm of attack. When someone begins a movement, there is a moment of tension as the muscles barely begin their movement. The relaxation Musashi talks about here is the “letting go” effect that follows that tension when someone stops. As an example of the timing of this, have a partner take a shallow forward stance that is just strong enough to resist being pushed back. Then move your hand in like you are about to shove him back, stutter just before you touch his chest, and then immediately complete the movement. People will reflexively tense to brace against the push, and the split second of relaxing from the counter balance is actually helping you push them back. It is difficult to avoid doing this - even for Black Belts. This exercise shows the timing Musashi is speaking of - except, of course, he is talking about doing it with sword strikes.

**No Design, No Conception.** “Munen Muso” to be calm naturally even in the face of danger. In our vocabulary, it is Advanced Kiai - the harmony on Spirit, Soul and Body in one strike. Thought and Deed are the same. Identity and Deed are also one. Advanced Kiai is also Mushin - “no mind” - the state of not having any particular idea in one's mind. To achieve Mushin, you must be relaxed and have an arsenal of solutions to the problems that may be presented to you in a fight. That arsenal, then, flows naturally to the extent you have ingrained it in yourself with proper training. It is not enough to know. We also say “It doesn't matter what you know. It matters what you can think of in time.” This means we must know, but we must think of it in time. Mushin is to do without needing first to think of it. More can be discovered on these principles in the Guardian Karate lectures on Kiai and Mushin.

**The Flowing Water Cut.** In an sword to sword clash, when the enemy disengages, follow him with a pace slower than his disengagement so he is fully disengaged and cannot block your cut. This is different than pressing into his disengagement. Pressing in to his disengagement would allow him a feel for your movement because he can feel your pressure on his blade and accommodate it. The normal expectation when one disengages and feels the disengagement of blades is that the enemy is also disengaging. Musashi says to let the swords disengage, but follow the enemy's disengagement with an attack rather than fully disengage yourself. This has the added virtue of an enemy that is withdrawing his blade, so he is already moving his weapon in a direction opposite what is necessary to stop your attack. Thus, even if your blades were to touch again, his blade will give way to your attack.

**Continuous Cut.** Follow the cut through all targets. When a cut is made, the blade is to

pass completely through the intended target. If the sword is stopped, it should be stopped by the body through which it is cutting. It should not be stopped because we do not cut through. The slashing principle we use is in response to a deep cut. We pull free and may immediately thrust. If we cut all the way through, we recover immediately.

**Fire and Stones Cut.** Strike strongly right through the guard without readying, using the hands, body and legs. This is a Tamishi Giri style power strike to be used against a weak or inattentive defense. If a defense is not strong, it can be ignored and simply blasted through.

**The Red Leaves Cut.** This is a cut that knocks the sword down with an intent to disarm. If one strikes far enough down the blade with enough power and what Musashi calls “a sticky feeling” an enemy can be made to drop his sword. The strike must be near the pommel, and it is most effective when someone has either an inattentive or weak grip, or when one clutches too tightly. It is least effective against a relaxed, firm grip.

**The Body in Place of the Long Sword - The Long Sword in Place of the Body.** This is knocking your body against an opponent just before or after cutting. It is especially useful when the blade is required to counter a blade or other weapon. When you use your sword to counter a weapon, you can slam your body into an enemy. This requires Base, not throwing your weight into an enemy. It is also a follow up move to use your body to slam into an enemy whom you have cut but not killed in a single blow. In that case, it will typically knock him back and probably to the ground where, if you have cut well enough, he will bleed to a level weakness that will not allow him to rise, and he will shortly die. It is a quick way to resolve clashes.

**Cut and Slash.** A Cut is like a focused chop through, while a Slash, by Musashi’s definition, it a “touch” in that it makes contact and draws along the target. When we slash, we cut and follow through with a withdrawal of the blade, so chances are what we call a Slash, Musashi would have still called a cut. The slash, by high definition, implies pressing the blade edge against an enemy as it draws across. This would be intended to cut an opening in the flesh rather than cut off anything. It would be used to injure or bleed an enemy without instantly killing him.

**Chinese Monkey Body.** This is moving in with arms shortened. It is a movement technique more than a cutting technique. The arms are shortened to create a shorter impression of Range. It sets up a thrust and allows you to take up less space so that an opponent may underestimate your range and leave an opening you can exploit before he thinks you can hit him.

**Glue and Lacquer Emulsion Body.** Stick to the enemy and not separate from him. This means you mentally connect your body to his body with such a level of Blending that there is nothing he can do to disengage. No matter what he does, you follow, staying connected the whole time so cannot gain position. In moments, his priority will likely shift to disengaging while your priority the whole time is to cut. Once his priority shifts to disengaging, he will almost always leave an opening for you to cut.

**To Strive For Height.** Expand yourself and attack. This is a mental as well as physical technique. The physical aspects are fairly simple. You stand as tall as you can. You expand your ribs with a slow, deep inhale. You stretch yourself out so you are as large and imposing as possible - ready to strike and kill. The physical by itself can be sabotaging, though, if it is done without the proper mental state. Otherwise, it is simply posturing - or being a “poser” pretending to be powerful while actually feeling weak. The only people who fall for that are those who are also only posing but are also weak. The strong, skilled warrior will see it for what it is and exploit it. The proper mental state is one of filling the area, of being master of the fight and the clear and obvious superior to the one faced. Since Musashi had never lost, chances are this was an easy technique for

him. It is best used by those who have an appearance or reputation that helps them appear strong in the eyes of an enemy. It is unlikely to be effective by those of poor skill, those who are fearful, those who are slight in attributes, or those who otherwise do not appear potentially dangerous.

**To Apply Stickiness.** Move in and deflect the enemy attack with a sticky, but not entangled feeling. Lock the swords together calmly. Entangled would be pressing the blades against each other. The idea here is to get the enemy deflected with even a momentary Priority Shift to disengaging his blade, which then leaves at least a momentary opening to cut. Always remember that it is always Musashi's goal to cut, so when he says something like this the intent to cut is always the purpose of the technique. Therefore, even when his book does not say so, always look for how a particular technique will help you cut an enemy.

**The Body Strike.** Approach through a gap in his guard and knock him back with your body. This is similar to Body and Sword, Sword as Body, but it is an individual technique. You may or may not have engaged weapons. You are claiming space. You are unbalancing your opponent. You are creating a Priority Shift from cutting you or blocking your cut to retaining his balance. You may be knocking him to the ground. Any of many effects may be produced. Because it was such an unusual and unexpected technique, the effects could be dramatic and unpredictable - but whatever happens, use any opening created to cut.

**Three Ways to Parry His Attack.** The most interesting aspect of this is that he suggests the possibility of hitting with your hand while parrying with your sword. We call it Atemi. (Atemi, technically, is an art unto itself focused on pressure points. Atemi, as used here, is the uninterrupted "percussion" of the pace of battle maintained when weapons are occupied by using the hands and feet.) This shows that Musashi was not weapon fixated. I expect he would approve of the combat philosophies of the Guardian Martial Arts, especially of high level Kempo, since it so often agrees with his teaching.

**To Stab at the Face. To Stab at the Heart.** This is to go resolutely after one or the other target. In this case it would be a thrust - an unusual attack in Musashi's time. It would have been commonly seen among the Portuguese that lived there in the pre- and early Togukawa Shogunate that began during Musashi's lifetime. In fact, it is thought that Musashi's two sword technique originated by his observation of their two-sword fencing technique, so it would be reasonable to assume he saw some virtue in their thrusting attacks as well. A stabbing motion to the face would be difficult to see, and even the heart would be a lethal, but hard to spot attack among a people that cut rather than stabbed with their blades.

**To Scold "Tut-TUT!"** Thrust and Cut. When you thrust, whether it is stabbing at the face or the heart, or any other thrust, the defense will knock the blade aside. If the blade is knocked aside, use that as the chamber to immediately cut. Even if it is not knocked aside, stab and then immediately cut. The "TUT!" is because a cut requires more power and force than a thrust.

**The Smacking Parry.** An attack that parries and attacks in one move, accounting for the parry in the single stroke of the attack. We call this a Defending Attack and while it seems simple, it is actually quite advanced. An Attacking Defense is the idea that your blocks should attack the incoming attack by striking what is coming at you - whether an arm or leg. A Defending Attack is more difficult because the primary goal is an Attack, but the line of the attack must defend without having your focus shifted from the Attack to the Defense. As simple as the physical movement may seem, properly thinking about the movement is difficult and requires practice and a great deal of skill.

**There are Many Enemies.** One against many with both swords out and attack those who

present themselves first without waiting at all. Musashi reserved his two sword technique for multiple opponents in all his personal fights (despite the choreography in the limited series about him). In this case, he simply says to go after the first target to present himself. Since the goal was to kill in one cut (see below), a single stroke would likely be enough to end the engagement one way or the other. There was no time to play or maneuver with everyone armed with blades that could take a life with even a stupid, lucky move - so Musashi advocated aggressive attacks, taking the fight to the enemy with a ferocity (but not anger) to instantly start cutting (and killing) every enemy that came within swords' reach plus a step.

**One Cut.** Each and every cut should be sufficient to cut and kill. It should not be one's strategy to *need* several cuts to kill a single enemy. Whether a single attack actually struck and killed was a matter determined by the interaction between opponents, but if a cut did find its target, each and every cut should be enough to end the fight. There should be no nonlethal cuts. Obviously his technique allowed for an enemy's defense, but he did not wish to ever hit and not kill because he did not cut properly.

This is different than the idea of One Cut, One Kill, or the striking art parallel One Strike, One Kill. In those styles, the attack presumed getting past the enemy's defense. In Musashi's style, he did not make that assumption. He might even have a flurry of blows (See Upper Attitude, Lower Attitude), but each one would be sufficient if it hit. In Kempo, we use multiple attacks precisely because one blow may not hit, one blow may not be enough even if it hits (we are not using razor sharp swords, so the effects are not always - or even often - lethal even when intended to be so). We use a flurry of blows so we can end a fight quickly even if some of them do not do what we hoped. Each blow, though, should be effective for what it is intended to do.

Musashi's earlier comments on cutting vs. slashing indicate that there were sword styles in his day that relied on speed and wearing down an opponent with nicks rather than simply ending the fight with a single successful cut. Against Musashi's technique, he may or may not be cut, but a single blow from him would end the fight.

## THE FIRE BOOK

**Depending Upon the Place.** Examine your environment. Use Terrain. This is a Kempo level skill. First, you begin learning the basics of Posture and Base as you learn to move. When you first begin sparring you worry about the interaction between you and your training partner and soon work your way to Position considerations. From this, you start to apply strategy and new techniques, adjust the purpose and application of maneuvering and combinations, and consider the various types of fighting and weapons and you study Karate, Jujitsu and Kobujitsu. In Kempo, then, you start to blend all these skills. Somewhere in your Kempo training, you start to work with Terrains and consider the variables in those Terrains.

Stairs, Sand, Hallways, Alleyways, Between Cars, on grass, on cement, on uneven surfaces, in a Living Room - all these potential Terrains have their own issues. Posture doesn't change, but Base does. As your footwear and surface upon which you fight interact, your Base considerations must be taken into account in your choice of maneuvers and techniques. Position changes as obstacles are placed in your way and your opponent's way. Each variable affects the movement choices you make and how you can use Terrain to do some of your work for you.

One of my favorite Terrains is stairs. If I had a chance to control where a real fight went, I would move it to stairs. Since I know so few people train on stairs, I believe it would give me an even greater advantage than what is likely a skill disparity. If the other side had multiple opponents

or a significant attribute or weapon advantage, stairs would tilt the odds in my favor. When Terrain becomes a variable, whomever is most comfortable on the Terrain gains a significant shift in advantage.

### **The Three Methods to Forestall the Enemy.**

These three flow from Musashi's basic principle of "Win." In Ken No Sen, you attack first, and you win. In Tai No Sen, your enemy attacks first, and you win. In Tai Tai No Sen, you both attack at the same time, and you win. So the three statements are: If I attack first, I kill him. If my enemy attacks first, I kill him. If we attack at the same time, I kill him.

In the Guardian Martial Arts, we would add: If my enemy kills me, I kill him. This last statement reflects the idea that if we are fighting in a life and death struggle, we need to stop the bad guy. Even if the violent criminal has dealt us a lethal blow, even if we are fatally wounded and will be dead in seconds, we take those seconds to make sure the violent criminal will never have the chance to do evil to another innocent.

**The First - Ken No Sen.** Attack. The spirit is to win in the depths of the enemy. This is the "I attack first" part of the three statements.

**The Second - Tai No Sen.** Wait. Feign Weakness. As he attacks first, attack. This is the "My enemy attacks first" part of the three statements. This lets an enemy over commit, and it may be used if an enemy is very aggressive.

**The Third - Tai Tai No Sen.** Blend. Cut. This is the "we attack at the same time" of the three statements. When Musashi says to Blend and Cut, he means to cut at the same time you blend. As the enemy attacks, you attack at exactly the same time as you flow with your enemy's move so you can strike him.

### **More Katana Techniques**

**To Hold Down a Pillow.** To preempt at the very beginning of any move. In Karate Sparring, we teach the PreEmpt technique. It takes a great deal of skill to do this because you must recognize an attack as an enemy is setting up the attack. If you do not have the skill and experience to respond with a movement that sabotages his ability to finish the move he started, you will not be able to use this technique. However, the more experienced you are - while working on this skill - the more easily you can preempt the movements of an enemy. Musashi would have used this to stop an attack and instantly cut an enemy. However, it also allows someone to stop an attacker without actually causing any harm. This is a useful skill when you are not really threatened by a supposed attacker - no matter *his* intent - and you do not wish to hurt him.

**Crossing at the Ford.** Look for the advantage and exploit it. This is not a physical technique as much as a philosophy. When crossing a river, you look for a ford - an easy place to cross. When you are looking for an opportunity to attack, look for the "ford" in an enemy's defenses. Wherever the easiest place to attack is found - that's where you attack.

**To Know the Times.** Know how the enemy is thinking, and take advantage of trended thinking. To do this technique read the mind by reading the body. The body will reveal the mind. People then to think and act in patterns. If you can recognize a pattern - especially a repeated pattern - you can take advantage of a moment in that pattern at which he is most vulnerable. This is a timing manifestation of Crossing at the Ford.

**To Tread Down the Sword.** Mass Combat, bows and guns, don't wait for the attack and then attack, attack immediately so you close while they attack, and you are attacking while they are reloading and renotching. Single Combat, strike down immediately while he is attacking rather than wait for him to attack. In each case there is a natural tendency to evaluate the results of an enemy attack before attacking in return (this is distinct from a counter-technique that is always immediate).

Musashi says to always attack - whether it is a counterattack or an attack in response to an attack. In the time it takes to evaluate the effects of an attacker's attack, you could have attacked. Whatever has happened has already happened, and the effect is what the effect is, and no matter the effect - if you will want to attack, attack without pausing to find out what happened to you. It takes focus to do this. People are naturally inclined to respond more powerfully to things happening to them than to things they are doing. This reflex must be overcome so it cannot be used against you.

**To Know "Collapse."** Collapse is losing timing in Musashi's language. For us, it includes a break of Posture, Base or Position. Press the advantage rather than allow an enemy to recover. Although the translation is "to know" - it is more "to recognize." "To Recognize Collapse" means you notice when an opponent has broken his Posture, when his Base is weak, and what the limits and opportunity of Position are between you. When an opponent starts to break any of those, you should recognize it and press the advantage immediately and win immediately.

**To Become the Enemy.** Think like the enemy with understanding to respond accordingly. In particular, feel for his weaknesses and uncertainty so you can exploit them. This is a psychological skill. Musashi likely developed it through many, many fights. He saw a lot of things and saw the effects those things had on his enemies. As you begin to read how an enemy is really thinking, you can respond in a way for which he is unprepared. While many are intimidated by Anger, Anger is a response to a threat. That means that the enemy actually perceives you as a danger and he is summoning the emotion to prompt him to want to destroy you. The more out of control his Anger, the more some are frightened, but the more afraid *he* actually is.

**To Release Four Hands.** Clashing. Change technique or attitude and attack immediately. Do not press the clash. Musashi and Guardian both agree that you don't want stand offs. A Nash Equilibrium is part of Game Theory that says you may have situations in which there is no advantage gained by changing unless your opponent also changes. However, to Musashi and in criminal self defense, such a stand off means time is passing and the fight isn't being ended. For us, a self-defense situation that goes too long makes Luck too large a factor in the outcome.

Musashi says that if you clash, immediately change something. Despite the occurrences of Game Theory Nash Equilibriums, if you change quickly even in a way that does not give an immediately advantage, the enemy will have to respond in some way, and whatever he does will create an opening in some way. Even if what you must do is completely disengage - paying attention to full defenses as you disengage (remember The Flowing Water Cut) and re-engage immediately using the technique or attitude that would most certainly work given the enemy's technique and attitude (Crossing at the Ford).

**To Move the Shade.** If you can't see his technique, do an attack in a way to reveal his technique and respond accordingly. Musashi again uses the word "feint" but it is not likely a fake as much as a quick stutter attack to see the enemy's preparation. The idea here is that the starting posture of some fighters might not reveal how they fight. That means you don't know the strengths and weaknesses, yet, because you don't know the technique... yet. Musashi says to resolve that with a quick beginning of an attack to see how they begin to move. You don't wait until you see a full move - unless you need to - but the beginning will often be enough to tell you something of how he intends to move.

In particular, if you know that a certain attack will force a defense that varies by style, you can gauge their style by doing that attack. You can quickly see if they defend by maneuvering, defend by blocking, or defend by attacking. That reveals something about the way they think and their philosophical/psychological choices they can be expected to make. In an instant, you now know something about their technique that their initial stance did not reveal and you can exploit that information.

**To Hold Down a Shadow.** Start to clash with his technique so he will respond, then work around the response as it unfolds. When a clash occurs, you often do not need to disengage (To Release Four Hands) or attack into his disengagement (Flowing Water Cut). Musashi notes that the way many warriors handle a clash leaves an opening through which you can attack by going around the clash. Musashi first mentions a Void Spirit here, which will be addressed in The Void Book.

**To Pass On.** This is the reverse of mirroring and matching. It is a leading, a sort of attitudinal Aikijutsu technique. Mirroring and Matching is you either create a mirror image of what your opponent is doing, or you match him as though there are two of him - one facing the other. To Pass On is a Mind Leading Technique. When students must do Slow Motion Sparring, this effect often happens (hopefully not on purpose) as one speeds up, then the other speeds up, and soon the fight is going way too fast. To Pass On is to do this on purpose. You alter the pace or timing of a fight, you lead the attitude and emotion.

You can start getting fierce, feigning anger while actually being in control to increase an enemy's intensity so he gets sloppy and then take advantage of an opening. These techniques are most useful only when a fight lasts more than a few seconds. Generally, Musashi wanted to end fights nearly instantly, but not all opponents can be so quickly overcome - especially in duels when both opponents face one another from a distance prior to engaging one another. As the fighters close to engage, Musashi might try to create an attitude or emotional state and "To Pass On" that state of intensity, tension, or pace to an enemy so he could then exploit the opening he lead the enemy to creating for him.

**To Cause Loss of Balance.** Throw off the enemy by creating one impression, but then attacking with something different quickly enough to prevent adaptation. This would be the expected follow up technique to To Pass On. The purpose for To Pass On is to create a state you wish to overcome, and then suddenly changing so the attitude you have helped create will not work against you. Obviously To Cause Loss of Balance may also be used no matter the state of the enemy. You simply have to get him ready for one thing while you do another. An example of this is a downstrike that intentionally falls short so an enemy will try to block, it will pass easily in front of his block and let you immediately thrust forward as his sword rises expecting an impact that is not coming.

When training with light weapons such as Chanbara Swords or Shinai, a student must be careful that the technique is not dependent upon the light weight of the training weapon. Another challenge here is relying on the "play" nature of sparring. There are a great many things you can muster the "courage" to do when you know it really doesn't matter. All the skills Musashi teaches require a level of willingness to face death. This is just one in which facing weapon to weapon, trying to off balance an enemy that wants to kill you, the way you fake left, strike right must be done in a way that an instant retaliatory strike will be stopped. You can "play" - but you are training for the real thing.

**To Frighten.** This is more a startle than fear. If someone is truly scared, they will back

off. If they are startled, they will hesitate. In a class exercise, a loud shout with a sudden move startled a young student into drawing back and blindly throwing up a poor defense. In a later class, a different student was so startled that he literally flung himself to the ground. Startling inexperienced fighters is relatively simple.

It is also easy to startle those who display great intensity or anger because they are mustering emotion to wage war with the fear that is already flooding their heart. A sudden, intense action with a sharp, loud, intense shout will often startle them - even just enough to momentarily hesitate - and you get a free attack. As you attack, be prepared to deal with an enemy who is ready for your attack since he may not actually be startled, but certainly take advantage of any hesitation or frightened movement you see.

**To Soak In.** From a clash, blend and soak him in and attack. This reaction is fairly simple - you just stop resisting the force of the clash. When an enemy is pushing his sword against yours, give way, but give way in a direction that allows you to “soak in” you enemy and blend with his movement so you can strike. This technique needs to be practiced with stiff weapons, such as Shinai or Bokken, but practiced carefully so no one gets hurt. In actual combat, it would be done very, very quickly.

**To Injure the Corners.** Break down what you can easily reach to make the whole vulnerable. If someone has good range and good defense, you may not have a clear strike at the body. If someone has a quick attack, even if they don't have a powerful technique, they can hurt you no matter what you do to reach a good target. In this case, Musashi recommends striking anything you can reach. You might take a lead leg in a deep stance, you might take an arm or hand - anything you can strike unanswered - and then immediately follow up with a lethal cut to the head or body.

**To Throw into Confusion.** Make the enemy lose resolve. If he loses resolve, he will not want to fight, and the moment that thought hits him, he is easily defeated. You press the attack at that time. Confusion means “it makes sense, but it isn't making sense to me.” So long as what we do makes sense to an opponent, he will respond sensibly. When we go beyond the bounds of his experience and training, he may become confused. If he doesn't know what you're doing, or he doesn't understand why you're doing what you're doing, he may get confused and lose resolve. The resolve may be lost in this case for as simple a reason as his mind shifts from what he is trying to do to you to trying to figure out what you're trying to do to him and how he should respond. Then you strike in with power and lethal technique and end the fight.

**The Three Shouts.** Beginning: Shout as the attack begins. Attacks: Low voice with shouts only at attacks. End: Shout of Victory. These initial shout may startle an opponent. The shouts at moments of attack are to focus one's energy - though shouts should not be necessary to do so. The shout of victory is common in large battle. In fact, while all three shouts are completely optional and largely a matter of personal choice in individual combat, they are all nearly necessary in warfare because of the impact it has on morale.

**To Mingle.** Advance, engage, do not withdraw. Go even from an enemy's strength to another place he is strong. Wear down the enemy. This is described mostly in mass battle: to hit strong and move forces to another strong point when pushed back. In one against many, attack one way then another. You go right after the strongest enemies or where the enemy is strongest to break him down. This is partially a moral booster for your own men, but also to make an enemy think you are stronger than you are because you are obviously unafraid of going after strength. This may help break an enemy's morale. It is a dangerous technique to use if you do not have the confidence to do so, and if you do not have the confidence of your men and high morale among

them. If the pieces are not in place, do not use it.

In single combat, when an opponent appears strong, you go after him without hesitation. You behave as though his strength is nothing to you. If you will be fighting anyway, fight. If you will fight to the death anyway, just kill. If you already know you will have to engage, don't take your time, don't let him know that you fear his size, strength, skill or weapons - just move in immediately and attack.

The movie "Troy" opened with an example of this as Achilles ran up and killed the large enemy warrior without hesitation. The enemy's size was imposing, and his scars indicated he has won many battles, but Achilles (in the movie) apparently knew that this man relied on his attributes and imposing form to rattle his enemies. The show he made of his ferocity hinted at this. Achilles knew he would fight this man and fight him to the death, so he charged, leapt, and killed him with a single attack. As unbelievable as the actual encounter may be to most, consider the unlikelihood that such a man ever faced a warrior that charged in and attacked without a moment's hesitation. Consider whether such a tall man ever had to defend against an attack from above him. Also consider whether such a large man using such large and heavy weapons could move quickly enough to deal with the attack even if he was not shocked at the lack of hesitation and angle of the attack - complicated for him by the fact that Achilles jumped up over the off-side to stab. This is a single combat version of To Mingle.

**To Crush.** As soon as any type of weakness is shown, utterly defeat your enemy. If you will have to kill an enemy, kill him. Don't waste time, don't give chances - take advantage of any chance you have to win and win. This works on our Guardian Principle of simply winning. When a criminal attacks, we don't think "fair" - we only think "win." When a criminal attacks, there are no rules. We do not fight just to fight, we fight only when we must, and when you must fight, you must win. The principle of To Crush embodies that ideal.

**The Mountain-Sea Change.** We say "Do not do the same thing to accomplish the same purpose." Musashi says that sometimes twice may be unavoidable, but try not to do the same thing three times. If he thinks one way, attack another. Don't repeat, at least not for the same reason.

**To Penetrate the Depths.** Destroy the enemy's spirit. With the "spirit" in this context encompassing what we call Spirit, Soul and Heart, this means to make your attack not just against the Body, but try to affect his Emotions, try to overwhelm his Mind, try to give him more to deal with than his Will can choose between, overcome his sense of You (Others) and what he expects, make his Principles not work for him, rattle his faith, and end the fight. Do all this in an instant. It is not a drawn out, slow process, but one that manifests in seconds as you go after the total elimination of your enemy. In military terms, this is destroying the enemy's morale. This is Musashi Miyamoto's version of "shock and awe." In the Iraq war, it overwhelmed the organized military forces serving the government and ended the government to government war in a very short time. This is what the United States did with two atomic bombs in World War II. You go after everything you can attack in every way you can attack it.

**To Renew.** If a clash cannot be resolved, fully disengage and begin anew. This is far from Musashi's preferred technique. Musashi says to use this "if a clash cannot be resolved." Musashi has already spoken of several ways to deal with clashes. If there is no way to use the other techniques, then you full and completely disengage and start the fight over from a proper distance.

**Rat's Head, Ox's Neck.** Do not become preoccupied with details. When this happens, shift to a large spirit - big thinking - and continue. Sometimes in fights, as in life, our mind gets

preoccupied with some little thing. When some detail has drawn your attention, and you realize you are losing or have lost the big picture focus, shift your focus to the big picture and continue.

**The Commander Knows the Troops.** Take command of the fight. In mass combat this would seem to indicate that one should know your own troops, and in single combat that you should know your own skills - but it is more. You also need to know the enemy and treat the enemy as though he is yours to command as well. You are in control, and no matter what the enemy does, you keep control. Make the enemy have to respond to you - don't spend your time responding to him.

**To Let Go the Hilt.** Winning without the sword. This implies not just unarmed martial arts combat, but all the psychological tools Musashi has described. Holding the sword without winning. This concept is difficult, but the idea includes maintaining your weapon without having fought. The idea seems to be one of backing off an enemy because you are ready, even though you have not taken the fight to the enemy. There is a story of Musashi Miyamoto at a restaurant eating dinner when a gang of thugs tried to pick a fight with him (not knowing who he was). He used his chopsticks to strike several flies out of the air, and the thugs backed off - realizing they were picking a fight with a master.

**The Body of a Rock.** Be immovable and untouchable. This is an attitude. We can choose not to move, but we cannot choose to be untouchable even if we try to defend ourselves well. By holding this attitude properly, though, we maximize our Base and maximize our defense. We may rattle the morale of an enemy that wonder how we can be so resolute and so confident in the face of death. To hold this attitude improperly leads to foolish choices and, therefore, defeat.

**“It is difficult to express it clearly.”** Whether reading Musashi Miyamoto's *Book of Five Rings*, Sun Tsu's *Art of War*, or any other deep, philosophical work, readers often find a difficult time understanding what the writer is trying to express. Musashi, at least, recognizes that the problem is not just that the reader doesn't understand, but that words are difficult to use to express an idea that must be experienced to really be understood. I find this to be true with many high level martial arts skills - particular when one has passed the level at which the techniques are purely physical. At the highest levels, the things that must be added are a matter of thinking and personal philosophy.

The problem is trying to find a common frame of reference. The master martial artist has a way of seeing things and thinking that does not have a common frame of reference with those whose rank and experience is too small a fraction. This is why Black Belt is generally seen as a beginning, not an end. Black Belt (or Third Degree Black Belt, at least) is when a martial arts student probably has enough of a frame of reference to allow easy communication. Without that frame of reference, so much of master-level technique seems mystical and so philosophical that most students have no idea what a master is trying to say. And, as Musashi says, it is difficult to express it clearly” without that common frame of reference.

**“Even though they seem skillful to watch, they have not the slightest true spirit.”** Musashi may have been speaking of several types, here. He may have meant those who have excellent “dojo technique” - but what they do could not work. He may have meant those who look good - but have no real skill. He may even have meant those who could fight expertly, but had no idea what they were doing. Musashi himself believed he was in that category when he was 30 with 17 years experience fighting to the death.

Today, it is difficult to find martial artists that have what Musashi would consider “true spirit.” True Spirit would include proper discipline and training, which is rare enough by itself but

is barely a beginning. True Spirit would include proper understanding of technique, what you are doing and why you are doing it. In our definition, it would also include our Core Principles, which then leads to proper Spirit and Soul.

**“The True Way of sword fencing is the craft of defeating the enemy in a fight, and nothing other than this.”** Musashi may not have approved of many of today’s marketed martial arts. To him, they would not be “The True Way.” The True Way is a martial expression of true philosophy, or a philosophical understanding of true technique. Either way, truth is truth. It must work - and no matter how many trophies it won, if it was not useful for true combat, then Musashi would not consider it part of the True Way.

## THE WIND BOOK

In this book, Musashi critiques other schools. Since the Guardian Martial Arts does not make a practice of judging other schools, little time will be spent here and Musashi explains these well enough that they need no comparison. In the Guardian Martial Arts, we look at the merits of other styles and what they do well and why. We also deal with why we don’t do what they do, but we generally do not judge other arts are “wrong.”

**Extra-Long Swords.** Musashi thought these schools relied too much on reach. It made victory weapon-dependent.

**The Strong Sword Spirit.** Musashi says that one should not be concerned about strong or weak, only killing the enemy. “The strongest hand wins” has no meaning. “Without correct principle the fight cannot be won.”

**Use of the Shorter Sword.** Wait for an opening, which means you are on the defensive. “You must chase the enemy around and make him obey your spirit.” Musashi’s problem with this is the mirror image of the large sword problem.

**Methods and Attitudes** need to be focused on achieving the result, not following a technique. Musashi spent a great deal of time saying that the purpose is not to use a method or use an attitude, but to cut the enemy, and you used whatever worked.

**Fixing the Eyes.** Where you look. See, but do not fix your eyes on one thing. Do not settle your focus on one part of the body, but see it all.

**Use of Feet.** In Musashi’s way, the footwork does not change and is natural. He dislikes all the various footwork techniques.

**Speed.** It isn’t about speed, it’s about timing.

**“Interior” and “Surface.”** Musashi preferred experience to philosophical expounding. He would teach, then help his students experience. One might wonder if Musashi would have been as opposed to philosophical expounding if he did not feel “it is difficult to express clearly.”

## THE VOID BOOK

The concept of the Void is “the nothing.” Musashi discusses it only a little, but it is an integral part of Japanese thought. Stephen Hayes addresses it in more detail in his books. In *The*

*Ninja and Their Secret Fighting Art* he defines the Void as Ku, subatomic energy; the nothing from which all this takes their form. This is also only a beginning of the concept.

The Genesis Principle of God Creating the Heavens and Earth out of nothing. That would be the Japanese concept of Void - that there was a “nothing” and all things were made out of it. It also embodies the idea that “everything” is “nothing.” In subatomic particles, we note that pieces of atoms fly around a nucleus, but, ultimately, most of all matter is really empty space. In this sense, almost all of anything is really nothing. The idea is also that “nothing” is “everything” - which is little more than expressing the same idea from the other angle - that what we think of as “nothing” is everywhere, through everything, and part of every thing that is. So the Void is “nothing” - but it is that particular “nothing” that is everything. “It is difficult to express clearly.”

Where do thoughts come from? Is there a “place” they come from, or are they made up of “nothing”? What is “information” like software? Is it a thing, or it is not a thing, just a system of organizing what is already there - in which case, in a sense, software is really not a “thing” (nothing). There are many examples, but one must dwell on the concept and sort out the examples that reveal it.

In swordplay, the Void concept is that you focus on no one way, no one technique - just on the result you want and you do whatever works. There is “nothing” in and of itself, only ways to win, and whatever that way, you use it.

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