

Newsletter "The Source"

Kukan- The "Empty?" Space

by Shihan Richard J. Van Donk

Do you know how you carry yourself through life? The way we move in the world reflects the inner dimensions of our being. There are basically three levels- affected, controlling and creation.

The **first** level (3rd position- disassociated) is where everything in the world affects you, your feelings, thoughts and actions. You can only react.

The **second** level (2nd position- synesthesia) is being able to manipulate the situations in the world to your satisfaction as you move through space.

The **third** level (1st position-associated {nagual}) is when as you move, the world moves. You are its co-creator in mind and body. There is a difference in being affected by the world as you move through it and the higher level of when you move, the world moves around you giving you ultimate choice and freedom of your own creation. This is not to be confused with an ego based self. There is a real difference between true self confidence, and the arrogance of a self inflated ego, although sometimes these traits are not always easy to distinguish between. Checking a person's intent is a great tool for measuring the difference. When we are powerful ourselves and comfortable in that power we are much less bothered by the power of others. Our place is understood, our boundaries are established yet we are unlimited in our possibilities. This is not true when we are unempowered mentally, physically or emotionally. We teach our beginning students at the American Bujinkan Dojo to relax and not to fight the fight. What's going to happen is going to happen. If you are fighting a battle inside as well as a battle outside that's two battles going on, which means you have a double chance of losing one of them. O'Sensei Takamatsu used this kukan to never get angry. We can all learn from him. We must learn to properly distance ourselves from our problems. This gives true perspective. You must become relaxed and composed so you can respond with proper action based on wisdom.

Personal Kukan

What about your personal use of your space. Are the spaces in your life filled with clutter? Examine your car, your house, and especially your mind. It may be a good time to clean these things and bring about a clarity in your self and in your life. In martial arts your ability or inability to move yourself and others (distancing for beginners) in the space in which you move creates the outcome of a situation for better, or worse. Timing is everything in life. If your personal space is very cluttered you may be causing yourself unrealized problems. Inefficient movement can cost you big time in a life and death situation. Your life may have become filled with too much effort (looking for misplaced things, tearing through stuff to get to something). Clean out your space. In training, the surface on which you are moving will determine your footwork, as will the timing, distancing, angling and intent of your adversary. Moving your body

on large rocks or in water or on ice or on uneven ground with a lot of holes in it will alter your footwork drastically. This is great practice in using the physical aspects of kukan. One of Soke's greatest secrets is his footwork patterns which he has mixed from all the schools. He told me he took up soccer while in college to master his footwork while in action. (He was the captain so he must have been good at it.) I understand what he means as I have also played and coached soccer at many levels. Make sure you train carefully on these secrets as you better your taijutsu. Injury will limit and alter the way you can move in the world. Kukan deals with all aspects, not just the so called physical. It's really all physical with many layers of perception from my level of experience and knowledge.

Kukan in Action - Godan Testing

The first real test of our mastery of kukan in this art is the Godan test which, once passed, gives a person the right to become a fully licensed teacher in the Bujinkan arts. Emotions and thinking get in the way for many who attempt this test and they fail. To pass you must be able to free yourself in the space between time. Societal changes and ignorant minds teaching others ignorant thoughts have caused most people to feel separate from their personal connection to what is natural, to their own humanity. Soke's true meaning in the Godan testing is to give humanity back to individuals. The automatic surrender of your conscious thoughts, your expectations, your ego, and trusting the divine intelligence (consciousness) to move you out of the danger of the thrusting sword cut of Soke Hatsumi taps you into the inner space of your humanity. A true aspect of kukan, at its best. Once this transmission is received the new Godan student is to begin training on the ura (inner) side of the art. The omote (outer) is the physical training up to Godan which gives you your foundation. Then as you approach Godan level and after the test you begin to blend this inner connection into the flow of your life. It will not only affect your taijutsu but also everything that you come in contact with. You have then reached the second level. Keep these things in Mind and Heart.