

## **‘Circle With No Circumference’**

by Bruce Lee (extract from the ‘Tao of Jeet Kune Do’)

Jeet Kune Do, ultimately, is not a matter of petty technique but of highly developed personal spirituality and physique. It is not a question of developing what has already been developed but of recovering what has been left behind. These things have been with us, in us, all the time and have never been lost or distorted except by our misguided manipulation of them. Jeet Kune Do is not a matter of technology but of spiritual insight and training.

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The tools are at an undifferentiated center of a circle that has no circumference, moving and yet not moving, in tension and yet relaxed, seeing everything happening and yet not at all anxious about its outcome, with nothing purposely designed, nothing consciously calculated, no anticipation, no expectation – in short, standing innocently like a baby and yet, with all the cunning, subterfuge and keen intelligence of a fully mature mind.

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Leave sagehood behind and enter once more into ordinary humanity. After coming to understand the other side, come back and live on this side. After the cultivation of no-cultivation, one's thoughts continue to be detached from phenomenal things and one still remains amid the phenomenal, yet devoid of the phenomenal.

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Both the man and his surroundings are eliminated. Then, neither the man nor his surroundings are eliminated. Walk on!

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One can never be the master of his technical knowledge unless all his psychic hindrances are removed and he can keep his mind in a state of emptiness (fluidity), even purged of whatever technique he has obtained.

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With all the training thrown to the wind, with a mind perfectly unaware of its own working, with the self vanishing nowhere, anybody knows where, the art of Jeet Kune Do attains its perfection.

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The more aware you become, the more you shed from day to day what you have learned so that your mind is always fresh and uncontaminated by previous conditioning.

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Learning techniques corresponds to an intellectual apprehension of the philosophies in Zen, and in both Zen and Jeet Kune Do, an intellectual proficiency does not cover the whole ground of the discipline. Both require the attainment of ultimate reality, which is the emptiness or the absolute. The latter transcends all modes of relativity.

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In Jeet Kune Do, all technique is to be forgotten and the unconscious is to be left alone to handle the situation. The technique will assert its wonders automatically or spontaneously. To float in totality, to have no technique, is to have all technique.

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The knowledge and skill you have achieved are meant to be "forgotten" so you can float comfortably in emptiness, without obstruction. Learning is important but do not become its slave. Above all, do not harbor anything external and superfluous – the mind is primary. Any technique, however worthy and desirable, becomes a disease when the mind is obsessed with it.

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The six diseases:

- 1.The desire for victory.
- 2.The desire to resort to technical cunning.
- 3.The desire to display all that has been learned.
- 4.The desire to awe the enemy.
- 5.The desire to play the passive role.
- 6.The desire to get rid of whatever disease one is affected by.

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"To desire" is an attachment. "To desire not to desire" is also an attachment. To be unattached then, means to be free at once from both statements, positive and negative. This is to be simultaneously both "yes" and "no," which is intellectually absurd. However, not so in Zen.

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*Nirvana* is to be consciously unconscious or to be unconsciously conscious. That is its secret. The act is so direct and immediate that intellectualization finds no room to insert itself and cut the act to pieces.

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The spirit is no doubt the controlling agent of our existence. This invisible seat controls every movement in whatever external situation arises. It is thus, to be extremely mobile, never "stopping" in any place at any moment. Preserve this state of spiritual freedom and non-attachment as soon as you assume the fighting stance. Be "master of the house."

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It is the ego that stands rigidly against influences from the outside, and it is this "ego rigidity" that makes it impossible for us to accept everything that confronts us.

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Art lives where absolute freedom is, because where it is not, there can be no creativity.

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Seek not the cultivated innocence of a clever mind that wants to be innocent, but have rather that state of innocence where there is no denial or acceptance and the mind just sees what *is*.

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All goals apart from the means are illusions. Becoming is a denial of being.

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By an error repeated throughout the ages, truth, becoming a law or a faith, places obstacles in the way of knowledge. Method, which is in its very substance ignorance, encloses truth within a vicious circle. We should break such a circle, not by seeking knowledge, but by discovering the cause of ignorance.

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Recollection and anticipation are fine qualities of consciousness that distinguish the human mind from that of the lower animals. But, when actions are directly related to the problem of life and death, these properties must be relinquished for the sake of fluidity of thought and lightning rapidity of action.

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Action is our relationship to everything. Action is not a matter of right and wrong. It is only when action is partial that there is a right and a wrong.

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Don't let your attention be attested! Transcend dualistic comprehension of a situation.

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Give up thinking as though not giving it up. Observe the techniques as though not observing. Utilize the art as a means to advance in the study of the Way.

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*Prajna immovable* doesn't mean immovability or insensibility. It means that the mind is endowed with capabilities of infinite, instantaneous motion that knows no hindrance.

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Make the tools see. All movements come out of emptiness and the mind is the name given to this dynamic aspect of emptiness. It is straight, without ego-centered motivation. The emptiness is sincerity, genuineness and straightforwardness, allowing nothing between itself and its movements.

Jeet Kune Do exists in your not seeing me and my not seeing you, where yin and yang have not yet differentiated themselves.

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Jeet Kune Do dislikes partialization or localization. Totality can meet all situations.

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When the mind is fluid, the moon is in the stream where it is at once movable and immovable. The waters are in motion all the time, but the moon retains its serenity. The mind moves in response to ten thousand situations but remains ever the same.

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The stillness in stillness is not the real stillness; only when there is stillness in movement does the universal rhythm manifest itself. To change with change is the changeless state. Nothingness cannot be confined; the softest thing cannot be snapped.

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Assume the *pristine purity*. In order to display your native activities to the utmost limit, remove all psychic obstruction.

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Would that we could at once strike with the eyes! In the long way from the eye through the arm to the fist, how much is lost!

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Sharpen the psychic power of seeing in order to act immediately in accordance with what you see. Seeing takes place with the inner mind.

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Because one's self-consciousness or ego-consciousness is too conspicuously present over the entire range of his attention, it interferes with his free display of whatever proficiency he has so far acquired or is going to acquire. One should remove this obtruding self or ego-consciousness and apply himself to the work to be done as if nothing particular were taking place at the moment.

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To be of no-mind means to assume the everyday mind.

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The mind must be wide open to function freely in thought. A limited mind cannot think freely.

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A concentrated mind is not an attentive mind, but a mind that is in the state of awareness can concentrate. Awareness is never exclusive; it includes everything.

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Not being tense but ready, not thinking yet not dreaming, not being set but flexible – it is being wholly and quietly alive, aware and alert, ready for whatever may come.

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The Jeet Kune Do man should be on the alert to meet the interchangeability of opposites. As soon as his mind "stops" with either of them, it loses its own fluidity. A JKD man should keep his mind always in the state of emptiness so that his freedom in action will never be obstructed.

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The *abiding stage* is the point where the mind hesitates to abide. It attaches itself to an object and stops the flow.

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The deluded mind is the mind affectively burdened by intellect. Thus, it cannot move without stopping and reflecting on itself. This obstructs its native fluidity.

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The wheel revolves when it is not too tightly attached to the axle. When the mind is tied up, it feels inhibited in every move it makes and nothing is accomplished with spontaneity. Its work will be of poor quality or it may never be finished at all.

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When the mind is tethered to a center, naturally it is not free. It can move only within the limits of that center. If one is isolated, he is dead; he is paralyzed within the fortress of his own ideas.

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When you are completely aware, there is no space for a conception, a scheme, "the opponent and I;" there is complete abandonment.

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When there is no obstruction, the JKD man's movements are like flashes of lightning or like the mirror reflecting images.

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When insubstantiality and substantiality are not set and defined, when there is no track to change what is, one has mastered the formless form. When there is clinging to form, when there is attachment of the mind, it is not the true path. When technique comes out of itself, that is the way.

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Jeet Kune Do is the art not founded on techniques or doctrine. It is *just as you are*.

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When there is no center and no circumference, then there is truth. When you freely express, you are the total style.

## **It's Just a Name**

There is a powerful craving in most of us to see ourselves as instruments in the hands of others and, thus, free ourselves from responsibility for acts which are prompted by our own questionable inclinations and impulses. Both the strong and the weak grasp at this alibi. The latter hide their malevolence under virtue of obedience. The strong, too, claim absolution by proclaiming themselves the chosen instruments of a higher power – God, history, fate, nation or humanity.

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Similarly, we have more faith in what we imitate than in what we originate. We cannot derive a sense of absolute certitude from anything which has its roots in us. The most poignant sense of insecurity comes from standing alone and we are not alone when we imitate. It is thus with most of us; we are what other people say we are. We know ourselves chiefly by hearsay.

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To become different from what we are, we must have some awareness of what we are. Whether this being different results in dissimulation or a real change of heart, it cannot be realized without self-awareness. Yet, it is remarkable that the very people who are most self-dissatisfied, who crave most for a new identity, have the least self-awareness. They have turned away from an unwanted self and, hence, never had a good look at it. The result is that most dissatisfied people can neither dissimulate nor attain a real change of heart. They are transparent and their unwanted qualities persist through all attempts at self-dramatization and self-transformation. It is the lack of self-awareness which renders us transparent. The soul that knows itself is opaque.

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Fear comes from uncertainty. When we are absolutely certain, whether of our worth or our worthlessness, we are almost impervious to fear. Thus, a feeling of utter unworthiness can be a source of courage. Everything seems possible when we are absolutely helpless or absolutely powerful – and both states stimulate our gullibility.

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Pride is a sense of worth derived from something that is not organically part of us, while self-esteem is derived from the portentialities and achievements of self. We are proud when we identify ourselves with an imaginary self, a leader, a holy cause, a collective body or possessions. There is fear and intolerance in pride; it is sensitive and uncompromising. The less promise and potentiality in the self, the more imperative is the need for pride. The core of pride is self-rejection. It is true,

however, that when pride releases energies and serves as a spur to achievement, it can lead to a reconciliation with the self and the attainment of genuine self-esteem.

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Secretiveness can be a source of pride. It is a paradox that secretiveness plays the same role as boasting – both are engaged in the creation of a disguise. Boasting tries to create an imaginary self, while secretiveness gives us the exhilarating feeling of being princes disguised in meekness. Of the two, secretiveness is the more difficult and effective. For the self-observant, boasting breeds self-contempt. Yet, it is as Spinoza said: “Men govern nothing with more difficulty than their tongues, and they can moderate their desires more than their words.” Humility, however, is not verbal renunciation of pride but the substitution of pride for self-awareness and objectivity. Forced humility is false pride.

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A fateful process is set in motion when the individual is released “to the freedom of his own impotence” and left to justify his existence by his own efforts. The individual on his own, striving to realize himself and prove his worth, has created all that is great in literature, art, music, science and technology. This autonomous individual, also, when he can neither realize himself nor justify his existence by his own efforts, is a breeding ground of frustration and the seed of the convulsion that shakes our world to its foundations.

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The autonomous individual is stable only so long as he is possessed of self-esteem. The maintenance of self-esteem is a continuous task which taxes all of the individual's power and inner resources. We have to prove our worth and justify our existence anew each day. When, for whatever reason, self-esteem is unattainable, the autonomous individual becomes a highly explosive entity. He turns away from an unpromising self and plunges into the pursuit of pride, the explosive substitute for self-esteem. All social disturbances and upheavals have their roots in crises of individual self-esteem, and the great endeavor in which the masses most readily unite is basically a search for pride.

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So, we acquire a sense of worth either by realizing our talents, or by keeping busy or by identifying ourselves with something apart from us – be it a cause, a leader, a group, possessions or whatnot. The path of self-realization is the most difficult. It is taken only when other avenues to a sense of worth are more or less blocked. Men of talent have to be encouraged and goaded to engage in creative work. Their groans and laments echo through the ages.

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Action is a high road to self-confidence and esteem. Where it is open, all energies flow toward it. It comes readily to most people and its rewards are tangible. The cultivation of the spirit is elusive and difficult and the tendency toward it is rarely spontaneous, whereas, the opportunities for action are many.

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The propensity to action is symptomatic of an inner unbalance. To be balanced is to be more or less at rest. Action is at the bottom – a swinging and flailing of the arms to regain one's balance and keep afloat. And if it is true, as Napoleon wrote to Carnot, "The art of government is not to let men grow stale," then, it is an art of unbalancing. The crucial difference between a totalitarian regime and a free social order is, perhaps, in the methods of unbalancing by which their people are kept active and striving.

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We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. Yet, it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents as well.

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The times of drastic change are times of passions. We can never be fit and ready for that which is wholly new. We have to adjust ourselves and every radical adjustment is a crisis in self-esteem: we undergo a test; we have to prove ourselves. A population subjected to drastic change is, thus, a population of misfits, and misfits live and breathe in an atmosphere of passion.

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That we pursue something passionately does not always mean that we really want it or have a special aptitude for it. Often, the thing we pursue most passionately is but a substitute for the one thing we really want and cannot have. It is usually safe to predict that the fulfillment of an excessively cherished desire is not likely to still our nagging anxiety. In every passionate pursuit, the pursuit counts more than the object pursued.

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Our sense of power is more vivid when we break a man's spirit than when we win his heart, for we can win a man's heart one day and lose it the next. But when we break a proud spirit, we achieve something that is final and absolute.

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It is compassion rather than the principle of justice which can guard us against being unjust to our fellow men.

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It is doubtful whether there is such a thing as impulsive or natural tolerance. Tolerance requires an effort of thought and self-control. Acts of kindness, too, are rarely without deliberation and "thoughtfulness." Thus, it seems that some artificiality, some posing and pretense, is inseparable from any act or attitude which involves a limitation of our appetites and selfishness. We ought to beware of people who do not think it necessary to pretend that they are good and decent. Lack of hypocrisy in such things hints at a capacity for a more depraved ruthlessness. Pretense is often an indispensable step in the attainment of genuineness. It is a form into which genuine inclinations flow and solidify.

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The control of our being is not unlike the combination of a safe. One turn of the knob rarely unlocks the safe; each advance and retreat is a step toward one's final achievement.

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Jeet Kune Do is not to hurt, but is one of the avenues through which life opens its secrets to us. We can see through others only when we can see through ourselves and Jeet Kune Do is a step toward knowing oneself.

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

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Learning Jeet Kune Do is not a matter [of] seeking knowledge or accumulating stylized pattern, but is discovering the cause of ignorance.

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If people say Jeet Kune Do is different from "this" or from "that," then let the name of Jeet Kune Do be wiped out, for that is what it is, just a name. Please don't fuss over it.