

## Incomplete Knowledge

A wonderful thing about the modern Internet age is that people share more knowledge than ever before. Now, in five minutes, I can compare 5 versions of a karate kata for free that, prior to the advent of the Internet, would have taken me the purchase of 5 books which easily could have taken me 5 years to accumulate (and cost more than \$50—in old-style dollars). Of course, in those days, I would have considered myself lucky to have those 5 treasured volumes and would have been one of only a few dozen people to do the comparisons. Unfortunately, in the contemporary world, having the ability to compare 5 kata, various waza, styles, and arts gives conviction to considerably more than a few dozen people, so they become instant experts regarding the value of those items.

Just as Facebook friends find fault with any statement from a political party other than their own, YouTube denizens seem to be all-knowledgeable about the quality and the details of any technique, style, or art that may appear in a clip. Some feel obliged to share their studied opinions with the less informed by writing unsolicited and un-detailed emails telling the author of the clip that he is a ignorant wretch if not an unscrupulous pretender. Others, in a much more positive spirit, try to inform the author that he had missed a detail, a variation, or an approach.

Recently, I received a polite email from a brown belt in judo informing me of a counter called *Te-guruma* (hand wheel)—a sort of modified *Sukui-nage* (scooping throw)—that would have worked perfectly against a kicking attack shown in one of my YouTube clips. Since I have spent more time laundering my gi than many YouTube denizens have spent on the mat, I was not only familiar with *Te-guruma*, but chose not to teach it in the seminar form which the clip was taken because the attendees were not judoka and would have had a hard time learning it. Nevertheless, I thanked him for his attempt to inform me. It is always good to share knowledge.

In said seminar (*Throws vs. Kicks, Kicks vs Throws*) because of time considerations, I did not teach various other counters to kicks that are closer to *Te-guruma*, *Sukui-nage*, and I think, more practical for non-judoka. I had saved them for last because I had already shown them in other programs (the kick defense sections of *Elegant Aiki Escapes* and *Aiki Combinations*).

I know said correspondent was only trying to help, but he made the assumption that less sincere and less charitable YouTube aficionados also make. They think that what they see is what they get. They unconsciously believe that a clip fully represents an entire video, seminar, session, etc., and that the session from which the clip was taken represents the complete knowledge of the teacher on that subject.

Folks, just because we have more access to martial arts knowledge than ever before, do not conclude that the knowledge you glean from that access comes close to the knowledge that

the teacher possesses. That does not mean that you are ignorant or that you don't know some fact, skill, or tidbit of which a teacher may be ignorant. It does mean, however, that teaching in a dojo for more decades than you have been drawing breath, probably suggests that the teacher has a reserve of know-how (facts, skills, tidbits) that he cannot begin to put in a YouTube clip—or even five books, or five years of instruction.

The martial arts knowledge available to many in the modern world is extensive, but it is still incomplete knowledge.