

Wanting It All

It is immature to expect that you can eat your cake and have it too. Similarly, it is immature to expect you can want your system to be complete as well as detailed. Anyone who has read *Gödel, Escher, Bach* will remember Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem: No system of logic/algorithms can prove all logical/mathematical truths, and any system attempting to do so cannot prove its own consistency.

I am making a leap to associate logical systems with martial arts systems, but if you are willing to leap a little with me, let's consider why I think Gödel's idea, just might teach us something about what we do.

We all know that Gōjū means "Hard/Soft" and that Chojun Miyagi adopted the name when his student after a public demonstration was pressed to give a title for the system. The name referred back to the revered *Bubishi* and seemed to accurately describe Miyagi's method in shorthand. Less well known, except among Shito stylists, is that Kenwa Mabuni's early name for his system was Hankō-ryu, a term that means "Half-hard Tradition". Obviously Mabuni felt that he too had a karate system that encompassed the short, sharp movements of Shorin and the rounder, softer movements of Shorei/Naha-te. A third Okinawan system, Uechi-ryu, was first called Pangainoon by Shu Shi Wa, Kanbum Uechi's teacher. The translation of this Chinese term is, *surprise, surprise*, "Half-hard Method". It seems that fully hard or fully soft was not good enough for Miyagi, Mabuni, or Shu Shi Wa. I have talked to Tang Doo Do stylists who, although their movements are clearly hard and powerful, claim that, at higher dan-ranks, they learn soft techniques.

I suggest that we are attracted to the idea of hard/soft because it seems rather all encompassing and that we are naturally drawn toward studying an art that "has it all". I have met aiki-ju-jutsu stylists who argue that they love their version of the art because it can strike, kick, sweep, lock, throw—the art, according to them, has it all. My guess is that theirs is a compilation of aiki and ju-jutsu arts that satisfies their need to be both hard/soft and as complete as possible. Who wants to go out on the street and be confronted with a roundhouse kick to the leg when one has studied only defenses to lunge punches to the face? Who wants to confront a crazed Central American weight lifter on industrial strength peyote when one has studied only defenses to straight line sparring combinations?

And yet we know that our desire to have the cake means we cannot really partake of the cake, too. Your system is incomplete and your desire to make it complete by adding other systems, or at least elements of other systems, is understandable but never fully realizable. I am no exception. I have tried to learn kata from diverse karate systems so I can train my body to

move in ways that are suited to more situations than my primary system prepared me for. I have learned judo for throwing and grappling, aiki for locking and throwing, and karate for blocking, punching and kicking, so I could have a utility belt full of weapons. But in reality, even Batman does not have the right gadget all the time.

No system of budo can address all self-defense scenarios, and any system attempting to do so cannot be technically consistent. Okay, I have taken some liberties with ol' Kurt, but you get the idea.