

Quantum Judo

I knew it. It was my very first night of judo, and I knew it, and the knowledge was so perfect it was nearly wordless. What I am about to tell you might frighten you away. If not, it might bring you closer to a new answer to a question you've always asked yourself, "Why judo?" It might simply convince you that I've gone around the bend. That could well be.

That first night a voice, almost wordless, said, "there is something special here". It wasn't just the implication of self-defense potential, and all that that entailed. I had done my share of physical confrontation in my early teens. I was a "fear no man" kind of young man, and to a certain degree, for good reason. I'd had my share of scuffles. I'd boxed Golden Gloves. I'd also studied some pretty good books on jujitsu, and I knew some tricks.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, I found myself in a mat room full of dweebs in funny pajamas, with white, green and brown belts (only one brown, and he was the sensei), who could throw me around and trip and sweep me at will. That did impress me considerably. That wasn't *it*, either. There was something else there. I knew, wordlessly, that there was a mystery here. I also knew that it was not so much a mystery to be solved as a mystery to become a part of.

That was what was happening in my head in 1960 in the wrestling room of Mankato State College, after I'd finally acquiesced to come on in and try judo. It had taken weeks of cajoling from the judo club guys, led by sensei Paul Sheehan, who had spotted me messing around as a D-Squad member of the gymnastics team (boy, did I suck at that!). Now, here I was in khaki slacks and a judo jacket being yo-yoed about by cheerful, grinning, truly friendly club members. It was hard to believe. It was also hard on my ego. It would have been easy to just walk away. But I couldn't, because something was going on here. So, I continued to search for it. I ordered a judogi, paid the club membership fee, and began my life-long journey.

Over the years after randori sessions, sitting sweat drenched and drained alongside the mat area, I would turn to a fellow judoka and ask, “Why do we do this?” I’d get a blank stare as often as not. Sometimes, “It’s just fun, man,” or something of that depth would be the reply. “I know,” I’d say, “but what is so much fun about grabbing some other person, waltzing around and endeavoring to slam each other onto the planet?” I sensed that the real answer was the answer to my unanswered mystery. Usually, the reply from my judo associates was a shake of a sweat dripping head, a gulp of Gatorade and perhaps as much as a, “Sure is great, huh?”

Sometimes, rarely, we are blessed with the “perfect throw”. It is often characterized by asking your uke, “Did you jump?”, and uke says no. It is a perfectly timed, smooth as silk, effortless thing of beauty. You tell yourself that if you could do it once, you ought to be able to do it more than once. Why not every time? When you do that excellent throw, there is an added feeling, something beyond the physical. “This is it,” you say, not quite sure what “it” is, but certain it is more than just an ordinary moment.

If you haven’t had that experience, you might be a novice still. If you are a veteran and haven’t had it, be patient, because it is waiting for you. It is as rare as a precious jewel, but almost all judoka experience it at least once. If it hasn’t come, it will. It has to, because it is the physical connection to the *do* part of judo.

Kano knew that his judo was an analogy for life . In his time, quantum physics had barely made its debut. How that concept would disrupt our perception of the cosmos, based on Newtonian Physics, and beyond that - cellular, molecular, atomic, subatomic, quantum, and Pre-quantum, was yet to be seen. How does this relate to judo, you might well ask? The answer lies in taking a momentary side road.

Buddhists, Zen masters, Yogis, and masters and adepts of many beliefs, from East to West, and the Native Americans on both sides of the Equator, have long believed that the ultimate truth as to the nature of existence and consciousness is unspeakable, wordless. Yet within us all is our connection to the cosmos. We are never disconnected. Our awareness of that connection is lacking, and that is why many meditate, use koans, and seek to arrive at enlightenment. I told you this was going to get spooky.

Physicists now tell us that if we move to the sub-atomic level of things, every seemingly solid particle of matter is composed of more than 99.999 percent empty space. Those who combine the laws of physics with the Zen-like search for the soul of the self, tell us that beyond the quantum level, our bodies, and perhaps the entirety of existence, exist as pure creative potential, a multilayered process controlled by ‘intelligence’. It is an intelligence or consciousness with which we are all connected. Let’s connect back to judo itself, for a moment.

In order to perform quality judo, in search of that perfect throw, whether it be in randori or shiai, you would choose to be:

1. Flexible instead of rigid.
2. Flowing rather than solid.
3. Dynamic instead of static.
4. Composed of information and energy rather than using random reactions.
5. Be a network of intelligence rather than a mindless machine.
6. Fresh and ever-renewing versus entropic and depleted.

In fact, number one is Kano’s definition of judo, the gentle way. Flexibility in the contest against force is the very thing that makes judo judo. A judoka who was all of these would certainly be wearing a deservedly high dan grade.

This list, however, does not come from a judo book. It comes from *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, by Deepak Chopra, M.D. , the renown author, speaker, and healer, whose belief in cosmic connections is strong.

In the search for the Unified Theory of how the universe is constructed and works, physicists have come to many quandaries and contradictions. They have run into the brick wall of light being either a wave, or a packet. Or is it waves full of packets? They cannot measure because Heisenberg has told them to do so alters the very thing being measured. Einstein put everyone in a difficult place when he pointed out that the place you are in determines the outcome of events, and all is consequently relative. When all the matter that matters is given its due, it might be that all is connected, especially because what seems solid is actually all so far apart!

So, when Chopra talks about quantum physics relating to how we use our consciousness to define ourselves, how we actually *re-define* ourselves, he uses that list

of “reality” statements. We should see ourselves as being flexible rather than rigid. It is, he says, the way of aligning ourselves with the cosmic reality of which we are a part. Consider the judo connection: when we use those same principles in our endeavors to throw someone, we are applying the *do* of judo.

Is it a wonder that the “perfect” throw feels so perfect? For one fleeting moment we are attuned to the clockwork of the universe, aligned with the cosmos, a part of the flow that pervades all. How could an 18-year old college freshman know this? He couldn’t.

I only knew that there was *something there*. Maybe you have felt it, too. If you have, you can close your eyes right this moment and *feel it*. I believe, now, that’s what it was. Somehow, in the timelessness of the universe, the certainty of quantum judo reached out that night a lifetime ago in a Mankato wrestling room and gave a young man a peek into the farthest reaches of the cosmos, connected all the dots, and whispered a wordless promise that it has kept. I have gone around the bend each rare time that throw has happened, each time I close my eyes and relive the moment, and I invite all judoka to join me.

###