



## The JKD “Divorce” Understanding JKD Part 4

### “ORIGINAL JKD” VS. “JKD CONCEPTS” – The Title Bout::

The JKD philosophy is difficult for many to wrap their minds around. In case it wasn't confusing enough on it's own, there is more confusion to thicken the soup...

Bruce's 1<sup>st</sup> generation students have split up and divided amongst themselves into two distinct and separate understandings of what the core philosophy behind the art “really is” [groan – I'm sure Bruce is turning over in his grave due to this conflict]. Each side of the debate has taken the quotes from Bruce Lee's teachings and have each derived their own beliefs of what they think it means for the art.

*Note: Before I go any further, it is essential to understand that BOTH concepts and original proponents truly feel they are accurately representing and honoring the legacy of Bruce Lee. I respect that and I respect them. I mean no offense to either side by these statements! Sijo Lee, the only person that could ever actually sort this out for us, is unfortunately not around, thus the debate will continue to rage on. It's disturbing to me that after all Bruce Lee tried to impart about unity, we once again return to the mire and stench of division. I wonder often to myself, 'What have we learned?'*

Let me *attempt* to explain the divide...

The basic disagreement hinges on one main philosophical point within Jeet Kune Do. That is, the philosophical debate surrounding whether or not JKD is an ever-expanding, or ‘evolving,’ process [concepts], or whether it should remain exactly as Bruce taught it when he passed away and therefore needs no further addition or change [original].

Well, we're chest-deep in the muck now! There's nothing like a little divisiveness to shed clarity on a subject, right? So...pick a side and line up! [Sarcastic levity intended] Maybe someday we'll just have to gather all JKDer's under one big roof and have the biggest rumble anyone's ever seen! As in any conflict/war in history, the side still standing will get to claim “the truth.”



*Civil war's are ugly damaging things that never brings about resolution just sometimes survive - maybe.*

It would be nice if this solved anything, but the experience and lessons of history teach us otherwise. No one wins a war, they

I think Wikipedia states it accurately and succinctly. *I chose this explanation, not for it's scholarly approach, but instead because it was the most unbiased I could find.* It defines the differences as the following;

- *“The Original [or Jun Fan] JKD branch, whose main proponents are Taky Kimura, James Lee, Jerry Poteet, and Ted Wong; these groups principally teach just what Bruce Lee taught, and encourage the student to further develop his or her abilities according to Bruce Lee's teachings .*
- *The JKD Concepts branch, whose main proponents are Dan Inosanto, and Larry Hartsell; these groups have continued to modify Jeet Kune Do, under the philosophy that it was never meant to be a static art but rather an ongoing evolution, and have incorporated elements from many other martial arts into the main fold of its teachings [most notably, grappling and Kali / Escrima material].*

*To understand the branches of JKD it is important to understand the difference between the two "types" of Jeet Kune Do:*

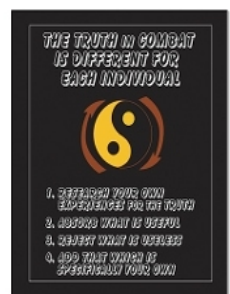
- *A. **JKD framework** This type of JKD provides the guiding principles. Bruce Lee experimented with many styles and techniques to reach these conclusions. To Lee these principles were truisms. The JKD framework is not bound or confined by any styles or systems. This type of JKD is a process.*
- *B. **JKD Personal Systems** This type of JKD utilizes the JKD framework along with any techniques from any other style or system to construct a "personal system". This approach utilizes a "building blocks" manner in which to construct a personalized system that is especially tailored to an individual. Lee believed that only an individual could determine for themselves what the usefulness of any technique should be. This type of JKD is thus a product.”*

Wikipedia also adds;

*“The two branches of JKD differ in what should be incorporated or offered within the "**JKD Framework**". The **Original [or Jun Fan] JKD** branch believes that the original principles before Bruce Lee died are all that is needed for the construction of personalized systems. The **JKD Concepts** branch believes that there are further principles that can be added to construct personalized systems. The value of each Branch can be determined by individual practitioners based on whatever merits they deem important.” [Emphasis added]*

So there you have it. Clear as mud, right? Maybe I'm the first to say or think this, but frankly, I see more similarities between the two sides than I do differences. Let me explain...

Each side of the debate still believes and practices a core structure and systematic approach. Even Larry Hartsell, a concepts proponent, states that, “there is a structure...” in JKD. In addition, both JKD ‘branches’ readily admit that eventually each individual must find what is ‘true’ for themselves and go through the process



of the now famous maxim, *discarding that which is useless, and keep that which is useful*. Both train themselves in footwork, power, agility, speed, timing, distance, coordination, endurance, lin sil die da [simultaneous block and hit], the 4 ranges of combat, efficiency, simplicity, centerline, the 5 ways of attack... etc...

Am I the only one that sees this?

**My opinion and perhaps some challenging questions for us all::**

Please allow me to be candid. I agree more with the concepts point of view on what JKD is supposed to be. I think Bruce would have agreed that JKD is based on a constant change – a filling, then emptying, then refilling of our cup, and so on. It should lead to an ever-broadening list of experiences that assists us in growing, yet while refining ourselves, ad infinitum. I share what Larry Hartsell said, “Bruce was always worried that if he were no longer around, his students would freeze JKD – which should always be growing, changing and adapting.” If forced to choose between the two, I’m a ‘concepts guy.’

Having said that and returning to the point; being a JKD practitioner brings a level of responsibility with it, to be true to the philosophy put in motion by Bruce Lee. He advocated and taught experiences, growth, imagination, expansion, and inclusion. Awareness is never exclusive.

Therefore, it is extremely important that we not ‘limit’ ourselves. By default this means that we also cannot discount or discard other people’s thoughts and understandings without careful consideration. Following this point of view begs me to ask difficult questions.

If we *truly* have ‘no way, as way’ *and mean it*, we cannot say in our next breathe that we will not listen to someone who has a different understanding of a philosophy than we do – especially if it is within our own JKD family – as distant as the, um...’cousins’ may be. In fact to remain consistent with our own philosophy we *must* listen to those we don’t always agree with. Fascinating, isn’t it?

Ponder this. If we refuse to listen to others we may not agree with, wouldn’t that by definition be a limitation? Could we be limiting ourselves by this very disagreement? If so, wouldn’t that make us the biggest hypocrites and actually living in the ‘limitation’ we say we don’t practice? I wonder...



Shouldn’t we *respect* those of differing understandings than our own, even if we don’t like their opinion? We may learn something from them. Something we may want to add to our repertoire. We may even have the opportunity to impart something of value on others. Pride in thinking we ‘have it all’ or that ‘we know it all,’ limits us. It’s like a snake eating its own tail; it’s not nutritious. This was the mistake many martial artists fell into in Bruce Lee’s time, and still do today. I think this is reminiscent of the common mistake Bruce was trying to correct.

Search yourself and think.

Are we confident and mature enough for this? Are we secure enough to ask tough questions

of ourselves? Can we transcend the division that clouds our thinking and blinds us? Does our strength and confidence come only from our muscle, OR can we push and strive to have it come from a much deeper place? Are we limiting ourselves by excluding thoughts and ideas from people of different understanding? I ask myself often.

Building bridges is difficult work, but the rewards are great. Destruction is easy. Anyone can do that. It's a tempting snare to fall into, but leads to division, and limitation. Strength may need to be redefined for many of us. Allowing ourselves to be bogged down by this serves nothing but a tremendous waste of time. It also hints at our own insecurity. It exposes our own weakness whether we realize it or not. Perhaps, true strength is displayed through humility and understanding.

I have trained with both concepts and original proponents in JKD. I intend to continue when, or if, the opportunity arises in the future. While I lean towards the 'concepts' school of thought, I refuse to be limited. I think this is accurate to the philosophy of JKD. I think we can learn from both.



# Humility

Humility begs us to self-examine. No one learns through hubris – except the 'hard-way' [which ultimately leads to humility anyway]. Wisdom is granted to those who humble themselves long enough to listen to the lessons surrounding them. I will continue to push forwards – towards holistic liberty.

Where does your strength dwell?