

Levels of Technical Veracity 2

In my opinion, styles and arts create methods to which to conform (maybe that's why they are called "formal"), thus breaking the student of his natural habits. He enters the school not in a state of unconscious incompetence...and the formal training converts him first to a state of conscious incompetence and then, after a lot of training, to conscious competence. In my experience, most schools stop there.

In order to train, we must do what we have been taught.

In order to defend ourselves, we must do what the situation demands.

We all know this, but we are trapped in arts that are martial, but never allow us to be martial. How can they? Being jumped by Boulder McLump, who bumps you unexpectedly from behind and then sits on your shoulder blades while pummeling your topknot, is not the most sane way to convert your art to a more martial application.

Besides, dojo etiquette means we must do what we have been taught more or less in the way it has been taught us. No one is going to volunteer for a 30-minute post-class special session in which Boulder and his brethren from the local bar have been imported for the evening to belch in your face before belting you with beer bottles.

But, you may be thinking, we do drills in which we get to react more freely rather than look like rigidly disciplined automatons. True, and that is great, but let me put you into a dojo situation and then tell me if you feel it teaches an art or something decidedly martial.

Sensei has been insisting that you off-balance your partner better before attempting to apply your *ude otosu odori/ikkyo* technique. Makes sense to you, so you do what Sensei asks and develop an excellent weight drop and arm press that folds the attackers arm at his elbow while he grips your lapel. In fact, you become so good at it that no partner in the dojo can resist your tricky and subtle off-balancing as you set up your technique. You are so skilled that your preliminary movement makes you flow directly to the required application with little or no effort.

You are a wise and aware martial artist so you know that, on the street, Mr. McLump and his cohorts do not usually go with the flow even if they are skillfully off-balanced, so you ask Grupo Terrón, who approximates the lumpy build of Mr. McLump, to be your partner as you train diligently to make your technique work on a less cooperative assailant. That is also great! Few martial artists go to the trouble to train the extra time with the extra effort. You are no doubt a better martial artist for the time spent with Mr. Terrón.

Then after class, a slightly intoxicated someone, not as big as Boulder or as resistant as Grupo, takes issue with the color of your cravat and grips you in the same way you have been practicing with Grupo from the dojo. It works pretty well, and when you meet with the expected

resistance, you call upon the variations you have learned in class and in your private training to make that damn *ude otosu odori/ikkyo* work even better.

It might have been easier, more self-defense-worthy, less damaging to the assailant, and more subject to a claim of overreaction, if you had just kicked him in the shin and used your preliminary off-balancing to tilt him into a bevy or parked bicycles. Why didn't you? Because that is not in your art, because Sensei never taught that to you, and because you have, as a good martial artist, programmed yourself to do what you have been taught, not what the situation calls for.

You are stuck with a technically true method, one that would pass an exam, and one that was somewhat effective—but nevertheless inefficient. Why? Because in order to train, we must do what we have been taught. In order to defend ourselves, we must do what the situation demands. And no one has yet satisfactorily brought the two extremes together.