



"A Sensei's Philosophy" by Hulon Willis

"Karate, the noble art of empty hand self defense, is suffering greatly due to the absence of a functional philosophy or set of values. Unification of the art under one organization, or even standardization of systems, will prove fruitless if there is no basic, functional philosophy to give direction and guidance to the Sensei as he goes about his daily work. A philosophy is basic to life, to teaching, and to karate.

As an art, karate is a teaching-learning situation involving a process and a product. Although categorized by a few as "the more violent form of self-defense", its roots are firmly and deeply embedded in the fertile soil of history, philosophy, morality and science. The Sensei who excludes principles, the principles of history, science, morality and philosophy from his teaching process can only hope and be deserved of a product that will do no good for karate.

As a physical educator, this Sensei has found that the teaching of karate is no different than the teaching of any other skill or physical activity. The principles of teaching, learning and movement prevail in the Dojo as they do in the gymnasium or classroom. The Sensei, if dedicated, must be just as deeply concerned and sensitive about the process through which the learning of karate takes place and the quality of his products as are the teachers of English or chemistry. He too is a molder of minds, a builder of men and women, a developer of character. He too, is a teacher of the highest order.

In karate, as it is true in any field of endeavor, the product is no greater than the process or the person directing or guiding it. If the product (the karateka) is to be of worth and value to society, and our way of life, the Sensei must stress the moral and philosophical principles of karate. The Sensei should be highly literate concerning the historical, philosophical, moral, and scientific principles of karate. Therefore, he must read, study and verbalize. Education is a never ending process.

The Sensei should possess some basic knowledge of anatomy, physiology, neurology, kinesiology (the science of movement), psychology, and physics. The principles of teaching, learning, and individual differences should fortify and improve the effectiveness of his teaching.

The Dojo is a classroom, not a facility for training gladiators hell-bent on mayhem and murder. It is not a place to be utilized solely for the purpose of developing tournament champions.

Many persons are studying karate to improve their status of physical and moral fitness, to develop self confidence, to improve them-selves in respect to speed, strength, flexibility, power, endurance, agility, coordination and balance. Others are motivated by man's inherent desire to master that which seems complicated. Self defense is not always the reason for studying the art. The beauty of the Kata, and the challenge to master the basic fundamentals, are strong motivating factors.

An informed public is an educated public. The individual Sensei is the key; he must be a scholar of karate. He must read, study, research and plan. The community is his proving ground along with the Dojo. The worth and effectiveness of the Sensei are not determined by his ability to break boards and bash bricks, but by his community service. Working with civic groups, children, the church and youth-serving agencies enhances his position as a Sensei, and by the same token the art."

Kancho note: the above philosophy was written many years ago by Master Willis, who professionally spent his entire life in the field of higher education. His words still ring true today and continue to provide a foundational aspiration to all of us in the Phoenix Karate-do Association Kyokushinkai. OSU