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We should really put an end to this "real JKD" business before it gets out of hand. I know that immediately there will be outcries of "It's none of this guy's business," but pity the poor editor who has to open the hundreds of letters from outraged students and "fans" who have been inflamed by a visiting seminar instructor.

Actually, one does not have to be a JKD practitioner to comprehend the situation. All one needs is access to the writings of Bruce Lee and a brain. I realize that the second component is a pretty tall order these days, but I'm willing to supply the thought effort.

First, there are a select group of people. They trained under instructors authorized by Bruce Lee, at locations supervised by Bruce Lee, in something called "jeet kune do." Not "jeet kune do concepts," not "jun fan gung-fu," but jeet kune do. They paid their money and received knowledge. Their checks were cashed; they purchased a service. Therefore, obviously, they have the right to teach that material and call it jeet kune do. Coming up with esoteric definitions culled from quotes (taken out of context) from specific philosophical tomes, some of them incompatible, and then redefining jeet kune do according to these terms, doesn't wash. To tell these guys, "No, that's not jeet kune do because by saying you teach jeet kune do you're making it a style and we all know it's a style and I could go on like this forever if you'd let me..." is like telling a university graduate his degree is no longer valid because the parameters of the degree program have been changed.

By the same token, it is also wrong to say that a person who trained in the core jeet kune do concepts and learned the process of simplification and assimilation, and who then goes on to study and "absorb" other arts, is also not pursuing a JKD path.

The problem comes in when people want to learn every martial art in the world and go out and study a drib of this and a drab of that (in what little time they have available) and then attempt to pass that

knowledge on without becoming sufficiently immersed in the systems to absorb them. That's like learning a few phrases in French and trying to teach and understand the French language. It's also wrong to insist that "If it wasn't a technique taught by Bruce Lee, it isn't jeet kune do." This makes the practitioner rigid and limited.

In short, the parties who feel that jeet kune do is an ongoing process and the parties who feel that Bruce Lee spent his life refining a devastating system, and that it would be like trying to reinvent the wheel to waste time dabbling in other areas, are both right. Here in Southern California, the Mecca of JKD, the instructors on the top level seem to all get along very well. It appears that their students, and I mean seminar contacts as well, are quite vocal over who's right and who's wrong.

As a creature of logic, I can't help but think it's kind of stupid. If what one instructor teaches works for you and you like that teacher, stick with that teacher. Does it really make a difference what he calls his style? Would it be any less effective if he called it "John Smith Martial Arts"?

We are then led to question the motivation of the people writing letters and complaining. Since many of them send in letters on stationery with the "yin-yang" arrows logo, and some of them even refer to themselves as "JKD instructors" or "JKD apprentice instructors" (an oxymoron if I ever heard one), could it be that we are once again faced with people simply fighting over a name? Are we again facing the possibility that things are getting out of a hand because of a small group of vocal opportunists seeking to cash in on a dead-man's fame?

I may be wrong, but didn't a certain "Little Dragon" once say, "Jeet kune do is only a name...please don't fuss over it"?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Steven Soet is interested in hearing from readers on this issue. He'll print what's useful, discard what's useless, and toss in what's uniquely his own.

John Steven Soet, Guest Columnist