



Bruce Lee's

Wisdom for Daily Living

Bruce Lee changed worlds--the world of martial arts, the worlds of Asian and American cinema, and the personal worlds of countless students and fans have been transformed by his brilliance. Far more than just a passing influence, Lee has continued to inspire and stimulate the minds of individuals from all walks of life for decades. Interest in his thought is on the rise and many regard him as a contemporary philosopher and visionary, discovering in his words an antidote to *contemporary* problems, as well as finding him a model of discipline, strength, and wisdom. Lee's philosophy forms for us a vision of a world of progress, a world free of suffering, and a world of enlightenment unflawed by ignorance, superstition, and corruption. In Lee's words, a world of "*love, peace and brotherhood.*"

To Bruce Lee, philosophy was not the professional playground of academics, but every human being's gateway to the greatest adventure of the human spirit. It illuminated the frontiers of human possibility and obliterated the shadows of doubt and insecurity. Unlike others, content to follow, Bruce Lee insisted upon charting his own course toward truth, and he encouraged those who wished to share his insights to do likewise. While Lee was a champion of individual rights and individual development, both of which stress the sovereignty of the individual as an end in himself, he also spoke to something deeper--the commonality of all human beings and the removal of such artificial barriers to true brotherhood as nationality, ethnicity, and class structure, so that human beings could live together peaceably as independent equals.

Bruce Lee rejected blind obedience to external authority. He urged human beings to hold themselves and their lives as their highest values and wrote in praise of "the artist of life" who lives by his own judgment and who is willing to stand alone against tradition and popular opinion. Lee pointed out that "*We have more faith in what we imitate than in what we originate,*" with the result that we are encouraged--and have opted--to look to anyone but ourselves for the answers to our most unsettling questions. Too many are confused about whom to trust, suspicious of their own impulses and uncertain of their futures. Spirits have been malnourished and minds stunted by allowing others to "take over" or decide what constitute "real" problems.

*Striking Thoughts: Bruce Lee's Wisdom for Daily Living*, then, is a book for

the free spirit who chooses to live by the power of his or her own mind rather than relying on the dictates of creed or institution in making decisions about life and how to live it. Consisting of eight sections, 72 topics, and 825 aphorisms, *Striking Thoughts* is for all who have sought truth but not found it in platitude or dogma. Within the pages of *Striking Thoughts* you will find that Bruce Lee has not so much prepared a banquet of easy answers as outlined a means by which you can prepare your own way. And if you are suffering, dispirited, or anxious, in his words you will find observations and insights that can fortify you and pacify your troubled spirit.

How can I say such things? Simply because Bruce Lee's words have done as much for me-and for thousands more from all walks of life and from all over the world who have taken the time to write or e-mail The Bruce Lee Educational Foundation offering identical testimony. It is easy to see the appeal of Lee's thought, for he dares to say that which others dare only to think; his candor disarms our insecurities and fears. Lee is capable of infusing a single sentence with a profundity that would take others at least a chapter to convey; his every aphorism is a mountain peak, offering a higher vantage point for viewing the unfolding of life's means and mysteries. The supreme irony is that this profound thought was the fruit of a life that spanned a mere 32 years.

The title "*Striking Thoughts*" is taken from a heading that Bruce Lee created for a series of maxims he wrote down after reading the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti's book *First and Last Freedom*. However, the committing to paper (and, later, to audiotape) of "striking thoughts" was a habit of Lee's that extended back to his early days in Hong Kong. Included within the pages of this book are those "striking thoughts" that issued forth in conversations, interviews, and correspondence that Bruce Lee shared with journalists, friends, and colleagues. Other entries are postulates that Lee had been moved to type out--perhaps with an eye toward one day making use of them--others were quickly jotted down before they escaped his concentration. Still others were noted in book margins as he read; the result of a "striking thought" that had come to him as he was closely regarding a particular writer or philosopher's point of view.

Lee's personal library contained the works of many great and diverse

# Life

*Emptiness the starting point.* – In order to taste my cup of water you must first empty your cup. My friend, drop all of your preconceived fixed ideas and be neutral. Do you know why this cup is so useful? Because it is *empty*.

*Flow in the process of life.* - You can never step in the same water twice, my friend. Like flowing water, life is perpetual movement. There is nothing fixed. Whatever your problems happen to be in the future, remember well that they cannot remain stationary but must move together with your living spirit. Otherwise, you will drift into artificiality or attempt to solidify the ever-flowing. To avoid that, you must change and be flexible. Remember, the usefulness of a cup is in its emptiness.

*Life has no frontier.* - Life is wide, limitless. There is no border, no frontier.

*To live is a constant process of relating.* - To live is a constant process of relating, so come on out of that shell of isolation and conclusion, and relate DIRECTLY to what is being said. Bear in mind I seek neither your approval nor to influence you. So do not make up your mind as to "this is this" or "that is that." I will be more than satisfied if you begin to learn to investigate everything yourself from now on.

*Life simply is.* - Living exists when life lives through us - unhampered in its flow, for he who is living is not conscious of living and, in this, is the life it lives. Life lives; and in the living flow, no questions are raised. The reason is that life is a living now! So, in order to live life whole-heartedly, the answer is life simply *is*.

## **The Now**

*The Now is truth.* - This evening I see something totally new, and that newness is experienced by the mind; but tomorrow that experience becomes mechanical, because I want to repeat the sensation, the pleasure of it - the description is never real. What is real is seeing the truth instantaneously, because truth has no future.

*The Now is all-inclusive.* - NOTHING EXISTS EXCEPT THE HERE AND NOW.

*The Now covers all that exists.* - The past is no more, the future is not yet. NOW includes the balance of being here, experiencing, involvement, phenomenon, awareness.

*Flow in the living moment.* - We are always in a process of becoming and NOTHING is fixed. Have no rigid system in you, and you'll be flexible to change with the ever changing. OPEN yourself and flow, my friend. Flow in the TOTAL OPENESS OF THE LIVING MOMENT. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves. Moving, be like water. Still, be like a mirror. Respond like an echo.

*The Now is total awareness.* - The "space" created between "what is" and "what should be." Total awareness of the now and not the disciplined stillness.

## **The Human Being**

*Identify with your humanity.* - You know how I like to think of myself? As a human being.

*The function and duty of a human being.* - The function and duty of a human being, a "quality" human being, that is, is the sincere and honest development of potential and self-actualisation. One additional comment: the energy from within and the physical strength from your body can guide you toward accomplishing your purpose in life - and to actually act on actualising your duty to yourself.

*Human beings are integrators.* - We do not analyze. We INTEGRATE.

*The goal of a human being.* - The human goal: to actualise oneself.

*False people.* - What I detest most are dishonest people who talk more than they are capable of doing and also people who use false humility as a means to cover their obnoxious inadequacy.

*On the Dominican Republic.* - I like the country and the people. The Dominicans have the simplicity of a real human being; there is not so much hypocrisy like in the big cities.

## **The Mind**

*An intelligent mind is constantly learning.* - An intelligent mind is one which is constantly learning, never concluding - styles and patterns have come to conclusion, therefore they [have] ceased to be intelligent.

*An intelligent mind is an inquiring mind.* - An intelligent mind is an INQUIRING mind. It is not satisfied with explanations, with conclusions; nor is it a mind that believes, because belief is again another form of conclusion.

*The qualities of mind.* -To be one thing and not to change is the climax of STILLNESS. To have nothing in one that resists is the climax of EMPTINESS. To remain detached from all outside things is the climax of FINENESS. To have in oneself no contraries is the climax of PURITY.

*You are the commander of your mind.* - I've always been buffeted by circumstances because I thought of myself as a human being [affected by] outside conditioning. Now I realise that I am the power that commands the feeling of my mind and from which circumstances grow.

*On the value of keeping an open mind.* - The usefulness of a cup is in its emptiness. Emptiness = Totality. Totality of mind; totality of physical structure.

*To free the mind.* - In order that the mind may function naturally and harmoniously it must be freed from all attachment to oppositional notions.

## **Health**

*To flow like water.* - The method for health promotion is based on water, as flowing water never grows stale. The idea is not to overdevelop or to overexert, but to normal-ise the function of the body.

*On the joy of exercise.* - I really dig exercise. When I'm jogging early in the morning, boy! It's sure refreshing. Although Hong Kong is one of the most crowded places in the world, I'm surprised how peaceful it can be in the morning. Sure, there are people, but I become oblivious to them while I am running.

*On the therapeutic benefits of jogging.* - Jogging is not only a form of exercise to me, it is also a form of relaxation. It is my own hour every morning when I can be alone with my thoughts.

*On diet.*- Only eat what your body requires, and don't [become] carried away with foods that don't benefit you.

*On smoking, drinking and gambling.* - I don't drink nor smoke and those events are many times senseless. I'm not a smoker because I don't think putting smoke into your body is quite the thing to do. As for alcohol, I think it tastes awful. Don't know why anyone should want to drink the stuff As for gambling, I don't believe in getting something for nothing.

*Health is a state of balance.* - Health is an appropriate balance of the

## **Adversity**

*Adversity is beneficial to us.* - Prosperity is apt to prevent us from examining our conduct; but adversity leads us to think properly of our state, and so is beneficial to us.

*Adversity causes the mind to think properly.* - In a time when everything goes well, my mind is pampered with enjoyment, possessiveness, *etc.* Only in times of adversity, privation, or mishap, does my mind function and think properly of my state. This close examination of self strengthens my mind and leads me to understand and be understood.

*The value of foolish questions.* - A wise man can learn more from a foolish question than a fool can learn from a wise answer.

*Never waste energy on worries and negative thoughts.* - I mean who has the most insecure job as I have? What do I live on? My faith in my ability that I'll make it. Sure my back screwed me up good for a year but with every adversity comes a blessing because a shock acts as a reminder to oneself that we must not get stale in routine.

*Anxiety is a defense.* - Don't be forecasting evil unless it is what you can guard against. Anxiety is good for nothing if we can't turn it into a defense.

*There is no shame in losing.* - It is not a shame to be knocked down by other people. The important thing is to ask when you're being knocked down,

## **Work**

*The practical nature of the world.*- This world is very practical. You do more work, you get rewarded more; you do less work, you lose your rewards.

*Something for something.* - There is only something for something, never something for nothing.

*More work equals more rewards.* - It's the law of averages: put in more, come out with more.

*The reward is to be found in the work.*- The important thing is that I am personally satisfied with my work. If it is a piece of junk, I will only regret it.

*It's not the job, but how you do it.*- It's not what you give, it's the way you give it.

*The reward should be proportionate to the work.* - No one ever does anything with enthusiasm unless he benefits thereby - reward proportionately.

*Intense desire creates its own talents and opportunities.* - We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents.

## **Money**

*The nature of money.* - Money of itself has no explicit nature. Money is what one makes of it.

*Money is a means, not an end.* - A child must be taught early that money is only a means, a *type* of usefulness, an implement. Like all instruments, it has certain purposes, but it will not do everything. One must learn how to use it, what it will do, but above all what it will not do.

*Money is an indirect matter.* - My policy is that money is an indirect matter. The direct matter is your ability or what you are going to do that counts. If that comes, the indirect things will follow.

*A fair share of the profit.* - Many film producers think I am only interested in money. That's why they all try to lure me on to their set by promising me huge sums and nothing else. But, at heart, I only want a fair share of the profit.

*The good times will not always last.* - I profited from my father's philosophy about money. He used to tell me, "If you make 10 dollars this year, always think to yourself that next year you may only make five dollars -so be prepared."

*Keep money in perspective.* - Sure money is important in providing for my family and giving us what we want. But it isn't everything.

## Art

*Art is the expression of the self* - Art is really the expression of the self. The more complicated and restricted the method, the less the opportunity for the expression of one's original sense of freedom.

*Art and choiceless awareness.* - Artists in all fields must learn to observe choicelessly, to digest their observations, and to express them in their work.

*Art begins with feelings.* - Art must originate with an experience or feeling of the artist.

*Art and emotion.* - Art is communication of feelings.

*Forget your mind and become one with the work.* - If [one] has any idea at all of displaying his art well, he ceases to be a good artist, for his mind "stops" with every movement he goes through. In all things, it is important to forget your "mind" and become one with the work at hand.

*Art requires creativity and freedom.* - Art lives where absolute freedom is, because where it is not, there can be no creativity-art has no ego rigidity.

*Art is not decorative.* - Art is never decoration, embellishment; instead it is work of enlightenment. Art, in other words, is a technique for acquiring liberty.

## Conditioning

*The individual and the “what should be.”* - Why do you as an individual depend on thousands of years of propaganda? Ideals, principles, the "what should be" leads to hypocrisy.

*Be “born afresh.”* - Drop and dissolve inner blockage. A conditioned mind is never a free mind. Wipe away and dissolve all its experience and be "born afresh."

*Keep your mind uncontaminated by past conditioning.* - The more and more you're aware, the more and more you shed from day to day what you have learned so that your mind is always fresh, uncontaminated by previous conditioning.

*Remove all psychic obstruction.* -In order to display its native activities to the utmost limit, remove all psychic obstruction.

*Drop your inner resistance.* - Are you a flowing entity, capable to flow with external circumstances, or are you resisting with your set choice pattern?

*The truth is outside of all set patterns.* - Conditioning is to limit a person within the framework of a particular system. All fixed set patterns are incapable of adaptability or pliability. The truth is outside of all fixed patterns.

## Self-actualisation

*The second-hand artist “the conformer.”* -The second-hand artist, in blindly following the teacher, accepts his pattern and, as a result, his action and, above all, his thinking becomes mechanical, his responses automatic according to the pattern - and thereby he ceases to expand or to grow. He is a mechanical robot, a product of thousands of years of propaganda and conditioning. The second-hand artist seldom learns to depend upon himself for expression; instead, he faithfully follows an imposed pattern. So what is nurtured is the dependent mind rather than independent inquiry.

*The “Mirror Person.”* - A mirror-person is one who always wants to know how he looks to others. Instead of being critical, he projects the criticism and feels criticised and feels onstage.

*The most poignant sense of insecurity comes from standing alone.* -We [tend to] have more faith in what we imitate than in what we originate. We [often feel that we] cannot derive a sense of absolute certitude from anything which has its root in us. The most poignant sense of insecurity comes from standing alone; we are not alone when we imitate .

*Do not look for a successful personality to duplicate.* - When I look around, I always learn something and that is *to be always yourself* And to express yourself. To have faith in yourself. Do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it, which seems to me to be the prevalent thing happening in Hong Kong. Like they always copy mannerisms, but they'll never start from the very root of his being, which is *“how can I be me?”*

*The need to be real.* - In life, what more can you ask for but to be real? To

**End of Preview.**

**Rest of the book can be read @**

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