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The Feel

— ILLUSTRATED —

Roland
Johan
Christiaan
Nansink

A Warrior's Journey

Movement, Feeling,
Taoism &
Self-Development

*From Amsterdam
Dojos to Japan*

TRAIN THE BODY • CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT • LIVE THE WAY

Roland Johan Christiaan Nansink

**A Warrior's Journey Through Movement, Feeling, Taoism
and Self-Development**

If you walked into a dojo in Amsterdam in the late 1960s, you could smell the sweat before you heard the impact. Bare feet sliding across worn mats. Gloves cracking against ribs. Young men testing themselves against pain, discipline and fear. Somewhere in that world stood Roland Johan Christiaan Nansink — lean, searching, restless — beginning a journey that would take him far beyond fighting.

Born on March 11, 1951, in the Netherlands, Nansink came of age during a Europe rebuilding itself after war. It was a generation raised on structure and restraint, but also one hungry for discovery. While many followed predictable paths, Roland chased something harder to define: the hidden mechanics of human potential.

Over the decades, he became known not only as a martial artist, but as a teacher, coach, Taoist-inspired thinker, writer and creator of body-oriented training systems. His life moved between hard-contact karate gyms, Japanese martial traditions, Taoist philosophy, corporate leadership seminars and nature retreats. Through it all ran one central idea: what he calls *TheFeel* — the body's natural intelligence, the instinctive sense that tells us when something is alive, healthy and true.

For Nansink, martial arts were never just about winning fights. They were about learning how to move through life.

Early Life: Growing Up in a Rebuilding Europe

Roland Nansink was born into a continent still carrying the scars of World War II. The Netherlands of the 1950s valued discipline, order and rebuilding. But beneath that surface, the cultural revolution of the 1960s was beginning to stir — new music, new philosophies, Eastern spirituality, travel and experimentation.

Nansink gravitated toward experience over theory. He learned by doing. By moving. By testing himself physically and mentally. Long before mindfulness became fashionable, he was already searching for direct perception — the ability to feel reality instead of merely thinking about it.

That search started on the mat.

The First Fight: Judo, Karate and the Hard Road

Like many martial artists of his generation, Nansink began with judo. The sport taught him leverage, timing and balance — lessons that would later shape his understanding of internal martial arts. But it was karate that lit the fire.

In 1967, he entered the brutal world of Kyokushin karate in Amsterdam, training under Rinus Schulz at Jon Bluming's legendary honbu dojo. This was not point fighting. This was full-contact combat before mixed martial arts existed. Fighters trained hard, hit hard and learned quickly whether they belonged.

Kyokushin forged toughness. Endless conditioning. Bare-knuckle body shots. Discipline under pressure. Nansink thrived in that environment and eventually earned his black belt. But even while mastering the external mechanics of fighting, he sensed there was something deeper underneath the surface.

Why did some fighters generate effortless power? Why did certain movements feel alive while others looked mechanical? Why could relaxation sometimes defeat brute force?

Those questions pushed him toward a lesser-known martial path that would redefine his life.

Discovering Taikiken

In the early 1970s, Nansink walked into Jan Kallenbach's Shin Bu Ken dojo in Amsterdam Osdorp and encountered Taikiken — a Japanese martial art rooted in the Chinese internal system Yiquan.

The contrast with Kyokushin was dramatic.

Where karate emphasized structure and explosive force, Taikiken emphasized sensitivity, spontaneity and natural movement. There were no flashy forms. No rigid choreography. Practitioners stood still for long periods in meditative postures known as *Ritsuzen* or Standing Zen.

To outsiders, it looked almost motionless.

To insiders, it was intense internal training.

Under Yoshimichi Sato, son-in-law of Taikiken founder Kenichi Sawai, Nansink discovered a system that blurred the line between combat training and self-development. Taikiken taught practitioners to relax deeply while remaining fully alert. To move from instinct instead of tension. To generate power without stiffness.

Standing still became a form of listening.

For Nansink, it was a revelation.

Japan: Training at the Source

In 1975, Nansink traveled to Japan — not as a tourist, but as a martial pilgrim.

Tokyo became his laboratory. At places like Meiji Jingu, he immersed himself in the demanding routines of Taikiken practice: standing meditation, stepping drills, crawling exercises, pushing hands and internal force training.

The sessions were deceptively simple. But simplicity, he learned, can be brutal.

Under the influence of Kenichi Sawai's lineage, Nansink experienced martial arts as something far beyond technique. Every movement became connected to breathing, posture, gravity and awareness. A punch wasn't just a strike. It was an expression of total-body coordination and mental clarity.

He also encountered practitioners connected to Wang Shu Jin's Taijiquan traditions and other internal martial systems rooted in Chinese philosophy. These experiences expanded his understanding of what martial arts could become when stripped down to essentials.

The deeper he trained, the more he realized the real opponent wasn't another fighter.

It was interference — tension, fear, ego and mental noise.

Southeast Asia, China and the Taoist Influence

Nansink's journey eventually carried him into Southeast Asia and China, where martial arts merged with Taoist philosophy and energetic training systems like qigong.

In Kuala Lumpur, he encountered Taoist temple practices centered around *Wuji* — the concept of fertile emptiness, the stillness from which movement emerges. It resonated deeply with what he had already experienced through Standing Zen.

Stillness wasn't dead space.

It was loaded potential.

In China, he explored Yiquan, Taijiquan, Shaolin-related movement systems and Taoist principles emphasizing natural action, balance and adaptability. He searched less for techniques than for universal principles.

What makes movement natural?

What creates effortless power?

How does a human being become fully alive and responsive?

The answers increasingly pointed toward Taoism — softness overcoming hardness, emptiness creating possibility, nature functioning without force.

For Nansink, martial arts were evolving into something larger: a philosophy of living.

Beyond Fighting: Martial Arts as Life Practice

Over time, Nansink expanded his focus beyond combat training. The dojo became a metaphor for life itself.

He observed that modern people often suffer from the same problems as tense fighters: too much force, too much mental chatter, too much disconnection from instinct and rhythm. In martial arts, that creates stiffness. In business, it creates dysfunctional teams. In daily life, it creates stress and burnout.

His work increasingly centered on reducing interference and restoring what he called compatibility — alignment between body, mind, environment and human relationships.

Those ideas eventually evolved into projects like MartriX and TheFeel.

MartriX: Martial Arts Meets Leadership

As co-founder of MartriX, Nansink helped develop a training system blending martial arts principles with leadership and organizational development.

The concept sounds unconventional until you watch a great fighter.

Elite martial artists don't waste energy. They stay relaxed under pressure. They sense timing. They adapt instantly. They maintain structure without rigidity.

Nansink believed effective leadership works the same way.

MartriX applies principles from Taikiken, Taijiquan, Qigong and Zen awareness to team dynamics and management training. Companies, he argued, behave much like bodies: they can become tense, fragmented and reactive — or fluid, coordinated and creative.

His philosophy emphasized balance: “round on the outside, square on the inside.” Flexible in interaction. Firm in principles.

It was Taoism translated into modern performance culture.

TheFeel: Trusting the Body Again

If there is one concept most associated with Roland Nansink, it is *TheFeel*.

The idea is simple but radical: human beings possess an innate sensing intelligence that modern life often suppresses. We become overloaded by screens, systems, algorithms and external expectations. We stop listening to the body.

Nansink's answer is direct awareness.

Feel the room.

Feel your breathing.

Feel tension before it becomes illness.

Feel whether an environment energizes or drains you.

TheFeel combines movement training, mindfulness, qigong, Taikiken, longevity practices and coaching into a practical system aimed at reconnecting people with instinctive awareness.

Its guiding principle is one of Nansink's signature phrases:

“When the Mind Is in the Right Setting, Life Follows Suit.”

ZenmaX and Natural Tuning

Nansink later expanded these ideas through concepts like ZenmaX and Natural Tuning — systems emphasizing movement, mindfulness and training in natural environments.

Forests, mountains, sea air and silence became part of the practice.

For him, nature wasn't scenery. It was medicine.

Training outdoors sharpened perception. Breathing changed. Attention deepened. The nervous system relaxed. Martial movement became less artificial and more instinctive.

Taikiken, with its emphasis on sensing and responsiveness, fit naturally into those environments.

The result was less about mastering opponents and more about mastering awareness.

The Creative Vacuum

One of Nansink's most intriguing ideas is what he calls the “Creative Vacuum.”

In sports, athletes sometimes describe entering “the zone” — a state where action flows effortlessly and instinct takes over. Nansink approached that phenomenon through Taoist language.

When the mind becomes overcrowded with stress, fear and noise, creativity disappears. But when interference drops away, something opens. Movement becomes spontaneous. Insight appears naturally.

In martial arts, that state produces fluid reactions.

In leadership, it creates innovation.

In life, it creates freedom.

For Nansink, emptiness was never passive. It was possibility.

Writer, Photographer and Storyteller

Outside the dojo, Nansink built a parallel career as a writer, photographer and multimedia creator. His projects explored martial arts, Taoism, longevity, self-development and independent living.

He wrote extensively about themes like self-steering, body awareness and modern conditioning. Titles and concepts such as *Be Your Own Guru*, *Be Your Own Healer* and *The Feel of Longevity* reflected his belief that individuals must reclaim responsibility for their own development.

His photography captured another side of the same philosophy: movement, atmosphere, travel and lived experience frozen in time.

For Nansink, images weren't decoration.

They were memory.

The Martial Artist as Alchemist

Trying to categorize Roland Nansink is almost impossible.

He is too philosophical for traditional sports culture. Too physical for abstract spirituality. Too unconventional for corporate management theory.

Instead, he became a synthesizer — blending hard-contact karate, internal martial arts, Taoism, coaching, mindfulness and creativity into one evolving system.

Kyokushin gave him toughness.

Taikiken gave him sensitivity.

Taoism gave him perspective.

Writing gave him language.

Together, they formed a life dedicated not simply to fighting, but to understanding human potential.

Self-Steering and the Search for Authentic Choice

At the center of Nansink's philosophy lies one recurring challenge: can people truly steer themselves?

Modern life constantly pushes external expectations — social pressure, fear, distraction, performance culture. Nansink believed genuine freedom begins when individuals reconnect with their own internal compass.

But that requires slowing down enough to listen.

Before action comes awareness.

Before leadership comes balance.

Before creativity comes silence.

His methods often begin with the simplest acts imaginable: standing, breathing and feeling.

Simple doesn't mean easy.

Legacy and Continuing Influence

Roland Johan Christiaan Nansink's story stretches across decades of martial evolution — from postwar European dojos to Japanese Taikiken circles, from Taoist philosophy to modern leadership training.

But his lasting contribution may be this: he helped redefine martial arts as more than combat.

For Nansink, fighting was only the doorway.

The real challenge was becoming fully present, fully aware and fully alive.

His message remains strikingly relevant in a distracted modern world:

Stand.

Breathe.

Feel.

Move.

Reduce interference.

Trust natural intelligence.

Find the right setting for the mind — and life will follow.

In the end, Roland Nansink's biography reads less like the story of a fighter and more like the story of a lifelong search for human balance.